



# Homes for Our Future

Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy  
2024 - 2029

A Strategy for Cambridge City and  
South Cambridgeshire District Councils



# Contents

## Vision, Objectives & Priorities

4

Long-Term Vision

Objectives & Priorities

Objective: Building the right homes in the right places that people need and can afford to live in

Objective: High quality, low carbon, energy and water efficient homes

Objective: Settled lives

Objective: Building strong partnerships

## Purpose and Context

5

Purpose

6

Context

7

Spheres of Influence

8

## New Homes

9

**Priority 1:** Increasing the supply of new homes, including affordable housing, contributing to healthy and sustainable communities

9

**Priority 2:** Enabling the housing market to meet a wide range of local housing needs and to support sustainable growth

9

**Priority 3:** Mitigating and adapting to climate change through good design and quality of new homes.

9

Introduction

10

Relationships with Local Plans

10

The 'Affordability' Challenge

12

Diversifying the market and meeting a wide range of needs

13

Affordable housing delivery

13

Mitigating and adapting to climate change

14

Supporting the economy and place-making

14

Cambridge 2050

15

## Existing Homes

18

**Priority 4:** Improving housing conditions, management, safety and environmental sustainability of homes, and making best use of existing homes

18

Introduction

19



Management, safety, maintenance and improvement of council homes	19
Affordable homes owned by other Registered Providers	20
Making best use of homes	21
Quality, safety and management of private rented homes	22
Safety and energy efficiency in other tenures	22
Empty Homes	23

## Settled Lives 25

<b>Priority 5:</b> Promoting health and wellbeing, tackling poverty, and promoting equality and social inclusion	25
<b>Priority 6:</b> Preventing Homelessness	25
Introduction	26
Additional support for those who need it	27
Preventing and tackling poverty & inequality, and building community wealth	27
Combating loneliness and isolation and promoting social inclusion	28
Preventing Homelessness	29

## Building Strong Partnerships 31

<b>Priority 7:</b> Working with key partners to innovate and maximise resources	31
Introduction	32
Working in partnership to improve outcomes	33
Maximising resources	33
Key existing partnerships	34

## Annexes

Annex 1: Housing for Specific Groups
Annex 2: Affordable Housing Requirements
Annex 3: Clustering & Distribution of Affordable Housing
Annex 4: Affordable Rents Policy
Annex 5: Build to Rent Policy
Annex 6: Summary of Evidence
Annex 7: Glossary
Annex 8: Key achievements 2019-2023

# Vision, Objectives & Priorities

Objectives & Priorities

**OBJECTIVE:**  
Building the right homes  
in the right places that people  
need and can afford to live in

**PRIORITY 1:**  
Increasing the supply of new homes,  
including affordable housing, contributing  
to healthy and sustainable communities

**PRIORITY 2:**  
Enabling the housing market to meet a  
wide range of local housing needs and to  
support sustainable growth

**OBJECTIVE:**  
High quality, low carbon,  
energy and water efficient homes

**PRIORITY 3:**  
Mitigating and adapting to climate change  
through good design and quality of new homes

**PRIORITY 4:**  
Improving housing conditions, management,  
safety and environmental sustainability  
of homes, and making best  
use of existing homes

**OBJECTIVE:**  
Settled lives

**PRIORITY 5:**  
Promoting health and wellbeing,  
tackling poverty, and promoting  
equality and social inclusion

**PRIORITY 6:**  
Preventing homelessness

**OBJECTIVE:**  
Building strong  
partnerships

**PRIORITY 7:**  
Working with partners to  
innovate and maximise  
resources

**Long-Term Vision**

**Affordable, Healthy, Safe and  
Sustainable: Homes &  
Communities for All**

# Purpose and Context



# Purpose

Our Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy 2024 to 2029 is a strategy for Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Councils. It is made up of:

- A main strategy document setting out our aspirational vision, objectives and priorities for both new and existing housing of all tenures.
- A set of annexes providing further detail on our policy direction in particular areas, a summary of evidence used to support the Strategy, and a glossary of terms - any of which may be updated, added to or removed during the life of the Strategy. Also a summary of achievements under our Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy 2019-2023.
- An annual action plan, to be monitored and reviewed each year, giving more detail on how the Strategy will be implemented.

## The Strategy is aimed mainly at:

- Partners involved in supporting the implementation of our priorities; and
- Others with an interest, including those directly affected by housing issues.

## The Strategy aims to:

- Update and replace the Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy 2019 to 2023.
- Set out our strategic direction, and our priorities (listed without any specific ranking or order), in relation to new and existing homes and communities and tackling housing affordability.
- Demonstrate the councils' shared priorities; as well as where priorities differ between the two.
- Outline what we aim to achieve going forward; with more detail in the annual action plan.
- Demonstrate our commitment to working with partners and residents to help us achieve our housing vision.

