

# Slough Borough Council

## Housing Strategy 2016 to 2021

March 2017

## **Foreword**

I am delighted to introduce the new Housing Strategy for Slough.

We have ambitious plans for the success and growth of our borough over the next 20 years. We want Slough to be a place where people work, rest, play and stay. We understand that supporting economic growth means providing a full range of housing opportunities in good quality homes that our residents can afford.

This Housing Strategy is an important building block of our future, alongside our new Local Plan which is currently in development. This Strategy covers the next five years but we are also looking further ahead, so that in 20 years time we have a range of housing and support services and the right infrastructure that matches the ambition and needs of our residents.

The population of Slough and the number of people living here will grow dramatically over the next 20 years. We need to provide housing both for people who are already here and for those residents who will come as a result of infrastructure developments such as Crossrail. This means providing a balance of housing to rent and to buy, but with a particular emphasis on homes that are affordable for local people.

A good and secure home is central to the quality of life. It affects physical and mental health, job prospects, educational attainment and the ability for our residents to prosper. So although most residents in the Borough are well-housed, that is why we need to tackle the known problem areas:

- One household in four in Slough rents their home from a private landlord. Most landlords provide a good and valuable service. But we need to address the minority of landlords who are exposing their tenants to poor housing conditions and ill health.
- We have a growing homelessness problem, some of it exported from London. It is vital for the sake of the families concerned that we work harder to prevent homelessness occurring in the first place.
- We need to do more to meet the needs of people in our communities who have specific housing needs, such as care leavers or older people needing extra care.

We have a vital and valuable resource in the 6,000 rented homes that the Council owns and we need to make sure that we nurture and improve those homes for the benefit of existing residents and those that are to come. We are committed to doing this despite the changes that are currently being imposed by the Government. This means developing a clear vision for what our homes and neighbourhoods will look like in the longer term.

This Housing Strategy commits the Council to pro-actively promoting the development of new homes, including delivering or facilitating the provision of at least 200 new homes each year. However, the success of the Strategy will depend also on the activities of others, including private developers, statutory agencies, the voluntary sector, housing associations, and our regeneration partner Slough Urban Renewal and residents themselves.

The council will continue to work hard with its many partners to deliver all the action plans within our Housing Strategy and I look forward to seeing them delivered over the coming months and years.

*photo*

***Councillor Zaffar Ajaib, Cabinet Member for Housing and Urban Renewal  
Slough Borough Council***

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## Executive Summary

The Housing Strategy is an important element of the Council's plans to build a town where people want to work, rest, play and stay. It covers a five year period but we are also looking to the longer term, so that in 20 years time we have a range of housing and support services that match the ambition and needs of our residents. The Strategy is presented under 5 themes.

### Theme 1: New Housing Supply

- The population of the Borough is expected to grow rapidly over the next 20 years **by at least 15%** to 169,611 in 2036. When added to the existing demand for homes this means Slough needs to provide around 20,000 new homes by 2036.
- Rising house prices and private sector rents at over 40% in the last two years mean that many residents cannot afford accommodation at market rates in the borough.
- The Government's Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) has identified the need for Slough to provide 927 new homes each year up to 2036. The Council will seek to achieve this ambitious target, but this depends on there being enough land and sites available for development in the Borough.
- Whilst many of the new homes will be built by private developers and other agencies, the Council itself will be very pro-active in bringing forward sites for development. This Strategy commits the Council to delivering or facilitating an average of at least 200 new homes each year over the life of this Strategy and beyond.
- A balance of new homes to rent and to own is required but a particular priority will be the provision of a range of affordable housing for people who cannot accommodate themselves in the market. This will include homes for key workers.
- Our new Subsidiary Housing Companies named Herschel Homes and James Elliman Homes will assist us in increasing housing supply. James Elliman Homes will also provide more housing options for vulnerable groups such as care leavers

### Theme 2: Private Sector Housing

- At least one Slough household in four rents their home from a private landlord and the proportion is growing.
- We understand that most landlords provide a good service and standard of accommodation.
- However, national statistics show that the worst housing conditions are found in the private rented sector. Rogue landlords provide poor and unhealthy accommodation.
- The Council intends to actively support good landlords but will vigorously use its legal powers, including prosecution to make rogue landlords comply with their obligations. It will investigate a new registration scheme for private landlords and implement the expansion of mandatory HMO licensing.
- The Council will actively use its powers to bring empty properties back into use.
- Our two new Subsidiary Housing Companies will act as exemplar private landlords in the Borough and provide alternative housing options for homeless and vulnerable households and others on modest incomes to access homes in the private sector.

### Theme 3: Council Homes

- The Council owns over 7,000 tenanted and leasehold homes. This housing stock is the Council's most valuable physical asset and plays an increasingly significant role in the borough in providing accommodation for people on low or modest incomes and those with vulnerabilities.
- Major investment plans are in place which will mean a £100 million spend on improving and maintain existing homes over the next 7 years and the building of at least 190 new Council homes.

- Service improvements are planned through a new Repairs, Maintenance and Investment contract due to start in 2017 and wider engagement with our residents.
- The financing of council housing is in a period of uncertainty, largely because of changes introduced by the Government. One of these is the forced reduction in rents over the 4 year period from 2016/17, which has removed substantial income from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA.) A major review of the HRA Business Plan has taken place because of these factors, though our previous prudent assumptions appear robust.
- In collaboration with residents the Council will undertake a major Options Appraisal to look at the future of the Council's homes over the next 20 years.

#### **Theme 4: Homelessness and Housing Need**

- Homelessness is increasing. More people are being accepted as homeless and the number of families in temporary accommodation aside from Bed and Breakfast accommodation is rising very sharply.
- Rough sleeping is an emergent issue that may be on the rise and a new collaborative approach and service delivery is required.
- The increase in homelessness is mainly due to rising prices in the private sector where local people are being priced out of their accommodation and static or reducing levels of welfare benefits which makes rents unaffordable for many.
- The problem is being exacerbated in Slough by homeless families moving from London, mostly placed here by London Boroughs. Often this is without adequate notification to services in Slough and this can lead to vulnerable people not fully accessing services and increasing demand on local resources.
- The Council will develop a Preventing Homelessness Strategy in partnership with the voluntary sector and other agencies.
- We have ended the use of Bed and Breakfast for families with children in the last 6 months and are committed to not use it going forward.
- The Scheme of Allocation for social housing will be reviewed to look at the priority homeless people and vulnerable groups receive;
- Our subsidiary housing company James Elliman Homes will acquire new accommodation to alleviate pressure on temporary accommodation.
- The Council will work with Adult Social Care and other relevant agencies to monitor and address the health and care needs of vulnerable homeless people placed in Slough.

#### **Theme 5: Special Housing Needs and Vulnerable Groups**

- Population projections show that the number of people in Slough aged over 65 will grow by 40% in the next 10 years. The number over 85 will grow even more sharply.
- The number of people with long-term health problems or a disability will also increase. There is a clear link between poor housing conditions and poor health.
- Although there is already a range of specialist accommodation available significantly more will be required to meet the growing demand. A greater range of options is also required, including for people who are currently owner-occupiers.
- The Council will develop a long-term strategy for older persons housing in the Borough.
- Joint working between Housing and Adult Social Care will deliver up to 3 new mixed use extra care schemes in the borough and other forms of supported accommodation.
- Our new Subsidiary Housing Company James Elliman Homes will be used to look at opportunities for specialist and alternative accommodation to be delivered locally and more cost-effectively for a range of vulnerable groups.
- There will be an adequate supply of suitable accommodation for care leavers.

## Introduction

Improving Housing quality and standards is a key component of the Council's ambition to make Slough a place to work, rest, play and stay over the next 20 years. In order to meet the needs of existing residents and to support the increase in population and jobs alongside the economic growth that will accompany it, we need to provide a broad and balanced range of new accommodation to own and to rent. We also need to improve the quality of existing housing.

Housing forms one of the major outcomes for the Borough in the Council's new 5 Year Plan 2017-2021. Outcome 4 reads: "Our residents will have access to good quality homes"

This Housing Strategy will help to deliver this outcome as well as the broader objectives of the overarching Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy to support and sustain our diverse communities. It draws together the key housing issues in the Borough into one document and summarises the Council's approach to addressing them. It has been prepared in parallel with the development of the Local Plan which will set out the planning and spatial framework to deliver the necessary infrastructure for the Borough in the period up to 2036.

Our plans are ambitious, both for the Borough and for the provision of housing. We want to welcome the growth that is coming and harness it to fashion a high quality and successful environment where people want to stay and have access to good quality accommodation that they can afford.

We recognise that success will involve many different organisations and agencies. Residents, private developers, statutory agencies, housing associations and the voluntary sector all have an important part to play. The Council cannot by itself meet the significant housing challenges facing the Borough. We hope that this Strategy will form the framework against which our partners can join together to improve housing opportunities for all the residents of the Borough.

### Structure of the Strategy

The document is structured into five key themes:

- **Theme 1: New Housing Supply** - *Ensuring the right supply and mix of new homes and increasing affordable housing through the efficient use of land and capital resources.*
- **Theme 2: Private Sector Housing** - *Ensuring that the private housing sector provides sufficient good quality market housing through support for landlords and tenants and, where necessary, robust quality control and regulation.*
- **Theme 3: Council Homes** - *Ensuring council homes are managed and maintained to a high standard and the Council builds new homes for Slough residents.*
- **Theme 4: Homelessness and Housing Need** - *Reducing homelessness and rough sleeping through effective prevention work.*
- **Theme 5: Special Housing Needs and Vulnerable Groups** - *Ensuring that specialist accommodation is available for vulnerable people and those with special housing needs, for example, young people, older people and people, people with disabilities.*

The Action Plans from each of the themes are brought together at the end of the document in a format which will be used to monitor the strategy over the next few years.

## Theme 1 : New Housing Supply

Ensuring the right supply and mix of new homes and increasing affordable housing through the efficient use of land and capital resources.

### Evidence Base - Key Points

- Slough has 54,123 homes accommodating 149,400 people with a predicted growth of a further 18,000 people over the next 20 years.
- Housing supply: 52% of households own their own home/have a mortgage; 28% are private rented, 20% are socially rented homes (council and housing association homes);
- Slough has high levels of overcrowding compared to neighbouring areas;
- House Prices average £365,908 (Zoopla, February 2017), with one of the highest rates of increase in the country over the previous two years;
- Affordability; the ratio between average house prices and average income levels is now 13:1.
- The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) indicates a requirement for 927 new homes per year over the next 20 years.
- Pressure on housing supply is indicated by the growth of homeless households in temporary accommodation which has almost doubled to over 300 in the 2 years to January 2017;
- Housing services are under increasing pressure from households moving from London, including homeless households placed in Slough by London Boroughs;
- Land supply is a key constraint for building new homes in Slough.
- Low development viability on brownfield sites has traditionally restricted the capacity to provide affordable housing and contributions to community infrastructure. We intend to address this requirement through the new Local Plan and we expect green field sites to deliver a substantial amount of affordable housing.

1.1. This chapter describes the overall position on housing and housing need in Slough and sets out the current information on the need for new homes. It also outlines the pro-active role the Council itself intends to play in ensuring the delivery of new homes for residents.

### Our Objectives

1.2. In setting out our Strategy on the supply of new homes we have a number of objectives;

- To provide homes that will support economic growth and enable residents to build their lives and careers by staying in Slough;
- To meet the new build requirements set out in the SHMA
- To provide a balance of new housing to own and to rent to cater for the requirements of all income groups;
- To provide affordable housing for the range of income groups who need it;
- To facilitate opportunities for households to move to different types of housing for people at all stages in their life and as their circumstances change;
- To make the best use of resources in providing new housing;
- To provide for new homes for special needs groups and vulnerable people within the community;

- To ensure that new homes are of high quality and make a contribution to the quality of life in Slough.

## **Background**

### ***Population and Housing in Slough***

1.3. Slough has the most diverse population in Berkshire, which had already grown by 18% between 2001 and 2013. Slough had an estimated population of 147,821 in 2016 and the population is currently estimated at 149,400. The population is projected to be around 169,611 by 2036. During the lifetime of this 5 year strategy the population is expected to grow by 6,900 (ONS). Overall it is anticipated there will be an increase of around 20,000 households between 2016 and 2036.

