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Bedfordshire
Council
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**TO EACH MEMBER OF THE
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

09 March 2016

Dear Councillor

**SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - Thursday 17
March 2016**

Further to the Agenda and papers for the above meeting, previously circulated, please find attached the following additional report(s) which the Chairman has agreed to take as an urgent item of business:-

10. Downs Road One-Way Scheme - Report on Consultation

The Committee are asked to consider and comment on objections to a traffic regulation order to remove the one way system in Down's Road, Dunstable, taking into account the results of a public consultation.

16. Parking Strategy Overview

To receive information regarding the Council's parking strategy, commenting on proposals and recommending a decision by the Executive.

19. The Housing Strategy

To receive the draft Housing Strategy for consideration and recommendation to Council.

Should you have any queries regarding the above please contact the Overview and Scrutiny Team on Tel: 0300 300 4193

Yours sincerely

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Scrutiny Policy Advisor
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DOWNS ROAD, DUNSTABLE – PROPOSED REMOVAL OF ONE-WAY TRAFFIC

APPENDIX A

Objections to Removal

I am clearly disappointed that you are wishing to revert Downs Road to two-way traffic, as this will clearly increase the traffic flow on Downs Road, along with your quoted 12% increase in general traffic activity.

Changing the flow of traffic to make Downs Road two-way again will increase congestion on Downs Road, from the previous levels, and only provide small relief for Great Northern Road, as Downs Road will not be able to cope with two-way traffic at peak times due to the current road layout.

It has to be accepted that the traffic in Dunstable continues to grow and making these types of changes does not directly improve the traffic flow in Dunstable. We all need to share the burden of the increase of traffic, and the current one-way system has shared that load.

I am very disappointed to hear that you are wishing to revert Downs Road to two-way traffic, as this will clearly increase the traffic flow on Downs Road, along with your quoted 12% increase in general traffic activity. This means that the congestion, that we previously had, will now increase as a result of the general traffic, which was considerable at peak times.

I note that the consolation was for 400 households, which is clearly not just Downs Road and Park Road, as mentioned in your letter. It would seem that using this area will greatly outweigh the views of the immediate residents involved. Those commuters not in the immediate area will only be affected by the current road system for 5 to 10 minutes each working day, if that while those living in the roads affected will be constantly affected and so their views should have a higher weighting than households outside of the affected area.

Changing the flow of traffic to make Downs Road two-way again will increase congestion on Downs Road and only provide small relief for Great Northern Road, as Downs Road will not be able to cope with two-way traffic at peak times due to the current road layout.

It is disappointing to hear that we have to have an accident before concerns are taken seriously. I truly hope that no accidents occur as a result of any changes to the road system, but if that has to happen, it will be a sad day for us all.

It has to be accepted that the traffic in Dunstable continues to grow and making these types of changes does not directly improve the traffic flow in Dunstable. We all need to share the burden of the increase of traffic, and the current one-way system has shared that load.

In response to the letter and the TRO from yourself I have the following comments.

I live in Half Moon Lane and I was very much against the implementation of the one-way before it was put in, however I am now in favor of keeping it in place, my reasons are

The one-way has not caused me any problems

I use Downs Road to walk into the town and the road is a lot more pleasant, less noise, less pollution and it seems safer.

Great Northern Road has always had a large amount of traffic which needs to be dealt with, from a financial point of view I believe it would be better to wait until the A5 is detrunked which as pointed out in the letter will take place next year, CBC cannot risk the possibility of spending any more money which could be a waste, it would be far better to wait until next year to give the highways department the opportunity to fully access the traffic situation when the plans to de-trunk the A5 are being worked on.

I thought Downs Road
Dunstable was made a
one way system because
18000 cars a week went
down it? The traffic is now
shared by other roads.
So why is it being
reversed?

I am a resident of Downs Road and have been for over 18 years. Over that time, I have seen a large increase in the volume of traffic due to the "cut through" nature of where it is and also an increase in the number of cars owned by the residents (for obvious reasons).

I fully support leaving the current restrictions as they are, even though it inconveniences me to have to drive around, because of the safety aspects etc. I know how few lorries now thunder down there and the car traffic has reduced substantially. I know that there are slightly more cars using Park Road and Grove Road, but these are only really local residents and taken as a whole area, the traffic using all of the roads affected must have significantly reduced overall. I understand that the residents of Allan Close are particularly vocal in wishing to have the restrictions removed. With all due respect, if they are, they will not suffer at all, as they are a cul de sac as are Barton Avenue and will not be affected by the increased traffic and the increased noise from that traffic.

As a car driver it is still difficult to leave ones house safely, onto Downs Road between all the parked cars and that will be worse when the traffic level increases.

If the restrictions are removed, I feel sorry for anyone who has moved into Downs Road and Borough Road when the traffic ramps up again.

I am frankly disappointed that after all the so called "final" appeals that there have been that this issue is still dragging out. It cannot be a good use of money to keep debating this.

Yes, it inconveniences a few, but for the majority it is a benefit.

I am against the removal of the one-way in Downs Road for the following reasons.

I live in Lovers Walk and the one-way has not caused us any problems.

Before any more money is spent I believe it would be better to wait until the A5 is under the control of CBC and then assess the traffic situation in regard to the whole of Dunstable.

I object to the removal of the system. As a new resident to Downs Road with children, one of the reasons for the move was the access to open space and the introduction of the one way system, which neighbours have reported has improved the noise, pollution and anti social hours noise and disruption and allowed neighbours across the road to actually speak and engage. Most importantly the safety of residents has been noted, and one neighbour reported to me that the quality of life has improved since the 'rat run' has been removed immeasurably. This has created a safer more engaged community and decreased pollution. All positives.

Removal of the system will be disruptive, Costly and residents should not be made to suffer that the council decision making procedures are not robust to withstand pressure in the outset.