The relationship between the Strategy and Annexes and the councils' Local Plans is explained in the New Homes section of the Strategy



# Purpose and Context

## Context

The following are some of the key factors affecting our Strategy, which bring both challenges and opportunities:

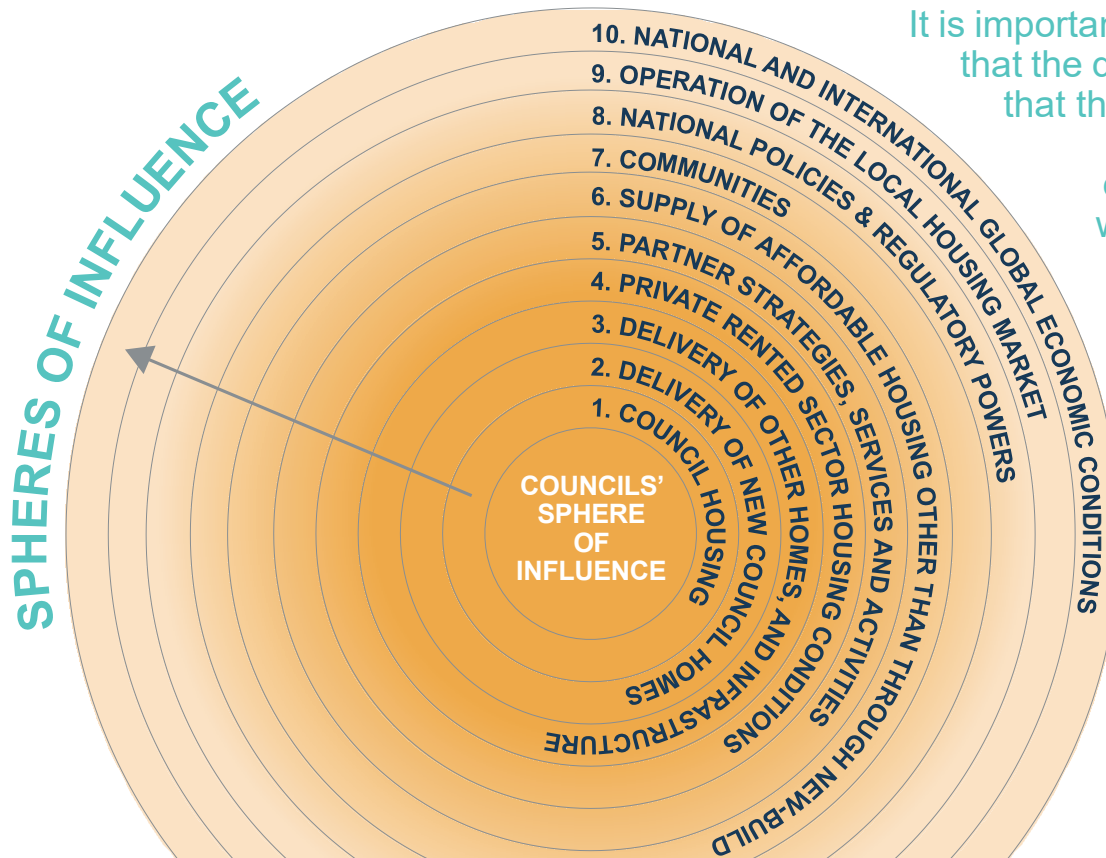


- National housing-related policies and priorities.
- Population growth and an ageing population, particularly in South Cambridgeshire.
- The economic strength of the Greater Cambridge area, which has continued despite the Covid-19 pandemic and more recent economic down-turn.
- Housing affordability: Greater Cambridge has some of the highest rental costs and house prices in the country.
- The climate change emergency and both councils' ambitions to achieve net zero carbon: by 2030 in Cambridge and by 2050 in South Cambridgeshire.
- The limited resources available to the councils, and the need to seek additional resources from elsewhere.

The Strategy is also set within the context of a number of other council strategies and plans, in particular:

- The **Cambridge Local Plan** and the **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan**, both adopted in 2018; and the proposed **Greater Cambridge Local Plan**.
- South Cambridgeshire District Council's **Business Plan**, and Cambridge City Council's **Corporate Plan**.
- South Cambridgeshire's **Zero Carbon Strategy** and **Doubling Nature Strategy**.
- Cambridge City's **Climate Change Strategy 2021-26** and **Biodiversity Strategy 2022-30**; and a **Sustainable Housing Design Guide** for its own council developments.
- South Cambridgeshire's **Cost of Living Support Programme** and Cambridge City's **Anti-Poverty Strategy**
- Cambridge City Council's **Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-2026**
- Council' South Cambridgeshire District Council's **Homelessness Strategy 2023-2028**

# Purpose and Context



It is important to recognise that the direct influence that the two councils can have in different areas will vary. Some of the main spheres of influence are summarised here.

## 1. Council housing:

Influence on: conditions, management, maintenance, energy & water efficiency and services provided directly by the council to tenants and leaseholders. Also on affordability (rent and service charge setting). Parameters include: regulations governing rent setting and how homes should be managed and how Housing Revenue Account funds can be spent.

## 2. Delivery of new council homes:

Influence on: delivery of new homes directly by the council or through council owned companies, particularly affordable housing. Affordability (rent and service charge setting), quality, housing mix, sustainability standards, biodiversity etc. Parameters include: land availability, access to grant and other funding, regulations around how different funding sources can be combined; etc

## 3. Delivery of other homes, and infrastructure particularly affordable housing through other providers:

Influence on: location, quality and number of homes in new developments, services and infrastructure, proportion of homes on new developments brought forward as affordable housing, size and tenure mix, location on site, and other requirements in the Local Plan and Housing Strategy. Parameters include: national planning policy, site restrictions, scheme viability, etc

## 4. Private rented sector housing conditions:

Influence on: Management, conditions and energy efficiency through advice and support, and enforcement if necessary through use of regulatory powers. Direct provision of privately rented accommodation through council owned companies. Parameters include: extent of regulatory powers allowing intervention; ability to charge for services, funding for local council initiatives.