1.4. It is anticipated that these increases will be accompanied by an increase in the workforce by at least 15,000 (ONS). Currently around 39,000 people commute into Slough mainly for high skilled jobs and a similar number commute out mainly for lower skilled work out of a working population of around 80,000 people (ONS 2015 business register and employment survey)

1.5. In keeping with the Local Plan, this strategy recognises the importance of increasing the skills of the local population to maintain Slough as a major employment hub and the links between its economic regeneration and having a suitable supply of quality housing to keep and attract skilled workers to the Borough.

1.6. A particular characteristic of households in Slough is the very high level of overcrowding. In the 2011 Census 21% of households were living in overcrowded conditions compared to just 8.5% for England as a whole. This figure represented a growing increase in overcrowding in Slough since 2001. Allied to this is the very high level of "concealed" households; that is, households living within other households (often with relatives) and yet to form. The number of such households has doubled since 2001 and is now the 3rd highest in the whole country. Slough also has a relatively high proportion of larger families, with 15% of households containing five or more people. The majority of overcrowded families live in the private rented sector.

1.7. Our recent surveys indicate that currently 52% of households in Slough own their own home; 28% rent their homes from private landlords, and 20% are social housing tenants (renting from the Council or housing associations). These proportions have changed sharply since 2001, with a reduction in the proportion of households owning their own homes and a significant increase in those housed in the private rented sector.

1.8. Housing in Slough is rapidly becoming more expensive. In August 2016, average house prices reached £304,000 with an affordability ratio of 11:1 (Zoopla). By February 2017 the average house price had risen again to £365,908 with an increased affordability ratio of 13:1 (Zoopla). It is clear that Slough continues to experience some of the most rapid price increases in the country, which means homes for sale and private sector rents are becoming more difficult for local people to afford.

1.9. This brief outline of the housing situation in Slough points to a future in which the Borough is looking forward to rapid growth in the population and the workforce, to add to existing pressures on the housing market. The very high levels of overcrowding and the rapid rise in house prices and rents suggest both that substantially more homes are required over the period of this Strategy and beyond, and that the "affordability" of these homes will be a major consideration and challenge for our residents going forward.



### ***The Strategic Housing Market Assessment***

1.10. The Borough has the benefit of a major new assessment of the need for new homes, published early in 2016. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) is a detailed study of the Housing situation in Slough (and neighbouring authorities), drawing on information about current housing requirements and future need arising from population and economic growth.

1.11. Slough is set within a wider "Housing Market Area" which also includes the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and South Buckinghamshire. The SHMA identifies the "objectively assessed need" to provide 927 new homes year on year in Slough over the period 2016 to 2036. This is higher than the Council's current annual target of 550 homes and higher than either of the other two local authority areas within the Housing Market Area.

1.12. As part of its detailed analysis, the SHMA also made recommendations for the size of dwellings to be provided, to be used as a guide on individual developments. It follows that the majority of new homes required are family sized 2 and 3 bed houses or flats.

1.13. The Council accepts the analysis of the SHMA (subject to the analysis of housing need below) and the need for the provision of new homes on the scale proposed. This is consistent with its long term vision for the economic growth of Slough and with its ambition to provide an adequate supply of high quality accommodation for people who want to live and stay in the Borough.

1.14. This Strategy commits the Council to maximising the supply of new homes as far as development is sustainable and consistent with the other objectives of the new 5 Year Plan.

### **Other Measures of Housing Need**

1.15. The urgency of the need to provide additional housing at the recommended scale is amplified by consideration of local pressures that we believe are not fully taken account of in the SHMA. The SHMA is concerned in particular with longer-term economic and population trends, using nationally available, but inevitably broad-brush data sources. The Council itself has access to numerous other data sources which reflect the rapidly increasing day to day pressures experienced by residents of the Borough.

### ***The Housing Register***

1.16. One such source is the Housing Register. From January 2014 the Council restricted access to its Housing Register in order to reflect the limited availability of social housing and the fact that many people then on the Register had no realistic prospect of receiving an offer of social housing. Prior to that, around 8,000 households had expressed a wish to be considered for an offer of social housing in the Borough. Of these, 43% required 1 bedroom; 31% required 2 bedrooms, 20% required 3 bedrooms and 5% needed 4 bedrooms or more. Since 2014, the Register has been reduced to a figure of around 2,500 households. Even so, the shortage of affordable accommodation still means a long wait for applicants. In 2015/16, households had waited an average of 2.65 years for a 1 bedroom home, 3.9 years for a 3 bedroom home and over 5 years for a home of 4 bedrooms or more.

### ***Homelessness***

1.17. A further key issue is homelessness. The Council has statutory responsibilities to provide accommodation for homeless households. Frequently, this is temporary accommodation, often in accommodation owned by private landlords. As families on low or modest incomes find it increasingly difficult to accommodate themselves in the private rented sector as a result of rising rents, static wage rises, and falling levels of benefits. These economic pressures increasingly emerge as homelessness.

1.18. The use of temporary accommodation is therefore a sensitive “bellweather” of the pressure being felt in the local housing market by households on lower or modest incomes.

1.19. In Slough, the use of temporary accommodation is rising rapidly. At 31 March 2015, the Council had 156 households in temporary accommodation. A year later this had risen to 225. By September 2016 the total in temporary accommodation stood at over 300 households. At this rate of change, the position in Slough will soon be approaching that of a typical London Borough. Each year, the Department for Communities and Local Government publishes data on the level of homelessness acceptances in each local authority area, expressed as a proportion of the population. For 2015/16, the rate for Slough was 4.43 per 1,000 of the population, higher than the 3.04 for the London Borough of Hillingdon and only slightly behind the Hounslow figure of 5.52.

1.20. However, this expresses only a part of the current pressures on the Borough. Published statistics refer to the **placing authority**, not where they are placed. In reality, the pressure on the housing market in Slough is being made considerably worse by movement outwards from London and from other neighbouring authorities in Berkshire and Buckinghamshire. Most of this is however caused by the placement by London Boroughs and other authorities of homeless households in temporary accommodation *in* Slough. Some of the issues arising from this for the households concerned are discussed further under Theme 4: Homelessness and Housing Need.

1.21. Councils placing outside their area are required to notify the receiving authority of the placement. Over the last 3 years Slough has been notified of some 450 placements into the Borough by 28 different authorities. These include all the other Berkshire authorities, South Bucks and 11 different London Boroughs. It is believed that the true level of placements is far higher than this and that in reality not all placements are notified. It is believed this figure excludes some instances where other authorities have purchased properties in Slough, have used accommodation on nightly-rates or where they have discharged their homelessness duty into the private sector. Our officers believe that it is likely that the total number of placements into Slough over this period is at least a 1,000 households or around 335 per year.

### **Key Workers**

1.22. The Council is aware that there are some vital services, for example in education, which are being hampered in their recruitment of key staff because of the difficulty of securing suitable and affordable accommodation. It is often the case that while such staff may not be able to afford to buy a home or to pay market rents, they are also excluded from the usual routes into affordable housing and in particular social housing. There is a very limited stock of accommodation for this group of workers, who may be able to afford rents which are higher than social housing rents but who cannot afford accommodation in the market. The Council wants to try and address this through the work of this strategy. This could be via new models of provision, which are being considered by the new Subsidiary Housing Companies, or provided through a smaller proportion of new affordable homes specifically for this group.

### **Heathrow Expansion**

1.23. The Government has recently announced its intentions on the expansion of Heathrow. This is welcomed by the Council particularly for the benefits of new jobs and will become an increasingly significant factor pointing to an increased requirement for more new homes in the Borough.

1.24. The Council believes that these special and live pressures on the housing market in Slough will not fully have been taken into account in the SHMA and that they amplify the need for additional accommodation at the recommended level.

## **Affordable Housing**

1.25. Market housing in Slough, both to rent and to buy is becoming more expensive. There has been a 40% increase in average house prices over the last 3 years with a 20% increase in the last 12 months alone. As noted above, the ratios between prices and incomes are widening rapidly and it is becoming more difficult for households on even average incomes to find accommodation in the market. This position is unlikely to ease during the lifetime of this strategy.

1.26. Housing demand is set to increase further with the expansion of Heathrow, the regeneration of the Town Centre, the introduction of Crossrail offering reduced commuter journey times into central London and the promise of future fast rail links with Birmingham and the North with HS2. Substantial numbers of new homes are already planned as part of Slough's regeneration, but demand for new housing will also continue to increase due to the growth in employment opportunities and population in the borough. It is therefore important that other opportunities for housing development are identified and existing housing committed housing sites are encouraged to come forward for delivery, especially during the next five years.

1.27. While it will be important to achieve a balance in the new housing which is provided the Council sees it as a high priority to provide sufficient affordable housing to allow people to establish themselves and to stay in Slough even if they cannot afford market accommodation. The information earlier in the chapter points to the wide-ranging evidence that significantly more affordable housing is required. The Local Plan sets a target that 40% of all dwellings in all very large housing developments built in Slough should be "affordable" to help meet local housing need. The ability to deliver this through planning applications has been hampered by low development values and viability. The review of the local plan will need to reassess the viability of the local plan requirements as part of an examination of the deliverability and soundness of the plan.

1.28. Over the last few years the term "affordable" has been used in variety of different ways as illustrated below.

### ***The SHMA and Affordable Housing***

1.29. The SHMA itself includes a considerable amount of material on the need for additional affordable housing. It uses the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) definition that affordable housing is "social rented", "affordable rented" or "intermediate" housing provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. "Intermediate" housing is taken to include shared ownership and rented housing provided to households who can afford to pay between 80% of market rates and the full market rate. "Social rented" homes are provided by Local Authorities or Housing Associations at or below "Target" rents. "Affordable rented" housing provided by Housing Associations or local councils at rents between Target rents and a figure which is 80% of the market value. In other words, the SHMA discusses affordable housing as accommodation available to a wide range of income groups whose common factor is that they cannot afford to house themselves in the market.

1.30. The SHMA report also makes some general assessments on the annual household income required to purchase or rent in Slough without additional subsidy. For purchase in the lowest quartile of the market the figure is £50,000 (this assessment is before the sharp rises in house prices in the year to August 2016.) For rental the equivalent figures are; lower quartile private rent, £23,100; affordable rent, £18,500; lower quartile social rent, £15,000. Across the study area as a whole, one fifth of households had an income of below £20,000 per year and a further one third of between £20,000 and £40,000.

1.31. By making assumptions about what proportion of their income households could be expected to spend on their accommodation the SHMA is able to make a broad assessment of the scale of how many of the households requiring accommodation in Slough over the period to 2036 would need “affordable” housing to this definition. Looking at the likely demand and comparing this with the supply of existing affordable housing over that period the SHMA quotes a net requirement of 671 affordable homes per year. It emphasizes that this cannot be compared directly with the overall requirement of 927 units per year because it has been derived through a different method.

1.32. Equally the SHMA suggests that this cannot be directly applied as a target and that it needs to be balanced with a range of other issues, not least whether it is practicable and viable to provide affordable homes on this scale. Nevertheless, it is a useful marker for the fact that a significant proportion of households looking to build their lives in Slough will be unable to do so with out some intervention that brings their housing costs below market levels.

1.33. The SHMA also make some broad recommendations about the type of affordable housing to be provided. It suggests that approximately 20-25% of the need for affordable housing could be met by “intermediate” rent homes that are between 80% of market rent and full market rent. The remainder would be met by rented housing at 80% of market levels or below. It does not make recommendations about the appropriate split between “social rent” and “affordable rent” due to the complexity of the relationship between the two, the changing nature of the funding arrangements and the role of the availability of Housing Benefit to support rent payments by households on low incomes.

#### ***Starter Homes and Intermediate Housing***

1.34 In addition to revised funding arrangements for affordable housing in recent years the Government has introduced the concept of Starter Homes. The original proposal for the provision of 20% of new homes on each new development to be “starter homes” for sale has now been modified by government in their White Paper (February 2017) and a range of affordable and intermediate rent products such as rent to buy, traditional shared ownership, and discounted market renting (Build to Rent) schemes are being developed. These homes will count towards the affordable housing contribution on larger developments and the market discount will need to come from the same pot of developer contributions that is used for other affordable housing and infrastructure needed to address development.