I am writing to object to the proposed removal of the Downs Road One-Way system for the following reasons:-

- It was clearly agreed that it would be reviewed in 2017 which would be a much more logical time to do it with all the area being reviewed at that time.
- No convincing reason has been given for its removal – only the convenience of residents who want to use Downs Road as a rat run as before
- With the general 12% increase in traffic the previous figures of 18,000 vehicles per week in Downs Road would become even more unmanageable
- When statistics and pollution levels were measured in Downs Road the traffic and pollution was found to be at unacceptable levels. Levels would be even higher if the one-way was removed now
- It is bad use of money to do this now instead of waiting till 2017 as planned.
- 18 years of campaigning should convince any Council that we genuinely did have a problem with traffic
- The problem was examined and a solution found. Appreciation has been expressed. It is irresponsible to bring back all that traffic into a narrow residential road
- Despite being told that safety is no different now than before the one-way, residents here have witnessed and been involved in many incidents which are not included in the statistics
- I believe it to be irresponsible to recklessly put residents back into the dangerous situation that you once helped to put right for them
- The danger is not just residents' perception but actual experience of living and coping daily with a difficult and worrying traffic situation
- The leaflet response in autumn 2015 for those wanting the one-way removed was low compared with the 96% of residents who want to keep the system
- Young cyclists use this road on a daily basis and would still use the road without the one-way but be in a much more vulnerable position
- Vehicles used to mount the pavement to force their way through at busy times when not only the roads were busy but mums and children of all ages were using the pavement
- Residents have repeatedly told the Council how much safer they observe the road to be. This should be noted as a very good reason to keep the one-way

- Using the pavement in particular on the corner of Great Northern Road is safer now as cars came round the corner far too fast even destroying a garden fence and wall on one occasion. If pedestrians had been there they would have been killed.
- Manoeuvring residents cars in and out of driveways and between parked cars was extremely risky and sparked off road rage regularly.

It would be ludicrous to remove such a well working system. Despite what opponents have tried to tell you it does not cause 'gridlock' in the area. It merely causes drivers to go a very slightly longer way round – I timed it as being less than two minutes longer. The congestion of traffic which once filled Downs Road to saturation point is now dispersed around the neighbourhood. Their objection boils down to them wanting to drive along Downs Road again which would bring us back to square one and the whole problem would start again. The issue would not be resolved as residents would be sure to

start campaigning again and yet another consultation would have to be done.

Today I counted 100 vehicles along Downs Road between 15.00 and 16.00. It is often far more busy than that even now.

I can only imagine that such an illogical proposal is politically motivated. This should be about traffic and safety not politics. If the one-way system is removed I believe the Council would be responsible for resulting accidents.

I'm responding to the "Public Notice" which has been delivered today regarding the removal of the Downs Road one-way system. I do have a number of objections which have been detailed in my ongoing email dialogue below with Central Bedfordshire Council, but I will summarise these in point form so these can be easily addressed:

Reasons for originally implementing the one-way system:-

- 1) Original area-wide review was undertaken in 2011 following an independent sample taken recorded an average figure of 18,000 vehicles per week using Downs Road! Such high volumes had been causing concerns to residents and the local council due to road safety and congestion concerns;
- 2) Downs Road has long since been used as a 'rat-run' by many from outside the immediate area, and the council looked at various measures to discourage those very motorists using a narrow resident street which was clearly not fit for purpose;
- 3) Original decision to implement the one-way system was made as part of an area-wide solution to share the burden more fairly amongst the roads rather than Downs Road continuing to take the bulk of the traffic;

Recent Review of the one-way system:

- 1) There is a majority of residents from the town that reacted aggressively to the original blocking off of Downs Road and the eventual implementation of the one-way system in 2013 as they firmly believe that there isn't a problem with such high volume of traffic passing through Downs Road, and that Downs Road should continue to be available to take up this full burden;
- 2) With the opening of the Dunstable by-pass and possible detrunking of the A5 in 2017, I fail to understand why such an important decision to those of us living in the immediate area isn't deferred until 2017. This will allow a full assessment to be fairly carried out when a large proportion of heavy goods traffic and passenger vehicles will be able to avoid using the A5 or the town centre;

3) I would like to understand why the decision has been brought forward. The Council's "traffic survey" mentions that the 12% increase in overall traffic since the system's implementation is likely to be from natural growth. Understandably, and I have also covered this point below, the amount of traffic passing through Downs Road has dropped due to the one-way system, and again understandably, traffic in Park Road and I assume the other adjoining roads (Grove Road and Blows Road) has increased. Surely, we need to know the actual figures as I'm sure that Downs Road will still have by far the highest traffic volumes of the roads in the immediate area with the obvious exception of Great Northern Road;

4) The afore-mentioned "traffic survey" of the local households was going to always have the voting split purely on "NIMBY" concerns depending on which road you live in rather than area-wide issues such as road safety, congestion, pollution and fairness - these macro issues should be decided on by those trusted to act in the public interest and in the interest of the town and ALL its residents. I know that politicians are affected by public opinion, but it does appear to me that the decision and the timing of it doesn't make any logical sense while the original council decision to implement the one-way system seemed like a fair attempt to solve the town's traffic problems;

5) "Further research carried out showed the number of recorded collisions has not changed since the scheme has been introduced," I would like to know the details of the further research and the figures collated. I would be one of the first to admit that the one-way system isn't perfect. There does need to be better speed restrictions in place as the 20mph limit is largely ignored (again as I have mentioned below), and allowing cyclists to enter Downs Road from Great Northern Road is very dangerous (I'm a cyclist and will always use Park Road/Grove Road). The one-way system on its own isn't enough to improve road safety but is clearly a step in the right direction along with other measures.

I do hope the council reconsiders its decision and the impact it has on everyone in the area. As a Downs Road resident, I am willing to accept a decision which doesn't pass the whole burden back to Downs Road, and I hope the decision-makers act ethically and with responsibility.

I'm writing to lodge my objection to your proposal to remove the one way installation in Downs Road and the 'no entry' from Gt Northern Rd. I shall set out my reasons later but first I must ask if you, or anyone else, has read the letter and public notice that has been sent to residents? If you look at paragraph three of the letter and compare it to the first paragraph of the public notice you will see that they are contradictory.

The covering letter from Nick Chapman makes it clear that the installation has achieved its aims and that the result is exactly as predicted prior to installation. He confirms that the twelve percent increase in traffic is natural growth and not as a result of the one way. So, nothing has changed from that which was expected and contributed to the original decision to install.

That Park Road has an increase in traffic was predicted. However, the Park Rd residents were offered the same as Downs Rd (opposite direction) but refused and so are the architects of their own problem.

Following some delay in getting a reply to my Freedom of Information request I was informed that in the two years since the one way was installed you have only received two complaints about the installation. When I queried this I was told that complaints are not recorded under most circumstances and that councillors may or may not keep records of complaints they receive. I wrote to Cllr Spurr asking him what complaints he had received. He passed my enquiry to Paul Cook for reply. Paul Cook, replied on behalf of Cllr Spurr, which shed no further light on the subject. He suggested I contact Cllr Spurr direct, which I had already, done but he passed it to Paul Cook!

