

# Harlow Housing Strategy

## Evidence Base

2022 – 2027

*More and better housing – of right type, in right place, and affordable*

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction to the Housing Strategy Evidence Base**

### **Purpose of this document:**

This document acts as the **background evidence base** that supports the Harlow Housing Strategy 2022 to 2027. The Housing Strategy focuses on the key priorities for strategic housing in Harlow and sets out how Harlow Council intends to address these over the next 5 years and beyond. The Housing Strategy promotes suitable, accessible and sustainable housing provision, whatever the tenure that meets the needs of all our residents. It will also guide the future planning and delivery of new homes to ensure that they meet local needs.

### **This evidence base provides a detailed, comprehensive and holistic review of the strategic housing issues in Harlow.**

Under each priority, key objectives are explored by outlining the issues and challenges for Harlow relating to a series of outcomes. A series of potential actions and activities we either intend to undertake or could undertake are then highlighted. The actions are split into short term (within the next 1 to 2 years); medium term (within the next 3 to 5 years); and long term (an aspiration, to be undertaken if opportunities and resources allow). The delivery of actions will be resource dependent - of staff and funding. This strategy will provide a framework to focus activity and work programmes within and will allow us to respond to new funding opportunities, policy and legislative changes and opportunities to work with potential partners.

The strategy does not cover Council Housing Tenancy or go into details relating to Homelessness and Rough Sleeping issues. The Harlow District Council Tenancy Strategy 2019-24 and Harlow Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-24 addresses these issues.

### **Key Council Priorities:**

This Housing Strategy is part of a joined up and coordinated approach that supports the Council's wider ambitions and priorities. The provision of more and good quality housing at varying price points enables local people to afford to continue to live locally, whilst ensuring that the town is attractive to people who are looking to relocate to the town. Carefully considering how the strategy is implemented will help to reduce the Council's carbon emissions and positively support the "climate emergency" that the Council declared in 2019.

### **Our Strategic Housing Vision:**

*More and better housing of the right type, in the right place and affordable.*

This Housing Strategy supports the delivery of **The Town Plan** which is being consulted on in 2021.

### The Town Plan states:

We want to be able to provide a wide range of housing that meets the needs of **all** our residents, including both market housing and a range of affordable options, as well as homes for older people and those with disabilities. An overarching aim is that thousands more Harlow residents will have their own home whether Council or privately owned.

Whilst current policy seeks 30% affordable housing, with a mix of tenures, the Council should consider social housing and First Homes with the Council also as a developer and facilitator, not only within Harlow but also adjoining areas.

This Housing Strategy also helps support the delivery of the **Community Resilience Strategy 2021-23**, embedding social inclusion and ensuring the best possible life chances for everyone.

### How the strategy has been developed

This strategy has been shaped by national policies and our local context, and, informed by local housing market and local housing needs evidence. This strategy also references and links into a series of other key Council policies and background documents including:

- Harlow Local Development Plan adopted in 2020
- The latest Strategic Housing Market Assessments (SHMA)
- Affordable and Specialist Housing Supplementary Planning Document (adopted in 2021)
- Essex County Council's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2019
- Homelessness & Rough Sleepers Strategy 2019
- Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Vision and other supporting documents including the Affordability evidence base
- Harlow Housing Delivery Test Action Plan 2019

The strategy was developed by working in close conjunction with a Housing Strategy Subgroup of the Council Cabinet Overview Working Group who reviewed the content over a series of meetings at the end of 2019.

A summary of the proposed content was subject to public consultation in February 2020 which demonstrated clear support for the priorities and themes identified.

Progress of the adoption of this strategy was delayed due to the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic.

### **How the strategy will be used**

This strategy will provide guidance to departments across the Council, including:

- the **Regeneration Team** (which is responsible for strategic housing issues such as supporting Planners in negotiating the appropriate housing mix and developing new Council housebuilding schemes),
- **Planning department** (in negotiating planning applications and developing policies linked to strategic housing)
- **Environmental Health** (who are responsible for the licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation)
- **Housing Department** (especially the Housing Options Team in relation to Nominations Agreements with Registered Providers)

More broadly, the strategy will help inform Council policies and activity relating to strategic housing and it will act as a guide for future Council investment decisions.

It will support the Council in how it engages with partners and other key organisations, including Registered Providers, Developers and land owners. It is expected that the strategy will guide and influence partners and other organisations that are wishing to undertake relevant activity within Harlow District.

## How the document is structured:

Chapter 2 outlines the national and local context that the Housing Strategy sits within.

The following four priorities have been identified for Harlow over the next ten years:



The Housing Strategy evidence base has a chapter on each priority which will:

- Outline why the priority is important
- Set out key objectives for The Council regarding the priority
- Identify outcomes that will help focus activity to meet the objectives
- Outline what we plan to do to help meet the priority (split into short, medium and long term actions)

The Action Plan relevant to each outcome section is included using the following structure:

### Our Action Plan:

Priority X			
Objective	Outcome	Short, medium or long term	Proposed actions
1.1	a)		1.1.1
			1.1.2
			1.1.3

The chapters are colour coded to aid ease of navigation of the document.

## Chapter 2: National and Local Context

### The National government policy context

#### Housing Legislation:

- The publication in February 2017 of the **White Paper, Fixing Our Broken Housing Market** marked a shift of emphasis in investment priorities back towards rented housing.
- **Social Housing White Paper** published in November 2020 outlined a Charter for Social Housing Residents.

#### Homelessness Legislation:

- The **Homeless Reduction Act 2017** emphasised prevention, early intervention, and support for families and single people faced with homelessness.
- The Government's **2018 Rough Sleeping Strategy** aims to end rough sleeping by 2027.

#### Planning Policy:

- The changes made in the **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021** emphasised the theme of significantly boosting the supply of homes, to meet the government's target of building 300,000 new homes annually by 2025.
- **Permitted development rights**, introduced temporarily in 2013 to allow the conversion of offices to residential use, were made permanent in 2016, and extended to include conversions from light industrial use. The aim was to unlock brownfield sites and increase the number of new homes. In Harlow, there have been over 1,000 residential units converted from office blocks via permitted development rights.
- **Planning for the Future White Paper released in August 2020** aiming to streamline the planning process and introduce a new approach to plan making (although government is reviewing its implementation). It also introduced First Homes as tenure.

#### A range of measures to **raise standards in the private rented sector**:

- **Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act** which gives tenants the right to take their landlord to court in cases where their rented property poses health risks. The Act applies to all tenancies created after 20 March 2019, with all existing tenancies being covered from 20 March 2020
- **Extension of HMO licencing** to include all properties which accommodate five or more people, from two or more separate households.
- **Tenant Fees Act 2019** which bans certain letting agent fees, and capping the level of tenancy deposits required. The aim is to reduce the costs that tenants can face in accessing and sustaining a tenancy.
- Proposal to **abolish 'no fault'** evictions in the private rented sector. Section 21 notices currently allow a landlord to terminate a tenancy without a specific reason, outside of the initial fixed term. Further consultation is expected on this measure.
- The **Housing and Planning Act 2016** introduced a range of measures that impacted on the private rented sector. It sought to crack down on 'rogue' landlords through Banning Orders, Civil Penalties, the extension of Rent Repayment Orders and a National Rogue Landlord Database.

## Recovering from the impact of Covid-19:

The coronavirus pandemic that began in 2020, has also had a major impact on housing.

- The measures taken to control the spread of the coronavirus impacted on many local residents' employment, resulting in large numbers of people within Harlow being furloughed or losing their jobs which in turn affected their income and ability to pay their rent or mortgages. Government policy restricting the ability of private landlords to evict tenants has prevented or delayed some tenants being evicted and potentially claiming homelessness.
- Covid-19 lockdowns highlighted the importance of safe and secure homes to people's health and wellbeing. Over-crowding, lack of digital connectivity and lack of disposable income were all factors that led to some sections of the community being disproportionately affected by the impact of the lockdowns
- At the end of 2020 local housing agents reported strong interest in the local housing market and high level of sales mirroring a national picture. This was potentially due to people opting to relocate out of London, attracted to Harlow's lower house prices compared to neighbouring areas, connectivity and green spaces.
- Covid-19 lockdowns and social distancing restrictions also impacted on the capacity of developers to build out at their usual pace affecting the rate of new build homes that were delivered.



### Local Context:

Harlow is located on the Essex / Hertfordshire border, between London and Cambridge.

#### **From New Town to Garden Town**

From its inception as a New Town in 1947, Harlow has been developed on **sustainable principles with the aim of creating balanced communities.**

The New Town of Harlow was planned around the concept of Neighbourhoods; located within each neighbourhood would be retail provision, services



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such as health and education, and employment space. This concept has recently been revisited and promoted by the Town and Country Planning Association and Sports England as the “**20-minute neighbourhood**”. This is seen as a way of creating healthier, active communities, with people living locally and meeting daily needs within a 20-minute walk from home.

Balanced communities were aimed to be created within each neighbourhood by providing a diverse housing offer that could meet the housing needs of all sections of the community through their different life stages. Within each neighbourhood the housing offer would include bungalows, flats, terraced, semi-detached and detached houses helping to create a sustainable community.



## **Harlow and Gilston Garden Town**

In January 2017 Harlow and Gilston was designated as a Garden Town. The Garden Town is a joint project incorporating Harlow District Council and its neighbouring councils of East Herts and Epping Forest as well as the County Councils of Essex and Hertfordshire.

The Garden Town will enable approximately 23,000 additional homes to be developed in the strategic sites in and around the town of Harlow by 2040. This will increase the population of the functional area of the town from 87,000 in 2020 to 130,000.

The development of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town aims to refresh and continue the development of the concepts of sustainable and balanced communities.

## **Harlow Local Plan**

In December 2020 Harlow’s latest Local Development Plan was adopted. One of its main aims is to ensure a sufficient supply of sustainable, high quality homes across a range of tenures and types in the district to fully meet Harlow’s Objectively Assessed Housing Need. It sets out the planning policies that will shape the growth and development of the town up to 2033.

The housing policies have been expanded upon in the Council’s Affordable Housing and Specialist Housing Supplementary Planning Document which was adopted in October 2021.

## Harlow tenure and demographic make up

A clear legacy of its New Town status is Harlow's **high proportion of homes rented from the Council**. In 2018, 34% of Harlow's population were living in social housing (which includes Council housing and renting from Registered Providers) compared with the national average of 13%.

In the 2019 **Indices of Multiple Deprivation**, Harlow was ranked 100 out of 316 of the lower tier Local Authorities in England. This places Harlow in the bottom 40% of the most deprived lower tier authorities nationally<sup>1</sup>.

## Population statistics

### Population (2020)

- ❖ Population: **87,300**
- ❖ **51.4%** female
- ❖ **48.6%** male

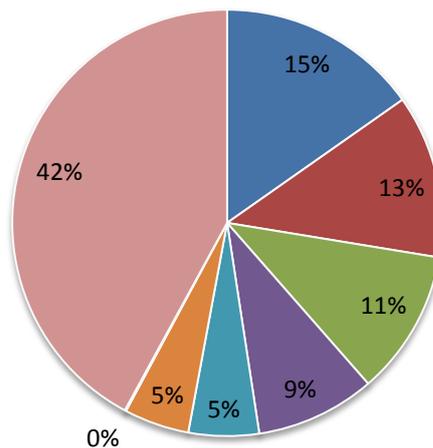
Source: Nomis, Resident Population 2020

### Health Ratings (2011)

- ❖ **45.1%** very good health
- ❖ **35.8%** good health
- ❖ **13.7%** fair health
- ❖ **4.1%** bad health
- ❖ **1.2%** very bad health

Source: Towns Fund.org, Health Ratings 2011

### Household composition (2011)



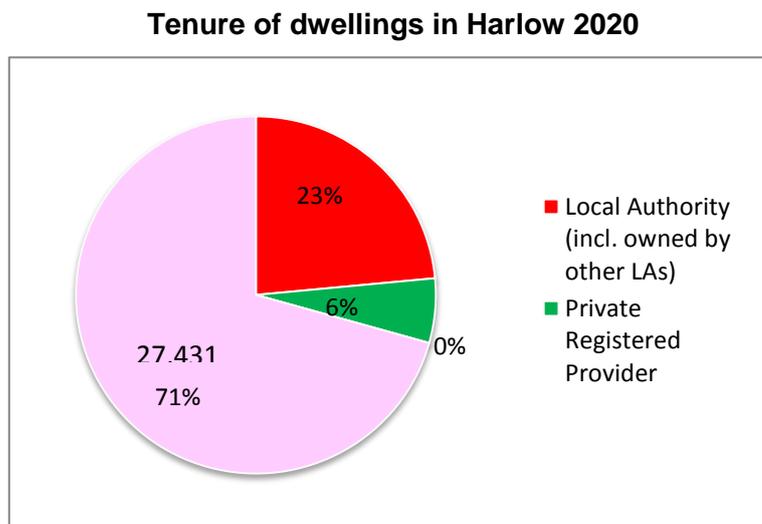
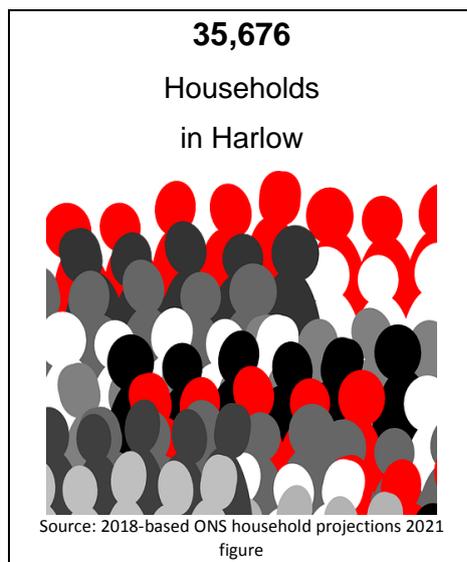
- Married or same-sex civil partnership couple: dependent children
- Aged 65 and over: one person household
- Married or same-sex civil partnership couple: no children
- Lone parent: dependent children
- Cohabiting couple: dependent children
- Cohabiting couple: no children
- All full time students
- Other

Source: Towns Fund.org, Household Composition 2011

<sup>1</sup> [http://dclgapps.communities.gov.uk/imd/iod\\_index.html#](http://dclgapps.communities.gov.uk/imd/iod_index.html#)

## Harlow Key Housing Characteristics

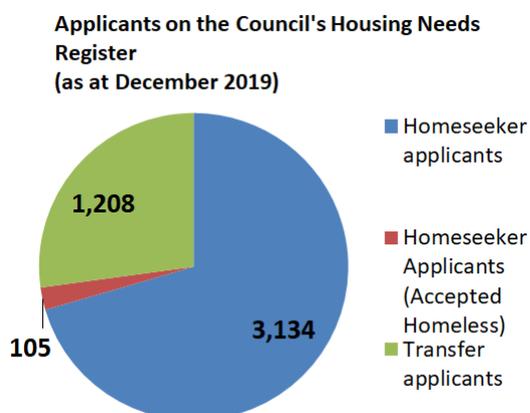
The following provides a summary of the current housing market in Harlow.



There has been a shift in the tenure that people live in between 2001 and 2018

	Census 2001			YouGov 2018			Percentage point change 2001 to 2018		
	Owens outright, mortgaged or shared ownership	Social Housing	Private rented or lives rent free	Owens outright, mortgaged or shared ownership	Social Housing	Private rented or lives rent free	Owens outright, mortgaged or shared ownership	Social Housing	Private rented or lives rent free
<b>Harlow</b>	64%	32%	4%	40%	34%	26%	-24%	2%	22%
<b>East Herts</b>	80%	10%	9%	69%	8%	23%	-11%	-2%	14%
<b>Uttlesford</b>	79%	11%	10%	70%	14%	16%	-9%	3%	6%
<b>Epping</b>	80%	13%	7%	71%	9%	20%	-9%	-4%	13%
<b>England</b>	73%	16%	11%	59%	13%	28%	-14%	-3%	17%

Source: Shelter, Growth in the private Rented Sector 2001-2018



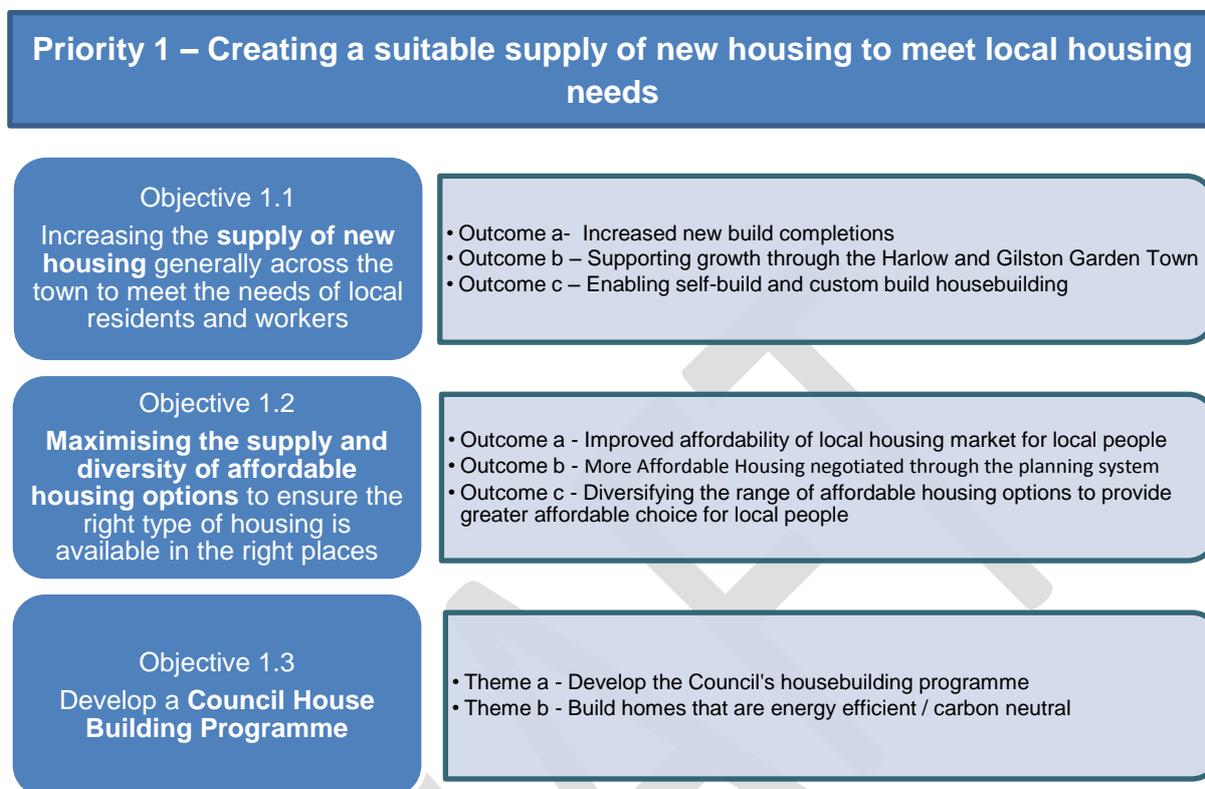
Source: Harlow Council Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2019 to 2049



Source: HM Land Registry 2019

## Chapter 3: Creating a suitable supply of new housing to meet local housing needs

The following summarises the key objectives and outcomes for the Council under this priority:



### Key issues:



#### Housing need in Harlow:

The **total housing need** (taking account of existing residents' needs and planned growth) identified for Harlow between 2011 and 2033 is **7,409 new dwellings**.