1.35. These affordable housing products may in future be the route through which the assessment within the SHMA of the need for homes at between 80% and full market levels will be met. They may also become the primary route into home-ownership for households aspiring to own their own home for the first time. The Council will need to take account of the potential contribution of these Intermediate products as they develop.

#### ***The Council’s Approach***

1.36. The Council wishes to support the future growth and development of the town through the provision of a balance of new housing which allows residents to build their lives and stay in the town and which also provides opportunities to move on to a range of other accommodation as their careers and circumstances develop and change. This means planning for a range of high quality affordable housing as well meeting the needs of those who will look to the private market for their accommodation.

1.37. The Council is determined to maximise the provision of affordable housing. This will come from a mixture of Council land and initiatives combined with private developments via the planning system. Primarily, new affordable homes will be to rent, although the Council is now looking for a wider range of opportunities to facilitate low cost home-ownership and a range of affordable rent products to meet the aspirations of local residents to remain in the

Borough and have greater access to lower cost home-ownership and secure rented accommodation. This may be helped by the growing range of Intermediate housing products as outlined in the new White Paper. These include Build to Rent, Rent to Buy, Shared Ownership and Starter Homes.

1.38. In thinking about the cost of affordable rented homes there are a number of considerations;

- First, the viability of individual schemes in an era where there is no longer national subsidy available for affordable rented housing. Depending on the site, the provision of affordable housing will be easier in some places than in others. There will often be a trade-off to be made between the number of affordable units which can be achieved and the level of rents. Viability may also vary between parts of the Borough. Accommodation at lower rent levels may be more viable on greenfield sites than on Town Centre or complex brownfield sites. As stated, we expect green field sites to deliver a substantial amount of affordable housing and ;
- Second, many of the households seeking accommodation are on low incomes and cannot afford rents even at “affordable rent” levels without subsidy;
- Third, however, the SHMA has shown that amongst the households which would be looking to access affordable rented housing there is a wide spread of incomes, including families who could afford to pay rents up to 80% of market rates’ but who cannot afford to house themselves in the market. These households commonly do not have access to council or housing association accommodation through traditional routes and there is a very limited stock of accommodation in the Borough available to this group. In this sense they are caught between their inability to access the market and the limited likelihood of ever accessing social rented housing.

1.39. Balancing these factors together the Council will therefore promote affordable rented housing at a range of rents, from traditional social housing rents to rents that are within the reach of households on middle incomes. However, it would not normally wish to see new affordable rented housing provided at rents above the Local Housing Allowance levels which are accessible to people claiming Housing Benefit. This is currently around 60-70% of market levels for most sizes of property.

1.40. As part of the delivery of this Strategy the Council will develop a new policy on Affordable Housing. On rented homes, this will develop the ideas already promoted in London, Manchester and elsewhere to encompass a range of rents. This new policy will introduce a *Slough Living Rent* based on average local incomes. This will sit alongside a *Slough Affordable Rent*, akin to existing Target rents in social housing. We will also expand the Council’s existing affordable housing policies to encompass the developing models of Intermediate housing and apply them to the local situation in Slough.

## **Delivery of New Homes**

### ***Performance in Recent Years***

1.41. The task in delivering new homes on the scale envisaged by the SHMA is challenging. However, performance in recent years demonstrates that this may be achievable. In 2015/16, across all housing tenures, 789 new homes were completed, well in excess of the Local Plan target of 550. This followed a total of 507 in 2014/15. The great majority of delivery in these years was on large sites.

### ***Projected Future Delivery***

1.42. The Slough Housing Trajectory estimates the number of homes likely to be completed over the period to 2036. Over the next 5 years, to 2020/21, the availability of known large sites means that delivery is likely to average between 700 and 750 homes per year. In the 3

years beyond that the combination of known large sites and other "core options" shows the prospect of reaching the SHMA target of 927 homes per year, taking account of how long it may in reality take to build our strategic sites. In the years after that, i.e. from 2024/25 onwards, the scarcity of sites in Slough appears to make the prospect of meeting the SHMA target difficult or impossible within the boundaries of the Borough.

### ***Support for Private Sector Delivery***

1.43. The Council recognises that the majority of new homes provided in the Borough will be built by private sector developers. We will support the development process through the Planning service via the provision of timely guidance about the preferred mix and tenure of homes on individual developments. This will include the required contribution of affordable housing products from private sector developers as this is where we expect the majority of new affordable housing development to come from. Where appropriate, we will support private sector development through assistance via site assembly and asset management, especially where the Council has neighbouring or ancillary assets that can be used to facilitate development. This will particularly be the case where active asset management can achieve wider regeneration benefits for Slough over and above the provision of new homes. Where possible, the Council will look to use its Subsidiary Housing Companies (see below) to support and encourage private sector development of new homes.

### ***A Leading and Pro-Active Role for the Council***

1.44. The Council has already recognised that in order to achieve the delivery of the new homes required for the people of Slough now and in the future, it will itself need to act as the leading player and catalyst for development. It will not be sufficient to rely on the private sector to deliver the homes required. It is already aggressively promoting and achieving the delivery of new homes through a variety of mechanisms. It is a commitment of this Housing Strategy that the Council will directly facilitate the delivery of an average of 200 new homes per year during the life of this strategy and the Local Plan. This will be through a combination of direct delivery and provision by partners on behalf of the Council. These homes will be of a range of tenures but with the main emphasis on affordable housing.

### ***Development on Council-Owned Land - General Fund Sites***

1.45. The Council is already directly using surplus General Fund land for the provision of new homes;

- At Ledgers Road, Chalvey, the handover of 73 new homes began in the Autumn of 2016. 23 of these will be passed as social rented housing to the Council's Housing Revenue Account, while the remainder are for market sale to local people who currently live in the SL1,2, and 3 postcode areas and excluding buy to let landlords;
- A further scheme of 103 homes at Wexham Nurseries will provide 33 homes for the Council's affordable rented stock and 70 homes for sale also restricted to local people on the same basis to ensure that the Council's new housing supply is for local people in line with our 5 Year Plan.

### ***Council Land - Housing Revenue Account Sites***

1.46. The Council intends to maximize the development potential on its own land held within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) A new Business Plan for the HRA was agreed by the Council's Cabinet in October 2016 which outlines;

- A programme of 190 new council homes will be delivered in the years up to 2019/20 on existing identified sites, using a combination of retained Right to Buy receipts, S106 contributions and council funding;
- The Council is looking for further sites, such as under-used garages to allow for an increase in the scale of the programme;

- The Council is looking actively at the scope for wider estate renewal. This follows successful regeneration schemes at Common Road Langley and at Britwell. The overall aim would be to increase the amount and quality of residential accommodation, improve the overall quality of the environment and ensure there is an appropriate mix of house types and tenures.
- The next major scheme will be at the Tower and Ashbourne House tower blocks, which are already being decanted prior to demolition, a total of 120 flats. An appraisal of the site is currently being carried out to determine the best mix for the future development while maximising the number of replacement units.

1.47. The new HRA Business Plan also commits the Council to undertake a fundamental Option Appraisal of its housing stock, for completion by December 2017. This will help determine the future of existing homes and estates over the next 15 to 20 years and look at how overall quality can be improved while maximizing the overall potential of HRA land. It is estimated that over the 15 years from 2016 a net gain of approximately 1,000 housing units can be achieved on HRA land.

### ***Joint Venture Delivery; Slough Urban Renewal***

1.48. The Council is confident it can deliver its ambitious programme for the delivery of new homes. We have established Slough Urban Renewal (SUR), a joint venture with Morgan Sindall (MSIL) which has already proven successful in developing new homes for both sale and rent. The sites at Ledgers Road and Wexham are current examples. SUR is also delivering a range of community projects, including vitally-needed extensions to schools. The Council sees SUR as a key vehicle in enabling it to deliver new homes in the next few years, through a variety of means.

1.49. For example, it has been a long-term ambition of the Council to create a high-quality, mixed-use residential scheme at the end of the Slough Arm of the Grand Union Canal. To date, the redevelopment of this area has been stalled due to an inability to assemble land required to meet the Planning objective of delivering a comprehensive scheme. In October 2016 the Council's Cabinet agreed to grant an option to SUR to redevelop Slough Basin in partnership with Waterside Places, the joint venture entered into by the Canal and Rivers Trust. This will provide 240 new homes.

### ***Site Assembly and Pro-Active Asset Management***

1.50. Slough Basin is an example of where the Council has used its strategic role to promote the assembly of sites and actively used the leverage of its own assets to help deliver development and regeneration. The Council is working on this basis on other sites in the Borough and will continue to do so in order to deliver the development of the new homes required either directly, via SUR or by the private sector.

### ***Strategic Acquisition***

1.51. The Council has already developed the capacity for the strategic acquisition of sites. Given the land constraints already referenced in the Housing Trajectory it will actively look for opportunities for acquisition, either directly or via SUR, in order to assist in the delivery of sites identified in the local plan.. It will do so in particular to increase the delivery of affordable housing.

### ***One Public Estate***

1.52. Combined with our assertive asset management approach we have a shared ambition with our public sector partners to make efficient and productive use of our joint estates and to see land and property as an enabler for growth and service transformation. We will be pooling data on asset holdings and developing joint plans with our partners. One current example is at Upton Hospital, where there is the potential to release surplus land and

buildings which can be reused for housing and new enterprise, boosting local jobs, growth and house building in the longer term.

### ***Horizon Scanning for Large Sites***

1.53. We will co-ordinate the work of this Strategy with that on the emerging Local Plan to look to identify large sites which are suitable for the provision of significant numbers of homes in the medium and long term. One such example are the Akzo-Nobel (ICI) and National Grid (gas works) sites which potentially have the capacity for up to 1,400 new homes.

### ***Subsidiary Housing Companies***

1.54. The Council has established two wholly-owned Subsidiary Housing Companies – Herschel Homes and James Elliman Homes. Two companies were required in order to allow for intervention in different areas of the market.

The companies are in the business of acquiring existing or newly-built homes. They can contribute to the provision of homes in a number of ways;

- Providing a potential buyer for new developments, for example at sites such as Slough Basin or those to be developed by private developers;
- Bringing empty properties back into use;
- Using existing accommodation to provide more affordable housing;
- Providing specialist accommodation for particular groups, for example care leavers or key workers.

### ***Compulsory Purchase***

1.55. Elsewhere in this Strategy we set out the Council's determination to pro-actively intervene to improve standards in the private rented sector. This will include the use of compulsory purchase powers to increase the supply of homes by bringing long-term empty properties back into use. As an example, the Council's Cabinet in November 2016 approved a proposal to issue CPOs on 7 long-term void properties in the Borough and this action is already proving effective and has set the direction of travel for the delivery of this strategy.

### ***LAPP (Local Authority Partnership Purchase Scheme)***

1.56. The Council has introduced the LAPP scheme. This is a modern shared ownership scheme to help local people buy a home in the borough. It is aimed at buyers who can afford mortgage repayments, but who cannot afford to buy a property outright, or who may not have the large deposit often required. The scheme is available on properties for sale up to the value of £400,000 and within the Slough postcode area.

LAPP helps people to buy up to 70% share of a home by obtaining up to a 90% loan to value mortgage on their share. Slough Borough Council will buy the remaining 30%. The buyer will then pay rent to the council for this share of the property. It is hoped that the scheme can eventually be expanded to help 100 Slough households into home-ownership.

### ***Partnership with Housing Associations***

1.57. The Council recognises that Housing Associations already make an important contribution towards Housing in the Borough and in particular the provision of social housing. 7% of households in Slough rent their homes from Registered Providers (Housing Associations.) We also recognize that Associations have the potential and the capacity to deliver new homes that the Borough requires, including affordable housing, but that this potential is not currently being fully exploited. We therefore intend to re-invigorate the partnership arrangements with local Housing Associations both to encourage the development of new affordable homes and to involve them more fully in programmes to improve the quality of life in the borough.



### ***Provision for special needs groups***

1.58. The Council is committed to improving housing options for vulnerable groups ensuring availability within local communities particularly for young people including care leavers, older people and people with disabilities as required. The Council will be working with its various health and other partners to develop new and relevant accommodation options where there is an identified need. It is a specific commitment of this Housing Strategy to facilitate the provision of more extra care units alongside the development programme to maximise the delivery of new homes.