Turning to the " Preliminary consultation". You consulted 400 households and received 165 responses. This equates to a 41.25 0/0 return. 235 households did not respond so are clearly not unhappy with the current situation. So, if we add 235 to the 47 who want to keep the scheme we get 282 (70.5 0/0) who are not unhappy and 118 (29.5 0/0) who are unhappy. This is far from a compelling result for removal of the scheme. Further, you state in the letter " but the majority of respondents from neighbouring roads wanted

to see it removed". This is misleading. By using this statement you imply that there is a majority wishing removal. That is not the case. It is misleading to use the word 'majority' when you have received less than fifty percent return on the 400 consultations sent out. In the area consulted you have not achieved anywhere near a majority for removal. My figures, set out above, give a clearer and accurate representation of the responses you received.

In summary:

The one way scheme is doing exactly what was intended at the time of installation;

There has been no increase in accidents;

There has been no increase in overall traffic other than the twelve percent which, according to you, is not attributable to this scheme;

There is no record of or audit trail of any on going complaints that the council can produce as evidence for removal;

Overall, most residents (70.5 0/0) are either happy with the scheme or do not care one way or another.

Your own figures from previous surveys show that Downs Rd still has more traffic than the other estate roads.

One final point; what reasoning does Cllr Spurr and his advisors use to decide which roads should bear the heaviest traffic load? As things stand there is a fairer distribution of traffic across the estate. If the scheme is removed then Downs Rd will revert to the traffic levels it had before and the other roads will have lighter traffic loads. Is this the aim that the council wants to achieve? If so, why? How do they decide which roads should bear the heaviest traffic load? Is it that they believe they can get away with it because it's only a minority of residents and so they (we) are not worth considering? The majority (if a majority existed) must always rule! If so then that runs contrary to the concept of a representative democracy in which authorities have a duty to protect minorities from the excesses of the majority. Those wanting the installation removed have made it very clear that they want the freedom to use all the estate roads just as they please, provided that no one uses their road and makes their life a misery. At present there is a fairer, more even distribution of traffic through the estate and that is how it should stay.

This should be about what is right and not what is most popular. That is the responsibility that Cllr Spurr and his advisors are charged with. He should not be surrendering that responsibility by allowing a group of tenacious and vexatious residents to bully him in to removing a measure which is achieving its aims. Are we now going to find that all council decisions are to be made following local referenda to find out what will be the most popular decision? If that's the case then we don't need any councillors.

Given that there is to be a wider traffic review in twelve months why on earth are you raising this issue now other than to stir up unrest, unless of course, it is to fulfil an election promise? If so, is that a proper use of public money?

I would again like to have my objections to this Decision noted.

I have lived in Downs road for the last 25 years and witnessed the problems getting steadily worse over this period, this is not only because of more traffic generally but also out of town shopping developments among other reasons.

Before the oneway was brought in I regularly witnessed small none reportable road traffic accidents outside my home, on one occasion a driver abandoned his car in front of my drive to chase the other party

on foot, this was easier for him due to the traffic congestion. I have also witnessed countless examples of road rage due to people trying to pass each other around parked cars .

It has been recognised by the council that most if not all residents of Downs road and Sundown Ave are in favour of the one way, this is for a very obvious reason , they were the people effected by these high volumes of traffic.

The CBC reason for reversing this decision appears to be political expediency, the fact that same residents of other roads who originally objected are still objecting should have been expected, the problems experienced by nearby roads now are small compared to the previous traffic volumes in Downs Rd.

Many of objections to the oneway were mainly on the grounds of inconvenience and we're exaggerated by the then local town councillor who started a campaign against anyone who supported the scheme, there were a lot of allegations of unfairness and incompetence by CBC.

There has been no evidence produced so far to suggest the oneway has caused excessive inconvenience to residents in other roads, I have only been delayed for a few minutes , even on busy days in the the rush hour.

If the oneway is removed without any other traffic calming measures the problems will come back but will be worse, unfortunately it will then be difficult to remedy due to the sums of money wasted already.

I wish to register my objection to the proposal to remove the one-way traffic order in Downs Road for the following reasons as listed below.

1. When the one-way scheme was being considered along with other options we were told in a Public Meeting that doing nothing about Downs Road was not an option. The proposal to remove the one-way scheme and replace it with nothing to relieve our serious traffic congestion is surely putting us back in the position we were in before the scheme was introduced. Therefore it now appears that to do nothing is an acceptable option.
2. In the economic climate that we are in, keeping all public expenditure to an absolute minimum, it seems an incredible waste of money to remove the scheme now when it will be reviewed in 2017 (after the de-trunking of the A5 etc) where there is a possibility that it could be reinstated.
3. When residents approached the Council a number of years ago the traffic count (18,000 vehicles per week) and the pollution levels measured were deemed to be unacceptable for a narrow residential road like Downs Road. Why is it that this figure plus 12% increase of traffic in the area is now considered acceptable?
4. Arriving and departing from our houses before the one-way traffic order was implemented caused us considerable stress due to the amount of passing traffic. Now, with the one-way system in place, it is not easy but more manageable. The proposal to bring the traffic levels back to more than the previous levels will make it extremely dangerous and no doubt cause considerable road rage as it did in the past. Please see the attached photo which illustrates the difficulty of one particular retired lady who is dreading

manoeuvring her car into the two-way traffic flow, should your proposal go ahead. Even now it is very difficult with so many parked vans in the road.

5. All the objections and criticisms of the scheme that we have heard appear to boil down to one thing ie slight inconvenience for residents in the area including those in Downs Road. We are aware that other roads have had an increase in their traffic; to share out the traffic more evenly was always the intention of the scheme.

Finally I would like to point out in the letter sent out to residents regarding the proposal to remove the one-way Traffic Order, it is stated that:

"Overall, in terms of movements, there has been a 12% increase in traffic since the scheme was introduced in 2013, but this increase is likely to be a natural growth in traffic rather than as a result of the scheme".

whilst in the public notice it is stated that:

"Reason for the proposal: The introduction of the one-way traffic order in Downs Road has contributed to an increase in traffic flows in roads adjacent to Downs Road"

This is clearly a contradiction.

I do trust that all these points will be considered seriously before the final decision is taken.

I am relieved that I have returned from holiday in time to send this e-mail to you.

I live in Downs Road and my property is on the corner at the junction with Borough Road. I am fully in favour of keeping the one-way system. I know you will have received communications about this so would add my personal reasons for wishing to retain it.

Even at present time I have to be very careful reversing out of my drive due to traffic coming from Borough Road. When there was two-way traffic it was even more difficult. Motorists are in such a hurry that they can be very abusive and awkward if held up while I attempt to get in out out of my drive. Currently I only have to contend with traffic coming in one direction. If the system is reversed I will probably find it impossible to get in and out during the rat runs both ways.