The amount of **affordable housing** identified for Harlow between 2011 and 2033 is **3,400 new dwellings**.

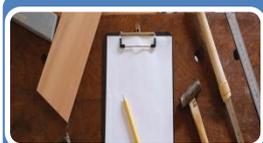
The average number of **new affordable houses required each year is 182**



#### Harlow and Gilston Garden Town:

The development of **Harlow and Gilston Garden Town** will deliver an estimated additional 16,000 homes by 2033 in and around Harlow.

2,600 homes are planned within the boundary of Harlow, (30% of which will be affordable)



#### Self-build and custom build housebuilding:

Statutory duty on Council to maintain a self-build register and to provide adequate planning permissions for serviced plots that can be sold to interested individuals or groups.

Over 70 people have registered on Harlow's self-build and custom build register.



#### Affordability

Housing affordability is a big issue in Harlow for all tenures.

The cost of buying and private renting in harlow has increased at a greater level than nationally.

## Objective 1.1 – Increasing the supply of new housing generally across the town to meet the needs of local residents and workers

### Outcome a: Increased new build completions

#### Background and issues

#### The national and local need for new homes:

It is acknowledged that there has been a shortage of new house build completions at both a national and local level.

**Nationally**, the Government announced in 2017 its commitment to build 300,000 new homes per year. This target continues to be a priority in order to support the post-Covid recovery of the national economy and to allow greater access to housing for people generally.

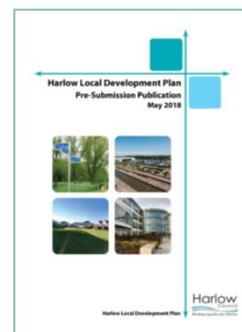
**Locally**, within Harlow, it has been identified (taking into account the needs of existing residents and the planned level of growth for the town) that between 2011 and 2033 there is:

- **A total housing need of 7,409** additional dwellings within Harlow
- **A Policy requirement of 9,200** dwellings to support regeneration and affordability
- And within that, an **affordable housing need of 3,400** additional dwellings.

Between 2011 and 2021 there were **3,653 dwelling new build completions**.

#### Harlow's Local Plan:

Harlow Council adopted its latest Local Plan in December 2020. As part of the objectively assessed evidence base for the Local Plan, the Council has identified more than a **5 year land supply**. This identifies a pipeline of developments sites equating to a total of 5,558 dwellings, made up of 4,723 committed dwellings (with valid planning permission at 31 March 2019) and 834 allocated dwellings up to the end of 2024. Of the 834 allocated dwellings, 249 are within Council owned land. In addition a Strategic Site has been allocated East of Harlow for 2,600 dwellings.



Harlow Local Plan

## The Council's committed supply of new builds:

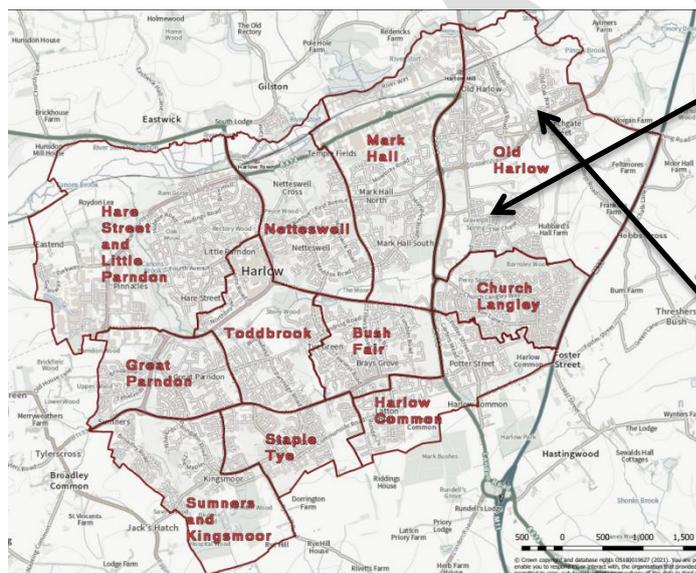
As at 31st March 2021, there were **5,122 dwellings with valid planning permission** on major sites (of 10 or more dwellings), with a further 54 dwellings on small sites.<sup>2</sup> Many of these dwellings are part of developments that were in the process of being built out. Of the 18 committed major sites, 11 were already under construction in 2021.

At 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 there were 3,551 dwelling commitments with valid planning permissions.

Harlow Council has a stepped housing trajectory whereby it has a target of delivering 361 dwellings per year up to 2022/23, after which 501 dwellings per year are required to be delivered.

## Strategic sites:

There is a strong reliance on the large strategic sites (sites with over 50 units) within the town in order to deliver new housing to meet the outlined need. Strategic sites have a long lead in time for being developed, partly to ensure that the appropriate infrastructure is in place. Two major sites have been in development for some time:



Newhall – which will deliver 2,968 dwellings in total (the whole site has already been in development for over ten years)

North of Gilden Way – which will deliver 1,055 dwellings in total

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The Local Plan also includes the East of Harlow strategic site that will enable 2,600 units to be developed as an integral part of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town planned growth.

## Housing Delivery Test:

The Government's Housing Delivery Test expects all Councils to achieve 95% of house numbers outlined in their Local Plans. In 2018, Harlow achieved 84% of its housing delivery requirement figure. As a result we published in August 2019 a

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.harlow.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Housing%20Delivery%20Action%20Plan.pdf> (page 11)

Housing Delivery Test Action Plan<sup>3</sup> which identified the key actions that the Council would take in order to ensure we met our housing targets.

Actions identified as key to delivering the Government’s Housing Delivery Test can be seen below. We have also created a 20% buffer (which makes sure that 20% more homes above the housing requirement would be built in the following five years).

<b>Corporate buy-in for growth</b>	Support new housing development, including Harlow and Gilston Garden Town, new homes and general regeneration
<b>Better planning processes</b>	Use of new technology and additional staff resources to adopt the new Harlow Local Development Plan Assess housing needs to improve affordability and regeneration
<b>Helping the Market</b>	Work in partnership with local developers to meet housing needs and promote/facilitate new affordable homes, community led housing and custom/self-build housing. Explore modern methods of construction Actively monitor local housing
<b>Harlow and Gilston Garden Town</b>	Promote growth in Harlow and surrounding areas. It is anticipated that the Garden Town will ensure that new housing development in Harlow is built out at a significantly higher rate than in the past
<b>Stakeholder Engagement</b>	Continue to foster good relationships with housing related stakeholders. The Council individually or collectively will bid for infrastructure and other housing related funding when opportunities arise
<b>Monitor build out rates</b>	Monitor the success of the Action plan annually It is anticipated that actions will begin to lift Harlow above the test measures, however the action plan will continue to be reviewed

### Our Action Plan:

<b>Priority 1: Creating a suitable supply of new housing to meet local housing needs</b>			
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Short, medium or long term</b>	<b>Proposed actions</b>
1.1 Increase the supply of new housing generally across the town to meet the needs of local residents and workers	<b>a) Increased new build completions</b>	Short	1.1.1 Implement the policies in the new Local Plan
		Short	1.1.2 Monitor the implementation of the Housing Delivery Test Action Plan
		Short	1.1.3 Monitor build out rates

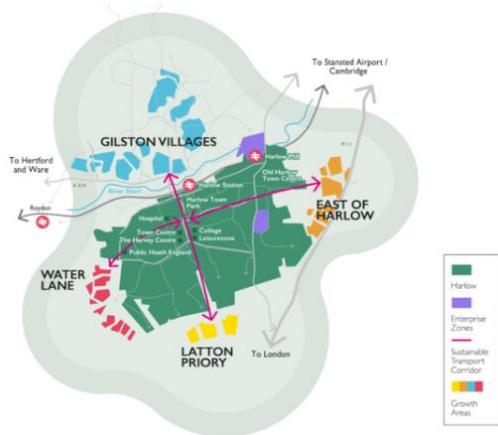
<sup>3</sup> <https://www.harlow.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/evidence/housing-delivery-test>

## Outcome b: Supporting growth through the Harlow and Gilston Garden

### Background and issues

In January 2017 Harlow and Gilston was designated as a Garden Town.

Overall, the Garden Town is expected to deliver **at least 23,000 new homes in and around the existing town of Harlow**. The majority of the growth will take place in the four strategic sites located outside of Harlow's boundaries; Gilston villages located to the north of the town in East Herts, Water Lane and Latton Priory located to the west and south, respectively, of the town in Epping.



However, the fourth strategic site: **East of Harlow**, straddles both Harlow Council and Epping's land, with 2,600 dwellings expected to be delivered within the Harlow boundary.

A masterplan is being developed for the strategic site.

It is anticipated that the first new homes on this site will be built in 2025-26 and will be developed over a nine-year period, to be completed in 2033-34.

### Harlow and Gilston Garden Town vision:

Central to the Vision for Harlow and Gilston is the mission of enhancing existing communities and creating exciting new ones in and around Harlow.

The Garden Town has set out a range of principles on how it will deliver the vision which includes:

#### New homes and neighbourhoods

- A mix of house sizes and types to cater for all including those most in need and the next generation of Harlow residents who want the opportunity to stay and work in the area.
- Beautifully designed homes and neighbourhoods built around self-sufficient local centres.
- Appropriate levels of new social infrastructure and public services including schools and health services.



ILLUSTRATOR : NEREA BERMEJO OLAIZOLA

#### Garden Town resources

The Garden Town has produced a range of resources that aim to support the successful delivery of the planned growth and housing.

These include:

- **Sustainability guidance and checklist** (March 2021) – to be used by developers in shaping all development proposals. The purpose of the guidance is to help applicants meet the Garden Town goals of becoming net zero-carbon by 2030, and, build strong and integrated communities across new and existing places.
- **Quality Review Panel** – a panel of independent, multidiscipline experts that provide advice and guidance on designs of proposed planning applications to help ensure developments are of the appropriate quality.
- **Housing Research Papers** – The Garden Town team commissioned a series of housing research papers to support the understanding of what is required to deliver successful integrated communities. This has included research into affordability issues within the Garden Town.



### Our Action Plan:

Priority 1: Creating a suitable supply of new housing to meet local housing needs			
Objective	outcome	Short, medium or long term	Proposed actions
1.1 Increase the supply of new housing generally across the town to meet the needs of local residents and workers	<b>b) Supporting growth through the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town</b>	Short	1.1.4 Support the delivery of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town
		Short	1.1.5 Actively participate in Harlow and Gilston Garden Town strategic housing partnership projects

## Outcome c: Enabling Self-build and custom build housebuilding

### Background and issues

#### National policy

Self-Build and Custom Build housebuilding enables residents to build their own homes. It provides an alternative to the traditional approach to housebuilding whereby developers build homes to sell. The Right to Build legislation was introduced in 2015/16 with the aim of boosting housebuilding.

The Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 (as amended by the Housing and Planning Act 2016) provides a legal definition of self-build and custom housebuilding. The Act does not distinguish between self-build and custom housebuilding and provides that both are where an individual, an association of individuals, or persons working with or for individuals or associations of individuals, build or complete houses to be occupied as homes by those individuals.<sup>4</sup>

Within the overarching definition there are various types of projects including:

<i>Individual self/custom build</i>	An individual purchases a plot of land and builds a house to live in. They may do some or all the build themselves or employ a builder, architect or project manager to oversee the build.
<i>Group self/custom build</i>	A group of people come together to design and develop a custom build housing development which they then live in. They may build this themselves or with help from a developer.
<i>Developer-led custom build</i>	A developer divides a larger site into individual plots and provides a design and build service to buyers. This gives people a chance to customise existing house designs to suit their needs.
<i>Community-led</i>	Community led housing projects help a group of people to build homes together, either individually or in cooperation with a builder or housing provider. Alternatively, housing co-operatives can own or lease properties and rent them to their members who also manage and control the housing.
<i>Cohousing</i>	A cohousing project involves a constituted group of people creating their own neighbourhood of homes, with shared facilities such as a communal house.

#### Harlow's policy

Harlow Council's policies regarding self-build and custom build housing are set out in H9 of the Adopted Local Plan and expanded upon in the Affordable Housing and Specialist Housing Supplementary Planning (SPD) Document adopted in 2021.



<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/over-150-million-funding-to-kickstart-self-building-revolution>

Self / Custom Build housing can be considered as either market or affordable housing. The SPD outlines potential ways in which this type of housing could deliver genuinely affordable housing.

**Local Plan H9 policy on Self-build and custom-build housing includes the following:**

Housing sites of greater than 50 dwellings must include the provision of fully serviced plots for self or custom build housing within each phase to ensure, as far as possible, the continuous availability of such plots throughout the development.

The number of plots is to be negotiated on a phase by phase basis given the evidence of the Self-Build Register at the time.

As required by the Self and Custom Build Housebuilding Act 2015, Harlow Council maintains a register of individuals and associations of individuals, who are seeking to acquire self-build serviced plots of land in the District for their own self / custom housebuilding.

The following table outlines the number of people registered on Harlow’s Self-Build Register as at 13/09/21.

**Numbers of people registered on the self-build register**

Base Period	Dates of Period	Nu of registrants (as at 13/9/21)
Base 2	31/10/16 – 30/10/17	6
Base 3	31/10/17 - 30/10/18	4
Base 4	31/10/18 - 30/10/19	19
Base 5	31/10/19 - 30/10/20	15
Base 6	31/10/20 - 30/10/21	26
<b>Total</b>		<b>70</b>

Harlow Council undertakes an annual review of the Self-Build Register whereby applicants are required to re-confirm their interest. This ensures the register is up to date and reflecting realistic numbers of applicants looking to undertake self/custom build projects.

Harlow Council has a duty to provide adequate numbers of serviced plots to meet the demand indicated by the Self-Build Register within three years of the base period.

Harlow Council intends to meet this duty by negotiating with developers on strategic sites of over 50 units to deliver and market appropriate numbers of serviced plots or units that are allocated for custom build opportunities. Whilst it is acknowledged that flat developments are unable to deliver serviced plots, they may be able to provide

custom-build opportunities. Custom-build flat units would enable individuals to design elements including the layout of their home.

In principal the Council will support self and custom build housing proposals where this is meeting a demand identified by the Council’s register.

However, it is acknowledged that no serviced plots or custom build units have been negotiated through the planning system in recent years. The Council may consider exploring if there are potential opportunities to use its own land to sell as serviced plots in order to meet this demand. However, in the first instance the Council will consider the options for building its own affordable housing units on its land.

### Community led Housing Developments

Community led housing developments refers to housing that is owned, managed and delivered by community groups for the benefit of their local community on a non-profit basis. If appropriate interest is demonstrated, Community Led Housing Developments could be explored.

#### Our Action Plan:

Priority 1: Creating a suitable supply of new housing to meet local housing needs			
Objective	Outcome	Short, medium or long term	Proposed actions
1.1 Increase the supply of new housing generally across the town to meet the needs of local residents and workers	<b>c) Enabling self-build and custom build housebuilding</b>	Short	1.1.6 Maintain and promote the Self Build Register
		Short	1.1.7 Implement the Local Plan policy on self-build
		Short	1.1.8 Implement the Affordable Housing and Specialist Housing Supplementary Planning Document section on Self-build and Custom Build housing / Community Led Development adopted in 2021
		Short	1.1.9 Deliver appropriate numbers of serviced plots to meet the needs indicated by the Self-build Register
		Medium	1.1.10 Explore the feasibility of offering Council owned plots of land for sale as serviced plots for self-build / custom-build housing
		Long	1.1.11 Engage in appropriate partnerships exploring opportunities linked to Community Led Housing Developments

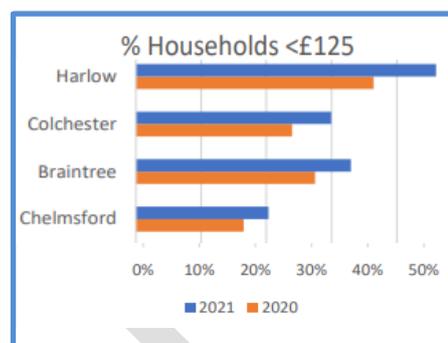
## Objective 1.2 – Maximising the supply and diversity of affordable housing options to ensure the right type of housing is available in the right places.

### Outcome a: Affordability of local housing market for local people

#### Background and issues

##### Income of Harlow residents

Harlow has a significant number of households which have low disposable income. In 2021, 163,491 households in Essex had a discretionary monthly income of less than £125 (representing 28% of all households). Certain wards are more affected than others, as an example 61% of Bush Fair's population had less than £125 discretionary income a month<sup>5</sup>.



The average gross annual income for a Harlow resident working full time in October 2021 was **£25,291**

Nomis, 2020

##### Housing costs in Harlow

The housing costs across all tenures have increased in Harlow. However, as both market house prices and private rented costs have increased dramatically it has made housing much less affordable for local residents than it was at the beginning of the century.

For households on median incomes only social rented housing is genuinely affordable, costing less than 25% of their household income.



Source: HM Land Registry 2019

##### House prices

Between October 2010 and October 2019 average house prices in Harlow increased by 69.55%. Since 2019 house prices have continued to increase, and in October 2021, the average house price in Harlow was **£297,000<sup>6</sup>**.

In the last quarter of 2020, median house prices in Harlow were £290,000 which was 10.6% higher than the average house price in England.