## 5. Partner strategies, services and activities:

Influence on: strategic direction, policy, service commissioning and/or delivery, service standards etc. Through joint working, and in some cases, provision of grants with conditions attached. The extent of influence varies depending on the service provided and across different partners. Parameters include: Partners' own statutory requirements and resources, and/or willingness to engage.

## 6. Supply of affordable housing other than through new-build:

Occasional purchase of homes by the council – usually at market value. Plus some limited influence on persuading landlords to provide housing for use as affordable housing. Parameters include: landlord willingness to engage, particularly in light of high local demand; loss of council housing through national Right to Buy policy.

## 7. Communities:

Some limited Influence on: actions, decisions and choices of community groups and individual residents. Parameters include: willingness of communities to engage.

## 8. National policies & regulatory powers:

Some limited influence on: setting of new government policy, but no direct control.

## 9. Operation of the local housing market:

Little or no influence on supply of existing homes coming onto the private rental or sales market, or affordability of new or existing market homes. Parameters include: free market and lack of statutory powers to intervene.

## 10. National and international global economic conditions:

No influence or control on global conditions affecting people's incomes and/or resources available to the council.



# New Homes

1

## PRIORITY 1

Increasing the supply of new homes, including affordable housing, contributing to healthy and sustainable communities

2

## PRIORITY 2

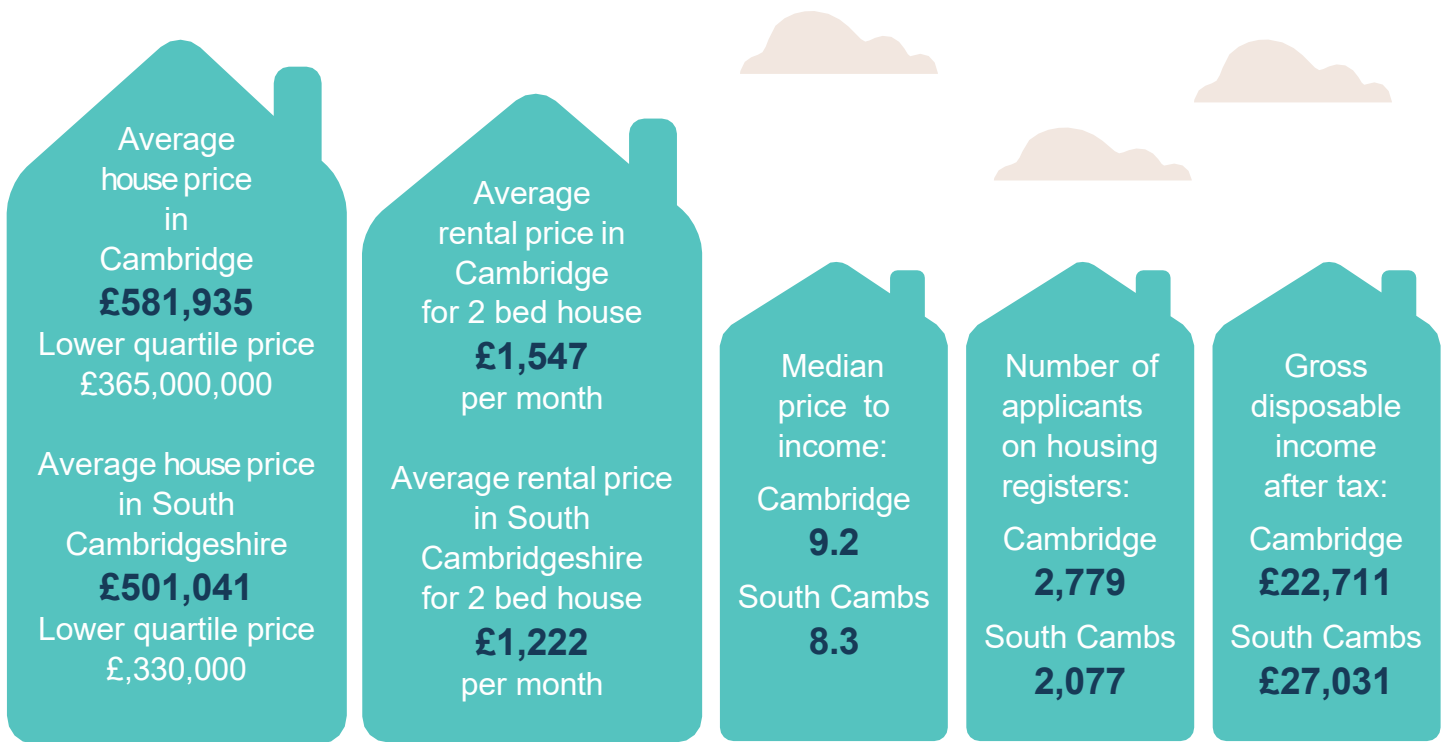
Enabling the housing market to meet a wide range of local housing needs and to support sustainable growth

3

## PRIORITY 3

Mitigating and adapting to climate change through good design and quality of new homes





## Introduction

Housing is at the core of our ambitions for sustainable growth, for jobs and prosperity, for the health and wellbeing of our residents and to ensure that Greater Cambridge is a great place to live.

The councils' adopted Local Plans identified the need for 33,500 new homes across Greater Cambridge (19,500 in South Cambridgeshire and 14,000 in Cambridge) between 2011 and 2031.