There are several one-way systems in Dunstable and I am sure there has never been such a nasty anti-campaign at any of these. Opponents seem to be concerned that they have to drive a little out of their way to get home, well so do the residents of Downs Road. It seems that for the convenience of Downside residents and rat-runners we are expected to take **all** the traffic - WHY?

These people will not gain much time when they have to weave between parked cars and two-way traffic if they get their way, so what will they achieve.

I appreciate that people in Park Road have more cars now but these are generally only going in one direction and not two as is proposed for us. Perhaps Park Road should be made one-way as well..

Please do listen to Downs Road and Blows Road residents. If it is decided purely due to numbers, two roads versus an Estate and rat-runne, we have no chance. It is unfair to give more credence to impatient drivers than residents putting up with the high density of traffic, fumes, noise and danger.

PLEASE KEEP THE ONE-WAY SYSTEM.

Reasons why the existing Downs Road one-way system should remain in place:

1) As a motorist:

Since the implementation of the one way system, I have enjoyed increased safety in exiting from Allen Close onto Downs road because -

a) with only west-bound all vehicle traffic and east-bound cycle traffic in the one-way section, it is easier to pull out of Allen Close, with improved safety.

b) up to the point of implementation of the one-way scheme, the increasing levels of street parking in the (currently) one-way section of Downs Road made visibility very poor when driving out of Allen Close; also, traffic attempting entry east-bound into Downs Road often found its way blocked by a combination of west-bound traffic and street parking.)This could, and did, lead to dangerous tailbacks onto Great Northern Road). Further, with parking of vehicles often partly or completely on the footpath, visibility on exit from Allen Close is at many times of the day dangerously reduced. With the current traffic flow, this is manageable; with a return to two-way traffic it would become far more dangerous.

c) the 20 mph speed limit posted in residential areas of Dunstable is largely ignored - including in the Downs Road area (try driving at 20 mph in any restricted areas of Dunstable and observe the queue forming behind you!) Again, the one-way traffic scheme currently in force means that you only have to allow for speeders in one direction rather than two.

d) rat-run - I assume that one of the reasons for implementing the one-way scheme was to reduce the attraction of using roads in the north-eastern quadrant of Dunstable (bounded by the A5 High Street South and A505 Church Street) as at rat-run, avoiding Dunstable town centre. Reverting to two-way traffic would merely return the opportunity for use as such.

2) As a pedestrian:

As part of my daily exercise routine, I frequently walk in the area of Downs Road/Grove Road/Borough Road. My personal opinion is that, since the implementation of the one-way scheme, traffic flow in the stated are has been considerably reduced, making local walking both more pleasant and potentially safer.

Conclusions:

From a personal point of view, the only acceptable course of action should the one-way system in Downs Road be scrapped would be implementation of ALL of the following:

e) effective parking restrictions (enforced!) on the section of Downs Road from its junction with Great Northern Road and Grove Road - restrictions to include on-footpath parking.

f) effective enforcement the 20 mph speed limit - not only in this area but in all applicable areas of Dunstable.

g) effective traffic-calming measures throughout the length of Downs Road (and maybe also Borough Road, Blows Road) - eq speed humps, traffic direction priority "gateways", width restriction "gateways".

The object of measures (e), (f) and (g) above would be to reduce the attractiveness of this area as a rat-run, thereby ensuring traffic flows remain low, whilst giving local residents the benefits(?) of a two-way Downs Road.

I know I am one of many emails you will be receiving in your inbox on this subject. I ask you to bear with me and my lengthy letter as I cover several important points, **especially as this may be my last chance as an affected resident of Downs Road to have my say.**

While I have found Mr Spurr to be very fair in his past dealings with this matter, I do regard the decision taken on the 5th November to be a perverse decision.

Past History and surrounding issues

You are aware that this has been an 18 year ongoing and increasing issue re the traffic problem ever since Sainsbury's was moved and the popularity of the White Lion Trading Estate increased. This has led to higher and higher levels of unacceptable traffic in this road. The residents from the most affected part of Downs Road have long been quietly complaining for this matter to be addressed. Many years ago there was an article in the local paper showing the backlog of traffic in our street. Traffic has increased considerably since the last survey - 12%, What will it be in 2017.

Before the one way system was introduced, there was a voracious orchestrated campaign against ANY traffic measures being taken in Downs Road no matter what was suggested. At the infamous school meeting many people stated we did not have a problem and voted that nothing should be done. They had no consideration or care of our ongoing problems until it started to affect them. Well if we did not have a problem then , well half of no problem is 'no problem' except of course that is not the case.

After careful consideration of the council who stated we did have a problem in Downs Road and the general area, with counts, surveys, a vote for which traffic measure people preferred(including the no action option strongly voted for by people not interested in our problems), the one way section was placed in Downs Road.

However during this time certain people were very active in the campaign to stop any traffic measures in Downs Road. A face book group where the people running it refused to say who they were, secret meetings where the residents of Downs Road were not invited to have their say. False rumours of what the council were going to do i.e. close Hillside. MPs and Councillors living in our Road, Emergency services unable to get to Downside causing loss of life, Misinformation given to a school parents assembly before a petition went round getting misinformed parents to sign, letters sent out via young children's schoolbags. Leaflets sent round houses in the area but not to the Downs Road residents where we were more affected. This may not be relevant to your committee but is part of what we have been dealing with over recent years. Some of these people were using this for their own political ends, and often directed abuse against Councillor Pepworth(and I am not a Labour voter). Others who have been most vocal live in a road where by your own count only have 15 cars an hour between 8 - 9 am. Just because they are making the most noise does not mean they are suffering the most. The Downs Road residents have always known that we cannot be successful on numbers alone, but what is **FAIR**. We all use these local roads to our benefit, and we should all take our share of traffic calming measures.

The people leading this campaign are small in number but have been very active in the papers and writing to councillors and to their MP. The Downs Road residents have only latterly come together to try and make the council realise that we do wish to be heard and are actually very worried that because of our relatively small numbers, we cannot be successful if a decision is being made based on numbers or complaints. It may be rounded to percentages for comparison, but the numbers of people anti the one way system will always look more than the smaller numbers of people who in in Downs Road and Allen Close, but are affected the most.

The council has said itself that there is too much traffic in this area. Something needs to be done to address the whole situation. The effect of the new relief road currently being built will hopefully address some of the traffic issues, but the effect of this cannot be assessed to after the new roads have been built and traffic flows settled down. This point was stated by the council itself at a previous meeting. The council stated previously it would review matters after this settling in period in 2017. However they have now changed their minds. This leaves the Downs Road residents now dreading the removal of the one way and going back to what we suffered before.