### **The Local Plan and Land Constraints**

1.59. This chapter has demonstrated that the Council has adopted a vigorous and interventionist approach in seeking the delivery of new homes to own and to rent. It accepts the high level of housing need and will actively seek to meet the new homes target set out in the SHMA. This is to ensure that existing and future residents of Slough have access to good quality homes appropriate to their needs. The Council will maximise the use of its own land and actively acquire sites, either directly or through other delivery vehicles, in order to increase the level and rate of completions. It will work positively through the planning process to encourage well designed developments that enhance the built environment. It will build partnerships with other agencies, including private developers, housing associations and other public sector bodies to assist delivery on other potential housing sites. It will use its strategic powers to assemble sites and build partnerships to allow development to be brought forward. Over the period of this Strategy there are sites and opportunities already identified which will deliver significant numbers of new homes.

1.60. In the medium and longer term, the pipeline of suitable housing sites may require further support to ensure that they come forward and in order to deliver the necessary housing. It is anticipated that the review of the Local Plan currently underway will seek to address this issue. Considerations include the question of whether it is feasible to meet all of the housing need up to 2036 within the borough boundaries or whether it will be necessary to pursue options for housing in other local authorities. The option for substantial housing to be located in South Buckinghamshire, possibly taking the form of a new “garden suburb” will require co-operation of the local authority and may also require considerable master planning input.

#### **Action Plan**

- Seek to enable the provision of 927 new units of housing per year for Slough in line with the SHMA.
- Require private developments to include affordable housing via the planning system
- The Council will directly deliver or facilitate a programme 200 units per year of new housing over the life of this Strategy and beyond, including affordable housing.
- Develop a new Affordable Housing policy, including the introduction of a Slough Living Rent.
- We will maximize the provision of affordable housing on Council-owned land through infill development and estate renewal, including the net gain of 1,000 units on HRA land over the period 2016 to 2031.
- Prioritise available funds and council assets to provide for the delivery of affordable housing schemes in partnership with SUR and Housing Associations.
- Work with private and public sector partners to acquire and assemble sites to

facilitate the delivery of new housing.

- Improve partnership arrangements with housing associations to facilitate the delivery of new affordable homes
- Extend our programme of Council mortgage lending through our existing LAPP scheme.
- Produce a plan to improve housing opportunities for key workers.
- Provide new homes for particular groups within the community where required, for example those needing extra care or care leavers.
- Use our Subsidiary Housing Companies to assist in providing homes for vulnerable groups within the community.
- Pro-actively use powers to increase the supply of homes by bringing long-term empty homes back into use.

## Theme 2 : Private Sector Housing

Ensuring that the private rented sector (PRS) provides sufficient good quality market housing through support to landlords and tenants and, where necessary, robust regulation and quality control.

### Evidence Base - Key Points

- The Council has commissioned the Building Research Establishment (BRE) to do a full survey of private sector housing in Slough. The private sector provides 80% of homes in Slough with 52% in owner occupation and 28% in the Private Rented Sector (PRS.)
- Most landlords provide a good service and standard of accommodation but a minority are rogue landlords who provide unsatisfactory and unhealthy accommodation.
- In Slough, overcrowding is a key issue for landlords to address as it is prevalent even in good quality private rented homes.
- Nationally, bad housing conditions are most commonly found in the private rented sector. One third do not meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard.
- The number of service requests from private rented housing, including complaints and requests for advice, rose from 683 in 2014/15 to 918 2015/16;
- It is estimated that there are around 1,849 Houses in Multiple Occupation in the Borough.
- 68 HMOs are currently licensed under Mandatory Licensing and a further 42 HMOs under the Chalvey Additional Licensing Scheme. Many more will come under the proposed new licensing scheme.
- 1,172 dwellings in the private rented sector currently have category 1 HHSRS hazards. This equates to 8% of properties which is lower than the national average. The total cost of mitigating category 1 hazards in Slough's private sector stock is estimated to be £11.3 million
- The average SAP rating for all private sector dwellings in Slough is 60, which is better than both England (57) and South East (58).
- 5% (2,156) of private sector dwellings and 3.8% (576) of private rented dwellings in Slough are estimated to have an EPC rating below band E.
- In the private sector stock as a whole there are an estimated 13,319 dwellings with un-insulated cavity walls and 7,452 dwellings with less than 100mm of loft insulation.
- The Council's Housing Regulation Team is currently working on 14 long-term empty properties.

### Objectives

2.1. The Council wants to ensure that Slough has good quality, affordable private sector housing which meets the needs of residents, improving health, well-being, and social mobility ensuring that Slough is a thriving place to live and work. To achieve this we have the following objectives;

- Improve the condition of private sector homes through assistance to residents and landlords and by robust regulation where necessary to ensure health and safety standards are met;
- Improve the standard of the management of private sector homes in the Borough and reduce overcrowding;
- Support residents to access affordable, well-managed private sector homes;

- Prevent homelessness and unnecessary evictions through timely and effective intervention with landlords;
- Develop new and stronger partnerships with a range of agencies including Adult Social Care, Public Health and the CCG to better support vulnerable and disabled home owners and tenants to live independently in safe, secure and warm homes;
- Increase the supply of private sector housing by bringing empty properties and abandoned commercial buildings back into residential use;
- Support residents to access affordable, well managed private rented homes through building effective partnerships with local landlords and increasing housing supply through our subsidiary housing companies.

## Background

2.2. The great majority of residents in Slough live in privately-owned homes, both owner-occupied and privately-rented. Private housing is therefore a critical resource for the Borough, its residents and its economy. To a large degree the private sector satisfies the requirements of many residents to own their own homes or to occupy accommodation which is suitable for them at particular times in their lives.

2.3. As in most other parts of the country the proportion of Slough households living in privately-rented homes has been increasing. The latest information suggests that over 28% of households now rent their home from a private landlord, much higher than the national figure of 17%. Most landlords provide good quality homes which are well-managed and cater for a wide range of income groups. The largest issue affecting private sector homes remains overcrowding due mainly to economic circumstances as many households are unable to afford a property of the right size, particularly larger families who need three bedrooms or more.

2.4. The Council itself has a range of partnership arrangements with private landlords, particularly where it is preventing families becoming homeless or placing residents in private rented accommodation as an alternative to expensive and unsuitable Bed & Breakfast hotels. Private sector homes are a vital resource when there is not enough permanent social housing available.

2.5. However, while most private sector homes provide a good standard of accommodation, there are also some severe problems;

- Nationally, conditions in the private rented sector are worse than in other housing tenures. A third do not meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard;
- Many tenants in Slough are living in overcrowded conditions;
- Research by Shelter nationally shows that over half of tenants had experienced at least one of the following problems over the previous 12 months; mould or damp; leaking roofs or windows; electrical hazards; pest infestations; a gas leak or inadequate heating. 10 % of tenants reported their health has been affected in the last year because their landlord has not dealt with repairs and poor conditions in their property and 9% of parents said their children's health has been affected;
- The Building Research Institute (BRE) has estimated that that poor housing is costing the NHS over £1.4 Billion per year nationally;
- Poor housing conditions, particularly associated with the private rented sector, have an adverse effect on public health and well-being and exacerbate health inequalities;
- The energy efficiency standard of a home and inadequate heating systems can lead to fuel poverty for low income households and further exacerbate the health effects of living in poor quality housing;

- For a number of elderly, disabled or vulnerable residents, particularly owner-occupiers, they now need support or adaptations to their homes to allow them to continue to live independently;
- In a small minority of cases, landlords are deliberately keeping their properties empty. Empty homes are a wasted resource and can be a major source of nuisance to local residents. The Council is proactively working on 14 sites and 7 of these are currently at an advanced stage towards a Compulsory Purchase Order.

### ***Dealing with Rogue Landlords***

2.6. The Council will target rogue landlords who exploit vulnerable people by renting out unsafe, illegal and overcrowded structures. We will use our stock modelling and other available intelligence to take robust action against rogue landlords who persistently break the law. We will develop a pro-active programme of inspections of properties rented by rogue landlords and estate agents and use all our statutory powers to ensure they comply with their legal duties. The Council has set up a multi-agency taskforce help tackle this issue and will not hesitate to use the full force of the law to eliminate rogue landlords from Slough.

### ***Landlord Registration Scheme***

2.7. Many Councils in London, the South East and other cities across the UK have concluded that one of the most effective ways to improve the private rented sector, protect tenants and reasonable landlords alike; would be mandatory registration of rented properties. This would promote 'letting properties' as a business and help the Council to have a programmed and methodical approach in regulating the worst condition properties and drive out the rogue and the criminal elements from the market. We will be investigating the feasibility of introducing borough wide registration of all rented properties. This would mean that for a relatively small fee the landlords register their properties with the Council. This would then give landlords access to expert advice and support by Council Officers as to how they should ensure they make best use of their investment.

### ***Regulation of HMOs***

2.8. The Council has statutory responsibilities to ensure there are good standards of accommodation in the private sector and regulatory and enforcement powers available to assist in achieving this objective. The use of these powers of regulation will be extended following the announcement in October 2016 that Government will expand the mandatory licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). As indicated, a further 215 HMOs will come under our proposed new licensing scheme.

### ***Dealing with Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)***

2.9. The Housing Regulation Team in partnership with Neighbourhood Enforcement Officers take a holistic approach in dealing with ASB. ASB is a tenure blind issue and affects the residents across the board. Investigations of ASB often expose a range of housing related issues including overcrowding, hoarding, unfit premises and unsafe/ illegal business activities such as dog breeding. We have included the reduction of ASB as part of a Housing Neighbourhood KPI. We will be recording and monitoring the impact of our approach in reducing ASB and associated criminal activities which will be reported to the Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Panel

### ***Improving Data on Private Rented Housing***

2.10. The Council has recently completed a full review of privately rented homes in the Borough using research carried out by the Building Research Establishment (BRE.) The main outcomes of the research achieved were;

- For the first time, a fully up to date picture of private rented homes in the Borough;

- To identify and highlight the extent of the main “Category 1” hazards found in homes in Slough. This is a hazard that presents a serious and immediate risk to a person’s health and safety;
- To identify where to target resources to achieve the greatest health outcomes, for example by relieving excessively cold homes, fuel poverty, dampness and overcrowding.
- To collate sufficient data to identify a range of factors related to private sector housing at ward level.

### ***Energy Efficiency***

2.11. The private rented sector has the highest proportion of poorly-insulated, energy-inefficient buildings. The Energy Act 2011 contains powers such that from 2018 landlords should ensure their properties meet a minimum Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of E or that they have installed the maximum package under the Green Deal.

2.12. The Council will use the evidence from its BRE stock modelling to build a business case for bringing external investment to improve energy efficiency into all of the housing stock in the Borough, particularly the older private sector stock in the owner-occupied and private rented sectors.

### ***Using the RMI***

2.13. The start of the Council’s new Repairs, Maintenance and Investment (RMI) contract in December 2017 provides an opportunity for the Council to provide a package of support to private landlords and help them to provide a better standard of accommodation.

2.14. This will also make it more attractive for the landlords concerned to offer their properties to the Council rather than to London Boroughs as has happened on a large scale over the last few years. In conjunction with our ambition to bring in external funding for energy efficiency, the RMI can also help to tackle fuel poverty amongst older or vulnerable residents. As a delivery vehicle, this contract would help complete the package from funding perspective alongside our Home Improvement Agency which provides much needed aids and adaptations to help our vulnerable and disabled residents maintain their independence and stay in their own homes.

### ***Prevention of Homelessness***

2.15. The Housing Regulation Team plays a key role in stemming the flow of people presenting as homeless due to conditions in their rented accommodation. The Council has a statutory duty to investigate and remove Category 1 Hazards from privately rented accommodation. This together with ensuring that any private rented accommodation is suitable and not overcrowded assists the Council’s Homelessness prevention activities. Through this strategy we aim to strengthen our effort in Homelessness prevention and increase the supply of good quality affordable housing in the private rented sector and through our subsidiary housing company James Elliman Homes – See Theme 4; Homelessness and Housing Need

### ***Primary Authority***

2.16. The purpose of the Primary Authority (PA) scheme is to allow businesses to obtain from their partner Local Authority consistent, reliable and robust advice concerning regulatory compliance. The PA scheme allows Local Authorities to recover from the PA partner all costs incurred in providing advice. The scheme is well established nationwide in the areas of Licensing, Trading Standards, Food Safety and Health and Safety but there appears to be far fewer PA relationships covering the area of Housing. Slough Borough Council’s Housing Regulation Team has just formed its first PA partnership with Superdrug

and it is hoped that the team can take advantage of the current 'gap in the market' by actively seeking out opportunities to form new relevant PA authority partnerships.'