We are making good progress in delivering new homes, and by 31 March 2023, around 60% of these new homes had already been completed, with anticipated completions over the next six years to 2029 projecting a further 12,194 homes. However, it is not just about maximising delivery. We need to use the powers we have to ensure that the right homes come forward in the right places, to meet a wide range of needs, as part of high quality, healthy and sustainable communities.

## Relationship with Local Plans

This Strategy complements both councils' adopted Local Plans, and will be a material consideration in making planning decisions.

We recognise that, in planning for new homes and communities it is essential to consider a wide range of factors, such as water supply where new settlements should be located; quality & design; site density; climate change; biodiversity; green space; services & facilities; parking; transport & other infrastructure; and protecting the character of the area.

# New Homes



All of these issues, including the overall number of homes to be delivered, are required to be dealt with through the statutory Local Plan process and so, to avoid duplication, are not covered in detail here.

Other issues dealt with through the Local Plans rather than the Housing Strategy include:

- Student housing in Cambridge, recognising that this may help free up accommodation suitable for the wider population
- Supporting development by Small & Medium Enterprise (SME) builders, through the current Local Plans allowing for a mix of sites to come forward; and through national planning policy requirements to identify land to accommodate at least 10% of local housing requirement on sites of less than a hectare, which will be considered in developing the new Greater Cambridge Local Plan.

Our Housing Strategy has been developed firmly within the context of the existing Local Plans, and will also help to shape some of the housing policies in the new Greater Cambridge Local Plan.

This chapter should be read in conjunction with Annexes 1-5 which give more detail on our policy position regarding the provision of new homes, with Annex 6 providing a summary of evidence used to inform these policy decisions.



# New Homes

## The 'Affordability' Challenge

Greater Cambridge is an expensive place to buy or rent a home. High prices are fuelled by high demand, which itself is fuelled by the strength of the local economy and in-migration of highly skilled workers.

For those on low incomes, the housing options are scarce, with a reliance on social housing for rent.

There is also a growing 'affordability gap' where middle income households are being squeezed out of the market, with limited housing options for home ownership or in the private rented sector.

Delivery of affordable housing, either directly by the council or through Registered Providers, aims to provide options for those who would struggle to afford to rent or buy locally on the open market.

The councils are also acutely aware of recruitment issues within the local workforce linked to the high cost of housing in the area. Providing a range of homes at different tenures will go some way to providing homes that are affordable for those on lower to average incomes. In particular, the councils have committed through the **Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Joint Health & Wellbeing Integrated Care Strategy** to look at the housing needs of the health service and the impacts that the lack of suitable accommodation is having on the health provision for Greater Cambridge.

**Shelter** recommends that no more than 35% of disposable income should be spent on housing costs, although many local households are paying much more than that.

## The councils aim to ensure:

- Appropriate levels of affordable housing come forward on new developments as part of the overall mix.
- Provision of a mix of sizes and types of affordable housing.
- Provision of a mix of affordable tenures. Social and Affordable Rent remains the highest priority, but other 'intermediate' affordable housing models – such as Rent to Buy or discounted market housing - may also make a positive contribution towards mixed and balanced communities.
- That new affordable housing is as affordable as possible to local people, including the factoring in of energy costs.
- That the needs of local workers who struggle to afford market housing are considered - particularly in allocating affordable housing - where this can help support the local economy and local services and help minimise travel to work.
- That decisions on affordable housing mix are based on sound and up to date evidence.



## Diversifying the market and meeting a wide range of needs

In addition to a mix of sizes, types and tenures of market and affordable housing, including homes for wheelchair users, both councils are keen to support other housing options where there is clear supporting evidence of need. Examples may include:

- Specialist accommodation for those needing additional support.
- Community-led or co-operative housing.
- Self or custom build housing.
- Gypsy/Traveller provision; transit/emergency stopping and/or permanent pitches.
- Forms of housing which may be particularly attractive to young professionals.
- Less traditional, more innovative build-forms where appropriate to meet a specific need.

Diversifying the housing market can also help:

- Speed up housing delivery.
- Support the local economy, and local employment & skills development.
- Enable Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) builders to bring forward smaller sites.

## Affordable housing delivery

New affordable homes are generally delivered through three main routes:

- The councils requiring private developers to deliver a proportion of new homes through planning obligations as affordable housing; with Registered Providers (which include the councils) taking forward the affordable homes on those developments, usually through a tendering process with the developer.
- The councils' own development programmes, including prioritising use of council land for our own developments.
- Registered Providers acquiring and developing their own land.

It is essential that the councils work closely in partnership with developers and Registered Providers to ensure that the right sizes, types and tenures of homes are delivered to meet identified needs.

We are also keen to work with other public sector landowners to bring forward development to help meet housing need.



## Mitigating and adapting to climate change

In addition to Local Plan requirements around delivery of high quality, energy and water efficient homes, the councils and other providers have a role to play in promoting high standards in new affordable housing. This includes:

- The delivery of a new generation of high quality energy and water efficient council homes.
- The use of on-site renewable energy and low carbon technologies, and homes built to Passivhaus or similar high standards.
- Information, advice and support to enable occupants to understand how new technologies can be used and the benefits they can bring.