Options not Considered.

To remove the one way system AND not address the current problem will mean a vast amount of time and money will have been spent on a officially recognised problem to go back exactly where we were, but now with officially recorded increased traffic.

There is no argument from me that traffic has increased considerably in Park Road. Please remember that the Park Road Residents rejected any traffic calming measures offered in their road as they thought it was a tool to stop any measures in Downs Road. I know that **Mr Spurr's original intention** was that traffic in Great Northern Road would be encouraged to use the exit on the A5 to progress the flow of traffic southbound along the A5 for people living in the Manshead Ward area of Dunstable. However people are very impatient and are refusing to wait for a minute or two more to get to the A5 to turn left. How can it make sense to drive the complicated indirect route from G N Rd via Park Road to the Downside area when they could progress along the A5 southbound leading to the 3 major roads ie Halfmoon Lane, Mayfield Road and Southwood Road. leading more directly into the area of the Ward nearer to where they actually live. I appreciate that traffic is sometimes held back from turning left at G N Rd at the A5 because of traffic stacking back who want to turn right into Periwinkle Lane, and this also increases people using Park Road as a short cut. Again this was discussed in the council meeting.

Before any removal of the Downs Road one way, full consideration should be made to implement a revised flow of traffic using carefully placed **No Right and No left turns in pertinent streets in the area.** I could write a selection of various combinations but I just want to make the point that it could easily and cheaply be done and have the effect of protecting Park Road from cut through traffic and meeting the original idea of Mr. Spurr to have the traffic use the A5. Before the Council go to the expense of removing a one way system, far earlier than the originally post 2017 link road traffic effect previously agreed, there has not been any consideration of alternative measures to address how the scheme could be made better in the general area. Other possible suggestions might be to remove the pinch point in G N Rd outside the Greyhound Pub, or to make Periwinkle Lane(which is a narrow road) a No Right Turn for A5 traffic going southbound, especially when there are two wider road in the general area more suitable to cope with that traffic such as Friars Walk and Old Hill.

My point is that before the One way in Downs Road is considered being taken out, other measures should be considered and this would benefit more people, make traffic flow smoother and cut down on unnecessary rat running in Park Road by impatient people.

Precedence

Solving traffic issues by making streets a one way system is already a long established fact. One only has to look at other areas of Dunstable where this method has long been used. St Peter's Road area, Lovers Walk Area, Periwinkle Road Area, Victoria Road Area and Burr Street Area easily come to mind. No doubt this was done for the best interest of the affected residents of that area at the time they were implemented, and relevant to the problems they had. The decision to make part of Downs Road is no different and certainly not a perverse or unusual traffic calming measure.

Who is actually affected and proportionality

Much has been made of the inconvenience and suffering of road users since this system came in. Firstly everybody who ever uses Downs Road to travel towards town now benefit from reduced traffic, smoother travel and quicker travelling time. How quickly they forget how traffic became snarled up as two directions of traffic tried to snake past each other in a road unfit for purpose. A road where even when both sides of parked traffic have to park up with their wheels on the pavement to allow traffic to pass. Traffic which can only pass in one direction at a time only. With parked cars there is no chance for traffic to flow both ways at the same time.

The traffic calming measure in Downs Road now means that we are all affected by the 'inconvenience of an altered route and an increased journey time'. But **what does this actually mean and how much are drivers really affected**. The distance involved is minimal, a few hundred yards, and a minute or two more. Are all the people complaining so bitterly being fair or proportionate in their complaints. I think not. It is actually the **residents** of the affected part of Downs road and Allen close that are the ones affected the most and it really is a minor trivial delay. The benefits to the smoother flow of traffic in Downs Road and the increased safety of drivers exiting Allen Close should be taken into consideration. Residents in Blows Road and Sundown Avenue have also noticed the benefits to their street. I have to suggest that the people who are moaning about this are really over egging things. I refer you again to the Grove Road and the to Grove Road complainers and their own traffic flow. Everyone benefits, everyone has to deal with the altered traffic flow and all road users take more share of the traffic in the area. This is the same factors as any other traffic measure also previously made in the streets of this town.

The recent survey said about 50% of people said they wanted the Downs Road one way to be removed. It was a very simplistic questionnaire. People would vote that way even if they were only very moderately affected. if the same survey had the additional question. Do you think the 20 miles a hour limit in the area be removed most people would say yes to that. Would the council then go back to 30 mph. Just because there are a lot of complaints against something does not make it mandatory to reverse traffic calming decisions.

Safety Issues

There has been some talk of emergency services not being able to get through and danger to life. As a former emergency driver myself, the route would be taken along the straightest fastest road to arrive at a destination, and that would normally be via the A5. On 10.3.2015 there was a violent incident outside my house. 3 ambulances and 3 police cars attended and all arrived very quickly. Yes some did come against the one way system but it was clear and safe to do so. Who knows where a police, ambulance or fire engine will be when they get a call. If they are coming from the centre of town to eg. Downside or eg. Apollo Close, why would they travel through the minor roads with numerous bends. Trying to use this to pressure the Council as a safety issue is not relevant in these circumstances.

I have lived here over 25 years and witnessed the increased traffic. Cars travelling in Downs road cannot pass each other and have to take turns and snake past each other where there are breaks in the line of parked cars (many of whom park up on the kerb to facilitate the flow of traffic otherwise nothing would get past.) Outside my home is a natural passing place. Over the years I have witnessed multiple counts of road rage, abuse from cars trying to get past each other. Cars have even driven up onto the pavement to get past opposing traffic and this is a route used daily by a great number of school children. When trying to reverse on my drive, previously I could easily wait 10 minutes for a break to start the reverse process only for a car to come along and subject me to glares, hand gestures, and beeping horn merely for trying to park on my own drive. All of which have made living with the traffic conditions continually difficult all the time for Downs Road residents who actually **live** and drive in the road, as opposed to those people who only have to divert their route when they make an occasional short journey through or into the area.

I would ask you to consider that if this was allowed to revert, then after 2017 when things were 'back to normal' the council again decided to put in a one way system. How perverse would that decision be let alone to cost of it to the taxpayers.

In conclusion.

I am asking that the decision to revert back to a two way traffic system to be considered a perverse decision.