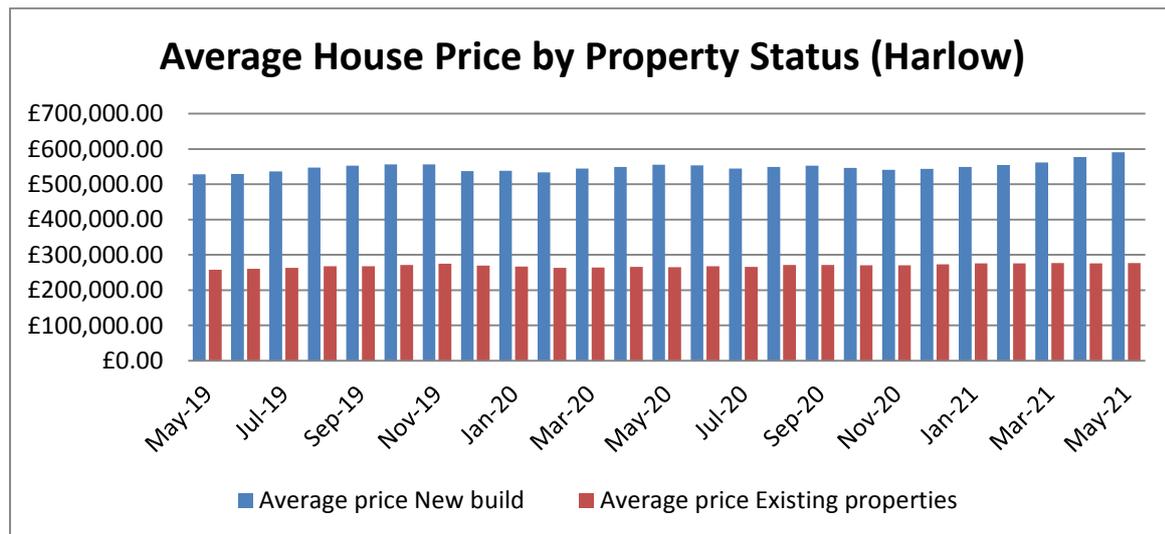
<sup>5</sup> Source: Essex County Council, Financial Wellbeing Resident vulnerability July 2021

<sup>6</sup> Source: Hometrack data as 4/10/21 Median average prices, based on sales in the previous 3 months of sales)

## New build are less affordable than existing stock

Nationally, new build housing is less affordable than that of existing stock<sup>7</sup> and this is also true in Harlow.

The average price of a new build property in Harlow has been consistently circa £300k above the price of existing homes over the past two years. In May 2021, the price of an existing home was £276,512 on average whereas new builds were costing £590,512 on average<sup>8</sup>.



## Affordability ratio

In 2020 Harlow had a median housing affordability ratio of **9.1**

The median affordability ratio in Harlow has increased from 3.2 in 1997.

The median housing affordability ratio for England in 2020 was 7.8

The median housing affordability ratio refers to the ratio of median price paid for residential property to the median workplace-based gross annual earnings for full-time

The affordability ratio indicates that an average house in Harlow costs 9.1 times the average household income of a local family<sup>9</sup>. This is well above the maximum

7

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/bulletins/housingaffordabilityinenglandandwales/2019>

<sup>8</sup> : <https://landregistry.data.gov.uk/app/ukhpi/browse?from=2019-05-01&location=http%3A%2F%2Flandregistry.data.gov.uk%2Fid%2Fregion%2Fharlow&to=2021-05-01&lang=en>

9

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/bulletins/housingaffordabilityinenglandandwales/2020#local-authority-analysis>

income multiplier of 4.5 times a household's income that lenders can usually lend for a mortgage.

### **The Challenges of purchasing a home**

Residents on an average income in Harlow will face real challenges in saving a large enough deposit and securing a mortgage in order to be able to afford to purchase any housing locally. The gross annual income for a Harlow resident working full time in October 2021 was £25,291. Even with two adults working full time on average salaries, and able to secure a mortgage at 4 times their joint salary they would require a deposit of nearly £90k in order to purchase an average priced house of £297k. For most people this is unrealistic and unaffordable.

Local residents are being priced out of the local housing market. Instead residents from neighbouring areas and London are moving into Harlow to take advantage of the lower comparatively lower housing prices to that in their local areas.

### **Shared ownership**

Shared Ownership is a scheme which offers first time buyers the opportunity to purchase a share of a market property and pay rent on the remaining half. Residents are then given the opportunity to purchase more shares of the property and staircase into full ownership.

The typical deposit required for a shared ownership property is between 5-10% of the share being purchased. In October 2021, the average house price in Harlow was £297,000<sup>[1]</sup> and purchasing a 50% share of such a property would require a deposit between £14,850 (5%) to £29,700 (10%). The high amount needed for a deposit can make shared ownership unaffordable for many Harlow residents.

Whilst shared ownership can provide a more affordable housing option for residents, it is still unaffordable for residents who are earning an average income in the town.

Based on 2018 prices, in order to own 25% of a Shared Ownership home in Harlow a household would have been required to earn at least £43k annually.

### **First Homes**

First Homes are a discounted market sale housing tenure that was first introduced by the Government in 2021. For planning purposes it is classed as an intermediate form of affordable housing. First homes must be sold to eligible first time buyers who are required to have a combined income that does not exceed £80k.

The properties must be discounted by a minimum of 30% against the full market value and after the discount has been applied must not sell at a price higher than £250,000. After the 28<sup>th</sup> December 2021 it is expected that 25% of all affordable housing delivered via planning agreements should be First Homes, with the remaining 75% being other affordable tenure.

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<sup>[1]</sup> Source: Hometrack data as 4/10/21 Median average prices, based on sales in the previous 3 months of sales)

A 30% discount on the average price of a Harlow property in 2021 (£297K) would see the average price reduced to £207,900. The discount reduces the prices of the average house significantly, but realistically it is still unaffordable for many Harlow residents (especially for those on a single income).

Local Authorities are able to introduce local policies which may include:

- Applying a higher minimum discount at either 40% or 50% if they can demonstrate need for this (via a housing needs assessment)
- Introducing a local connections test
- Introduce priorities for local key workers

## Private Rents

As house prices are unaffordable for many residents of Harlow, the demand for private rented properties has risen. But private rents have increased and are also unaffordable for residents on average incomes.

Private rents in Harlow as of the 1<sup>st</sup> of November 2021 ranged from £736 per month for a one bed property to £1,524 for a four bed property<sup>10</sup>.

It is estimated that 19% of Harlow's population are experiencing difficulties on their current income, with 8% expressing their current income is very difficult to manage<sup>11</sup>. High private rents are leading to insecurity in tenure and rent arrears leading to homelessness.

## Large difference between social and affordable rents

As affordable rents can be charged up to 80% of the market rent, affordable rents in Harlow can be high. There is a large difference between **social rent and affordable rents** within Harlow (sometimes almost double for same size property). This has resulted in some Housing Associations applying "Affordability criteria" to potential tenants nominated from Harlow Council's Housing Needs Register who have been rejected on the grounds that the property is unaffordable for residents with their income.

The large difference in social and affordable rents also leads to Council tenants being less likely to agree to transfer into a Housing Association affordable rent property as they view the increase as unaffordable. This may prevent the freeing up of larger Council houses by tenants who are looking to downsize.

However, affordable rents are more acceptable to existing Housing Association tenants or perspective tenants from the Housing Needs Register and homeless applicants as these rents are cheaper compared to market rents.

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<sup>10</sup> Source: Hometrack, Harlow District Rents by Bedcount, 1<sup>st</sup> November 2021

<sup>11</sup> Source: Essex County Council, Financial Wellbeing: Sector and Resident Types, May 2021:

## Rents above Local Housing Allowance levels

The Local Housing Allowance (LHA) sets the level of rent that people on benefits are expected to be able to afford to pay.

Outlined below is the 2020/21 Local Housing Allowance Rates for Harlow and the level of rents for each type of property as at September 2021 according to Hometrack.

Property Size	Harlow LHA	Housing Association	Private rent-Median
	Weekly Rent		
<b>Shared Accommodation</b>	£76.50	N/A	N/A
<b>1 bed</b>	£165.70	£107	£190
<b>2 bed</b>	£207.12	£108.10	£248
<b>3 bed</b>	£258.90	£120	£300
<b>4 bed</b>	£299.18	N/A	£381

Harlow residents on benefits who are privately renting will need to find over £40 per week (over £160 per month) to pay for their rent and “top up” the rent element of their benefits. This results in residents having less money to pay for food and other essential expenses and may lead to increased personal debt or opting to over-occupy homes in order to make the property more affordable.

### Private sector rent arrears causing homelessness

Harlow’s Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024 highlights that the main trend in the increase in homelessness was caused by a loss of accommodation in the private rented sector. This is reflecting national trends.

- According to Shelter<sup>12</sup>, nationally between January and March 2020 one in five households facing homelessness (15,130) lost their last settled home due to the ending of a private tenancy. Of these households, a quarter lost their tenancy as a result of rent arrears.
- Almost 230,000 private renters in England have fallen into arrears since the pandemic started, which could put their home at risk. Despite the evictions ban, Shelter suggest that more than 170,000 private tenants were already been threatened with eviction by their landlord or letting agent.

<sup>12</sup>

[https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press\\_release/thousands\\_of\\_private\\_renters\\_made\\_homeless\\_as\\_pandemic\\_unfolds\\_which\\_shelter\\_warns\\_is\\_just\\_the\\_beginning](https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press_release/thousands_of_private_renters_made_homeless_as_pandemic_unfolds_which_shelter_warns_is_just_the_beginning)

## Supporting Community Resilience

By taking action to help local housing to be affordable for local residents it supports the Council's Community Resilience Strategy which aims to confront social and financial exclusion.

### Our Action Plan:

Priority 1: Creating a suitable supply of new housing to meet local housing needs			
Objective	Outcome	Short, medium or long term	Proposed actions
1.2 Maximising the supply and diversity of affordable housing options to ensure the right type of housing is available in the right places	<b>a) Affordability of local housing market for local people</b>	Short	1.2.1 Monitor the affordability of the local housing market including monitoring Local Housing Allowance rates against actual market rents
		Short	1.2.2 Monitor the impact of affordability of housing (private rent and market housing) on homeless presentations
		Short	1.2.3 Monitor Registered Providers affordable rent levels to ensure that they are genuinely affordable for local residents and that Registered Providers are not unnecessarily refusing nominations on unrealistic affordability criteria
		Short	1.2.4 Review the S106 Agreements clauses for affordable housing to consider if they need amending to ensure Registered Providers deliver genuinely affordable rents
		Short	1.2.5 Ensure that any new Council built homes are capped at rents below LHA rates to ensure that they are genuinely affordable for local residents

## Outcome b: Affordable housing negotiated through the planning system

### Background and issues

#### Affordable Housing Need

The latest version of the SHMA<sup>13</sup> provides an objective assessment of the housing need in the locally.

The 2020 adopted Local Plan states that 30% of all new developments should be affordable housing. This is lower than the level of assessed need for affordable housing at 61% due to viability issues.

The July 2017 SHMA outlines the level of housing need including affordable housing.

The table below breaks down the size and type of affordable and intermediate housing that is required to meet the assessed need.

#### **Table demonstrating Housing needs (SHMA)**

Harlow's housing need					
Total need for affordable housing 2016 to 2033			3,098		
Average annual need for affordable housing			182		
Proportion of overall need for affordable housing			61%		
Affordable rent requirements			Intermediate affordable housing requirements		
Flat	1 bedroom	240	Flat	1 bedroom	30
	2+ bedroom	460		2+ bedroom	90
House	2 bedroom	800	House	2 bedroom	160
	3 bedroom	980		3 bedroom	180
	4+ bedroom	170		4+ bedroom	30
Subtotal		2,700	Subtotal		500
% of affordable housing		84%	% of affordable housing		16%

The **Affordable Housing and Specialist Housing Supplementary Planning Document** which was adopted in October 2021 provides detailed guidance for developers on the expectations and process of how affordable housing is expected to be delivered through the planning system.

#### **First Homes**

In 2021, First Homes was introduced as a new form of intermediate affordable housing. The guidelines state that "First Homes are the governments preferred discounted market tenure and should account for at least 25% of all affordable

<sup>13</sup> SHMA – Strategic Housing Market Assessment

housing delivered by developers through planning applications.” This has implications for the Council’s policies on affordable housing as 25% is a larger proportion than the 16% required in the latest SHMA assessment of need.

Until a new housing need assessment is undertaken, in order to comply with the First Homes guidelines it will be assumed that the following split will be required in planning applications:

- 75% affordable rent
- 25% intermediate affordable housing including First Homes.

This best reflects the objectively assessed need for affordable rent.

### **Affordable housing delivered through the planning system**

The following table illustrates the number and percentage of Affordable Housing units that have been delivered through the planning system.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total number of new build completions</b>	<b>Number of Affordable Housing units</b>	<b>% of new build completions that are Affordable Housing</b>
2017/18	281	53	19%
2018/19	676	24	3.5%
2019/20	725	133	18.4%

### **Barriers to achieving affordable housing through the planning system**

Significant challenges exist that make it difficult to deliver the required level of affordable housing to meet local needs through the planning system and negotiations.

Viability assessments of housing schemes submitted for planning by developers have resulted in fewer affordable housing units being delivered over recent years by proposing evidence that the required number of units are commercially unsustainable.

Permitted development conversions of offices into residential units over recent years have resulted in a loss of opportunity to deliver over 300 potential affordable units.

There are a limited number of Registered Providers who are interested in taking on the affordable units delivered through S106 agreements. Many Registered Providers prefer to develop their own housing schemes as a more cost effective business model than taking on low numbers of units scattered across a wider geography.

## Our Action Plan:

Priority 1: Creating a suitable supply of new housing to meet local housing needs			
Objective	Outcome	Short, medium or long term	Proposed actions
1.2 Maximising the supply and diversity of affordable housing options to ensure the right type of housing is available in the right places	<b>b) More Affordable Housing negotiated through the planning system</b>	Short	1.2.6 Implement the affordable Housing and Specialist Housing Supplementary Planning Document that was adopted in 2021 which provides guidelines for developers on the expectations and process of negotiating affordable housing through the planning process
		Short	1.2.7 Ensure that the objectively assessed evidence base of housing need, broken down into housing type and mix is kept up to date, and takes into account the implications of the introduction of First Homes as an affordable housing tenure expected to deliver 25% of all affordable housing.
		Short	1.2.8 Work to maximise the provision of affordable housing achieved through planning negotiations including reviewing the viability assessment process
		Medium	1.2.9 Strengthen partnership work with Registered Providers to help support the delivery of affordable housing. This might include setting up a Registered Providers Forum that can explore potential development opportunities, monitors the delivery of affordable housing, and identifies potential issues in the system
		Short	1.2.10 Monitor the delivery and affordability of new affordable homes achieved through the planning process

**Outcome c: Diversify the range of affordable housing options to provide greater affordable choice for local people**

**Background and issues**

**Importance of diversity of choice for different price points**

It is important to provide access to a greater choice of housing at different price points to enable a wider range of residents to access housing that they can afford.

Alongside the traditional housing products such as social and affordable rented homes, and intermediate products such as Shared Ownership, newer models of housing products are now available such as Starter Homes, Help to Buy options, First Homes, Build to Rent, Community Led Housing and Cooperative housing.

These products can support people to gain their first step on the housing ladder and where appropriate should be promoted as options for local residents.

The Town Centre Masterplan highlights the potential for Build to Rent schemes to be located in the core of the Town Centre.

**Our Action Plan:**

<b>Priority 1: Creating a suitable supply of new housing to meet local housing needs</b>			
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Short, medium or long term</b>	<b>Proposed actions</b>
1.2 Maximising the supply and diversity of affordable housing options to ensure the right type of housing is available in the right places	<b>c) Diversifying the range of affordable housing options to provide greater affordable choice for local people</b>	Medium	1.2.11 Investigate the feasibility of different housing tenure options and promote as appropriate
		Medium	1.2.12 Investigate the feasibility of delivering council built homes of different tenures to provide a variety of affordable housing options locally
		Medium	1.2.13 Review the feasibility / desirability of establishing Build to Rent zones in the Town Centre core to develop wider affordable options for the whole housing market
		Medium	1.2.14 Promote affordable housing ownerships products to enable local residents to get on the first step of the housing ladder

## Objective 1.3 – Develop a Council House Building Programme

### Outcome a: Develop the Council's housebuilding programme

#### Background and issues

#### Previous Council Housebuilding schemes

##### Pathfinder Council houses



In December 2015 the Council completed the building of its first 18 Council Houses through the Pathfinder programme.

The two and three bedroom houses were developed on three ex-garage sites.



All the Pathfinder Homes were let to people on the Housing Needs Register on a social rent.

#### 2021 developments

During 2021 a scheme of 16 two and three bedroom houses started on site at Bushey Croft.



A further scheme of two houses replacing a structurally damaged house was also commenced at The Hill, Old Harlow.

Both schemes will be let to people on the Council Housing Needs Register on social rents in early 2022.

#### Developing a Pipeline of new build Council Housing

The Council is committed to developing and delivering a pipeline of sites to build out as new Council Housing.

The pipeline is being developed through a methodical review and prioritisation of a number of underutilised sites such as ex-garage sites, infill sites and car-parks that are located across the town.

Feasibility studies are being undertaken to understand which sites can deliver housing that achieves value for money and contributes to the wider regeneration of areas.

Funding opportunities such as taking advantage of the new financial freedom that lifts the cap on Housing Revenue Account borrowing, the use of retained Right to Buy (RTB) receipts and grant funding from Homes England are being explored to help deliver the housing.

To support the development of the Council House building programme a **Council Housebuilding Delivery Plan** is being developed that will outline the processes and key decision making points involved in delivering the pipeline of Council housebuilding.

### **Opportunities to build Council housing that will support specific local housing needs**

Whilst it is important that the Council housebuilding programme delivers quality general needs housing that will be able house the majority of people on the Housing Needs Register, the development programme does enable more specialised schemes to be considered.

Examples of potential specialised Council house schemes that could be considered to become part of the Council housing pipeline might include:

- Innovative Temporary Accommodation options such as mobile homes, micro-homes and flat pack homes. The Council has identified a need for additional Temporary Accommodation and innovative cost effective solutions could be investigated as potentially included as part of the Council housebuilding programme.
- Small schemes of bungalows or low rise flats with access to gardens that are designed to meet the needs of older tenants. The schemes would be designed with the aim of potentially encouraging tenants that currently are under-occupying large general needs housing to down-size and so make better use of the existing housing stock. Such tenants are often found to be less keen to move into the Council's existing sheltered schemes as they often have pets they wish to keep or want access to gardens and their own outdoor space.

### **Purchasing housing for Council Housing**

In 2020 the Council utilised used Right to Buy receipts to purchase 45 additional houses from the private sector to provide Council Housing for people on the Housing Needs Register. This ensured that Harlow was able to benefit from the Right to Buy receipts rather than them being return to the Treasury.