## Supporting the economy and place-making

Housing provision, including affordable housing, is essential in supporting the economy and local services. Building new, high quality, healthy and sustainable communities requires careful planning and learning from past experience. As well as homes being developed in the right places, with early provision of appropriate infrastructure, it is important that:

- All homes on new developments are well designed with different tenures and property sizes, are well integrated, are informed by forecast housing need, and are in locations which are relative to jobs and existing communities.
- Villages within South Cambridgeshire remain vibrant and sustainable through appropriate development, working with local communities through parish councils and the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plans.
- Where appropriate, some priority for allocation of Social and Affordable Rent homes is given to particular groups of applicants to help create mixed communities.

# New Homes



- Resources are put in to support new communities to become established, and to support integration between new and existing communities.
- Health and wellbeing considerations are taken into account in shaping new communities.
- House-building programmes provide wider opportunities for training, skills development and employment amongst local people, to help build community wealth.

Having a sense of community is key to the success of any new development and we recognise the importance this has on health and wellbeing and the overall sustainability for new communities to grow and thrive. Both councils have dedicated community development teams to support neighbourhoods, and local community forums enable engagement with residents in areas of significant growth.



## Cambridge 2050

The councils have been working with government to better understand its **Cambridge 2050** ambitions to significantly increase the numbers of new homes in Greater Cambridge alongside new business parks, laboratories and science hubs. The '**Case for Cambridge**' outlines the government's vision for building up to 150,000 new homes around Cambridge by 2050. Both councils have called on government for more detail around what housing growth is being proposed, and where – and to ensure both councils and local communities are closely involved and can have their say.

A Water Scarcity Group has been established to help tackle the critical water supply issues which are already impacting development in Greater Cambridge.



## Over the life of the Strategy...

### Both councils will:

- Work with developers and Registered Providers to ensure new housing (both private and affordable) meets the wide range of housing need, including single young people, families and older residents, to ensure new communities are mixed and sustainable.
- Work with government around their ambitions for increased housing delivery in Greater Cambridge, including how the government's "Cambridge 2050" proposals link with what is already being planned for through the Local Plan process, and enabling the councils and local communities to have their say.
- Seek out opportunities for further devolution of funding and powers from central government to support housing delivery.
- Generally prioritise delivery of social housing for rent, but also seek to expand the delivery of "intermediate" affordable housing tenures where there is clear evidence that it will meet local needs.
- Work with Registered Providers to help ensure that affordable housing is as affordable as possible to those who need it.
- Consider Local Lettings Plans for the affordable housing on specific sites to complement our broader Lettings Policies, and where appropriate share those affordable housing allocations between Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire.
- Seek to integrate health and wellbeing considerations into planning, design and provision of services, including reference to the **Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Integrated Care System Health & Wellbeing Strategy** and the **10 principles for a Healthy New Town**.
- Work with Cambridgeshire County Council to help find housing solutions for disabled people, and support delivery of other types of specialist accommodation for those who need it.
- Work with partners to ensure that local house-building programmes provide wider opportunities for training, skills development and employment amongst local people.
- Work with partners to better understand and help to address the housing needs of local workers.
- Agree and implement any actions arising from the findings of a new Greater Cambridge Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment.



# New Homes



## Cambridge City Council will:

- Deliver and keep under review its **10-year affordable housing programme**, through the **Cambridge Investment Partnership (CIP)**, using the council's own Sustainable Design Guide, to help increase supply, address losses incurred through the Right to Buy, and meet a broad range of housing needs. (Target figures will change over time as new opportunities are identified).
- Explore options for working with further development partners through our council house-building programme.
- Provide some new council homes at 80% of market rents targeted at local workers, through homes delivered over and above the 40% affordable housing requirement in the Local Plan.
- Improve its approach to early planning for the delivery of new council homes, including working with existing tenants and leaseholders to help ensure homes can be effectively managed and service charges can be set at appropriate levels.

## South Cambridgeshire District Council will:

- Deliver at least 375 new council homes between 2023 to 2028.
- Work with parish councils and local residents to bring forward affordable housing for local people through rural exception sites.
- Support the delivery of Neighbourhood Plans.
- Explore further opportunities for direct commissioning of land through local authority investment, joint ventures, etc.
- Develop a new carbon reduction standard for properties that the council builds outright.
- Develop an exemplar scheme on one of its own land-holdings based on Passivhaus or similar design.

# Existing Homes

4

## PRIORITY 4

Improving housing conditions, management, safety and environmental sustainability of homes, and making best use of existing homes



# Existing Homes



## Introduction

Everyone has the right to live in a warm, safe and decent home; and energy and water efficiency is essential in reducing carbon emissions and helping to make homes more affordable to live in.

Poor housing conditions can also have significant impact on people's physical and mental health; and on educational achievement and future life-chances.

As well as managing, maintaining and making best use of our own council housing stock, the councils also play an important role across other tenures.

## Management, safety, maintenance and improvement of council homes

As stock holding authorities, the councils maintain and manage around 12,500 properties for rent. 11% of households in Greater Cambridge are estimated to be council tenants.

Details on how resources are used to manage, maintain and improve council homes and estates, including making them more energy efficient, is detailed in:

- **Cambridge City's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan and Asset Management Strategy**
- **South Cambridgeshire's HRA Asset Management Strategy**

The councils are committed to maintaining high standards in council homes, and have a number of programmes in place to help ensure the safety and wellbeing of tenants. Mitigating damp and mould is one area where there has been a recent increase in focus. Both councils have published policies on, and set up dedicated pathways for, reporting damp and mould issues in council homes, and have raised awareness with all frontline staff.