- In that decision no account has been made of the appropriate type and proportionality of their complaints against the current system. A few more yards to drive , and a couple more minutes journey time is not an appropriate complaint.
 - In that decision no account has been taken of additional traffic calming measures to the benefit of the whole area. This could be installed quickly and reduce traffic for Park Road which is really the only road really adversely affected by the one way.
 - Park Road is of a very similar size to Downs Road. The traffic they get now is only half of what Downs Road suffered.
 - A reversal of the current system will not reduce pollution. There is still the same amount of traffic in the general area.
 - The Council have already agreed that there is too much traffic in the area. A reversal of the current system will do nothing to directly alter that.
 - The decision goes against well established similar systems already in long term use elsewhere in the Town.
 - The Council has gone against its own decision not to review until 2017.
 - There are no increased safety benefits to be gained by reversion.
 - That as proportionally the residents of Downs Road could never win on decisions based on a numbers game. What should be considered is what is reasonable and fair to residents with an acknowledged traffic problem.
 - A decision should not be made because there are more people to vote against, especially when it is a noisy hard core of unreasonable determined complainers.
-

I Wish to register my objection to the removal of the one way system in downs road for the following reasons.

The traffic problems in Downs road were caused by SBDC mismanagement of the sainsburys works 20 years ago.

They created a rat run and we have suffered ever since. The council caused this.

For most of that time we have tried to get some understanding and relief from the council. We had support from other roads but they gradually preferred using our road to helping us get a solution for the entire area.

We have been fobbed off for years until a police survey I commissioned revealed 18.000 vehicles using this road a week.

This was flagged up by Nigel young as unacceptable. And he said he would help.

When Roger pepworth was ejected he also vowed to help. And we all worked together with David Bowie. We chose the one way as the most neighbourly. We could have gone for a block. The pay back has been a trickle of complaints from mean minded people who are slightly inconvenienced. Of course if they use the A5 as they should. It's still more of an inconvenience to us residents. Than to those non residents who (apart from residents of Allen Close, who have benefitted by safer exit) have no need to use this road at all. Ever. !!!

You quote. "Concerns expressed by residents of roads affected "

There are none. Park road was offered measures at the time but everyone vetoed the entire scheme. But explain how they are effected. They have access from Gt. northern and A5. They have no need to use Downs Road. They are not effected. We are.

We were told the one way would stay until the A5 is detrunked. And strongly question why this promise has been broken. We've endured enough stress, pollution and neighbour wars. Why is this rearing its ugly head again?

From the comments made by people canvassing in this area. I feel it was an election promise.
Not sure that's even ethical is it.

If this is removed. We will have back the 18,000 vehicles. Which, if it was wrong then. How can it be acceptable now? Plus we have the 12% increase. So we face 20,000 vehicles a week. This is without the extra when the M1 jams.

The meeting of July 2015 gave three options. Why has Brian not chosen option C The least disruptive and the fairest to all. At almost no cost. In fact why not still do it ?
There is also no budget for this removal. How much more of our inflated council tax are CBC going to waste on appeasing a few selfish people and political gain.

This desire for some fairness in distribution of traffic in this area. And an improvement in noise and pollution has taken its toll on my life. I have all the correct documented evidence which Eugene has not. And despite asking to see it prior to the election, he now no longer wants to see it and says he has all the information. He does not. And neither does Brian. I am happy to share. I think the full story should be told.

I could make more objections. But suffice to say. Money has been spent. The one way has done just what CBC predicted. So leave it alone. At least until the A5 is de trunked. I know the level of complaints on record. They do not justify this action.

I object to the proposal to remove the one-way traffic order in Downs Road. This is because I have found it so much better in Downs Road since it was installed. There is less traffic which was the intention of the system and I feel safer driving, parking and pulling out from the kerb. This is important to me as I have my young son in the car with me when I visit my family in Downs Road. I also feel this is a huge waste of money when the system is working so well for the neighbourhood. Why bring the problem back into Downs Road? I thought it was to be reviewed in 2017 – why is it being done now?

With reference to your letter of 20th January, I strongly object to your current proposals to remove the existing one-way traffic order in Downs Road .

I live in Norcott Close, off Half Moon Lane, and regularly use Downs Road both on foot and by car.

My objections are as follows:-

1) Twice in the last 2/3 years you have spent thousands of pounds of ' taxpayers money!' setting up various traffic management systems,
and now you intend to spend more of our money removing the existing one-way system, only to then say, that whatever the
outcome of your current plans, you will look again at the whole area, including Downs Road, as part of the work planned
to de-trunk the A5 which will take place in 2017.

Why not save money by leaving things as they are until you carry out this further review in 2017

2) Removing the existing one-way section of Downs Road, will cause traffic chaos in Downs Road, even worse than before, as there has been
a steady increase in traffic in this area of Dunstable. At peak times gridlock will occur in Downs road as lines of cars from both directions
struggle to fight their way past the many parked cars in Downs Road. The main benefit of the existing scheme is that generally the
main traffic flow in Downs Road, is in one direction only, towards Great Northern Road.
The present scheme does at least spread the burden of through traffic amongst other roads in the area, such as Park Road, Grove Road, and Borough Road.

Why should Downs Road Residents have to bear the full brunt of traffic in this area of Dunstable?

I wish to object to the proposal to remove the existing one-way Traffic Order in Downs Road Dunstable on the grounds that the decision to do so is flawed.

In 2013, the partial one-way system was introduced in Downs Road to address the unacceptably high traffic flows in the road. Although Downs Road still experiences traffic flows, the measure has been successful in that it has distributed the traffic to neighbouring roads. The recent survey carried out by Central Bedfordshire indicates that even though there has been increased traffic movements, it is likely to have resulted from a natural growth in traffic rather than as a result of implementing the one-way system in Downs Road.

The recent consultation undertaken by Central Bedfordshire clearly indicates that the majority of residents in Downs Road and Blows Road (who previously experienced the direct effects of the high volumes of traffic and associated noise and pollution) wish to see the measure retained, whilst residents in neighbouring roads wanted it removed.

Whilst the reason given for the proposal to remove the measure states that it has contributed to an increase in traffic flows in roads adjacent to Downs Road, this is exactly what it was meant to do in order to reduce the traffic in Downs Road. In addition, the recent survey results indicate that the increased traffic flows are likely to have resulted from a natural growth in traffic rather than as a result of the scheme. For these reasons the decision is flawed.

If the one-way system is removed, Downs Road will once again experience unacceptably high volumes of traffic, noise and pollution, which surely cannot be fair and equitable. The one-way system should be retained until a full and proper review of the traffic in the area takes place in 2017 as this will enable a strategic and holistic approach to the issue.

I would be grateful if you could take this into account.

I object to the proposal to remove the one-way system installed in Downs Road 2 years ago. There is far less traffic now which means I feel safer driving in the road as well as pulling out from the kerb as it was very difficult to do before the system was installed. When I visit my family in Downs Road the road is now a normal residential road instead of a horrible rat run. I also object to the terrible waste of money when so many cuts are being made in the area. I object to the road being made dangerous again when it is so much safer now, I thought it was to be reviewed in 2017 – why is it being done now?