### **Partnering with HTS**

Harlow Council has an ambition to build more Council homes in partnership with the Council's subsidiary HTS Group Ltd. In 2021, HTS were appointed as the contractor to build out the two homes at The Hill.

## Our Action Plan:

Priority 1: Creating a suitable supply of new housing to meet local housing needs			
Objective	Outcome	Short, medium or long term	Proposed actions
1.3 Develop a Council House building Programme	<b>a) Develop the Council's housebuilding programme</b>	Short	1.3.1 Produce and implement the Council Housebuilding Delivery Plan to support the successful delivery of a Council housebuilding programme
		Short	1.3.2 Explore funding mechanisms that will support the delivery of the Council Housebuilding programme including maximising the use of retained Right to Buy receipts, additional HRA borrowing, cross subsidy schemes for mixed tenure developments and reinvesting return from sales into future schemes
		Long	1.3.3 Explore opportunities and feasibility of developing innovative housing schemes that meet a specialist housing need through the Council Housebuilding programme

### Outcome b: Build homes that are energy efficient / carbon neutral

#### Background and issues

##### Carbon emissions from housing

The UK has a set legally binding target of 80% reduction in carbon emissions by 2050.

The Committee on Climate Change states<sup>14</sup> that:

- 18% of all UK carbon emissions is from buildings (the majority of which are from homes).
- A further 15% of emissions are from electricity consumed in buildings.

A key strand of the government's **2021 Net Zero Strategy (Build Back Greener)**<sup>15</sup> is reducing emissions from heat and buildings. Heating homes and workplaces is responsible for about 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of UK carbon emissions. In response the government has set a target to improve the energy efficiency of housing and that by 2035 all newly installed heating appliances will be low carbon technology such as heat pumps or hydrogen boilers.

<sup>14</sup> The clean growth plan – a 2050 ready new homes policy

<sup>15</sup> Net Zero Strategy; Build Back Greener published October 2021

## **The Council has declared a Climate Emergency**

In July 2019 Harlow Council declared a climate emergency.

The Council's housebuilding programme can support the Council's carbon reduction targets by adopting low carbon, low energy and water efficient standards.

By building energy efficient / carbon neutral new homes it will prevent additional funds being required to be spent on the buildings at a later point as part of a (more expensive) retrofit programme.

Energy efficient / low carbon homes will reduce the running costs for tenants, which will help reduce fuel poverty, enable tenants to have more money to pay for other essentials, potentially resulting in reduced levels of rent arrears and supporting the Council's aim of social inclusion.

## **Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Sustainability Checklist**

The Harlow and Gilston Garden Town has produced a Sustainability Checklist which sets out practical and technical guidance on how to apply sustainable indicators and policies to help reach the Garden Town target of reaching carbon neutral by 2030. It carries material weight in planning applications.



The checklist outlines adopts a traffic light approach for a range of themes with red indicating the minimum requirements and green indicating approaches that will support the development achieving zero carbon by 2030.

The Council housebuilding programme will adopt and apply the principles laid out in the Sustainability Checklist.

## **Budgeting for building net zero homes**

The Garden Town Sustainability Checklist states that “net zero homes can be achieved at a capital cost uplift between 3.5% and 15% for residential developments”<sup>16</sup>.

The cost implications of net zero measures will need to be included in the financial assessments of each Council Housebuilding scheme and considered as part of the scheme feasibility assessment.

## **Council housebuilding net zero options**

The Council will explore the feasibility of various low carbon design options to help improve the carbon efficiency of the new Council Homes that they build. The Council's Regeneration Team will work with Energy Consultants to utilise the best

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<sup>16</sup> Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Sustainability Checklist page 10

and most appropriate technology reflecting a balance between cost and carbon emissions.

Among the options being considered are:

- **Passivhaus Designs** – takes a fabric first approach to design and can include considerations such as the orientation of buildings, insulation and thickness of walls and using timber frames rather than higher options such as concrete and steel.
- **Electric wet hot water and heating systems** backed by PV on the roof and battery management options.
- **Solar thermal technology** to raise water to ambient temperature reducing the energy required to heat it
- **Recycling rain water** for flushing toilets.
- **Availability of electric vehicle charging points** to all new homes.

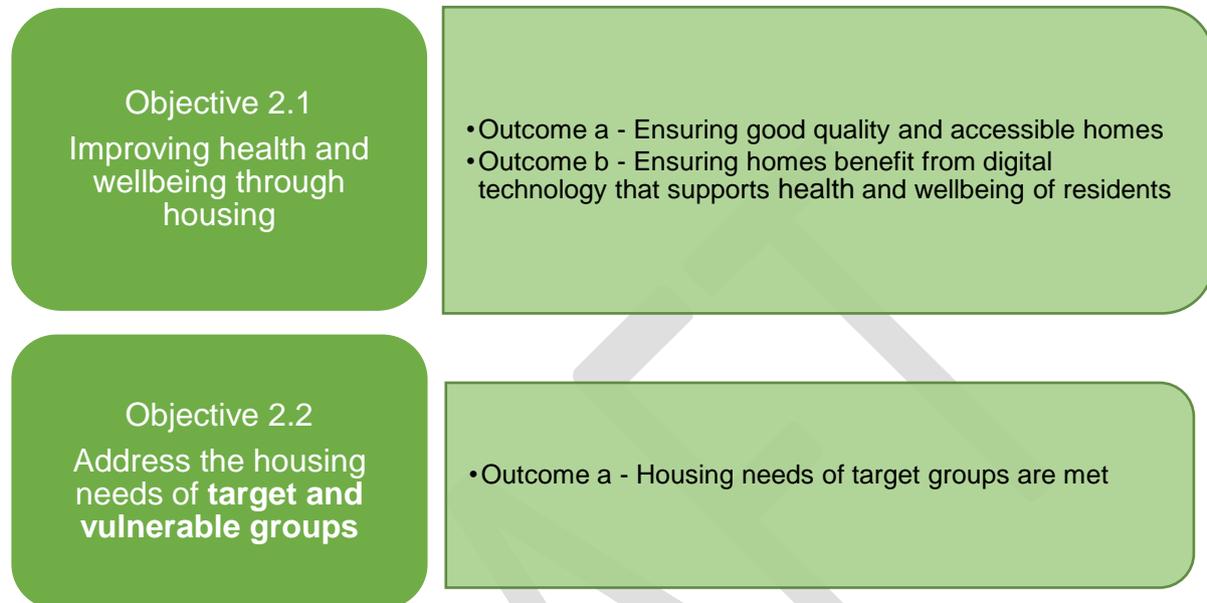
### Our Action Plan:

Priority 1: Creating a suitable supply of new housing to meet local housing needs			
Objective	Outcome	Short, medium or long term	Proposed actions
1.3 Develop a Council House building Programme	<b>b) Build homes that are energy efficient / carbon neutral</b>	Short	1.3.4 Apply the Garden Town Sustainability Checklist indicators to the Council house building programme
		Short	1.3.5 Adopt and implement fully costed net zero technologies in the Council housebuilding programme

## Chapter 4: Address the housing needs of target and vulnerable groups

The following summarises the key objectives and outcomes for the Council under this priority:

### Priority 2 – Addressing the housing needs of target and vulnerable groups



### Key Issues:



This priority of “ensuring that the Council addresses the housing needs of target and vulnerable groups” supports the Council’s Community Resilience Strategy by ensuring that on one in the town is left behind.

## **Objective 2.1 – Improving health and wellbeing through housing**

### **Outcome a: Ensuring good quality and accessible homes**

#### **Background and issues**

##### **The importance of good quality homes for people’s health:**

The housing conditions that people live in can have a profound effect on people’s health. Warm and dry homes that are free from mould can prevent respiratory disease. Over-crowded housing conditions or a home where people do not feel safe and secure can affect people’s mental health. A stable home enables people to access employment and be more economically prosperous which statically results in healthier outcomes. During the Covid pandemic, overcrowded homes made it harder for people to isolate as required leading to the potential spread of the virus within households.

The English Housing Survey Headline report 2019-20<sup>17</sup> highlights that in general, social renters have lower levels of wellbeing and are more likely to be lonely than owner occupiers and those in the private rented sector. Whilst Harlow has a higher proportion of social renters than the national average, it may be a combination of many social / economic factors that results in the poor health outcomes of some of its population.

##### **Covid-19 measures exacerbated health impact of poor housing:**

The impact of the Covid-19 lockdown measures highlighted the importance of the quality of peoples housing for maintaining people’s health.

##### **Decent Homes standards:**

After a programme of investment that lasted several years all Harlow Council homes meet the Decent Homes Standard, until Covid prevented or delayed building maintenance in 2020.

On a national level 23% of private rented sector homes do not meet Decent Homes Standards<sup>18</sup>.

Harlow’s Environmental Health team recently prosecuted landlords for letting properties in a poor state of repair.

<sup>17</sup> English Housing Survey Headline Report 2019-20; page 3

<sup>18</sup> English Housing Survey Headline Report 2019-20; page 3

## Fuel Poverty in Harlow

Homes that are more energy efficient help prevent the occupiers from suffering from fuel poverty which is defined as the condition of being unable to afford to keep one's home adequately heated. There are strong links between fuel poverty and poor health. Those who are fuel poor are more likely to turn their heating down to below the level that is adequate for their wellbeing and as a result could live in cold and damp homes. This can contribute to causing or exacerbating health issues such as respiratory, circulatory and heart diseases and mental health problems.

In 2019, Harlow had 4,986 households in fuel poverty which equates to 13.3% of the town's population. This is just above the rate across the whole of the East of England which was 13.2%.<sup>19</sup>

Fuel poverty in Harlow			
Area	Number of households	Number of households in fuel poverty	Proportion of households fuel poor (%)
Harlow	37,401	4,986	13.3

## Accessible homes

The following features are felt to be required to enable a home to be visit-able and accessible for most people to visit:

- having level access to the main entrances
- flush thresholds
- sufficiently wide doorways and circulation spaces for wheelchairs
- toilets at entrance levels (with adequate space besides the toilet to allow people to slide across)

In 2019, nationally, 9% of homes have adequate accessibility features to deem them as visit-able and accessible for most people to visit. This is an increase from 5% in 2005<sup>20</sup>.

Accessible and adaptable homes can keep people safe and independent in their homes for longer and prevent avoidable hospital and care home admissions.

Harlow Council's adopted Local Plan policy H5 supports the provision of accessible homes in new developments.

### Local Plan H5 policy states:

**“All new dwellings must be at least Building Control Part M4(2) standard for accessible and adaptable homes to meet the occupiers future needs. In addition, major residential developments must provide Building Control Part M4(3) standard dwellings for wheelchair users.”**

<sup>19</sup> Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy 2019 data on Fuel Poverty by area (<https://data.essex.gov.uk/dataset/v8971/fuel-poverty>)

<sup>20</sup> English Housing Survey Home Adaptations Report 2019-20

Additional information on the policy can be found within in the adopted Affordable Housing and Specialist Housing Supplementary Planning document.

The latest Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) sets out the proportion of wheelchair accessible housing required. The 2015 SHMA<sup>21</sup> identified the need for 10% of new build market housing and 15% of Affordable Housing should meet M4(3) standards and therefore be suitable for wheelchair users.

### **Adapting existing homes:**

Making adaptations to a person's home can enable a person to live independently for longer. This can also help free up blocked hospital beds by enabling people to be discharged to their own homes and take the pressure off Adult Social Care services.

<b>Minor adaptations could include:</b>	<b>Major adaptations might include:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• grab rails to the bathrooms or near doors</li><li>• additional stair rails</li><li>• small steps into doors</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• level access showers or wet rooms</li><li>• stair-lifts or through-floor lifts</li><li>• wheelchair ramps</li><li>• widening doors</li><li>• adapting kitchens</li></ul>

People with Disabilities that require adaptations for their homes can apply for grants. (Residents in private accommodation can apply to Essex County Council under the Disability Facilities Grant. Council tenants can apply to Harlow Council.)

An ECC **Adult Social Care Assessment** can with minor adaptations (costing up to £1,000) help residents to continue to manage everyday tasks at home.

A **Disabled Facilities Grants** from Essex County Council's Better Care Fund can help residents to undertake major adaptations to the home. This would require an assessment by an occupational therapist.

### **Existing Council house stock**

Harlow Council's existing housing stock has been found to have a lack of 2 and 3 bedroom mobility properties. The Council's Housing Department has opted to adapt some existing homes (through the use of grants) to support tenants with disabilities to live independently in their homes for longer.

However, it is important to consider carefully whether to undertake major adaptations in a Lifetime Home for a person who uses a wheelchair full time. For instance, installing through floor lifts reduces the available liveable space in the house as they effectively removes a bedroom from use and part of the ground floor.

The Housing Department has introduced a new Aids and Adaptions process. This focuses on making the best use of the existing stock by giving greater priority to moving residents rather than adapting their existing homes.

<sup>21</sup> SHMA – Strategic Housing Market Assessment

## Our Action Plan:

Priority 2: Addressing the housing needs of target and vulnerable groups			
Objective	Outcome	Short, medium or long term	Proposed actions
2.1 Improving health and wellbeing through housing	<b>a) Ensure good quality and accessible homes</b>	Short	2.1.1 Implement and monitor the Local Plan Policy H5 to ensure new homes are accessible
		Medium	2.1.2 Adopt a new Disabled Facilities Grants policy that provides clear definition and justification for how Disabled facilities Grants are allocated

### Outcome b: Ensuring homes benefit from digital technology that supports health and wellbeing of residents

#### Background and issues

#### Covid-19 lockdowns saw major take up in the use of digital technology:



The Covid-19 lockdowns and other related measures have resulted in major changes in behaviour especially in the take up of digital technology. Digital technology such as video conferencing platforms and other technology enabled shielding residents to have vital

interactions with their family and friends helping to reduce levels of social isolation, get food deliveries, and have health consultations.

#### Digital technology enabling people stay independent in their homes:

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic it was acknowledged that digital technology could have a very positive impact in supporting people to live independently in their own homes for longer.

Digital and assisted technology, often referred to as Smart technology can help alert others if help is required, allow a person to control their home environment and keep connected with their family, friends and the wider community.

Digital technology includes:

- **Sensors, monitors and alarms:** such as wearable alarms, lights that come on when a person moves around the house and video connected doorbells
- **Digital assistants:** such as smart speakers which allow people to interact with them by asking questions or giving instructions verbally and can be used for medicine reminders or to control the heating or lighting in a home

- **Mobile apps** that remotely monitor a person's health and wellbeing including monitoring heart rates, blood sugar levels and blood pressure.

### **Appropriate digital infrastructure and connectivity to all homes**

Ensuring people have the appropriate digital connectivity through digital infrastructure is essential to enable people to take advantage of digital technology. This means having affordable superfast broadband and Wi-Fi.

### **Collaborating as part of the Essex and Hertfordshire Digital Innovation Zone (DIZ)**

Harlow Council is part of the Essex and Hertfordshire Digital Innovation Zone (DIZ)<sup>22</sup> (which is a partnership of public and private organisations located in West Essex and East Hertfordshire) and has signed up to the DIZ Strategy and Vision.



#### The DIZ Vision:

**To be the best connected place of its type in the UK. A place of innovation and inclusion. A place where the benefits of digital investment are harnessed maximised and shared across residents, commuters, businesses and borders.”**

The DIZ partnership is delivering a number of projects that will support local residents to take advantage of digital technology to support their health.

#### **Ultrafast broadband to GPs surgeries**

In 2021, the DIZ successfully completed a project to install Local Full Fibre Network (LFFN) broadband infrastructure, providing ultrafast digital connectivity to all GP surgeries in Harlow and the wider DIZ area. The £1.7m project was funded by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).



The provision of the superfast broadband to the GP surgeries puts them at the forefront of digital healthcare, enabling them to potentially deliver more health care remotely, online and through digital applications.

The project will also support properties located close to the GP surgeries to take advantage of the superfast broadband. This will support more local people to make greater use of digital technology to access health and care services they need as well as the wider benefits of enhanced high speed connectivity.

<sup>22</sup> <https://diz.org.uk/>

## DIZ SMART Homes and Digital Buddies project



Third Sector partners within the DIZ have led on projects to help reduce digital exclusion amongst residents and support them to access digital technology that helps them to live independently in their homes for longer.

The Digital Buddies project provides informal training and support to residents who struggle with technology to help them become confident with technology.



Digital Boomers was a £143,000 DCMS funded project that supported older people or people living with disabilities across the DIZ partnership area with technology that helped them to live more independently in their own homes. After an assessment of their lifestyle and needs, residents were supported with choosing appropriate technology, installing it and then trained on how to use it. The residents then acted as Smart Home hosts – demonstrating the benefits of the technology to both health and care professionals and other residents who were considering using technology to support them remain living at home.

### Our Action Plan:

Priority 2: Addressing the housing needs of target and vulnerable groups			
Objective	Outcome	Short, medium or long term	Proposed actions
2.1 Improving health and wellbeing through housing	<b>b) Ensuring homes benefit from digital technology that supports health and wellbeing of residents</b>	Medium	2.1.3 Investigate opportunities to expand the SMART Homes pilot project whereby technology can be used to support people to live independently in their own homes for longer
		Short	2.1.4 Support the DIZ (Digital Innovation Zone) project to ensure that GPs and Health Services are supported to make the best use of the full fibre network Superfast Broadband infrastructure that has been supplied to all GP surgeries in Harlow
		Long	2.1.5 Ensure that the Council's Sheltered Homes are digitally connected to enable residents to connect with their families and services to improve their health and wellbeing
		Medium	2.1.6 Adopt guidelines that outline the minimum standards of digital infrastructure that developers need to implement in new developments to ensure all properties have good connectivity

## Objective 2.2 – Addressing the housing needs of target groups

### Outcome a: Housing needs of target groups are met

#### Background and issues

It is important to ensure that different groups have suitable housing to meet their needs. Outlined below is a summary of some of the issues that affect key target groups within Harlow.

### Theme a: Homeless

#### New homeless legislation 2018

- The April **2018 Homelessness Reduction Act** gave the Council increased duties to prevent and relieve homelessness.
- In August 2018 the **Rough Sleeping initiative** committed to halving rough sleeping by 2022 and ending it by 2027.

#### Homelessness in Harlow

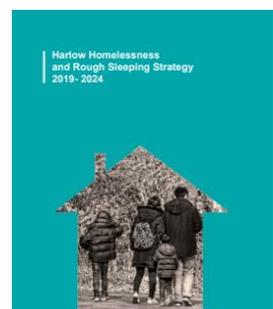
Harlow has had consistently higher rates of applicants accepted as homeless and in priority need than the East of England and England<sup>23</sup>.