### ***Tackling Long Term Empty Properties***

2.17. The Council has adopted a zero tolerance approach to empty residential properties that are left empty and abandoned in a derelict state. The impact of such properties is well documented as well as being a waste of valuable housing resources. The Council is currently dealing with 14 sites, seven of which are at an advanced stage of a Compulsory Purchase Order. This demonstrates that the Council is determined to use all available powers to improve housing supply in Slough across all tenures and will continue to do so throughout the life of this strategy.

#### **Action Plan**

- Build a well-resourced Private Sector Housing Service to support good landlords and carry out the Council's statutory responsibilities towards tenants and landlords.
- Undertake rigorous enforcement and prosecution against rogue landlords who have a history of breaking the law.
- Undertake a feasibility study for introducing a borough-wide Landlord Registration Scheme to protect good landlords and drive out rogue or criminal landlords.
- Implement the expansion of mandatory HMO licensing.
- Support responsible landlords and work with them to become professional and grow their business.
- Ensure our subsidiary Housing Companies act as exemplar private landlords in the Borough.
- Use the new RMI contract to provide support and repair services to private landlords.
- Use all available powers to bring empty properties back into residential use.
- Work with all partner agencies to tackle the problem of illegally-occupied outbuildings through a range of approaches.
- Work with utility companies and all relevant agencies to reduce fuel poverty, insulate homes, help with the cost of healthy living and improve the energy ratings of older private sector buildings.

## Theme 3; Council Homes

Ensuring council homes *are managed and maintained to a high standard and the Council builds new homes for Slough residents.*

### Evidence Base - Key Points

- The Council owns 7, 400 tenanted and leasehold homes, managed through the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).
- Over the next 7 years there will be £100m investment programme in existing homes and £40m invested in building new council homes.
- The award of a new repairs and investment contract to start in 2017 will provide a focus for improved services to tenants.
- However, there are threats to the viability of the HRA, mainly brought about by Government policy. These are the mandatory reduction in rents for 4 years from 2016/17; and a potential requirement to make a payment to the Government following the sale of “higher value” council homes when they become void.
- The Council is undertaking an Options Appraisal to look at the long-term future of council homes.

### Objectives

3.1. The Council has a number of important objectives in planning the future of Council homes in the Borough;

To place tenants and leaseholders at the centre of the development of services and planning for the future of council homes;

To keep homes in good repair and to maximise the potential of council homes for the long-term benefit of the people of Slough;

To take opportunities to provide additional affordable homes on council-owned land;

To develop and provide high quality and responsive services for tenants and leaseholders.

### Background

#### ***The Significance of Council Housing***

3.2. Slough Borough Council owns and manages 7,400 rented and leasehold properties across the borough. This is the Council’s most valuable physical asset. These homes are financed through a special account – the Housing Revenue Account (HRA.)

3.3. A wide and diverse range of residents are accommodated in council homes across a range of income groups. However, council homes are a particularly important resource for households on low or modest incomes who cannot afford to house themselves in homes available on the private market. Its significance is increasing as house prices and private sector rents escalate. Demand for council homes is high and far outstrips supply. This explains the length of the Housing Register and the growing need to use temporary accommodation for homeless households.

3.4. The Council’s housing stock is a particularly vital resource for people who are vulnerable or disabled or elderly, who will not be able to find a home elsewhere. In an environment where market housing is increasingly unaffordable for many residents, council



housing is also vital for the economic future of the town in that it provides affordable accommodation for people who work in the borough.

3.5. For all of these reasons the Council wants to retain and enhance its homes for the long-term benefit of Slough. At the same time, as this Strategy is being written, council housing in Slough, as elsewhere, is subject to fundamental external change and pressure. This means taking a long-term look at the future of this critical asset and maximising its contribution to the future of the town.

#### ***Residents at the Centre of Services***

3.6. The Council wants to place residents – tenants and leaseholders – at the centre of its strategy for council homes. This means improving the responsiveness of the services provided and broadening the ways in which residents can become involved in monitoring and developing services. Central to this will be the use of digital technology to improve the delivery, quality, timeliness and value of services.

3.7. The centrepiece of the Council's drive to improve services to residents will be a new Repairs, Maintenance and Investment contract which will begin in December 2017. This will cover both day to day repairs and planned maintenance and improvements and will allow for a long-term and more planned approach to maintaining and enhancing these important physical assets. A particular priority will be to shift the balance of works to property so that 70% is planned, cyclical maintenance and investment and only 30% is reactive routine repairs. The Council will also take the opportunity of this new contract to build local. In-house capacity to carry out maintenance work on public and private assets.

#### ***Responding to Change***

3.8. At the time of writing this Strategy the Government is introducing a number of changes through the Housing and Planning Act and other legislation which will have a major impact on the future of council homes in the Borough. Chief amongst these are;

The Government has taken control of council rents and these will fall by 1% in each of the 4 years from 2016/17. While this benefits existing tenants it will have a major impact on the HRA, including money available for investment;

After April 2018 the Council will be forced to sell some its higher - value homes as they become empty and pass some of the proceeds to the Government;

The Government is changing the rules on new council tenancies and the granting of fixed-term as opposed to lifetime tenancies. This will not affect the position of existing tenancies.

3.9. These changes are being introduced at the same time as further measures to reform the benefit system, particularly the reduction in the Overall Benefit Cap and the further rollout of Universal Credit, both of which could significantly affect the finances of individual tenants and the HRA itself.

3.10. The combination of these measures means that the Council will need to look fundamentally again at access into council homes and how to ensure that homes are used to their greatest benefit. This will include a review of the existing Tenancy Strategy, the Scheme of Allocation and at the effectiveness of existing policies to encourage under-occupying households to move into smaller accommodation.

#### ***HRA Business Plan***

3.11. In 2012, the Government of the day reached an agreement with Local Authorities which still owned their housing stock, aimed at providing long-term stability for the HRA. This "Self-Financing" regime included a settlement on outstanding debt and the transfer of risk to

the Council. In return, the Council would be free to plan its housing finances for the long term.

3.12. The changes outlined above effectively set that agreement aside. A new 30 year Business Plan has been prepared and this will be subject to a further major review in 2018 when more will be known about the Government's intentions on rents and high value voids. The latest version of the Business Plan has incorporated headline data from a comprehensive Stock Condition Survey and the Council now has high quality and up-to-date information about the condition of its homes.

### ***Options Appraisal***

3.13. Major changes are already in train. For example;

- The regeneration of Britwell has included the provision of around 300 new homes;
- The current development programme will provide a further 190 affordable Council homes over the next 3-4 years;
- The council has decided to redevelop the tower blocks at Tower House and Ashbourne House.

3.14. However, alongside residents, the Council has decided to take a fresh and long-term look at the future of the assets which are its council housing; the resources which will be available for keeping good-quality existing homes in good repair; and the need and scope for replacing homes which are outdated and worn-out with more and better homes which maximise the potential benefit for the residents of Slough.

3.15. This Options Appraisal began in November 2016 and will report in December 2017. An interim report to the Council's Cabinet in March 2017 reported that "doing nothing" was not an option if the Council wished to maintain the number of council homes in the face of continued Right to Buy sales. Equally, transferring the housing stock to another landlord – a Registered Provider - was not financially viable. The Options Appraisal will now look at the range of means available for sustaining existing homes and maximising the provision of new affordable housing.

### **Action Plan**

- Publish a baseline 30 year Business Plan for the Housing Revenue Account in the Autumn of 2016.
- Undertake a comprehensive survey of the condition of the Council's housing stock, for completion by January 2017.
- In the light of the results of the condition survey and the implementation of the provisions of the Housing and Planning Act, produce an updated HRA Business Plan in March 2017.
- In partnership with residents, undertake a formal asset management review and option appraisal of the Council's housing stock for completion by December 2017.
- Complete the existing programme of 190 new homes on Housing-owned land and seek to continue the programme beyond 2020.
- Adopt the following priorities for improving the services to residents;
  - Awarding a new Repairs, Maintenance and Investment contract for council homes to improve the quality and responsiveness of repair for residents and to act as a catalyst for the development of local and in-house capacity to provide maintenance services
  - Engaging and enabling residents so as to create a culture of accountability and responsibility and to broaden opportunities for tenants and leaseholders to be involved in the development and monitoring of services ;
  - Increasing resident satisfaction through greater responsiveness to customers and in particular through the greater use of digital technology.

- Develop a new Tenancy Strategy for council tenancies in the light of the Housing and Planning Act.
- Undertake a formal review of the scheme for the Allocation of social housing in Slough.
- Develop proposals for the more effective use of council homes by increasing the number of tenants choosing to downsize when their family circumstances change.

## Theme 4: Homelessness and Housing Need

*Reducing homelessness and rough sleeping (living on the streets) through effective prevention work.*

### Evidence Base – Key points

- 2500 applicants on the Housing Register (people needing accommodation)
- The Council had a total of 2,373 homelessness approaches in 2015/16; of these 963 needed housing advice and 1,410 were on an emergency basis;
- The number of households accepted as homeless in Slough increased from 74 in 2013/14 to 241 in 2015/16, an increase of 225%.
- The number of homeless households in temporary accommodation increased from 156 at 31 March 2015 to 225 a year later. By September 2016 the total had exceeded 300 including some households in bed and breakfast accommodation.
- The market in Slough is experiencing increasing pressure from other Authorities, particularly London Boroughs, who are placing homeless households in Slough.
- The effect of Welfare Reform is to create more homelessness through the impact of the affordability of private sector accommodation.
- Rough sleeping (living on the streets) is an issue that may be increasing and requires a better joined-up approach.

### Objectives

4.1. The Council has a number of important objectives in addressing Homelessness in the Borough;

- To prevent homelessness and minimize the need to place households in temporary accommodation;
- To ensure there is a good advice and support network in Slough for both statutory and non-statutory households, including single homeless people;
- To ensure there is a supply of affordable alternative accommodation available to assist in preventing homelessness;
- Where it is necessary to use temporary accommodation, to ensure that it is suitable and of a decent standard;
- To minimize the cost to the council tax payer of the use of temporary accommodation;
- To address the issue and needs of rough sleepers (living on the streets) as part of a wider health prevention strategy.

4.2. This chapter summarises the current position on homelessness in Slough. It sets out the causes of the pressure in the market and commits the Council to building a new Homelessness Prevention Strategy to tackle homelessness and better meet the needs of our homeless population through wider partnership working.

### Background

#### *Pressure from the Market and from Benefit Changes*

4.3. In Slough, those households on low or modest incomes who cannot access home ownership or social housing are accommodated in the private rented sector. Households in this position have been under increasing pressure in the last few years.

4.4. This is due to partly to the effect of the growth of population as described in the previous themes. However, it is also more directly due to rapidly increasing rents and restrictions in the availability of benefits.

4.5. Following the introduction of the Local Housing Allowance (LHA), which capped the level of Housing Benefit available, the “affordability gap” between the LHA and market rents has grown. The table below illustrates the current gap faced by the majority of households on benefits seeking private rented accommodation in Slough.

<u>Property Type</u>	<u>Monthly LHA rate</u>	<u>Median rents</u>	<u>Gap</u>
<u>One Bedroom</u>	<u>£656.50</u>	<u>£950</u>	<u>£293.50</u>
<u>Two Bedrooms</u>	<u>£840.32</u>	<u>£1275</u>	<u>£434.68</u>
<u>Three Bedrooms</u>	<u>£1061.19</u>	<u>£1525</u>	<u>£463.81</u>
<u>Four Bedrooms</u>	<u>£1449.19</u>	<u>£1650</u>	<u>£200.81</u>

Note; LHA maximum rates (April 2016 to April 2017)

4.6. The Table demonstrates the “affordability gap” for those on benefits is large and increasing as the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate has been fixed for the next three years. We expect the gap to widen during the life of this strategy. The property types in highest demand, namely 2 bedroom and 3 bedroom properties have the largest current “affordability and this continues to widen.