This issue is particularly concerning with regards to safety as I have two young children... the busyness of the road, combined with the fast speed at which people used to go down it meant it was a worry when I was getting my kids in and out the car. The one way system took this worry away - removing it would lessen the fantastic safety factor it has produced.

I have of course already formally raised my objections in response to Central Bedfordshire Council's Public Notice, but I am pleased to provide you with a list of reasons on why the one-way system should not be removed.

- Prior to the blocking off of Downs Road in 2011 and the implementation of the one-way system in 2013, the council carried out a sample of traffic volumes passing through Downs Road in advance of these measures which came to c.18,000 per week. With the council's own recent assessment that traffic volumes in the town having increased by 12% in the period since, traffic volumes passing through Downs Road without restriction could exceed 20,000 vehicles per week.
- Downs Road is a narrow residential street and the opening up of two-way traffic would have a big impact on road safety. The bulk of traffic would then be entering Downs Road from Great Northern Road by turning left – this is a blind turn at a narrow junction with oncoming traffic as well as pedestrians and cyclists in the vicinity. Although in lower volumes, traffic would also be entering Downs Road from Great Northern Road by right turn creating further congestion and making the junction even more dangerous. I personally (as a pedestrian and a runner) have had a number of close calls with speeding traffic taking the left turn previously as they have been unsighted to my presence even if they were entering Downs Road at safe speed.
- Although there is a current speed limit of 20mph through the one-way section, this is frequently ignored, and I think there are safety concerns for pedestrians and residents even before factoring in for the removal of the one-way system. I have already advised the council that allowing cyclists to enter Downs Road from Great Northern Road is extremely dangerous and I have again had a few near misses when crossing as a pedestrian.
- I was previously in dialogue (in 2014/2015) with the council over proposals to restrict parking along this stretch of Downs Road due to safety concerns even with the one-way system in place. With the input of some residents including myself, double-yellow lines were added to the junctions with Grove Road and with Allen Close which has made these junctions less dangerous. These junctions would become more dangerous if you allow two-way traffic

- and in higher volumes again. Parking is already a major problem in this section of Downs Road so restricting it further should not even be debated.
- Downs Road has long since been used as a 'rat-run' by many from outside the immediate area, and the council looked at various measures to discourage those very motorists using a narrow resident street which was clearly not fit for purpose.

As I have stated on more than one occasion, Central Bedfordshire Council have a responsibility to represent all of the town's residents. I accept that there is pressure from a sizable majority living outside the Priory Ward to reopen Downs Road in order to avoid using the town centre and the A5. It is important that the council resists these pressures and look at area-wide solutions rather than passing the burden on to one particular road as it seems in this case. This should include a range of measures preventing traffic selecting convenient (to them) short cuts and rat-runs.

Any decisions made should be based on detailed analysis of existing traffic flows but also the impact of the Dunstable by-pass/J11A on the town when it is opened in 2017. If the by-pass does relieve the A5 and town centre as expected, then the incentive of using Downs Road will be lessened, and this will then provide the circumstances to possibly remove the one-way system or at least a justifiable reason to review the need for it.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my concerns and I am grateful to you for agreeing to pass on my views to the Consultation Team.

Dear Sir,

I am writing re my concerns, that consideration is being given to reversing the one way system in Downs Rd.

1) Why is consideration being given at this time, when it was originally agreed to re-consider in 2017.

2) Despite being one way, there is still a steady flow of traffic, at certain times queuing to get out of Downs Rd. and several still use it as a speed trap.

3) With the amount of traffic increase in the future, and currently parking on both sides of the roads, the present two way system makes it very difficult for vehicles trying to pass both ways, and is only going to make it more dangerous.

There is a similar problem in Grove Rd. Why not make Park Rd & Grove Rd one way too. It would alleviate some

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of the problems, surely.
Finally, there is the cost involved in creating a two way through road again. Surely there are more pressing areas in Central Beds, which would benefit from the money considered to change the present road system.

I refer to your letter dated 20 January regarding the proposed removal of the one way system along a short length of Downs Road.

I would like to object to this proposal on the following grounds.

1. The objective of the original consultation and the subsequent implementation of the one-way system was to reduce the volume of traffic using Downs Road as a shortcut between the A505 and A5. This has clearly been demonstrated as a success and although the traffic has increased slightly over the last couple of years, the traffic still remains significantly lower than that prior to the scheme being introduced.
2. Nothing has changed regarding traffic in the general area and so by removing the one-way system would inevitably mean a "back to square one" and the return of in excess of 18,000 cars a week using Downs Road as a Rat Run. In fact using your calculations of a 12% natural growth, this would be in excess of 20,000 vehicles a week.
3. Downs Road is a residential street and various agencies including Yourselves, the Police and Central Beds District Council all agreed that, at the time (2012), in excess of 18,000 vehicles a week was unacceptable. What has changed to make this now acceptable?
4. I fully understand residents in adjacent roads have been inconvenienced by the one-way system which makes it less direct for them to make either their outward or return journey, but not both, but they didn't have to put up with the volume of traffic, the increase in pollution, noise as well as CO2 emissions, the increasing incidents of road rage and the damage to parked cars to name but a few. Plus, it's not only residents in adjacent streets that have to take an alternative route, we have to as well, but we can live with this inconvenience.
5. As I have stated in point 2, nothing has changed regarding traffic in the general area, or at least it hasn't decreased, so doesn't it make more sense to look at this issue when the A5 - M1 link road is complete and the A5 is de-trunked and not before?

I understand that residents in Downs Road are the minority and that residents in neighbouring roads are the majority, this will always be the case when it's 5 or 6 roads against 1 but please take into consideration the residents of Downs Road have lived through the pain of the issues I have highlighted in point 4, the residents in neighbouring roads have been slightly inconvenienced.

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As council tax is increasing, I object strongly to the council wasting **MY** money to remove the TRO. Money which could be better spent providing more money for policing or more worthwhile causes.

I am writing to object to the removal of the one way TRO on Downs Road.

This problem has been going on for 18 years now and the council has played "ping pong" with its decision making and not dealt with the "root cause " of this issue.

Too much traffic in this area.

The TRO has been a God send to those of us that have lived here for many years and endured Speeding, 18000 cars per week, abuse, pollution and "rat running".

I have attached a photograph which reflects the volumes of traffic on our road outside my house on a regular basis even after TRO has been installed.

Cars are turning onto Gt Northern Road.