The Council has at any one time in the region of 250 to 280 households living in temporary accommodation<sup>24</sup>.

During 2021/22 it is expected that there will be a 20% increase in the numbers requiring Temporary / Emergency Accommodation as a result of the impact of easing regulations to the private rented sector as Covid-19 lockdown measures are eased.

#### Harlow Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy 2019-2024

In October 2019 Harlow Council adopted its new Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy. This has the overarching objective of eliminating rough sleeping and providing a service that focuses on the prevention of homelessness. The Strategy outlines a framework approach to delivery that is focused on the four pillars of prevention, intervention, recovery and partnership.



<sup>23</sup> Measured by: numbers of homelessness acceptances per 1000 households of the population for area.

Source Harlow Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 - 2014

<sup>24</sup> Source Harlow Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 - 2014

## Preventing homelessness in Harlow:

The main reason for homelessness is Section 21 notices or “no fault” evictions from private rented accommodation. The increasing gap between the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) and actual rents is exacerbating this problem. The Council seeks to help prevent households at risk from losing their private rented accommodation and so becoming homeless.

The **private rented sector** is seen as a key part of the solution to homelessness within Harlow. The Harlow Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy commits to making the best use of all housing within Harlow. It highlights the opportunities from utilising homes in the private rented sector to help support homeless households either by using them as temporary accommodation or as permanent housing solutions for those at risk of homelessness.

### Temporary accommodation

The Homeless Reduction Act led to a greater need for temporary accommodation. This has budget implications.

The Council uses a mix of accommodation for temporary accommodation including its own stock, Registered Providers, the private rented sector and is closing down its use of buildings with Permitted Development rights. The Council only uses Bed and Breakfast accommodation where absolutely necessary and has rarely placed homeless households in temporary accommodation outside of the area.

The Council’s Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy identifies the need to improve the quality and supply of temporary accommodation with an eye to achieving cost effectiveness.

54% of temporary accommodation used in Harlow was from the private rented sector in 2019.

The Council has at any one time in the region of 250 to 280 households living in temporary accommodation.

## **Streets2Homes Bromley Cottages**

In 2019 the Council completed a conversion of Bromley Cottages into a centre for Street2Homes to support rough sleepers or those at risk of rough sleeping with up to 9 bed spaces.



Streets2Homes also have a Day Centre at Wych Elm where they offer support such as access to showers, IT and internet access and training / advice to help prevent homelessness.

## **Use of Permitted Development conversions by other Local Authorities**

Many of the recent office to residential Permitted Development conversions within the town have been used by out of town Local Authorities as temporary accommodation. This has resulted in concentrations of vulnerable households without local connections living in inappropriate locations.

## **Rough Sleepers**

Rough sleepers are more likely to have underlying health conditions than the wider population. Rough sleeping is likely to have negative impacts on people's health in both the short and long term.

The Harlow Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy outline how the Council will work in partnership to help tackle rough sleeping.

The numbers of people sleeping rough in Harlow has fluctuated since 2010. After the Council was awarded government funding from the Rough Sleeping Initiative, significant work was undertaken locally to reduce the numbers of rough sleepers within a year from 24 individuals in 2018 to nil in October 2021..

## **“Everyone In” – helping to protect rough sleepers from Covid-19**

In March 2020, the government announced a series of initiatives and funding (under the banner of “everybody in”) to help get rough sleepers safely accommodated to help protect them and the wider public from the risks of Covid-19.

- 64 individuals temporarily accommodated through “Everyone In”.
- 27 were moved onto permanent accommodation in the private rented sector with assistance from the Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP) funding.
- 3 moved into supported accommodation (Bromley Cottages).
- 34 left the accommodation provided without a permanent offer; reasons for this were either re-connected with family/friends or abandoned accommodation.

## Our Action Plan:

Priority 2: Addressing the housing needs of target and vulnerable groups			
Objective	Outcome	Short, medium or long term	Proposed actions
2.2 Addressing the housing needs of target groups	<b>a)Housing needs of target groups are met</b>  <b>Theme: Homeless</b>	Short	2.2.1 Implement the Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy 2019 to 2024 (adopted October 2019)
		Medium	2.2.2. Improve the quality and supply of temporary accommodation, with an eye to cost effectiveness
		Long	2.2.3 Investigate the feasibility of delivering new temporary accommodation to help reduce expenditure on temporary accommodation in order to meet local need

### Theme b: Older People's Housing

#### The numbers of older people living in Harlow

15.3% of Harlow's population are aged over 65 years. This is significantly lower than the average for Essex which is 20.5% of the population<sup>25</sup>.

Although Harlow has a lower Old Age Dependency Ratio at 242.8 aged 65+ to every 1000 working age<sup>26</sup> compared to the national average for England of 286.8 in 2019, the population of older people in Harlow is growing.

In Harlow the number aged 65 or over is projected to increase from 13,500 in 2018 to 18,000 by 2033, which is a +33.3% increase<sup>27</sup>.

#### "Agewell" in Harlow

Providing suitable housing for older people supports the "AgeWell" priority of **Harlow's Health and Wellbeing Partnership Strategy 2018 to 2028**.

#### "Agewell" vision:

Harlow to be a great place to grow older with people living healthy and independent lives, where older people feel connected, valued and celebrated and supported within their communities.



<sup>25</sup> Essex JSNA 2019; Harlow Profile Page 4 - using the source of 2016 ONS population projections

<sup>26</sup> Essex JSNA 2019; Harlow Profile Page 4 - using the source of 2016 ONS population projections

<sup>27</sup> Source ONS 2016-based subnational populations projections

Whilst the aim is to support as many people as possible to live independent lives in their own homes for as long as possible, it is important that suitable specialist housing is provided to meet the needs of older residents.

## Planning guidance

Harlow’s adopted **Local Plan Policy H5** states:

“The provision of specialist housing developments will be supported on appropriate sites that will meet the needs of older people and other such groups.”

Further guidance on the provision of specialist housing to meet the needs of older people is outlined in the **Affordable Housing and Specialist Housing Supplementary Planning Document** as adopted in 2021.



Housing for older people can be split into the following categories:

<b>Age restricted / age exclusive independent accommodation</b>	usually restricted to people above 55 years of age with no additional facilities or services
<b>Residential and nursing homes</b>	individual rooms within residential building and providing a high level of care
<b>Specialist housing for older people</b>	
<b>Retirement housing</b>	housing for older people with some additional facilities
<b>Supported housing</b>	housing for older people with a greater range of facilities and with support and care available
<b>Retirement villages</b>	larger scale clusters of accommodation with a central hub providing a large range of facilities – i.e. <b>Extra Care Housing</b>

Specialist housing for older people can include both affordable and market for sale options.

## Need for Extra Care Housing

In 2021 Essex County Council identified the need for **60 additional extra care units** within Harlow.

## Supporting older Council Tenants

Harlow Council’s Housing department will support their older tenants to live independently for longer by offering incentives to encourage older tenants to downsize from family sized accommodation to smaller units. This policy helps free up much needed family sized housing.

## Our Action Plan:

Priority 2: Addressing the housing needs of target and vulnerable groups			
Objective	Outcome	Short, medium or long term	Proposed actions
2.2 Addressing the housing needs of target groups	a) Housing needs of target groups are met  Theme: b) Older people	Medium	2.2.4 Work in partnership with specialist providers to secure a range of good quality and affordable housing options for older people and an aging population
		Medium	2.2.5 Support ECC in the development of new Extra Care housing that meets identified needs locally
		Short	2.2.6 Offer incentives to Council tenants to encourage them to downsize from family sized accommodation to smaller units which will help older tenants to continue to live independently for longer
		Medium	2.2.7 Investigate opportunities to expand the SMART Homes pilot project whereby technology can be used to support people to live independently in their own homes for longer. (as per 2.1.3)

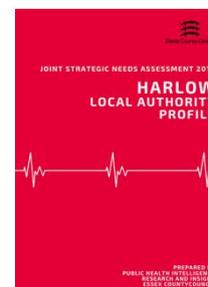
### Theme c: Housing for people with disabilities

#### People with physical disabilities and sensory impairments in Harlow

According to the 2019 Essex JSNA, 10.1% of the population of Harlow aged 18 to 64 years old has a moderate or serious disability.

The 2019 Essex JSNA<sup>28</sup> identifies that Harlow has:

- high rates of hospital admissions for all ages
- high rates of emergency admissions to hospital due to Coronary Heart Disease
- high incidents of lung cancer
- approximately 2800 people might have some form of impaired mobility
- approximately 2500 people have difficulty performing personal care
- approximately 160 with health conditions caused by a stroke
- approximately 1500 of all ages with a hearing sensory impairment
- approximately 1300 of all ages with a visual sensory impairment



Nationally, in 2011, 3.3% of all households had at least one wheelchair user and the rate is higher at 7.1% for those living in affordable housing. It is expected that these proportions are likely to increase in line with the aging of the population.

<sup>28</sup> JSNA – Essex Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Harlow Profile 2019

Based on the above figures, the 2015 SHMA<sup>29</sup> identified that 10% of new build market housing and 15% of Affordable Housing should meet M4(3) standards and therefore be suitable for wheelchair users.

## **Key Challenges**

Harlow's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019–2014 identifies the increase in clients with mental health issues and / or complex needs and the reduction in Housing Related Support by Essex County Council as two key challenges faced in tackling homelessness.

### **Support people to live independently**

As highlighted earlier in the chapter (under objective 2.1) making adaptations to a person's existing home and the use of digital technology can support people to live independently in their homes for longer. Supporting people with disabilities to access appropriate digital technology that helps meet their personal needs can be part of a person's housing solution.

### **Working with ECC to deliver appropriate accommodation for people with disabilities**

ECC recognises that there is a need for a more structured approach to enabling residents who are able to live independently to move-on from Supported Living. Part of the problem is the lack of suitable move-on accommodation. It is recognised that a more joined up approach is needed both between service areas within ECC (including Mental Health, Learning Disability and Leaving Care) and with District Councils in order to better identify needs, support move-on opportunities and procure suitable accommodation. ECC is setting up a Supported Housing Partnership Board to support with the coordination of the provision of suitable accommodation for people with disabilities<sup>30</sup>.

### **Harlow planning policies**

Harlow council's adopted Local Plan policy H5 supports the provision of accessible and adapted homes in new developments.

#### **Harlow's Local Plan**

To help meet the need for homes suitable for residents with disabilities Harlow's Local Plan Policy H5 states:

"All new dwellings must be at least Building Control Part (M4(2) standard for accessible and adaptable homes to meet occupiers' future needs. In addition, major residential development must provide Building Control Part m4 (3) standard dwellings for wheelchair users. The proportion is set out in the SHMA."

<sup>29</sup> SHMA – Strategic Housing Market Assessment

<sup>30</sup> As identified in the Scrutiny Report "housing and accommodation requirements for adults with at moderate / severe learning disability" presented to Harlow Council Cabinet 9/9/21

## Supporting Council Tenants

There are a number of Council tenants who are currently living in family sized housing that require mobility or adapted accommodation. Ideally these tenants would like bungalows or larger ground floor flats with access to gardens. However, there is a very limited supply of such accommodation. This shortage is preventing the freeing up of general needs housing. There is the potential of designing Council new build schemes to help meet the needs of such tenants encouraging them to move, ultimately freeing up of more general needs housing and making better use of the whole stock.

## People with Learning Disabilities

In September 2021 Harlow Council accepted the recommendations of a report from its Scrutiny Committee seeking to improve the provision of housing accommodation in Harlow for adults with moderate / severe learning disabilities.

The report estimates that in 2019 there were approximately 1,500 adults in Harlow with learning disabilities which is predicted to increase to approximately 1,730 adults by 2035. Of the 1,500 adults with learning disabilities approximately 330 have severe learning disabilities that may have additional support needs<sup>31</sup>.

The table illustrates the number of homeless applicants that self-identified as having a learning disability support need. In 2019/20 the average for England was 4.9%.

Year	Total number of homeless duties	Total with a support need due to a learning disability	% of those owed a duty
2018/19	445	4	0.9%
2019/20	259	7	2.7%

**“For people with a learning disability, appropriate accommodation has a strong impact on their safety and overall quality of life, while also reducing social exclusion. At least half the adults with learning disabilities still live with their parents, without the opportunities to learn independent living skills and make choices about how they live their lives..... There is evidence that smaller scale residencies, based in the community which offer a higher level of choice and independence result in better outcomes for service users.”**

Quote from Scrutiny Report

The Scrutiny report identifies that the following accommodation exists in Harlow for people with Learning Disabilities:

- Supported Living – 11 schemes with 47 places in total
- Residential Care – 4 homes with 99 places in total

<sup>31</sup> Data from JSNA 2019 contained within the Scrutiny Report “housing and accommodation requirements for adults with at moderate / severe learning disability” presented to Harlow Council Cabinet 9/9/21

## Scrutiny Report recommendations

The Scrutiny report makes a series of recommendations that could support the delivery of accommodation options for adults with Learning Disabilities. These include:



The report outlines potential accommodation options and opportunities for providing accommodation for people with Learning Disabilities. These include:

- Identifying small blocks of under-utilised accommodation/stock (ideally 4-6 units) that could be converted to meet the needs of learning disability clients.
- Identify any opportunities to convert former sheltered stock or low demand stock into accommodation for adults with learning disabilities. ECC advise that they would not cluster more than 12 learning disability clients on anyone project, however for any larger schemes that are identified consideration could be given to a multiple use scheme.
- Identify any opportunities within the Council's own build programme or with developers to develop new build schemes for clients with learning disabilities.

It is clear that any commitment to deliver housing provision for clients with learning disabilities needs to be carefully balanced against the need to deliver housing for more general needs and other specialist client groups, especially given the high demand for housing within the town. Essex County Council are considering how their own sites can be developed to meet the needs of Learning Disability clients and this may also provide opportunities for collaborative working in the development of mixed use schemes.

## Supported Housing

Supported Housing offers people a chance to live independently whilst providing additional support services such as 24 hour assistance, specialist support services or a support officer.

The Supported Housing options in Harlow have reduced over recent years. In addition ECC has reduced funding for housing related support.

The lack of options and funding for supported housing and related services can prevent people with disabilities from reaching their potential. It also affects people who may be recovering from periods of rough sleeping or homelessness as well as those who have or are recovering from addiction issues

**Our Action Plan:**

<b>Priority 2: Addressing the housing needs of target and vulnerable groups</b>			
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Short, medium or long term</b>	<b>Proposed actions</b>
2.2 Addressing the housing needs of target groups	<b>a) Housing needs of target groups are met</b>  <b>Theme:</b> <b>c) People with disabilities</b>	Short	2.2.8 Implement and monitor Policy H5 of the Local Plan and implement the Affordable Housing and Specialist Housing Supplementary Planning Document to ensure adequate numbers of accessible and wheelchair adapted homes are built
		Short	2.2.9 Support people with disabilities to live independently in their own homes through the promotion of suitable adaptations and the use of digital technology
		Short	2.2.10 Work closely with colleagues in ECC to better identify the accommodation needs of people with all types of disabilities, move on opportunities and the procurement of suitable accommodation
		Short	2.2.11 Implement the recommendations of the Scrutiny Report on Housing and accommodation requirements for adults with a moderate / severe learning disability
		Medium	2.2.12 Investigate the options for meeting supported housing needs including influencing ECC

**Theme d: Gypsy and Travellers**

The adopted Local Plan Policy H10 provides planning guidance relating to pitch requirements for gypsies and travellers, and travelling show people.

**Harlow Local Plan Policy H10 states:**  
If evidence indicates that there is a need for additional pitches or plots, new sites must meet the defined criteria.

The Council undertakes regular Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment which provides a robust assessment of the current and future need for Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople accommodation for the period 2016- 2033.

The additional identified future need within Harlow for pitches has been met by restoring the Fern Hill site.

### Our Action Plan:

Priority 2: Addressing the housing needs of target and vulnerable groups			
Objective	Outcome	Short, medium or long term	Proposed actions
2.2 Addressing the housing needs of target groups	<p><b>a) Housing needs of target groups are met</b></p> <p><b>Theme: d) Gypsy and travellers</b></p>	Short	2.2.13 Implement policy H10 of the Local Plan which supports new travellers sites if there is a proven need and all appropriate criteria is met

### Theme e: Housing for people under 35 years old

Harlow Council wishes to be able to provide a wide range of housing that meets the needs of **all** our residents. This includes housing for people under 35 years old.

#### Young people are being priced out of the housing market

People under 35 years old are being priced out of the housing market in all tenures. The local housing market is experiencing high prices and rents relative to local incomes. Young people who work struggle to save enough for a deposit to buy their own home and often find that their incomes are not yet high enough to be considered for schemes such as Help to Buy. The private rented sector is expensive, hard to access and insecure.

Nowhere across the country is the private rented sector affordable for young people on the minimum wage<sup>32</sup>. Rather than rent accounting for 35% of income the average private rented accommodation would equate to 71% of the income of a young person on the minimum wage<sup>33</sup>.

Limited affordable housing options for people under 35 are resulting in greater numbers of people living with their parents until much later in life. Nationally, around 1 million more adults are living with their parents compared to two decades ago<sup>34</sup>.

The unaffordability of the housing market results in large numbers of households becoming concealed households. The concealed households include both adult

<sup>32</sup> Based on the assumption that affordability equates to 35% of income – as per the Resolution Foundation

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/news/news/private-renting-unaffordable-anywhere-in-england-for-young-people-on-minimum-wage-68912>

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.civitas.org.uk/press/1m-more-young-adults-living-with-their-parents-than-two-decades-ago/>

children living with their parents as well as families with children concealed within other households. This can have result in over-crowding and have a negative impact of the household's health.

### **Changes to Local Housing allowance for people under 35 years old**

Most private renters under 35 years on benefits can only get the shared accommodation rate of the Local Housing Allowance (LHA). But in May 2021 the government introduced changes to the exception rules for LHA rates for people under 35 years old. The changes enable some Universal Credit claimants to receive a greater allowance for housing if they meet certain criteria and therefore would be able to receive the rate for one bedroom accommodation.

### **Impact on the local economy**

The lack of a stable home can make it harder for young people to obtain and retain employment and can impact on their ability to access decent training and skills to help them progress. The result can be young people effectively being excluded from the labour market and become socially and financially excluded.

The lack of affordable housing options for young people under 35 years old affects the local economy. Local businesses find it harder to attract and retain staff.

Young people under the age of 25 were disproportionately affected by Covid-19 measures which resulted in high levels of young people being furloughed or losing their often lower paid jobs. This resulted in greater difficulties in gaining access to affordable housing.