4.7. Other national factors in regard to welfare reform are beginning to impact on Slough :

- The reduction in the Overall Benefit Cap which started in late 2016;
- The further roll-out of Universal Credit to families and vulnerable groups and the associated risks of failure to claim, non-payment, rent arrears and debt.

4.8. The Overall Benefit Cap, which restricts the total amount of benefit which can be received and therefore the financial help available to pay rent. The Council is already seeing the impacts of this policy in homeless presentations as it makes it more difficult for family households to sustain private rented tenancies.

4.9. One symptom of these restrictions is a further increase in overcrowding. Slough already has the eleventh highest incidence of overcrowding of all local authorities in England. Many residents are renewing and recycling their private sector tenancies on short term six month agreements. As a result, many are becoming increasingly vulnerable to homelessness as private renting is the least secure form of accommodation.

#### ***The Increase in Homelessness and its Impact***

4.10. The combined effect of these factors has inevitably been a large increase in homelessness. Some of this hidden - for example the large number of residents who are withstanding very overcrowded conditions in the private rented sector. At the same time, these combined pressures have also manifested as stark upturns in applications and pressures on the local authority;

- In 2015/16 there were a total of 2,373 approaches to the Housing Service, of which 1,410 were on an emergency basis;
- The number of homeless households accepted as homeless in Slough increased from 74 in 2013/14 to 241 in 2015/6, an increase of 225%;
- As a consequence, the number of households placed in temporary accommodation also increased rapidly from 156 on 31 March 2015 to 225 a year later. The numbers continued to rise in 2016 and had topped 300 by September 2016.

4.11. Previously, some of these households had to be accommodated in Bed & Breakfast (B&B) hotels, a problem also facing most neighbouring councils, and particularly those in London. This Council has however, begun to “buck the trend” by succeeding in reducing the number of households in B&B, from 46 in September 2015 to 21 a year later. We had eliminated the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation for families by January 2017 and have stabilized the numbers in temporary accommodation at 316 as at March 2017.

4.12. Many of these pressures are also being experienced by neighbouring areas, though the increase in Slough has been higher than the norm. However, one additional factor specific to Slough has exacerbated these pressures. That is the increasing tendency for households to move outwards from London into Slough and in many cases for homeless households to be placed in Slough by other councils. In the last 3 years, a total of 450 notifications have been made to the Council by authorities of households they have moved into the Borough. These have been made by 28 different councils, including 11 London Boroughs. It is held by officers that this is a considerable underestimate and that the total number of placements is likely to be over 1000 new households placed in the last three years.

4.13. There is one more factor which serves to increase the difficulty for local households in the market. Competition from London Boroughs both makes it more difficult for Slough households to find accommodation in the market and more difficult for the Council to find housing for its homeless families.

4.14. The movement of households from London, many of them placed by London Boroughs, has also brought particular difficulties for local health, care and education services. Many of the households being placed in Slough are not being provided with sufficient support to allow them to settle properly to access local services, such as GPs, dentists or schools. The fact that in many cases the Council and other local agencies are not notified of the placement makes matters worse.

4.15. The links between having a good, secure home and the overall quality of life are well-established. Equally, the relationship between homelessness and other forms of disadvantage are well known. Homeless people are more likely to have health problems, relating to both physical and mental health. Children within homeless families risk having their educational prospects severely damaged. Employment prospects are affected by not having a permanent place to stay. These risks are amplified when families are forced to spend some time in unsuitable forms of temporary accommodation and overcrowded conditions in the private rented sector. These linkages are highlighted in Slough’s Wellbeing Strategy.

4.16. Whilst the Council's primary concern is improving the position for homeless families in the Borough to improve the life chances of the families concerned, there is also a pressing financial reason to do so. Temporary accommodation, particularly Bed & Breakfast accommodation is expensive for the council tax payer as well as largely unsuitable for the families concerned. It is therefore vital to protect the financial resources available for other critical services, such as Adult Social Care and Slough Children’s Service’s Trust, through minimising homelessness and the use of temporary accommodation.

### ***Homelessness Pressure likely to Grow***

4.17. There are a number of reasons to believe that homelessness will continue to grow. The threat for Slough is that the high levels of homelessness and usage of temporary accommodation seen in neighbouring London Boroughs will spread outwards to this Borough.

4.18. The concern is that a number of factors will combine to increase the levels of homelessness;

- Continued population growth leading to overcrowding and further increases in house prices and rents;
- The 4 years freeze in welfare benefits, including Local Housing Allowance, announced by the Chancellor in the Budget for 2015 and the implementation of the Benefit Cap and roll out of Universal Credit;
- Continued placement into Slough by London and surrounding Boroughs;
- It is becoming ever more difficult for households on benefits, or low or modest incomes to find and sustain tenancies in Slough's private rented sector.

### ***New Preventing Homelessness Legislation***

4.19. New legislation in the form of the Homeless Reduction Bill 2016/17 is set to place new duties on all local authorities to prevent homelessness at much earlier stages, with a focus on homeless advice and early intervention to prevent evictions.

4.20. This legislation will place an additional burden on already stretched homelessness services. The ethos of the legislation is to widen the responsibility for preventing homelessness beyond simply Housing services and this will mean delivering a better, joined-up holistic approach with homeless reduction being a shared priority across the Health, Housing and Wellbeing sectors. This includes addressing the needs of vulnerable homeless households in partnership with Adult Social Care and Slough Children's Service's Trust whilst intervening in the private rented sector to prevent evictions.

### ***Our Local Response to Homelessness***

4.21. Our intention to reduce homelessness, eliminate the use of unsuitable forms of temporary accommodation starting with B&B's and tackle living on the streets (rough sleeping). We also believe the most effective way to deal with homelessness is to stop it happening in the first place. Our focus and "acid test" will be on preventing homelessness for local households now and in the future. Through early intervention and prevention and proactive creative solutions we expect to manage and reduce the levels of homelessness and rough sleeping in Slough from our existing levels and therefore reduce the financial, social and economic costs of homelessness over the next five years for the residents of Slough.

### ***New Homelessness Prevention Strategy***

4.22. The Council has committed to developing a new Homelessness Prevention Strategy which will be delivered by September 2017. We have therefore invited our partner agencies in the statutory and voluntary sectors to join us in developing and delivering this and to change and improve the way we collectively work together to prevent homelessness.

4.23. We will fully involve our partners at the Slough Homelessness Forum and the strategy will be scoped to address the following key priorities:

- Deliver effective early intervention and prevention with a focus on education, employment, health and wellbeing;
- Prevent homelessness through delivery of rapid and effective assessment;
- Use only the most appropriate temporary accommodation to prevent further social and economic deterioration;
- Manage demand by ensuring that we address over - expectation and make the best use of our social housing stock;
- Increase access to and the supply of affordable accommodation to prevent homelessness;
- Prevent homelessness by supporting single homeless people and reduce rough sleeping by 50%.

#### ***Working with Private Landlords***

4.24. We understand that the private rented sector in Slough will continue to be the main housing option for many residents, but that it is very often problems arising with private sector tenancies which are the immediate trigger for homelessness. We therefore intend to develop a new strategic and positive working relationship with private sector landlords to improve affordability and prevent homelessness approaches to the council. We believe our current number of homeless approaches can be stabilised if we can successfully work with private landlords to meet the local needs of residents. We aim to allocate our resources to preventative approaches rather than providing unwanted Bed & Breakfast or Temporary Accommodation for homeless households. We have eliminated the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation for families with children and aim to restrict B&B to emergency use only going forward.

#### ***Subsidiary Housing Company***

4.25. In addition to developing a fresh partnership with private landlords, we intend to intervene directly in the market to provide a greater supply of affordable accommodation for homeless families or as a preventative alternative to homelessness. Our Subsidiary Housing Company James Elliman Homes will acquire existing housing for use for households threatened with homelessness. The new company will act as an exemplar private landlord and help promote good standards in the private rented sector. Alongside the new Subsidiary Company, the Council will put in place improved management arrangements to bring together landlords and tenants to make the most effective use of the accommodation available. We hope to increase the quality and choice of accommodation available to homeless and potentially homeless households through both the delivery of new housing supply detailed in this strategy alongside other specific market interventions that will be detailed in our new strategy.

#### ***Support for Households in Temporary Accommodation***

4.26. We also understand the need for additional support for some of the homeless individuals and families who approach us and those who are temporarily housed or placed in Bed & Breakfast accommodation. A key need is to enable households to develop the relevant skills for independent living or to take advantage of work opportunities to be able to sustain their tenancies longer term. At a management level we are looking to increase debt/money management advice and at closer working and mediation with landlords to prevent evictions.

#### ***Placements in Slough by other Local Authorities***

4.27. We have also recognised the vulnerability of households placed in Slough by other authorities and the urgent need to address their access to local services. We will work with our local partners, particularly in the Health sector to better co-ordinate



the sharing of information about these individual and families and to insist upon better data sharing and cooperation by the "exporting" authorities.

### ***Review of Allocations Policy***

4.28. Although many homeless households will continue to be accommodated in the private sector, it is a key aim of this Strategy to increase the supply of permanent affordable housing. We intend to undertake a review of the Housing Allocation Policy, which governs which categories of household are allocated social housing. Amongst other matters this review will look at the priority which should be given to homeless households.

### ***Single Homelessness and Rough Sleeping***

4.29. Slough is fortunate in having an existing network of voluntary agencies and support and advice services offering services to single homeless people and rough sleepers. In some cases their clients include those who do not come within the statutory obligations of the local authority to accommodate homeless people. Often, however, joint working between the voluntary sector and the Council can bring the support which allows vulnerable client to access services.

4.30. Whilst data is traditionally difficult to compile for rough sleeps, the general view of our voluntary sector is that Rough Sleeping (living on the streets) in Slough is on the rise. Estimates vary between 30 and 60 people, with a significant proportion being of Polish origin. The current official Rough Sleepers count for Slough is 25 and is undertaken every year on a Berkshire wide basis. This is the highest it has been over a number of years, but in the main these totals has remained relatively static. We also know the scale of rough sleeping is greater than that captured and are aware of 39 individuals in total who sleep rough from time to time. The statistics vary because as for other homeless households most people squat, 'sofa surf', stay with family and friends or anywhere else they can find temporary shelter for as long as possible.

4.31. The voluntary and statutory agencies working in this field already meet regularly at the Slough Homelessness Forum. A number of specific initiatives are coordinated through is group, including a Winter Nightshelter and the London and Slough Soup Run.

4.32. In developing the new Homeless Prevention Strategy, we will be carrying out a sector wide review to consider how we can help better coordinate services for Rough Sleepers and achieve longer term solutions including jointly commissioning new services for the most vulnerable single homeless people. We are also carrying out an early review of arrangements for rough sleepers during periods of cold weather.

4.33. The Council is also working in wider partnerships and has recently commissioned work through Homeless Link to deliver the Making Every Adult Matter" (MEAM) approach across our strengthening homeless prevention partnerships. This offers an exciting opportunity for information sharing and development of joint solutions between Health, Adult Social Care, Slough Children's Services Trust and Housing to work in new strategic partnerships to support new service delivery models.

### **Action Plan**

- Develop and adopt a Preventing Homelessness strategy in collaboration with clients, landlords, the voluntary sector and other partner agencies.
- Develop new partnerships with private and third sector landlords to maximise

opportunities for tenancies for homeless families and individuals.

- James Elliman Homes will acquire homes to alleviate the pressures on temporary accommodation and Bed & Breakfast provision.
- Ensure the use of Bed & Breakfast for families with children is eliminated going forward.
- Review the Council's Allocation Scheme to re-evaluate the priority which homeless people receive under the scheme.
- Work with the Health sector and other agencies to monitor and address the health and care needs of vulnerable homeless people placed in Slough by other Local Authorities and require those authorities to review their placement and notification policies.
- Undertake an early review of arrangements for rough sleepers during periods of cold weather and find longer term solutions.
- Roll out the MEAM approach and develop new partnerships that makes homelessness everyone's business in Slough.