The councils also have ambitious programmes to upgrade or re-develop council homes to make them more energy efficient and fit for purpose.

Cambridge City Council is working to bring all its council homes to a minimum Energy Performance Certificate rating level C, as part of this the council is running a pilot project to retrofit 50 older, uninsulated council homes, with outcomes to be monitored to help inform future projects.

# Existing Homes



South Cambridgeshire District Council has recently carried out a stock condition survey which will enable the council to undertake a costed 5,10 & 15 year plan in terms of prioritising works. To date, the council has fitted a number of solar panels to its homes as well as ongoing insulation works and is committed to bringing all council homes up to a minimum Energy Performance Certificate rating of Band C by 2030.

As well as the work we already do, the councils will be implementing requirements arising from the new **Social Housing (Regulation) Act** and the new regulatory consumer standards that came into force in April 2024.

The views of tenants and leaseholder themselves is essential in understanding and addressing housing management and maintenance issues, and in planning for and providing services. The councils will continue to seek ways to improve resident engagement at all levels. See our resident engagement web pages: **Resident involvement - Cambridge City Council** and **South Cambridgeshire Tenant News and Involvement**.

Both councils are working to improve the quality of the data we hold on the profile of tenants, to help address individuals' issues and improve targeting of services and resources.

## Affordable homes owned by other Registered Providers

Registered Housing Providers maintain and manage just under 12,000 homes (6,100 in the City and 5,700 in South Cambridgeshire). They play an important role in providing and maintaining high quality affordable homes.

The homes are managed by various Registered Providers operating in the area, All Registered Providers are regulated by the Social Housing Regulator and must meet similar standards to those required of council homes. The councils' expect Registered Providers to provide a localised management service.

# Existing Homes



## Making best use of homes

With council housing in short supply, the councils take a number of measures to ensure that best use is made of them, including:

- Letting them appropriately in line with **Cambridge City Council's Lettings Policy & South Cambridgeshire District Council's Lettings Policy**.
- Providing advice and support to residents in helping them to move to homes that are more suitable for their needs.
- Publish Local Lettings Plans relating to specific developments to help create mixed and balanced communities, and/or to address particular issues which may have arisen on existing developments.
- Tackling Tenancy Fraud to ensure homes are allocated to those with a housing need

Cambridge City Council in particular has been seeing an increase in reports of private homes being used as short-term holiday lets. As well as complaints around noise and anti-social behaviour and potential safety concerns, this growing trend may be impacting on the supply of homes available for people to live in. We need to get a better understanding of the scale of the problem and, if necessary, work with government and other partners to find solutions.



# Existing

14% of households in England, and 23% of private renters are living in a home that does not meet the Decent Homes Standard.  
**English Housing Survey 2021 to 2022**

13.4% of households in England were in fuel poverty in 2022; up from 13.1% in 2021.  
**Government Annual fuel poverty statistics report 2023**

It costs the NHS around £1.4bn per year to treat those affected by housing conditions; rising to around £18.5bn when other costs to society are factored in.  
**BRE, The cost of poor housing in England 2021**

Almost half of all households may have been in fuel poverty by January 2023.  
**Child Poverty Action Group 2022**  
Domestic emissions make up around 30% of all greenhouse gas emissions in Cambridge, and 18% in South Cambridgeshire.  
**DESNZ, Local authority greenhouse gas emissions national statistics**

## Quality, safety and management of private rented homes

Around 14% of households in South Cambridgeshire, and 31% in Cambridge City live in the private rented sector.

Housing conditions, including Category 1 hazards under the **Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS)** tend to be worse in the private rented sector than in other tenures.

It is important that the councils:

- Work with landlords, letting agents and private tenants in helping them understand their rights and responsibilities, using enforcement powers as a last resort if proactive work with landlords is unsuccessful.
- Ensure that rented homes meet statutory Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards, for the benefit of tenants and to help meet council objectives around reducing carbon emissions.
- Prioritise the proactive identification of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) which require licensing, particularly in Cambridge where they form a major part of the housing market.

## Safety and energy efficiency in other tenures

Both councils work in partnership with other agencies to secure additional grant funding to deliver energy and water efficiency and decarbonisation projects, and to provide advice and support to residents and private landlords. For example:

- Action on Energy Cambridgeshire has secured government grant to help lower income households in Cambridgeshire to improve energy efficiency, save money on heating bills and cut carbon emissions.
- Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority Net Zero Hub, aimed at accelerating delivery of clean local net zero projects (See **South Cambridgeshire Climate Emergency and Nature**, and **Cambridge City Home Energy and Water Use** web pages).

# Existing Homes



- The councils offer discretionary repair grants to our most vulnerable residents who are unable to afford necessary repairs to make their homes safe and secure through the **Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency (CambsHIA)**.
- Both councils also help to fund the **Cambridgeshire Handyperson Service** providing home safety assessments, minor adaptations and DIY jobs for older and disabled people.

## Empty homes

Whilst the number of long-term empty homes across all tenures is low compared to many other parts of the country at less than 1% of the total Greater Cambridge housing stock, it is important that we work with owners to try and bring homes back into use.