### **Our Action Plan:**

<b>Priority 2: Addressing the housing needs of target and vulnerable groups</b>			
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Short, medium or long term</b>	<b>Proposed actions</b>
2.2 Addressing the housing needs of target groups	<b>a) Housing needs of target groups are met</b>	Medium	2.2.14 Investigate examples of good practice and innovative housing models that could be adopted in Harlow that could provide affordable housing for people under 35 years old
	<b>Theme: e) Housing for people under 35 years old</b>	Long	2.2.15 Undertake a review of potential opportunities across all tenures within Harlow that could deliver affordable housing solutions for people under 35 years old
		Long	2.2.16 Investigate housing models that can support people under 35 access affordable housing including the feasibility of Living Wage housing

## Theme f: Young people leaving care

### Gaps in current provision

There are gaps in the current approach to providing suitable housing for young people who are leaving care.

The lack of suitable support and accommodation for young people leaving care prevents them having a smooth transition to living independently. It can result in young people living in unsuitable shared accommodation or needing to move away from areas where they have familiar networks in order to find cheaper accommodation that they can afford. This can result in a lack of stability and does not support young people to achieve better life chances.

### Issue identified in Harlow's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

Harlow's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 to 2024 identifies the poor housing provision to support young people leaving care as one of the main challenges in tackling homelessness locally.

### Government support for care leavers

In 2019 the government introduced additional funding and support for care leavers. This included £2,000 Leaving Care Grants to help a young person leaving care to furnish their own homes.

### Our Action Plan:

Priority 2: Addressing the housing needs of target and vulnerable groups			
Objective	Outcome	Short, medium or long term	Proposed actions
2.2 Addressing the housing needs of target groups	<b>a) Housing needs of target groups are met</b>  <b>Theme: f) Young people leaving care</b>	Long	2.2.17 Investigate opportunities to improve the provision for care leavers within Harlow

## Theme g: Key workers

### Who are Key workers?

The importance of key workers was highlighted during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Key workers provide essential services to local communities. They work predominately in the public sector and without whom key parts of the infrastructure of

health and social care, education, law enforcement and other vital frontline services cannot function. Typically, teachers, nurses, police and fire officers are included as key workers. However, other groups such as care workers, social workers and other public sector officers could also be included as key workers. As of May 2020, 30.1% of Harlow's workforce are defined as key workers<sup>35</sup>.

### **Key workers are priced out of housing market**

Key workers generally do not qualify for social housing unless they meet the specific priority need criteria on the Housing Needs Register. Escalating housing prices both to purchase and to rent accommodation means that housing is unaffordable for key workers.

As previously, Highlighted under Objective 2.1 of this Housing Strategy, local residents who earn the average gross annual income of £25,291 (as at October 2021) are priced out of both the private purchase and private rented housing markets. The table below indicates the average gross salary for various Key Workers and illustrates that these Key Workers are not earning enough to make housing affordable locally.

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Average Gross annual salary for the profession (October 2021)</b>
<b>Registered Nurse</b>	£ 25,574
<b>Police Officer</b>	£29,310
<b>Fire Fighter</b>	£29,919
<b>Teacher</b>	£29,637

<https://www.payscale.com/>

High housing costs for key workers is causing recruitment and retention difficulties for local key Anchor Institutions such as the Princess Alexandra Hospital. High housing costs can deter applicants accepting local employment.

### **Key worker housing schemes**

The feasibility of providing affordable housing schemes for key workers could be investigated to support local key employers to recruit and retain staff. Options could include the development of rented schemes ring fenced for key workers where rents are set at a level affordable to average key worker salaries or schemes linked to key employers such hospital workers. Appropriate mechanisms will need to be devised to ensure schemes are successfully managed including development of key worker allocation policies.

<sup>35</sup>

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/articles/coronavirusandkeyworkersintheuk/2020-05-15>

## Our Action Plan:

Priority 2: Addressing the housing needs of target and vulnerable groups			
Objective	Outcome	Short, medium or long term	Proposed actions
2.2 Addressing the housing needs of target groups	<b>a) Housing needs of target groups are met</b>  <b>Theme: g) Key workers</b>	Medium	2.2.18 Investigate the feasibility of delivering key worker housing schemes and policies to support the local economy and efficient functioning of public services

### Theme h: Ex-offenders

#### Ex-offenders at risk of rough sleeping

On release from prison, it is acknowledged that ex-offenders are at risk of homelessness including potentially rough sleeping. In August 2019, Harlow Council signed up to the Essex-wide **Essex Prisoner Housing Protocol** which outlines actions that partner agencies will take to reduce the number of adult offenders who leave custody without suitable accommodation to move into.

## Our Action Plan:

Priority 2: Addressing the housing needs of target and vulnerable groups			
Objective	Outcome	Short, medium or long term	Proposed actions
2.2 Addressing the housing needs of target groups	<b>a) Housing needs of target groups are met</b>  <b>Theme: h) Ex-offenders</b>	Short	2.2.19 Implement the Essex-wide Prisoner Housing Protocol to help prevent ex-offenders sleeping rough or moving into accommodation which is unsafe for themselves and others

## Theme i: Veterans

Individuals who are current or former members of the Armed Forces or a bereaved spouse or civil partner of a member of the Armed Forces are able to join the Harlow Housing Needs Register.

Harlow Council has signed the **Essex Armed Forces Community Covenant**. The covenant aims to:

- Encourage local communities to support the armed forces communities in their areas
- Increase public understanding of the issues affecting the armed forces community
- Recognise and honour the sacrifices faced by the armed forces



The Armed Forces Covenant has now been enshrined in law by the Armed Forces Bill.

We are proud to support our men and women serving in the armed forces, their families and veterans in our communities.

### Our Action Plan:

Priority 2: Addressing the housing needs of target and vulnerable groups			
Objective	Outcome	Short, medium or long term	Proposed actions
2.2 Addressing the housing needs of target groups	<p><b>a) Housing needs of target groups are met</b></p> <p><b>Theme:</b> <b>i) Veterans</b></p>	Short	2.2.20 Implement the Essex Armed Forces Community Covenant

## **Chapter 5: Improving housing in the Private Sector**

The following summarises the key objectives and outcomes for the Council under this priority:

### **Priority 3 - Improving housing in the Private Sector**

**Objective 3.1**  
Understanding the importance of the private rented sector within the local housing market

- Outcome a - Using the private rented sector to help meet local housing needs
- Outcome b - Limit the impact of the growth of permitted development office conversions and other commercial premises into residential accommodation

**Objective 3.2**  
Improving conditions for tenants within the private rented sector

- Outcome a - Improved conditions of private rented sector housing
- Outcome b - Reduced homeless applications resulting from evictions from private rented sector
- Outcome c - Understanding the affordability of the private rented sector

**Objective 3.3**  
Improving the conditions of the wider Private Sector

- Outcome a - Reduction in Empty homes
- Outcome b - Improving wider private sector housing

### **Key issues:**



#### **Growth in the private rented sector**

The number of households in Harlow that are living in private rented housing has grown substantially from 4% in 2001 to 26% in 2018 ( a 22 percentage point increase).

This is greater than the national picture of a 17% increase.



#### **Local Housing Allowance (LHA)**

Rates have not kept up with market rents since 2010 and are currently frozen at 2016 rates.

The main reason for homelessness is “no fault” evictions from Private Rented Sector (S21 notices).



#### **Growth of Permitted Development office conversions to residential**

Permitted development conversions have created over 1,000 new residential units in Harlow in the last few years; the majority of these are located in industrial/employment areas with poor living environments. If 1,000 residential units had been built via schemes that need planning permission it would be expected that 30% would be affordable units.



#### **Improving the conditions of the wider Private Sector**

The 2008 Harlow House Condition Survey suggested that 24.9% of all housing in Harlow was a non-decent standard. This included 23.1% of owner occupied housing and 34% of the Private Rented Stock.

## Objective 3.1 – Understanding the importance of the private rented sector within the local housing market

### Outcome a: Greater use of the private rented sector to help meet local housing

#### Background and issues

#### Large expansion in private rented sector within Harlow

10.9% of Harlow's stock was private rented according to 2011 census<sup>36</sup>. It is likely that when the 2021 census data is available that the proportion of private rented dwellings will have increased.

As the table below shows, the number of households in Harlow that are living in private rented housing has grown substantially from a low level of 4% in 2001 to 26% in 2018. Whilst this growth reflects the national trend it is at a far greater rate than the national rate which is at 17 percentage points increase.

	Census 2001			YouGov 2018			Percentage point change 2001 to 2018		
	Owns outright, mortgaged or shared ownership	Social Housing	Private rented or lives rent free	Owns outright, mortgaged or shared ownership	Social Housing	Private rented or lives rent free	Owns outright, mortgaged or shared ownership	Social Housing	Private rented or lives rent free
<b>Harlow</b>	64%	32%	4%	40%	34%	26%	-24%	2%	22%
<b>East Herts</b>	80%	10%	9%	69%	8%	23%	-11%	-2%	14%
<b>Uttlesford</b>	79%	11%	10%	70%	14%	16%	-9%	3%	6%
<b>Epping</b>	80%	13%	7%	71%	9%	20%	-9%	-4%	13%
<b>England</b>	73%	16%	11%	59%	13%	28%	-14%	-3%	17%

Source: Shelter, Growth in the private Rented Sector 2001-2018

The estimated number of households living in private sector accommodation in Harlow in 2019 was 4,939<sup>37</sup>.

Households have become more reliant on the private rented sector for housing as house prices have grown and priced local people out. It is clear that a number of former council properties have been purchased via the Right to Buy, and subsequently have become private rented accommodation.

<sup>36</sup> Tenure type as proportion of all households

<sup>37</sup> Generation Rent -

[https://www.generationrent.org/44\\_000\\_renters\\_faced\\_homelessness\\_in\\_our\\_wait\\_for\\_eviction\\_reform?ruter\\_id=7540](https://www.generationrent.org/44_000_renters_faced_homelessness_in_our_wait_for_eviction_reform?ruter_id=7540)

## Increase in Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

A House in Multiple occupation (HMO), also known as a house share, is a house where:

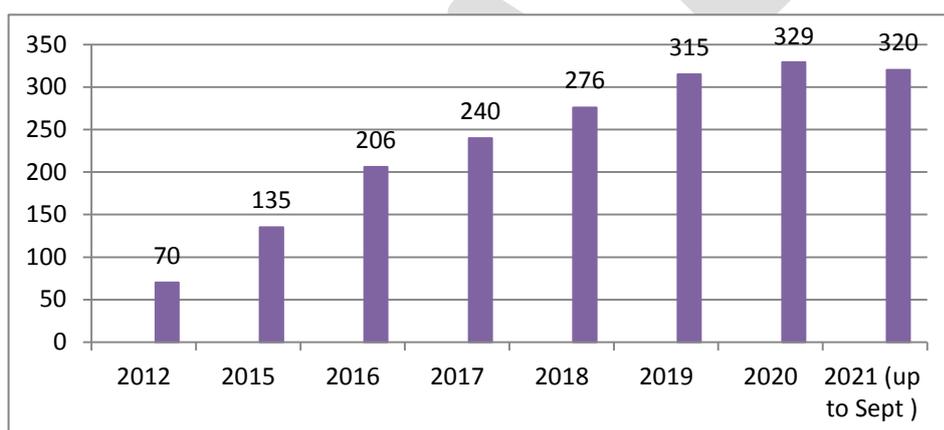
- There are 3 or more unrelated people living there, forming more than 1 household
- Some or all tenants share toilet, bathroom or kitchen facilities

Landlords of private rented accommodation need a mandatory licence if:

- It is rented to 5 people or more who form more than 1 household
- Some or all tenants share toilet, bathroom or kitchen facilities

A household can be a single person or members of the same family who live together. It includes people who are married or living together and people in same-sex relationships.

Within Harlow there has been an increase in registered HMOs. In 2021 there were **320 HMO properties spread over 145 landlords**. Several landlords have a portfolio of multiple properties.



Numbers of registered HMOs in Harlow

## HMO licensing

Harlow introduced a HMO licensing scheme prior to it being made mandatory on a national level.

Landlords are required to apply to Harlow Council Environmental Health Licensing Team for a HMO licence.

All properties must meet key conditions to be awarded a HMO licence that include:

- Full planning permission to convert a property into a HMO
- Fire risk assessment
- Appropriate safety certificates
- Meet minimum amenity standards
- Paid the appropriate fees

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO)

Harlow Council Code of Practice

Amenity Standards for HMOs



Details of every registered HMO property in Harlow are added to the public register of HMOs.

The Council will prosecute landlords that are operating unlicensed HMOs.

### **Town-wide Article 4 direction**

There is a town-wide Article 4 direction affecting HMO conversions across the whole of Harlow. The direction has been in place since April 2021 and means that from this date all conversions to HMO, regardless of size, will require full planning permission before the conversion can take place.

Applications for planning permission will need to comply with the planning policies set out in policy H3 of the Local Plan.

#### **Harlow's Local Plan**

The creation or conversion of a dwelling to a House of Multiple Occupation (HMO) must meet the following criteria:

- (a) The number of HMOs would not exceed one out of a row of five units;
- (b) It is supported by a design rationale based on an understanding and analysis of local context and character taking into consideration the adopted Harlow Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD);
- (c) The development makes adequate provision for refuse storage and collection;
- (d) Parking is provided at a level of one space per bedroom, plus one secure covered cycle space per bedroom, or set at the current adopted parking standards;
- (e) Effective measures are proposed to minimise the effects of noise and disturbance.

The effectiveness of this policy and the one-in-five restriction should be reviewed two years after the adoption of this Local Plan.

### **Private rented sector helping to meet housing need**

The growth in the private rented sector demonstrates the importance the sector plays in the local housing market and that the sector is helping to meet the needs of a growing number of local people.

Nationally, there has been an increase in the proportion of young people aged under 35 year old and older people living in the private rented sector. It is expected that this national trend is reflected locally.

## Using the private rented sector to prevent homelessness

As highlighted in earlier in the document (Objective 2.2 outcome a) the private rented sector is seen as a major part of the solution to help prevent homelessness in Harlow both for use as temporary accommodation and as permanent housing solutions for those at risk of homelessness. The Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy also outlines how the Council will support individuals to have better access the private rented sector.

Initiatives include:

- a) Creating a dedicated team to focus on supporting access to the private rented sector
- b) Providing loans to applicants to help them with advanced payments and guarantees to landlords
- d) Targeted use of Discretionary Housing Payments and payments that may be available to Universal Credit claimants.

There is also the potential to start a Harlow Landlord Forum. The aim of this forum would be help to improve conditions and drive management standards upwards within the private rented sector. It would also help administer the homeless prevention initiatives such as the cash incentives / rent deposit guarantee scheme and other upfront payments that can be paid to landlords if they are willing to accept people who are at risk of being homeless or homeless people as their tenants.

### Our Action Plan:

Priority 3: Improving housing in the Private Sector			
Objective	Outcome	Short, medium or long term	Proposed actions
3.1 Understanding the importance of the private rented sector within the local housing market	<b>a) Greater use of the private rented sector to help meet local housing need</b>	Short	3.1.1 Monitor the growth of the private rented sector
		Short	3.1.2 Administer the HMO licensing and maintain the HMO register
		Short	3.1.3 Monitor the town-wide Article 4 direction
		Short	3.1.4 Implement activities outlined in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy that aim to prevent homelessness through the use of the private rented sector
		Medium	3.1.5 Investigate the feasibility of setting up a Harlow Landlords Forum to help monitor standards and support homeless prevention initiatives such as promoting Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme

## **Outcome b: Limit the impact of the growth of Permitted Development office conversions and other commercial premises into residential accommodation**

### **Background and issues**

#### **Large numbers of Permitted Development conversions in Harlow**

In 2013, changes to planning legislation introduced Permitted Development Rights that allowed for the conversion of offices to residential accommodation. These Permitted Development conversions do not require the permission of the local planning authority. The policy was introduced in an effort to stimulate bringing empty property space back into use and re-energise town centres by providing new housing.

Harlow has seen significant numbers of Permitted Development conversions. By 2018, over **1,000 permitted developments residential units** had been identified within Harlow.

In 2019, 51% of all new homes in Harlow were office conversions.<sup>38</sup> This was well above the national average of 6% and was in fact the highest level for any Local Authority.

In 2020, further changes widened the use classes of Permitted Developments to include commercial properties.

#### **Concerns over standards**

Concerns have been raised about the quality, design and location of the Permitted Development units. Conversions often result in poor energy efficiency and high carbon footprints for the buildings leading to the likelihood of fuel poverty for residents.

Permitted Development conversions result in the concentration of substandard accommodation with little or no outdoor space, in areas that are inappropriate due to noise, air quality issues and a lack of local facilities.



Many of these blocks are in employment areas surrounded by industrial units and without key facilities required for residential areas such as pavements, street lighting, play areas and public transport. The industrial estates are often over half an hour walk to the nearest shops and schools leading to an increased feeling of isolation.

#### **Other Local Authorities using the Permitted Development accommodation in Harlow**

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.localgov.co.uk/Council-chiefs-call-for-permitted-development-right-to-be-scraped/49795>

There has been an extensive number of placements by either neighbouring or London Councils into the Harlow Permitted Developments for use as Temporary Accommodation. The Harlow Permitted Development units offer cheaper housing solutions for these Councils who are experiencing increasing demand for affordable housing in their own areas.

The Local Housing Allowance (LHA) cap freeze has exacerbated this issue. Rents of properties located within placing authority areas are above their local LHA rate. Whereas, the comparatively lower rents within Harlow are below the LHA of the placing authority. This means that the other Councils are able to provide housing for people on benefits at a rate that is more affordable when they place them in Harlow.

The result is a large number of potentially vulnerable residents have moved into the town without any additional resources for the services needed to support them. The placing authority does not have to notify Harlow Council that they are placing people within the town.

The negative impact on families placed in temporary accommodation from out-of-area can be significant. This is particularly true for children and young people because they are removed from familiar surroundings, extended family and friends and their education is often interrupted which may go on to result in children not fulfilling their true academic potential. They may also be exposed to anti-social behaviour and criminal behaviour which has been reported to have taken place at some of the sites. Adults are also likely to feel socially isolated.

Harlow Council has engaged with the Local Authorities that are placing people in Permitted Development accommodation locally to set up protocols to ensure better communication between the councils.

### **Harlow Council use of permitted development units**

According to the Harlow and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 -24, 16% of the temporary accommodation that Harlow Council uses is within Permitted Development conversions but have subsequently moved on almost all of those tenants.

### **Loss of Section 106 Affordable Housing**

Permitted Development conversions across England have resulted in the loss of many affordable housing units. The LGA estimated that by January 2020, nationally Permitted Development conversions had potentially led to the loss of 13,540 affordable housing units being achieved through the planning system<sup>39</sup>.