## Theme 5 ; Special Housing Needs and Vulnerable Groups

Ensuring that specialist accommodation is available for vulnerable people and those with special housing needs, for example, older people, people with disabilities and young people including care leavers.

### Evidence Base - Key Points

- The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) estimates that that the number of people over the age of 65 in Slough will increase by 40% in the next 10 years. The SHMA estimates that between 2013 and 2036 the number of people aged over 85 will increase by 120%.
- The JSNA also estimates that in 2012, 9,322 residents between the ages of 16 and 65 had a physical disability.
- The SHMA reports that the number of people with long-term health problems or a disability will increase by over 50% by 2036.
- The SHMA projects that between 2013 and 2036 there is a net additional requirement of 957 units of older persons accommodation, (including specialist housing), or 42 per annum, predominantly market housing.
- This strategy is strongly linked to the joint Corporate Parenting Strategy of the Council and Slough Children's Services Trust (The Trust).
- As at February 2017, there were 179 care leavers receiving a service from Slough and 55% live within the borough. The Council and the Trust aim to rapidly increase opportunities for our care leavers to live in Slough if they wish to and it is safe for them to do so.
- The key recommendations of the Children's Trust action plan are to review the range and quality of accommodation for looked after children and care leavers, including staying put arrangements.

### Objectives

5.1. Our objectives in relation to people with special housing needs and vulnerabilities are to ensure that;

- People with long term conditions are supported by suitable housing which is safe, warm and resource efficient allowing access to appropriate prevention services including adaptations to stay well and maintain their independence;
- People with mental health, learning or physical vulnerabilities, whether in childhood, adulthood, or in older age have choice of access to suitable or specialist accommodation, maintain their independence and report a better quality of life;
- Young people and children leaving care have available to them a range of accommodation which is suitable to their needs;
- The best use is made of existing housing resources, for example the existing stock of social housing.

### Background

5.2. The Borough is fortunate in having two up to date assessments of requirements in this area – the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and the SHMA. The JSNA estimates that that the number of people over the age of 65 in Slough will increase by 40% in the next 10 years. The SHMA estimates that between 2013 and 2036 the number of people aged over 85 will increase by 120%.

5.3. We understand that older people are disproportionately likely to own their homes outright or to live in social housing. There are also significant degrees of under-occupancy – that is, people occupying homes where they have at least 2 more rooms than they would normally require. Again, the SHMA suggests this is disproportionately the case for people owning their homes outright or living in social housing (the numbers of such households are 2,533 and 336 respectively.)

5.4. On disability, the JSNA estimates that in 2012, 9,322 residents between the ages of 16 and 65 had a physical disability. Looking forward, the SHMA projects that the number of people with long-term health problems or a disability will increase by over 50% by 2036. Again, people with a disability are more likely to be outright owners or to live in social housing. These projections are highly significant in designing homes and services in the future.

5.5. In estimating the need for additional specialist accommodation the SHMA concentrates on the needs of older people with dementia or mobility problems. The table below, drawn from the SHMA, compares the estimated need for older person's accommodation (including specialist housing), with the existing supply of sheltered and extra care housing. It concludes that an additional 987 units are required in the period up to 2036, or 42 per annum. Although 200 of these are in the affordable sector, the majority of the requirement is for market accommodation.

<b>Need for Units of Older Person's Accommodation 2013 – 2036 (SHMA, 2016)</b>			
	<b>Market</b>	<b>Affordable</b>	<b>Total</b>
Overall Need	817	725	1,542
Existing Supply	60	525	585
Net Need	757	200	957

5.6. This analysis points to a number of long-term strategic issues in relation to housing for older people;

- How to deliver additional accommodation at a scale to meet projected demand over the next 20 years. This strategy already recognises the need for additional extra care housing but overall requirements stretch considerably beyond this;
- The need to find market options, particularly for older owner-occupiers who would wish to move from their existing accommodation;
- How to address the scale of under-occupation, in both the under-occupied and social sectors. This could involve providing better alternative housing options for people to move to and assistance in doing so. Reducing under-occupation would also help to release valuable housing resources across the private and social sectors.

5.7. These questions sit alongside those already being addressed by Adult Social Care and Health services in seeking to allow older people to continue to live independently. This will be one of the major Housing issues for Slough over the next 20 years. It is therefore proposed that the agencies concerned come together to develop a long-term term strategy for older person's housing in the Borough. This would include looking at the suitability and future use of the Council's existing stock of sheltered accommodation through an options appraisal process.

5.8. The private sector, both for owner occupation and the private rented sector is the most important source of housing for all our residents including those who may need

more specialist accommodation now and in the future. This is unlikely to change and the private sector is set to increase proportionately given our current and projected housing market conditions. Hence our urgent need to not only ensure the private rented sector provides sufficient good quality housing, but to develop and increase the social housing and specialist housing options provided by the Council, its subsidiary companies, its regeneration partner (SUR) and our local housing associations where the private sector is unable to do so. This focus on better partnership working and new ways of working is necessary to achieve our objective of ensuring all our residents have access to quality homes by leveraging in the alternative investment opportunities as a driver for new specialist developments.

### ***The Need for Specialist Accommodation***

5.9. There are already a range of accommodation and housing options for people who require specialist accommodation or who are vulnerable. This includes sheltered accommodation and a range of supported housing. However the available evidence suggests that more will be required over the life of this Strategy and beyond. This is closely linked to increasing life expectancy and the projections that there will be more older people in the future, living longer, but with increasing long term health conditions and levels of disability. This in turn means we will have to increasingly consider “age friendly” design and consider meeting “Lifetime Homes” standards on new all developments. In the longer term this will mean increasing the number of properties suitable for wheelchair users or other people with disabilities through adaptation in both the private and social housing sectors.

### ***Housing and Health***

5.10. Adequate and appropriate housing is widely acknowledged to be a crucial underpinning of health and wellbeing. In general, poor housing and home conditions can be associated with both physical and mental effects on residents’ health. It is associated with asthma, skin allergies and respiratory diseases and is linked to physical accidents and injuries. Poor housing can also lead to depression, isolation, anxiety or aggression. Noise related stress from poor sound insulation is associated with lack of sleep, mental stress and depression.

### ***Housing Conditions***

5.11. All of our partners agree that housing is a wider determinant of health. We have undertaken a Stock Modelling project (BRE) to identify private sector homes where the worst conditions are found and we will continue to use this data to focus resources on achieving the greatest health outcomes e.g. relieving excessively cold homes, fuel poverty, falls amongst the elderly, dampness, overcrowding etc. We will then quantify the estimated costs and benefits to Public Health of these housing interventions by way of a Health Impact Assessment. By targeting future resources to preventing poor health impacts greater savings in health care and adult social care costs can be accrued. This is also known as the Health Dividend.

### ***Joint Working between Housing, Public Health and Adult Social Care***

5.12. Through this Strategy we are committed to a closer alignment of services provided by Housing, Public Health and Adult Social Care, aimed at early intervention and promotion to improve the quality of life; promoting independence and choice; reducing health inequalities by focusing on groups most affected by poor housing; and integrating services where this is appropriate.

5.13. For example, the Public Health Outcomes Framework “Healthy Lives, healthy people: Improving outcomes and supporting transparency” (2013) sets out desired

outcomes for public health and how they will be measured. Many of the measures have links to housing, some of the more relevant being:

- Falls and injuries in over 65's
- Fuel Poverty
- Excess Winter Deaths

5.14. The provision of good quality housing also has a critical role to play in preventing hospital admissions for vulnerable groups in the first place, and in avoiding delays in hospital discharges as part of the wider health and social care economy. These are critical priorities for Slough that help deliver the new Five Year Plan; Outcome 2 "Our people will become healthier and will manage their own health, care and support needs". As a practical example, we are jointly reviewing the functions and effectiveness of our Home Improvement Agency with Adult Social Care. This service carries out adaptations to the homes of vulnerable residents in both the private and social housing sectors. The aim is develop the service as a joint vehicle to deliver the above objectives and to prevent the unnecessary use of residential care and faster hospital discharges for older and vulnerable residents. There are a number of examples of how to do this nationally and we will be seeking the right service balance for Slough in the context of delivering new preventative services.

5.15. In addition to the strategic requirement for the alignment of work between Housing, Health and Adult Social Care, there are a number of more specific initiatives to be pursued during the life of this Strategy;

- There are 2 Extra Care Schemes already in Slough for residents over the age of 55 who have some care and support needs. However, more provision is required and the Housing and Adult Social Care services are working together to develop up to 3 additional extra care schemes on a mixed tenure basis including flats for sale. Extra Care Schemes will help residents to continue to live in self-contained accommodation which allows them to maintain their independence, dignity and personal choice. We will also look at other options for providing accommodation with care;
- Exploring further options for supporting people to live in their own homes, if appropriate with equipment and adaptations, potentially with a revised plan for the use of Disabled Facilities Grant;
- Slough already has a considerable resource for people with a disability in its stock of social housing which has already been adapted or is capable of being adapted. However, the monitoring of adaptations which have been carried out and the matching of vacancies to the requirements of individual residents needs to be improved;
- Within the direct new build programme on council land, the Council has made provision for new units for people with learning difficulties;
- Promoting measures to prevent illness such as improving energy efficiency and installing aids and adaptations to reduce the likelihood of accidents in the home. This will be pursued alongside the greater use of digital technology to enhance the delivery of person-centred care in the home;
- Ensuring timely housing advice is provided to all people with long-term mental health issues on admission to hospital and working towards a consistent approach to the assessment of priority for re-housing;
- A review of Housing Related Support services in the borough, which provide a range of supported accommodation to groups such as young homeless people or those with mental health problems;

- As noted above the development of a long-term strategy for older person's housing in the Borough;
- Supporting the needs of family carers in order to support their role as carers.

***Joint Working with Children's Service and Slough Children's Services Trust – Care Leavers***

5.16. It is a major priority of this Housing Strategy to enable children leaving care to access a range of suitable accommodation. The Housing service will work closely with the Children's Trust and Adult Social Care to help deliver effective pathways to support vulnerable children to address both specific housing and care needs.

5.17. Joint protocols are already in place between the homeless team and the Children's Trust to ensure that Looked After Children (LACs) do not fall between gaps in services and care leavers receive an additional preference on the Housing Register. Most receive an offer of council or housing association accommodation as soon as they are legally able to sign a tenancy agreement at 18 years of age. However, we understand that taking on the full responsibilities of a secure tenancy may not be the best outcome for many care leavers and some may prefer shared accommodation with a degree of on-going support. The lack of this type of accommodation and other housing options has been raised by young people in Ofsted's Report (2016).

5.18. The Council has therefore committed to developing this housing option through James Elliman Homes by the end of 2017. Initially this will be on a small scale through acquiring one or two shared three bedroomed properties in an agreed suitable location. We intend to see how this works in practice before putting such arrangements in place for a larger number of care leavers who may need different housing solutions.

5.19. There are a number of issues to be taken forward in the joint work between the services;

- Working with the Trust and the young people themselves to understand in detail the range and types of accommodation that care leavers would prefer;
- Developing new models of accommodation and support, including shared accommodation, using the vehicle of the Council's new subsidiary housing company James Elliman Homes (see below);
- As part of the review of Housing Related Support services reviewing the current range of supported accommodation available to care leavers as outlined;
- Ensuring the existing protocols and pathway into social housing is working effectively.
- We have recently reviewed the scheme of allocation for this group and have concluded that no change is required for care leavers as an additional priority is already given and our Equality Impact Assessment has demonstrated that this group has not been disadvantaged by the scheme. The key is to ensure all care leavers who want social housing are assisted to make an application in good time before leaving care, if so, then the evidence is the majority of care leavers have been accommodated and avoided homelessness to date.

***Wider Review of the Scheme of Allocation***

5.20. The Council will be reviewing its Scheme of Allocation, which governs the flow of residents in social housing in the Borough and the priority to be given to different groups. This review will include in particular the priority afforded to vulnerable people

including those with a disability or mental illness who are likely to be unable to work in the long term. For example, there is growing evidence that if a significant number of people with learning disabilities had greater access to social housing they could be better supported by Adult Social Care in their local community.