The councils' approaches to empty homes are detailed in:

- **South Cambridgeshire District Council's Empty Homes Strategy**
- **Cambridge City Council's Empty Homes Policy**

## Over the life of the Strategy...

### Both councils will:

- Implement the statutory and regulatory requirements arising from the Social Housing (Regulation) Act and the new Consumer Standards; and work towards any additional requirements following the government's proposed review of the Decent Homes Standard.
- Implement requirements arising from the Renters (Reform) Bill once it is enacted.
- Continue to work in partnership to secure funding and provide advice and support for home-owners to maximise the energy efficiency of their homes, save money on energy bills and cut carbon emissions.

# Existing Homes



## Cambridge City Council will:

- Implement its new **net zero retrofit pilot project** to retrofit 50 council homes to net zero carbon standards.
- Look for any opportunities which may arise through our housing development programme, to improve the physical appearance of existing estates within the vicinity of new developments.
- Continue to improve how we engage with and use feedback from council tenants and leaseholders to improve services.
- Support retrofitting in private sector homes through practical guidance, access to funding, and routes to installers.
- Monitor changes in numbers of Houses in Multiple Occupation over time, and use other available data, to help assess any changes in availability of private rented housing in the City.
- Establish ways of monitoring the impact of private sector short-term holiday lets on housing supply and assess whether action is needed to address the issue within the context of the new Levelling Up & Regeneration Act.
- Consider how to make better use of cultural activity to improve engagement with residents.

## South Cambridgeshire District Council will:

- Act on the results of the recent stock condition survey to improve the energy efficiency of all its council properties.
- Work with resident representatives to review its Resident Involvement Framework and develop a Communications Standard for council housing residents.
- Bring 20 empty homes back into use in 2024/25 which have been empty for longer than 6 months
- Carry out a private sector stock condition survey to inform decisions on future approaches
- Deliver a scheme to upgrade off-gas properties
- Produce a retrofit guide for South Cambridgeshire housing archetypes to support householders to realise retrofit improvements
- Run a Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) project to identify private rented sector properties which fall below standards and actions required.
- Establish a private rented sector landlord forum to share best practice and advise on support for improvement measures



# Settled Lives

5

## PRIORITY 5

Promoting health and wellbeing, tackling poverty, and promoting equality and social inclusion

6

## PRIORITY 6

Preventing Homelessness





## Introduction

The councils' role in tackling housing conditions, affordability and ensuring high quality homes and neighbourhoods is mainly dealt with elsewhere in this Strategy. However, other interventions can also help to support health & wellbeing, prevent poverty & inequality, and promote social inclusion, through services to people within their homes and communities, and linking with other strategic agendas.

More detail on the councils' approaches to preventing homelessness are in:

- **Cambridge City Council's Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-2026** and
- **South Cambridgeshire District Council's Homelessness Strategy 2023-2028**

## Additional support for those who need it

The councils work with a range of partners to enable people to live independently, either in their own homes or in more specialist accommodation. This includes **mobile warden schemes** operating in the villages of South Cambridgeshire that support older people to help combat loneliness and social isolation.

With ongoing budget cuts, an ageing population, and Cambridgeshire County Council's direction of travel moving away from residential care towards supporting more people to remain at home for as long as possible, demand for home-based services in particular is likely to continue to increase.

The councils have been working with Cambridgeshire County Council and other partners in the setting up and delivery of a new **Changing Futures** service, to deliver a multi-agency approach and improved outcomes for those experiencing multiple disadvantage. This includes people with lived experience guiding professionals on how issues should be tackled.

The new **Supported Housing Regulatory Oversight Act** will bring new responsibilities to both councils for licensing and enforcement of supported housing in our areas, identifying needs, and the development of local supported housing strategies.

Mental health issues appear to be on the rise, including issues with hoarding. In response, both councils have adjusted their council housing management services, including introducing tenancy sustainment services to people who may be at risk of losing their tenancies, and taking a multi-agency approach to improve early intervention for those with mental health needs.



We are also committed to deal with anti-social behaviour and crime, including hate crime through our local Community Safety Partnerships. Both councils have achieved DAHA (Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance) accreditation, demonstrating the councils' commitment to delivering safe and effective responses to domestic abuse.

More information on the councils' approaches to housing for specific groups, including older and disabled people and refugees, is highlighted in the Housing for Specific Groups Annex to the Strategy.


## Preventing and tackling poverty & inequality, and building community wealth

Not everyone is experiencing the benefits that the strength of the Greater Cambridge economy can bring; and the cost of living crisis has led to increased numbers of people struggling to make ends meet. Poverty, as well as other factors such as high housing and energy costs, poor housing conditions and overcrowding can also severely affect people's future life chances.

Both councils have a range of measures in place to help tackle poverty, including:

- Enabling residents to access debt and other financial advice, as well as providing specialist support such as for those with mental health issues or who are struggling financially.
- Support to increase access to digital services; and
- Grant funding to help minimise fuel and water costs.

However, it is not just about providing support services. We need to strengthen work with partners to encourage education and skills development and improve access to employment opportunities for those on low incomes, to help to improve the wealth of individuals and communities.



In March 2024, 21.8% of adults in Great Britain said they found it difficult or fairly difficult to manage financially in the past month.  
**ONS: UK measures of national wellbeing dashboard**



For example:

- A pilot is under way with the Integrated Care System, through the **Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Health and Wellbeing Integrated Care Strategy** on integrating work skills and health advice.
- The **Greater Cambridge Impact Fund pilot** will use social impact investment to help address inequalities, including improving education, skills and employment for young people.