If the 1,000 permitted development units that have been delivered in Harlow had gone through the normal planning framework, then it could be expected that 30% would have been affordable, equating to **a loss of 300 affordable units**.

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<sup>39</sup> <https://www.localgov.co.uk/Council-chiefs-call-for-permitted-development-right-to-be-scraped/49795>

## Harlow Article 4 Directions

In response to the serious issue of the level of Permitted Development conversions within the town, in 2019 Harlow Council served Article 4 Directions on remaining office buildings within the town. This was to ensure that no further office building could be converted into residential accommodation without applying for planning permission.

By October 2021 no further Permitted Development conversions were created on the buildings that the Article 4s were served on. The original Article 4 Directives were renewed in 2021.

Due to the expansion of the Permitted Development use classes, the Council is pursuing further Article 4 Directions to regulate changes of use in the Town Centre and four key employment areas in the district. This will protect residential amenity and the needs of retail and commercial businesses. These further Article 4 Directions are non-immediate, and, if confirmed, will come into effect in October 2022.

### Our Action Plan:

Priority 3: Improving housing in the Private Sector			
Objective	Outcome	Short, medium or long term	Proposed actions
3.1 Understanding the importance of the private rented sector within the local housing market	b) Limit the impact of the growth of Permitted Development office conversions and other commercial premise into residential accommodation	Short	3.1.6 Continue to develop better relationships with Councils who are making out of town placements of homeless people into the Harlow Permitted Development accommodation and monitor the effectiveness of the Protocols between Harlow Council and other Councils that have been put in place.
		Short	3.1.7 Monitor the success of the Article 4 Directions that have been served on office buildings and other Permitted Developments across the town and ensure that they are renewed as required

## **Objective 3.2 – Improving conditions for tenants within the private rented sector**

### **Outcome a: Improved conditions of private rented sector housing**

#### **Background and issues**

##### **Generally housing in the private rented sector is of good quality**

The vast majority of homes within the private rented sector within Harlow are of good quality.

HMOs are required to be registered with the Council and are inspected to ensure that they meet appropriate standards.

As previously noted, poor housing conditions can have a negative impact on tenant's health and wellbeing.

##### **Prosecutions of landlords**

Harlow Council's Environmental Health Team has prosecuted landlords who fail to keep their properties up to standard.

In 2019 Harlow Council took a landlord to Court for failure to comply with a Housing Enforcement Notice regarding structural movement due to subsidence. The landlord was fined £6,000 and charged costs and a victim surcharge

##### **Energy efficient homes**

There is recent no data on the energy efficiency of private rented sector housing within Harlow. A Community Renewal Funded project to support Retrofit in Harlow taking place in 2022 will hopefully provide greater detail on the energy efficiency of the housing stock in Harlow.

However, nationally energy efficiency is a key metric of housing conditions. The 2019-20 English Housing Survey suggests that nationally the energy efficiency of homes is improving but the private rented sector housing is less energy efficient than social housing but above owner occupation. (38% of private rented sector dwellings

were in EER bands A to C, compared to 61% for social housing and 36% of owner occupied dwellings<sup>40</sup>.

The governments Clean Growth Strategy highlights the importance of improving energy efficiency of homes including the energy efficiency performance of privately rented homes. The government’s aim is to upgrade as many homes as possible to EPC Band C by 2030 where practical.

Supporting all homes to become more energy efficient will help make homes more cost effective and affordable for residents. It will also be an important measure to support the Government’s Net Zero targets and may result in potential support for home owners (including landlords) to retrofit homes.

### Our Action Plan:

Priority 3: Improving housing in the Private Sector			
Objective	Outcome	Short, medium or long term	Proposed actions
3.2 Improving conditions for tenants within the private rented sector	<b>a) Improved conditions of private rented sector housing</b>	Short	3.1.8 Continue to maintain the HMO licensing regime and where appropriate take action against landlords that do not maintain their properties in good condition
		Medium	3.1.9 Promote any opportunities for the private rented sector to take advantage of any potential support such as grants that may become available for improving the condition of private sector housing, retrofitting homes to achieve carbon zero and energy efficiency measures

**Outcome b: Reduced homeless applications resulting from evictions from private rented sector housing**

### Background and issues

In April 2019, the Government promised to abolish Section 21 “no fault” evictions<sup>41</sup> where landlords can seek to evict private rented tenants without giving a reason. As of September 2021 the law had not been changed. Landlords used Section 21 notices when they are selling their property. However, Section 21 notices can be used by landlords if they wish to re-let the property for a higher rent, or they wish to avoid making repairs to the property.

<sup>40</sup>

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/945013/2019-20\\_EHS\\_Headline\\_Report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/945013/2019-20_EHS_Headline_Report.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> As outlined in Section 21 of 1988 Housing Act

In Harlow, the most common reason for a household presenting as homeless is a Section 21 “no fault” notice to end assured shorthold tenancies.

Harlow ranked 114<sup>th</sup> out of 315 Local authorities for the rate of cases of no fault evictions.<sup>42</sup>

Harlow’s ranking out of 314 Local Authorities	No-fault eviction homelessness cases 2019-21	Estimated private renter population, households, 2019	Cases per 1000 private renters
114	51	4939	10.3

### Our Action Plan:

Priority 3: Improving housing in the Private Sector			
Objective	Outcome	Short, medium or long term	Proposed actions
3.2 Improving conditions for tenants within the private rented sector	b) <b>Reduced homeless applications resulting from evictions from private rented sector housing</b>	Short	3.1.10 Raise awareness of tenant’s rights in relation to Section 21 notices – ensure access to good quality housing advice in a timely fashion
		Short	3.1.11 Take action against any landlord that undertake any illegal eviction

### Outcome c: Affordability of the private rented sector

#### Background and issues

#### Affordability of rents in the Private Rented Sector for local people

As of the 1<sup>st</sup> of November 2021, Private Rents in Harlow ranged from £736 per month for a one bedroom property to £1524 per month for a four bedroom property.

Source: Hometrack

<sup>42</sup>

[https://www.generationrent.org/44\\_000\\_renters\\_faced\\_homelessness\\_in\\_our\\_wait\\_for\\_eviction\\_reform?recruiter\\_id=7540](https://www.generationrent.org/44_000_renters_faced_homelessness_in_our_wait_for_eviction_reform?recruiter_id=7540)

## Shelter research on affordability

In July 2019 Shelter published research<sup>43</sup> that demonstrated that Harlow ranked 12<sup>th</sup> in the East of England in affordability ratio of a low wage family compared to median rents. A low wage Harlow resident would pay 46.1% of their income on paying their private rent.

The following table is taken from the Shelter report:

Rank	Area (Local Authority) – East Region	Yearly regional low wage after tax and NI (FT and PT wages)	Yearly median private rent (2 bedroom)	% of wage spent on private rent	Yearly social rent (2 bedroom)	% of wage spent on social rent
1	Cambridge	£24,717	£15,000	60.7%	£5,203	21.1%
2	Hertsmere	£24,717	£14,400	58.3%	£6,451	26.1%
3	Three Rivers	£24,717	£14,400	58.3%	£6,268	25.4%
4	St Albans	£24,717	£14,400	58.3%	£5,671	22.9%
5	Epping Forest	£24,717	£14,400	58.3%	£5,578	22.6%
6	Watford	£24,717	£13,800	55.8%	£6,137	24.8%
7	Brentwood	£24,717	£13,200	53.4%	£5,117	20.7%
8	Dacorum	£24,717	£12,000	48.5%	£5,778	23.4%
9	Broxbourne	£24,717	£11,988	48.5%	£6,033	24.4%
10	East Hertfordshire	£24,717	£11,940	48.3%	£6,018	24.3%
11	Welwyn Hatfield	£24,717	£11,700	47.3%	£5,662	22.9%
12	<b>Harlow</b>	<b>£24,717</b>	<b>£11,400</b>	<b>46.1%</b>	<b>£5,129</b>	<b>20.7%</b>
13	Basildon	£24,717	£11,400	46.1%	£4,779	19.4%
14	Stevenage	£24,717	£11,100	44.9%	£5,481	22.2%

## Local Housing Allowances have not kept up with actual rents

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates have not kept up with market rents since 2010. There was a national freeze on the LHA between 2016 and 2020. Whilst in March 2020 the LHA rate was increased there may be further freezes in the rate. As highlighted on In Objective 1.2 on page 27, Harlow residents who are on benefits will need to find over £40 per week to pay for their rent to top up their rent element of their benefits.

Outlined below is the 2020/21 Local Housing Allowance Rates for Harlow and the level of rents for each type of property as at September 2021 according to Hometrack.

<sup>43</sup> Shelter: Private Rents and family wages, Affordability in the Private Rented Sector, July 2019

Property Size	Harlow LHA	Housing Association	Private rent-Median
	Weekly Rent		
<b>Shared Accommodation</b>	£76.50	N/A	N/A
<b>1 bed</b>	£165.70	£107	£190
<b>2 bed</b>	£207.12	£108.10	£248
<b>3 bed</b>	£258.90	£120	£300
<b>4 bed</b>	£299.18	N/A	£381

## Our Action Plan:

Priority 3: Improving housing in the Private Sector			
Objective	Outcome	Short, medium or long term	Proposed actions
3.2 Improving conditions for tenants within the private rented sector	c) <b>Affordability of the private rented sector</b>	Short	3.1.12 Monitor Local Housing Allowance rates against the local housing market and actual local rent levels

## Objective 3.3 – Improving the conditions of the wider Private Sector

### The wider Private sector housing in Harlow

According to 2011 census statistics:

- 56.1% of households in Harlow (equating to 19,429 households) were owner occupied
- In addition 0.9% of households lived in shared ownership dwellings

In 2017, 69.3% of dwellings in Harlow, equating to 25,740 homes were in the private sector. This figure includes dwellings that are privately rented and owner occupier homes.

Whilst the proportion of households living in owner occupied homes has reduced in Harlow from 64% in 2001 to 40% in 2018<sup>44</sup> (as set out in the table on page 60), the wider private sector still represents a large number of homes within the town.

<sup>44</sup> Source, Shelter, Growth in the private rented sector 2001-2018

## Outcome a: Reduction in empty homes

### Background and issues

Long term empty homes can become an eyesore in the local community and a target for anti-social behaviour, and damage the perception of the local neighbourhood.

In 2018, Harlow had an estimated 607 vacant dwellings according to Council Tax data which represents 1.7% of the total dwelling stock. This was lower than the national rate of 2.5%. The vacancy rate is below the “transactional vacancy level” of 3% which is the proportion of stock normally expected to be vacant to allow movement within the market.

The Harlow Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy includes the action: “Review work on bringing empty homes in Harlow back into use”.

However, it is acknowledged that often properties are empty for long periods for reasons such as the occupier may be in care, hospital or having recently deceased.

Harlow Council charges a 50% Council Tax premium on properties that are left vacant for more than two years.

### **Our Action Plan:**

Priority 3: Improving housing in the Private Sector			
Objective	Outcome	Short, medium or long term	Proposed actions
3.3 Improving conditions of the wider private sector	a) <b>Reduction in empty homes</b>	Medium	3.1.13 Review work on bringing empty homes in Harlow back into use
		Medium	3.2.2 Monitor empty homes within Harlow to gain greater understanding of the issue

## Outcome b: Improved wider private sector housing

### Background and issues

#### **Encouraging investment in private sector housing**

In the wider private sector it is the home owners’ responsibility to maintain their own property. The vast majority of privately owned housing in Harlow is well managed and maintained. However, some homeowners may struggle maintaining and carrying out repairs to their homes. Possible reasons for this include being asset rich but cash poor or frail elderly owner occupiers.

## Achieving Net Zero

In 2019, the Government set a target of achieving Net Zero by 2050. The Climate Change Committee has said that in order to meet Net Zero, the UK buildings stock needs to be completely decarbonised by 2050. Private sector homes will need to undertake retrofit works. This will include ensuring that all homes are insulated effectively in order that low carbon heat options can be deployed.

The Government's 2017 Clean Growth Strategy included an aspiration for all homes to achieve EPC Band C by 2035 where cost-effective, practical and affordable. Government data suggests that 2/3rds of English homes are rated as D or worse. If 2/3rds of Harlow's Private sector homes are rated as such it would mean that nearly 13,000 existing homes require energy efficiency upgrades.

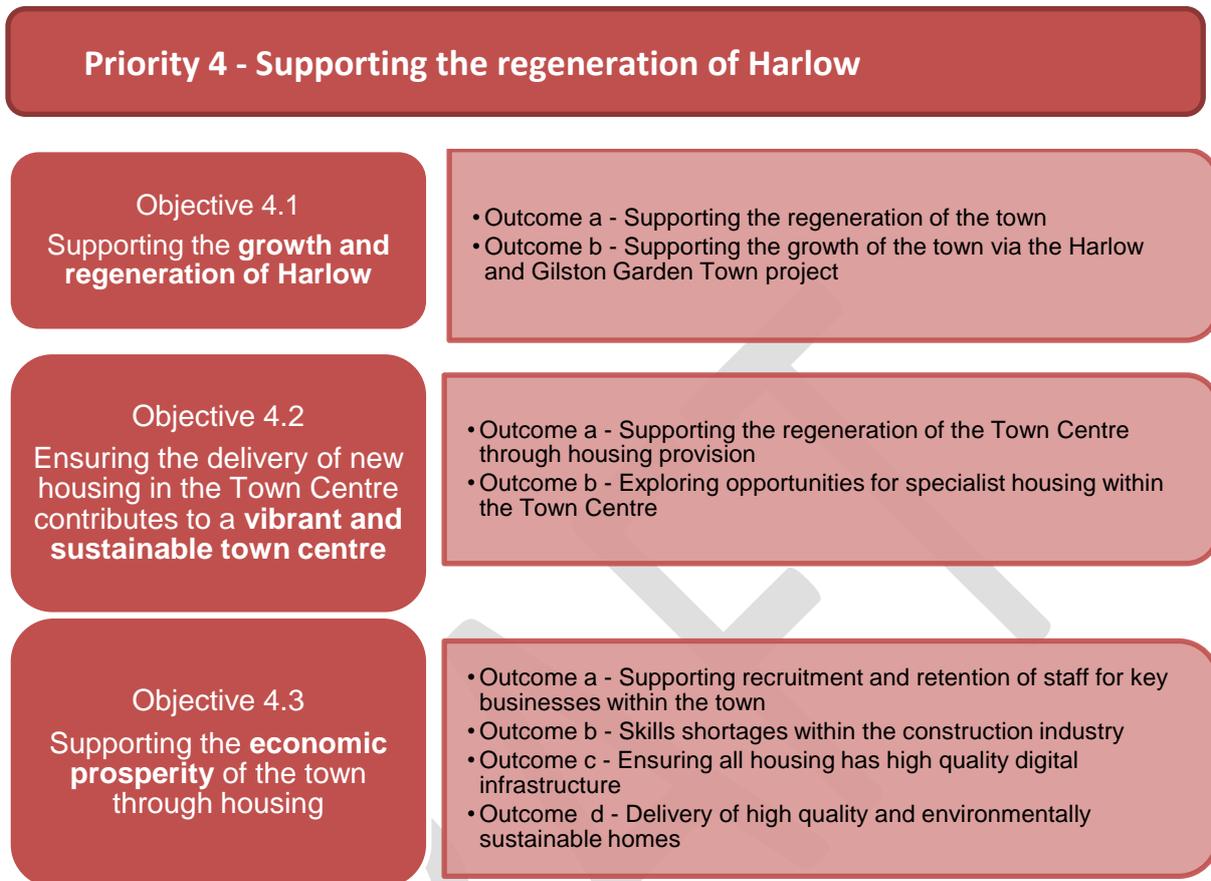
The Government's 2021 Net Zero Building Back Greener Strategy states that by 2035 no new gas boilers will be sold and some funding was provided for boiler upgrade schemes including the installation of heat pumps..

### Our Action Plan:

Priority 3: Improving housing in the Private Sector			
Objective	Outcome	Short, medium or long term	Proposed actions
3.3 Improving conditions of the wider private sector	b) <b>Improved wider sector private sector housing</b>	Medium	3.2.3 Respond to and investigate the feasibility of any potential schemes or funding that may be able to support improving the conditions of private sector housing including potential retrofit schemes

## Chapter 6: Supporting the Regeneration of Harlow

The following summarises the key objectives and outcomes for the Council under this priority:



### Key Issues:



## **Objective 4.1 – Supporting the regeneration and growth of Harlow**

### **Outcome a: Supporting the regeneration of the town**

#### **Background and issues**

##### **Housing creating regeneration opportunities**

Housing does not exist in isolation. Good quality developments can help regenerate and revitalise the wider area in which it is located, helping to improve the attractiveness of the area and acting as a catalyst for further investment.

Delivering the right housing in the right places will support the growth ambitions of the town. Creating high quality places with housing at a variety of price points will help facilitate the success of the planned major investments that are taking place in the town (such as the relocation of the hospital, relocation of the UK Health Security Agency and the development of the Enterprise Zone) by helping to attract new businesses and staff to live and work in the town.

Council Housebuilding programmes should be considered in the wider context of the site's location. Could the proposed housing scheme help to resolve issues that the local area is facing? Could the scope of the housing scheme be widened to help deliver additional benefits for the local area? Council Housebuilding schemes can support small scale regeneration of neighbourhoods across the town.

##### **Supporting the delivery of the Harlow @ 100 Vision in the Town Plan**

Strategic housing can support the Harlow @ 100 Vision that is contained in the Town Plan. The 2021 consultation document includes as part of its Vision:

#### **By 2047:**

**A rebuild of the town centre will have taken place and a once-in-a-generation programme of Neighbourhood renewal rolled out. Regeneration will have taken place and will continue at pace where needed.**

The 2021 Harlow Town Plan

## **Estate regeneration programmes**

As a New Town, much of Harlow was built within a fairly short time frame. As a result many of the original estates are now ageing at a similar rate. There has been a lack of investment in some of Harlow's local residential neighbourhoods resulting in a decline in the quality of the local built environment in some areas.

The Council has limited ability to implement large scale estate regeneration programmes as it no longer is the majority landowner as a result of Right to Buy sales leading to large numbers of private homes spread across every estate. Significant buy out of a large number of private owners would be required in order to be able to deliver large scale estate regeneration programmes which adds additional complexity and cost to the programmes.

The new communities that will be built as part of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town may provide a contrast with the quality of the existing neighbourhoods. Therefore, it continues to be a priority to find ways to support the renewal of Harlow's neighbourhoods.