### ***Subsidiary Housing Company***

5.22. The Council has set up 2 wholly-owned subsidiary housing companies to acquire existing or newly-built properties. One of these companies James Elliman Homes will target its activity at securing accommodation for specific groups within the community, primarily households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. The intention is also to use this vehicle to look to secure various accommodation tailored to the needs of particular groups and which may not be available through existing mainstream housing provision including social housing.

5.23. This will entail joint working between Housing, Adult Social Care and Slough Children's Services Trust to identify the models of provision required and the support necessary to the occupiers and to build a sustainable business plan for each housing option. The potential for each model will need to be explored as the new company grows, but the intention is to start with the outlined pilot scheme for care leavers and modelling and if possible implementing new forms of accommodation for care leavers and other priority special needs groups.

### ***Staff Trained to Safeguard Vulnerable People***

5.24. All front line Housing staff are trained in safeguarding protocols for children and adults. The Council is working with partner agencies to identify specific roles that housing staff can play in safeguarding in the borough.

### **Action Plan**

- Build on the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) on health and disability housing needs and undertake further detailed work with partners and stakeholders to examine what housing options are required to best meet current and future demand and changing needs.
- Through our new Subsidiary Housing Company, develop new delivery partnerships with Slough Children's Services Trust, Health and Adult Social Care to maximise opportunities for specialist and alternative accommodation within Slough and more cost effective wherever possible.
- In collaboration with the Trust, ensure there is an adequate supply of accommodation for care leavers and a clear housing pathway.
- Undertake a review of Housing- Related Support services in the borough with Adult Social Care as commissioners, to agree the best use of resources to meet joint strategic objectives.
- Undertake a review of the Home Improvement Agency services with Adult Social Care as commissioners, to agree the best service model and structure going forward to meet joint prevention objectives.
- Deliver up to 3 new mixed use extra care schemes in the borough during the life of this strategy where there is established local need.
- Develop an Older Persons Housing Strategy for Slough.
- Within the review of the Scheme of Allocation, ensure full account is taken of the needs of vulnerable people and those with a disability who are not working.
- Improve the recording and matching of adapted properties to ensure the best use of existing council stock.
- Improve partnership working, particularly with Adult Services, Public Health



and Slough CCG, develop services to allow elderly and disabled residents to live independently in their home and reduce the impact of poor housing on the health of residents to meet the wider priorities of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

## **Implementation of the Strategy**

### **Implementation and monitoring**

The high level outcomes of the Housing Strategy support the strategic objectives of the Council as outlined in the 5 Year Plan under Outcome 4 as well as our partnership priorities as set out in the Slough Wellbeing Strategy.

The Housing Strategy will be monitored by members through reports to Cabinet and progress scrutinised by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Action Plans and outcomes will be monitored through existing mechanisms such as the Tenants Panel, the Homelessness Forum and the HRA Board. The Council will consider whether to hold an annual conference to assess progress against the Strategy following the successful event held in January 2017.

## **Links with other Strategies**

### **The Council's Five Year Plan**

We are specifically aiming to deliver Outcome 4 of the Council's overarching Five Year Plan 2017 -2021: "Our residents will have access to good quality homes"

However, there are strong links with all the other outcomes to achieve our vision of "growing a place of opportunity and ambition - under our banner of "putting people first";

Outcome 1: Our children and young people will have the best start in life and opportunities to give them positive lives.

Outcome 2: Our people will become healthier and will manage their own health, care and support needs.

Outcome 3: Slough will be an attractive place where people choose to live, work and visit.

Outcome 5: Slough will attract, retain and grow business and investment to provide jobs and opportunities for our residents.

### **Slough's Wellbeing Strategy**

The council intends to take the unique opportunity that housing offers to engage, change and improve the way housing works within the delivery of better health outcomes for the borough in partnership with Public Health. The Slough Wellbeing Board recognized the importance of housing as one of its priorities in its refresh of the Slough Wellbeing Strategy for 2016-2020.

Through links to the Wellbeing Board and other mechanisms we intend to create more inclusive processes to engage health and social care professions alongside residents in delivering better housing, health, education, and work outcomes for homeless and vulnerable people with housing needs.

### **Links with other relevant strategies and plans**

- **Draft Local Plan 2016-2036**
- **Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy-2016- 2020.**
- **Learning Disability Plan 2016-2019**
- **Community Safety plans**
- **Children and Young People's Plan-2015-2016**
- **Centre of Slough Strategy-2015 onwards**
- **Economic Development Plan for Growth 2014-2018**
- **Asset Management Plan-2014-2017**
- **Get Active Leisure Strategy**
- **Climate Change Strategy -2011-2014**

<b>Action Plan</b>				
<b>Action</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>RAG</b>
<b>Theme 1: New Housing Supply</b>				
Seek to enable the provision of 927 new units of housing per year for Slough in line with the SHMA.	HoHS PIng	Continuous Monitoring		
The Council will directly deliver or facilitate a programme 200 units per year of new housing over the life of this Strategy and beyond, including affordable housing.	HoHS	March 2021		
Maximize the provision of affordable housing on Council-owned land through infill development and estate renewal, including the net gain of 1,000 units on HRA land over the period 2016 to 2031.	HoHS HoNS	Continuous Monitoring		
Prioritise available funds and council assets to provide for the delivery of affordable housing schemes in partnership with SUR and Housing Associations.	HoHS HoAM	Continuous Monitoring		
Develop a Revised Affordable Housing policy for the Borough.	HoHS PIng			
Work with private and public sector partners to acquire and assemble sites to facilitate the delivery of new housing.	HoAM	Continuous Monitoring		
Improve partnership arrangements with housing associations to facilitate the delivery of new affordable homes	HoHS	Oct 2017		
Extend our programme of Council mortgage lending through our existing LAPP scheme.	ADFA	Mar 2018		
Produce a plan to improve housing opportunities for key workers.	HoHS	July 2017		
Provide new homes for particular groups within the community where required, for example those needing extra care or care leavers.	HoHS	Continuous Monitoring		
Use our Subsidiary Housing Companies to assist in providing homes for vulnerable groups within the community.	HoHS	May 2017 Continuous Monitoring		
Pro-actively use powers to increase the supply of homes by bringing long-term empty homes back into use.	HoNS			
<b>Theme 2: Private Sector Housing</b>				
Create two wholly-owned Subsidiary Housing Companies to act as exemplar private landlords in the borough and to assist homeless households and others on low or modest incomes to access	HoAM	Jan 2017		

affordable private sector homes.				
Undertake a feasibility study for introducing a borough-wide Landlord Registration Scheme. This is to protect good landlords and drive our rogue or criminal landlords from Slough.	HoNS	Oct 2017		
Following the announcement of the expansion of mandatory HMO licensing we will implement the scheme once the commencement date has been announced.	HoNS	Oct 2017		
Undertake rigorous enforcement and prosecution against rogue landlords who have a history of breaking the law.	HoNS	Continuous Monitoring		
Support responsible landlords and work with them to become professional and grow their business.	HoNS	Continuous Monitoring		
Use the new RMI contract to provide support and services to private landlords.	HoNS	Dec 2017		
Use all available powers to bring empty properties back into use. Work with our partner agencies to tackle the problem of illegally-occupied outbuildings.	HoNS	Continuous Monitoring		
Work with utility companies and other agencies to insulate homes and improve the energy ratings of older buildings.	HoNS	Aug 2017		
Through partnership working, particularly with Adult Services, Public Health and the CCG, develop services to allow elderly and disabled residents to live independently in their home and reduce the impact of poor housing on the health of borough residents.	HoNS HoHS	Continuous Monitoring		
Build a well-resourced Private Sector Housing Service to support good landlords and carry out the Council's statutory responsibilities towards tenants and landlords.	HoNS	Apr 2017		
<b>Theme 3: Council Homes</b>				
Publish a baseline 30 year Business Plan for the Housing Revenue Account in the Autumn of 2016.	HoNS	Oct 2016		
Undertake a comprehensive survey of the condition of the Council's housing stock, for completion by January 2017.	HoNS	Jan 2017		
In the light of the results of the condition survey and the implementation of the provisions of the Housing and Planning Act, produce an updated HRA Business Plan in March 2017.	HoNS	Mar 2017		
In partnership with residents,	HoNS	Dec 2017		

undertake a formal asset management review and option appraisal of the Council's housing stock for completion by December 2017.				
Complete the existing programme of 190 new homes on Housing-owned land and seek to continue the programme beyond 2020.	HoHS	Mar 2020		
Adopt the following priorities for improving the services to residents; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awarding a new Repairs, Maintenance and Investment contract for council homes to improve the quality and responsiveness of repair for residents and to act as a catalyst for the development of local and in-house capacity to provide maintenance services</li> <li>• Engaging and enabling residents so as to create a culture of accountability and responsibility and to broaden opportunities for tenants and leaseholders to be involved in the development and monitoring of services ;</li> <li>• Increasing resident satisfaction through greater responsiveness to customers and in particular through the greater use of digital technology.</li> </ul>	HoNS	Dec 2017  Dec 2017  Continuous Monitoring		
Develop a new Tenancy Strategy for council tenancies in the light of the Housing and Planning Act.	HoNS	Sept 2017		
Undertake a formal review of the scheme for the Allocation of social housing in Slough.	HoHS	May 2017		
Develop proposals for the more effective use of council homes by increasing the number of tenants choosing to downsize when their family circumstances change.	HoHS HoNS	Mar 2018		
<b>Theme 4: Homelessness and Housing Need</b>				
Develop and adopt a Preventing Homelessness strategy in collaboration with clients, landlords, the voluntary sector and other partner agencies.	HoHS	Sep 2017		
Develop new partnerships with private and third sector landlords to maximise opportunities for tenancies for homeless families and individuals.	HoHS	Continuous Monitoring		
Establish a Subsidiary Housing	HoAM	Jan 2017		

Company to acquire homes to alleviate the pressures on temporary accommodation and Bed & Breakfast provision.				
End the use of Bed & Breakfast for families with children.	HoHS	Mar 2017 Continuous Monitoring		
Review the Council's Allocation Scheme to re-evaluate the priority which homeless people receive under the scheme.	HoHS	May 2017		
Work with the Health sector and other agencies to monitor and address the health and care needs of vulnerable homeless people placed in Slough by other Local Authorities and require those authorities to review their placement and notification policies.	HoHS	Continuous Monitoring		
Produce service proposals for multi-agency working for rough sleepers during periods of cold weather.	HoHS	Aug 2017		
Roll out the MEAM approach and develop new partnerships that makes homelessness everyone's business in Slough.	HoHS	Mar 2018		
<b>Theme 5: Special Housing Needs and Vulnerable People</b>				
Build on the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) on health and disability housing needs and produce service proposals with partners and stakeholders to examine what housing options are required to best meet current and future demand and changing needs.	HoHS	Oct 2017		
Through our new Subsidiary Housing Company, develop new partnerships with the Children's Trust, Health and Adult Social Care to maximise opportunities for specialist and alternative accommodation to be delivered locally and more cost effectively.	HoHS	Continuous Monitoring		
In collaboration with the Children's Trust, ensure there is an adequate supply of accommodation for care leavers.	HoHS	Continuous Monitoring		
Undertake a review of Housing-Related Support services in the borough.	ASC	Dec 2017		
Undertake a review of the Home Improvement Agency	HoHS ASC	Mar 2018		
Deliver up to 3 new mixed use extra care schemes in the borough during the life of this strategy where there is established local need.	HoHS HoAM ASC	Mar 2021		
Develop an Older Persons Housing	HoHS	Apr 2019		

Strategy for Slough.	ASC			
Within the review of the Scheme of Allocation, ensure full account is taken of the needs of people with a disability.	HoHS	May 2017		
Improve the recording and matching of adapted properties to ensure the best use of existing council stock.	HoNS	Apr 2018		
Improve partnership between Housing, Adult Services, Public Health and Slough CCG to allow more elderly and disabled residents to live independently at home.	HoHS ASC	Continuous Monitoring		

<b>Key</b>	
HoHS	Head of Housing Services
HoNS	Head of Neighbourhood Services
HoAM	Head of Asset Management
ASC	Adult Social Care
ADFA	Assistant Director, Finance and Audit
Plng	Planning Officers