The councils take a wider approach to tackling inequality through a number of separate policies and plans. See:

- **Equality and diversity - South Cambs District Council** and
- **Our equality and diversity policies and plans - Cambridge City Council**

## Combating loneliness and isolation and promoting social inclusion

Loneliness is a major issue nationally and locally, with implications for people's physical and mental health.

Both councils offer community grants to voluntary and community groups which help bring people together, and there are plans for warm spaces, which were provided in partnership for people to meet to help with the cost of living crisis, to evolve into longer term Community Hubs.

Our priorities around place-making for new developments and communities include a focus on preventing social isolation, and supporting residents to make a positive contribution to their communities through our community development work.



21.8% of UK adults reported some evidence of depression or anxiety in 2021 to 2022; up 19.1% since 2016 to 2017.

**ONS: UK measures of national wellbeing dashboard**

7.8% of adults in Great Britain reported feeling lonely often or always in April 2024.

**ONS: UK measures of national wellbeing dashboard**



## Preventing Homelessness

Both councils have separate Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategies, with action plans for implementing them. Their focus is on homeless prevention, early intervention and support, as well as helping people to find suitable accommodation when faced with homelessness. The homeless prevention work includes working closely with other organisations to support vulnerable groups, such as rough sleepers, care leavers, those suffering from domestic abuse, mental health issues and/or drug/alcohol addiction, or leaving prison.

Although preventing homelessness is an important priority within our Housing Strategy, we have avoided duplicating here the detailed objectives, priorities and actions relating to homelessness that are set out in the relevant homelessness strategies.

The Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategies were developed to align with our previous Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy 2019-23, and any reviews will be within the context of this revised Housing Strategy.

## Over the life of the Strategy...

### Both councils will:

- Support the Integrated Care System in delivering outcomes for local people through their Health & Wellbeing Integrated Care Strategy.
- Support implementation of the Changing Futures Cambridgeshire & Peterborough programme to support people who are multiply disadvantaged.
- Review the councils' **Adaptations Policy**
- Implement the requirements of the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023.
- Implement their Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategies, including regular reviews of their action plans and monitoring of outcomes.
- Continue to support refugees, applying for government funding where available.



## Cambridge City Council will:

- Continue to implement the council's **Our Cambridge Transformation Programme**, including defining our future role and making it easier for people to have their say.
- Implement our new Community Wealth Building Strategy.
- Develop a new Community Wealth Building Strategy.
- Use opportunities emerging from the council's house-building and retrofit programmes to engage residents and promote community wealth.
- Use the results of council tenancy audits, improved information on assets, and the Low Income Family Tracker pilot to help inform where resources should be targeted.
- Help drive the Greater Cambridge Impact Fund pilot aimed at tackling local inequalities.

## South Cambridgeshire District Council will:

- Continue to deliver its Cost-of-Living Support Programme, including the implementation of the Low-Income Family Tracker.
- Improve its housing management system to update council tenant profiles, including identifying those requiring additional support.
- Increase money advice support to those in financial hardship, including those in privately rented accommodation.
- Work with partners to promote skills development opportunities to businesses.
- Set up employment hubs to support long term unemployed people with a disability or long-term condition to gain skills and/or support to get back to work.

# Building Strong Partnerships

7

## PRIORITY 7

Working with key partners to innovate and maximise resources



# Building Strong Partnerships



## Introduction

With most of the work to achieve our Strategy being done in partnership, the councils have positive and proactive relationships with many organisations, communities and individuals.

Joint working on the response to Covid-19 brought many partners closer together, and we will continue to strengthen and build further relationships to help achieve positive outcomes and improvements to people's lives.

## Working in partnership to improve outcomes

It would be impossible to achieve our strategic objectives without working closely with local communities and other partners.

Examples of how the councils work in partnership with others to help achieve outcomes include:

- Understanding housing and service needs to ensure evidence-based decision making.
- Delivering and supporting delivery of new homes and communities, including working with developers and Registered Providers.
- Bidding for, securing and sharing of resources, including grant funding.
- Joint commissioning, delivery and monitoring of services.
- Engaging with council tenants and leaseholders to help shape and improve our landlord services
- Engaging with local communities, including individuals and community groups through our consultation and engagement processes.
- Supporting the development of Neighbourhood Plans to help guide future development
- Statutory and regulatory enforcement.
- Establishing best practice and finding innovative solutions.
- Lobbying and influencing government and other agencies.

The councils' Transformation Programmes are aimed at improving efficiency, achieving better outcomes, and making the authorities economically sustainable in the long term. Increasing the role that residents play in decision-making needs to be central to this.



# Building Strong Partnerships



## Maximising resources

Both councils face severe financial challenges, and it is essential that we take every opportunity to seek out and harness additional sources of funding. Bidding – often in partnership - for government grant funding which becomes available for specific projects is one example, but both councils are also keen to seek out opportunities for drawing in investment from other partners to achieve outcomes.

How the councils will use the financial resources available to them is laid out in: both councils' Medium Term Financial Strategies; South Cambridgeshire's Housing Revenue Account; and Cambridge City's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan and Budget Setting reports. (See our websites for latest versions). Our annual action plan will also include costs and sources of funding for some of the specific projects we will be working on.

## Over the life of the Strategy...

### Both councils will:

- Continue to strengthen existing relationships, and seek out new partnership and entrepreneurial opportunities to access funding, support innovation and deliver shared outcomes.
- Continue to improve opportunities for residents and communities to have a more central role in decision-making.

**Examples of our key existing partnerships, many of which we work with on a multi-agency approach:**