Whilst large scale regeneration programmes may be difficult to achieve, smaller infill housing developments will be implemented as part of the Council Housebuilding programme. Housing schemes may be delivered on ex-garage sites and other under-utilised sites in existing housing estates. Where possible wider neighbourhood improvements, such as landscaping and improving the wider connectivity through upgrading cycle tracks, will be implemented as part of the house building scheme.

## **Priority Estates regeneration**

### **Atelier Estate**

The last major neighbourhood regeneration scheme to be undertaken in Harlow was the Atelier estate which was completed in 2021. The scheme was a joint project between Harlow Council, Countryside Properties and Home Group. It saw the redevelopment of the The Briars, Copshall Close and Ayletts Field (BCA)



estate in Staple Tye. An estate of over 200 bungalows, mostly owned by the council that did not meet Decent Homes Standards was redeveloped into a mixed tenure estate of 343 new properties, including 200 affordable homes ( made up of 92 social rent, 73 affordable rent homes managed by Home Group and 35 shared ownership).

The redevelopment of the BCA estate was originally part of a bigger regeneration programme called Priority Estates. Unfortunately, due to funding issues, the planned

works to the other estates could not be pursued. However, work was undertaken to the Council Housing on the other estates to ensure it met Decent Homes Standards.

Opportunities may arise that enable Harlow Council to consider further major estate regeneration projects in future.

### Supporting investment and growth opportunities

As outlined in the Town Investment Plan that was submitted as part of Harlow Council's bid for Towns Funding, major investment is taking place within the town some of which will result in opportunities to support improving the housing offer of the town.



### Relocation of the Princes Alexandra Hospital creates an opportunity for housing

One of the key investments planned for the town is the relocation of the Princess Alexandra Hospital (PAH) to a site on the east of the town. Once the hospital has been relocated, the existing site has been allocated in the Harlow Local Development Plan for 550 new homes.

#### Our Action Plan:

Priority 4: Supporting the regeneration of Harlow			
Objective	Outcome	Short, medium or long term	Proposed actions
4.1 Supporting the regeneration and growth of Harlow	<b>a) Supporting the regeneration of the town</b>	Short	4.1.1 Ensure that Council Housebuilding programmes consider the wider regeneration potential of the proposed scheme to ensure that the developments maximise the wider benefits that can be delivered to the local area
		Long	4.1.2 Investigate opportunities to seek funding and undertake potential major estate regeneration programmes
		Short	4.1.3 Consider how the major investment opportunities that are taking place in the town might support housing

## Outcome b: Supporting the growth of the town via the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town project

### Background and issues

In January 2017 Harlow and Gilston was designated as a Garden Town. The Harlow and Gilston Garden Town (HGGT) enables the town to deliver its growth ambitions.

The Garden Town will enable approximately 23,000 additional homes to be developed in the strategic sites in and around the town of Harlow by 2040. This will increase the population of the functional area of the town from 87,000 in 2020 to 130,000.

Whilst the majority of the new housing will be outside of Harlow Council's boundary, the East of Harlow site is partly located within Harlow and will deliver 2,600 new dwellings within the boundary.

Harlow Council will work with the developers of the East of Harlow site to ensure that it delivers the right mix of housing for local residents.



### Our Action Plan:

Priority 4: Supporting the regeneration of Harlow			
Objective	Outcome	Short, medium or long term	Proposed actions
4.1 Supporting the regeneration and growth of Harlow	<b>b) Supporting the growth of the town via the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town project</b>	Short	4.1.4 Actively work in partnership with the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town partners to successfully deliver the growth planned via the Garden Town project

## Objective 4.2 – Ensuring the delivery of new housing in the Town Centre contributes to a vibrant and sustainable Town Centre

### Outcome a: Supporting the regeneration of the Town Centre through housing

#### Background and issues

#### **Regeneration of the Town Centre is central to the growth of the town**

Ensuring that Harlow's Town Centre is vibrant and thriving is essential to achieving sustainable inclusive growth of the town.

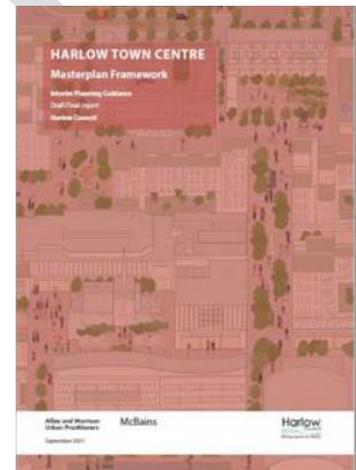
The Council has a role in leading and directing the regeneration of the Town Centre. Harlow Council plans to implement a major regeneration programme to invigorate the Town Centre. High quality housing schemes have the capacity to make a positive contribution to creating a sustainable Town Centre.

A **Masterplan for the Town Centre** has been produced and will form part of a Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document. The Town Centre Masterplan provides a framework to guide future development in the Town Centre.

It outlines the opportunities for major regeneration and remodelling of the Town Centre.

The vision of the masterplan states:

**“The Town Centre will also have a range of high quality homes that can support a mixed and balanced community”**



The masterplan highlights opportunities to bring forward residential development in the Town Centre to help reinvigorate and regenerate the area. Housing will help increase the footfall in the Town Centre and provide a complementary residential offer to the rest of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town.

The Masterplan emphasises high quality design, and encourages the introduction of new residential accommodation in the Town Centre especially on upper floors.

#### **Recent housing schemes in the Town Centre**

Up until the changes to the Permitted Development rights which allowed office to residential conversions without applying for planning permission, Harlow Town Centre had very little housing located within it. However, large scale permitted developments and other private sector residential developments over recent years

has significantly altered on the social mix of the Town Centre population and the quality of residential accommodation. The Town Centre has changed from a predominately retail / commercial area to becoming more mixed use with a predominance of residential uses.

A priority for the regeneration of the Town Centre is to rebalance the Town Centre residential offer with good quality provision.

### **Delivery of housing to support the regeneration of the Town Centre**

There will be many strands required to deliver the whole programme of regeneration of the Town Centre and it will take many years. Key to delivering successful regeneration will be accessing funding.

The delivery of new housing formed part of the major regeneration schemes which Harlow Council submitted in 2020/21 to the government for Towns Fund and Levelling Up funding. The direct provision of quality housing in the Town Centre will help build confidence in the Town Centre and help to unlock private sector investment.

### **Our Action Plan:**

<b>Priority 4: Supporting the regeneration of Harlow</b>			
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Short, medium or long term</b>	<b>Proposed actions</b>
4.2 Ensuring the delivery of new housing in the Town Centre contributes to a vibrant and sustainable Town Centre	<b>a) supporting the regeneration of the Town Centre through housing provision</b>	Short	4.2.1 Implement the Town Centre Masterplan and develop a Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document
		Medium	4.2.2 Investigate the feasibility and benefits of supporting the Town Centre as a potential Build to Rent area
		Short	4.2.3 Investigate opportunities to deliver housing provision as part of wider Town Centre regeneration schemes
		Medium	4.2.4 Explore funding opportunities to help deliver housing as part of regeneration schemes within the Town Centre

## **Outcome b: Exploring opportunities for specialist housing within the Town Centre**

### **Background and issues**

The Town Centre Masterplan highlights potential opportunities that residential development could create in the Town Centre.

*“Housing Delivery in the Town Centre could meet a range of housing needs, from higher density smaller units in the core of the Town Centre grading down to family sized units on the edges of the Town Centre”.*

Harlow Town Centre Masterplan

### **Opportunities for specialist housing schemes**

The higher density smaller units of housing suggested in the masterplan could potentially be used to create more affordable housing schemes for either younger people aged under 35 years or key worker housing.

The location of the Town Centre near to key facilities (such as GP surgeries and local shops) could potentially make it a suitable area for older persons housing. The masterplan suggests that older person's or multi-generational accommodation could be located on the Town Centre's periphery.

### **Key Worker housing schemes**

The Town Centre could be a good location for a potential Key Worker housing scheme. A Key Worker affordable housing scheme would help support key Anchor Institutions within Harlow such as the hospital and other public sector employers including the UK Health Security Agency which is relocating to Harlow. The provision of Key Worker housing would support with the recruitment and retention of staff within these key employment institutions. .

### **Build to Rent**

Build to Rent schemes could provide some additional housing at a more affordable level than market rents. Build to Rent schemes would need to provide at least 20% of the site to be designated as affordable housing in perpetuity. The affordable housing dwellings would be required to be rented at a rent at least 20% discounted on the private rented market.

It is not felt that areas outside of the Town Centre would be suitable for potential Build to Rent schemes. However, there is potential to investigate whether Build to rent schemes would be appropriate in the Town Centre and understand the

practicalities of such schemes including how they could help meet local housing needs. Any potential Build to Rent scheme would need to be stitched into the Local Plan making process.

**Our Action Plan:**

<b>Priority 4: Supporting the regeneration of Harlow</b>			
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Short, medium or long term</b>	<b>Proposed actions</b>
4.2 Ensuring the delivery of new housing in the Town Centre contributes to a vibrant and sustainable Town Centre	<b>b) Exploring opportunities for specialist housing within the town centre</b>	Long	4.2.5 Investigate the feasibility of Town Centre sites being used for specialist housing such as older people's housing, affordable housing options for people aged under 35 years or inter-generational housing schemes.
		Medium	4.2.6 Investigate the feasibility of Town Centre sites being used for key worker schemes to support recruitment and retention at key Anchor Institutions.
		Medium	4.2.7 Investigate the feasibility and potential benefits of supporting Build to Rent schemes within the Town Centre

## Objective 4.3 – Supporting the economic prosperity of the town through housing

**Outcome a: Support the recruitment and retention of staff for key businesses within the town**

### Background and issues

#### **The right housing offer**

Ensuring that the town is attractive will help attract potential employers to relocate into the town. The right housing offer (housing that is high quality, affordable and has the right mix of housing sizes and tenure) will help employers to recruit and retain staff.

There needs to be a wide range of housing at different price points including higher value properties located across the town. Employers have highlighted that many of their higher earners move out of the town because they are unable to source larger higher value properties. However, to encourage employees at earlier stages within their careers to take up local jobs there needs to be access to more affordable housing options.

There needs to be continuing dialogue with local businesses, employers and the promoters of the major investments that are taking place within Harlow to ensure that there is a good understanding and evidence of the demand for different types of housing across the town

#### **Key Worker housing**

As highlighted previously there is the potential to explore the feasibility of delivering affordable Key Worker housing schemes to support key Anchor Institutions to recruit and retain staff.

### **Our Action Plan:**

<b>Priority 4: Supporting the regeneration of Harlow</b>			
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Short, medium or long term</b>	<b>Proposed actions</b>
4.3 Supporting the economic prosperity of the town through housing	<b>a ) Recruitment and retention of staff for key businesses within the town</b>	Medium	4.3.1 Ensure that there is a balance of housing across a wide range of price points to provide the right housing offer to support the local economy
		Medium	4.3.2 Instigate dialogue with local businesses and employers and the promoters of the major investments that are taking place within Harlow to gather

			evidence on local demand for different types of housing to meet their staff needs.
		Medium	4.3.3 Investigate the feasibility for Key Worker schemes to support recruitment and retention at key Anchor Institutions where there are clear labour market pressures and the need for more local solutions.

**Outcome b: Reduced skills shortages within the construction industry**

**Background and issues**

**National Skills shortage**

In order to build the quantum of housing that is expected to be delivered in and around Harlow over the next five years, the construction industry needs access to skilled people. Ideally, the local housing developments will be able to provide local residents with employment and training.

Nationally there is a skills shortage in the construction industry, which has been known about for some time. This shortage can contribute to higher costs due to increased recruitment costs and increased salaries.

The shortage is reflected locally.

Nationally,  
the construction industry needs  
**216,800 new workers**  
**by 2025** to meet demand.

Source: CITB June 2021

The skills shortages affects both developers building new build housing schemes and the availability of contractors to undertake repairs and maintenance work to the existing housing stock. It is likely to also affect the Council Housebuilding programme.

Looking forward, additional people will be needed who have suitable specialist skills to implement the retrofit net zero requirements for the existing housing stock, both in the Council housing stock and private housing stock.

However, local residents do not have the appropriate skills required by the construction industry in order to access the available jobs. This prevents local people benefitting economically from the growth of the town.

## Employment and Skills planning conditions

Housing developments offer great opportunities to support local residents to gain appropriate construction skills training, work experience and employment opportunities. Harlow Council has developed guidance for developers on the employment and skills support it expects developments to provide to local residents. The employment and training conditions are included in the Planning S106 Agreements, Working in partnership with Harlow College, the local DWP office and the developers, Harlow Council supports programmes of activity that provide construction skills training and employment opportunities on site during the build period for local residents.

There is the potential to explore if additional employment and skills opportunities are able to be stitched into the Council Housebuilding programme which would ensure that added social value can be provided from the building of the new homes.

### Harlow College Construction Skills Centre

Harlow College has created a Construction Skills Centre near the site of the UK Health Security Agency redevelopment. The Construction Skills Centre supports people to gain construction skills required by developers working locally as well as coordinating work experience on sites and supporting local recruitment opportunities.



### Our Action Plan:

Priority 4: Supporting the regeneration of Harlow			
Objective	Outcome	Short, medium or long term	Proposed actions
4.3 Supporting the economic prosperity of the town through housing	<b>b ) Reduced skills shortages within the construction industry</b>	Short	4.3.4 Ensure that Employment and Skills conditions are included within all large housing development planning applications to maximise the training and employment opportunities available for local residents from the developments
		Short	4.3.5 Work with Harlow College to support the Harlow Construction Skills Centre which will support the delivery of a local skilled construction workforce
		Short	4.3.6 Explore the potential for expanding the opportunities of employment and skills activity that can be linked to the Council Housebuilding programme

## Outcome c: All housing has high quality digital infrastructure

### Background and issues

#### Need for digital connectivity

Covid-19 lockdown measures highlighted the importance of everyone's home having good digital connectivity via superfast broadband to enable residents to work from home effectively and home school.

Digital connectivity provides residents with increased economic, social and health and wellbeing benefits, including increased productivity, better employment opportunities arising from remote and flexible working, educational attainment and reduced social isolation.

Across Harlow there is currently variable broadband connectivity. All new developments including infill developments should have digital infrastructure that ensures access to a choice of superfast network providers. The market needs to also look to increase the connectivity in the existing housing estates. This will ensure that there is not a digital divide between the existing town and the new developments of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Ton located around the edge.

It is essential that all new housing developments are provided with appropriate superfast digital infrastructure.

Retrofitting digital infrastructure after a development has been built is costly.

### **Our Action Plan:**

<b>Priority 4: Supporting the regeneration of Harlow</b>			
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Short, medium or long term</b>	<b>Proposed actions</b>
4.3 Supporting the economic prosperity of the town through housing	<b>c ) All housing has high quality digital infrastructure</b>	Short	4.3.7 Ensure appropriate digital infrastructure is included in all new housing developments
		Short	4.3.8 Monitor digital speeds to existing residential areas to identify areas of poor connectivity and influence digital providers to improve their offer across the town
		Long	4.3.9 Ensure that the Council's Sheltered Schemes are fully connected to allow residents to use technology to prevent social isolation and increase health and wellbeing

## Outcome d: Delivery of high quality and environmentally sustainable homes

### Background and issues

#### **High quality homes and environments supporting economic prosperity**

Ensuring high quality and sustainable homes across the whole of Harlow will help support the economic prosperity of the town. High quality homes and surrounding environments helps build sustainable places that remain attractive places to live and work. Measures to support the Net Zero are likely to create new employment opportunities especially linked to the “Green skills” required to deliver retrofit and energy efficiency measures in existing homes as well as installation of Modern Methods of Construction in new developments.

#### **Achieving New Zero Carbon**

A key strand of the government’s **2021 Net Zero Strategy (Build Back Greener)**<sup>45</sup> is reducing emissions from heat and buildings. Heating homes and workplaces is responsible for about 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of UK carbon emissions. In response the government has set a target to improve the energy efficiency of housing and that by 2035 all newly installed heating appliances will be low carbon technology such as heat pumps or hydrogen boilers.

Achieving Net Zero will require investment in both the existing housing stock of the town and new build developments.

#### **Delivering Net Zero in the existing housing stock**

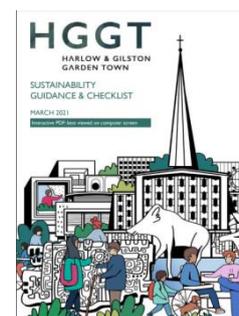
40% of all UK emissions come from households. Decarbonising homes will need to include:

- Reducing energy usage
- Energy efficiency measures (such as double glazing and loft / wall installation)
- New ways to heat homes

There will be capital costs and disruption to individual home owners to achieve the decarbonisation of the existing housing stock.

#### **Harlow and Gilston Sustainability Checklist**

In 2021 Harlow Council adopted the Harlow and Gilston Sustainability Checklist. The checklist provides practical and technical guidance on steps that can be taken by developers of all new homes in Harlow that will help support achieving net zero by



<sup>45</sup> Net Zero Strategy; Build Back Greener published October 2021

2030. The Council will apply the Sustainability Checklist to all housing applications.

### Modern Methods of Construction

Modern Methods of Construction(MMC) or off-site construction covers a range of housebuilding processes offering an alternative to traditional brick built house building on site. MMC can include whole off site construction or factory built volumetric modules such as whole units or plumbed in bathroom and kitchen pods that are delivered to site and slotted into the main build.

MMC can help reduce the amount of embodied carbon of buildings. The transferring of the production of the homes to a factory can result in less transportation of materials and labour, greater control through automation and digitalisation resulting in efficiencies and less waste. The homes can be built quicker and deliver quality energy efficient home.

There may be the potential to explore with potential developers who are looking to work locally to consider greater use of MMC and potentially to explore the potential of setting up flying MMC factories. This will reduce the carbon footprint of the homes and help create local employment opportunities.

### Our Action Plan:

Priority 4: Supporting the regeneration of Harlow			
Objective	Outcome	Short, medium or long term	Proposed actions
4.3 Supporting the economic prosperity of the town through housing	<b>d ) Delivery of high quality and environmentally sustainable new house building</b>	Short	4.3.10 Promote environmentally sustainable construction methods and materials in all housing developments to help achieve net zero
		Short	4.3.11 Apply the Garden Town Sustainability Checklist to all planning applications to support the net zero ambitions
		Short	4.3.12 Explore opportunities and the feasibility of delivering housing that uses environmentally sustainable Modern Methods of Construction
		Long	4.3.13 Explore opportunities to encourage the potential setting up of flying MMC factories locally