My comments/objections/grounds of my objection are as follows:-

Downs Road is the main "artery" to many housing estates, Manshead/other school sites, businesses and A5.

It was the "rat run" & short cut for many people trying to access these destinations prior to the TRO being introduced.

People Avoiding the congested A5, which was built for such volumes of traffic. Our Road is not been built as a designated A road on any AA map.

Our road is slightly wider than Park Road, but not as wide as Halfmoon Lane, Brighton Road etc., therefore the volumes of traffic will become unacceptable again and dangerous!

We have mainly terraced houses on this road with no off road parking on both sides of the street. So parked cars are constantly parked halfway up the pavement to let traffic flow.

The road is only wide enough for 1 car to pass through at a time.

In the past we had nearly 18,000 cars cut through our road to access these various sites. (official figures)

This together with pollution levels is unacceptable to both council and residents.

Speeding is a continuous problem.

Main reasons why other roads have objected so strongly to the TRO is not on facts/figures but on inconvenience of having to use other major roads to get home.

These facts have been documented on Council official report November 2015 (Surrounding roads have more traffic, More dangerous in surrounding roads, Speeding is a problem, Emergency vehicles/HGVs struggle to get through, Cycle route goes against the traffic) - All these issues are the same in Downs Road.

A recent FOI enquiry that covered "councillors, officers, contractors or any other source" revealed that on 2 official complaints had been received/logged by CBC.

But This is a caption from an email I received from Cllr Spurr dated 4/12/2015

"However, following two years of operation it is evident that the scheme continues to be problematic to many local residents. Whilst it is usual for any change to a road system to provoke a negative reaction in the short term, the continued disquiet after this amount of time and further representations by members of the public and by Councillors such as Cllr Ghent, led us to feel we must reconsider our position. "

So Why is the council spending in the region of 5k for another consultation only a few years after consultation/ installation of this TRO? If only 2 official complaints received

The council itself has acknowledged that the traffic would naturally increase in volume; therefore our road is not built for such volumes!

It was acknowledged at the last consultation that Downs Road endured cars cutting through to A5 in the morning from Great Northern Road and return traffic in the evenings.

In the following report

Delegated Decisions by the Executive Member for Community Services on Traffic Regulation Orders
21st July 2015

Downs Road Dunstable, Proposal to Amend Traffic Management

The following was stated:

"There has been a corresponding decrease in traffic entering Downs Road between 8am and 9am eastbound from 137 down to zero. Thus total traffic using the two roads heading east in the morning has increased by 12%. This increase is likely to be a natural growth in traffic rather than new traffic being attracted to the area, but this cannot be proved. "

Unfortunately I don't seem to understand what the sentence means "the traffic entering Downs Road was "zero" as you can't enter Downs Road from Great Northern Road.

Why was this figure reported as it doesn't reflect the true nature of the traffic flow in Downs Road.

Budget

"The report that is goes to the Traffic Management Committee in March will make it clear that there is currently no budget to remove the scheme—as did previous reports.

The reports referred to above are all available on the council's website,"

Why now?

Response from Cllr Spurr dated 4/12/2015

On Downs Road, your resident asks for the basis of the decision. I can understand the reason for this question as when the scheme was last considered, following a petition by residents opposed to it in late 2014, we had said that we planned no further works until 2017. By this time we anticipate very significant changes to the traffic in the town following the opening of strategic routes and de-trunking of the A5 and we plan to conduct further consultation and traffic surveys at this point.

In times of austerity and no budget why are the council looking at this scheme now why not wait until 2017?

Please accept this email as my objection of the removal of the TRO.

Support for Removal

I really hope that the decision to make Downs road one way is reversed and as soon as possible. Since its implementation, the traffic on station road and great northern road has been absolutely awful. The traffic regularly queues back to the sainsbury turn and beyond during rush hour because of this poorly thought out decision. I have no option but to use this route twice daily to get my daughter to Manshead as you cut the funding to the bus service that used to take children from Katherine Dr to the Manshead campus, resulting in Grant Palmer cancelling this service (in the middle of a school year). Let's hope that with the quick removal of this dreadful one way system that the council at long last thinks of the residents that pay its wages.

Thank you for sending me notification of the Order to remove the one way system in Downs Road Dunstable.

Since its introduction I have experienced both inconvenience and frustration. It has lengthened my journeys to and from my home, not only in distance but also time. I estimate that at peak times it adds ten to fifteen minutes to my journey home all of which is spent sitting in the unbroken queue of traffic on Great Northern Road.

I believe the scheme was ill advised and unnecessary from the start and I am delighted and relieved that this un welcome blockage is now subject to removal.

I look forward to confirmation of the order.

The Downs Rd one way is a disgrace and should never have been implemented. It has made residents lives especially in Park Rd, which is a road not designed to take such heavy traffic as it has seen since the one way a living nightmare, together with the increased queuing on GT Northern Rd which tails almost the entire length down to Station Rd every evening rush hour, and all these problems plus many more are down mainly to the one way system.

You will find little support for it to stay if any outside the seemingly selfish attitude of some Downs Rd residents.

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You will find little support for it to stay if any outside the seemingly selfish attitude of some Downs Rd residents.

This is about time this was opened back up to two way traffic.

I am a resident of Borough Road and wish for the one way system be removed from from Downs Road.

I wish to express my support for the removal of the current one way system for the following reasons.

1. It causes unnecessary congestion in Great Northern Road. As a resident of Sundown Avenue returning from Luton direction I have to join traffic trying to join the A5. Increased stationary traffic increases local pollution levels increasing the risk of asthma which can kill and increased noise levels.
 2. As above and trying to turn into Park Road requires a wide berth to avoid the metal posts putting you on the wrong side of the road in Great Northern Road and Park Road which is dangerous.
 3. Park Road has not been resurfaced in a long time and is very uneven and too narrow to support frequent two way traffic, especially with parked cars.
 4. Exiting Park Road is hazardous as vehicles including large vans park up to the junction making it impossible to see traffic from either direction. I have then had to pull out into the middle of the road only to face oncoming traffic in Borough Road.
 5. Turning in to Blows Road from Borough Road means turning across traffic turning right out of Blows Road into Borough Road because of the one way system. It would have been safer and more logical to have made the one way system work clockwise with entrance into Downs Road from Great Northern Road one way. Park Road would then have to be one way, resurfaced to take account of increased traffic flow, and KEEP CLEAR road marking or yellow box on Great Northern Road to allow cars out turning right.
 6. The traffic numbers presented at the public meeting back in 2013 did not support the argument that the roads Blow Road, Borough Road, Downs Road, Sundown Avenue were being used as a rat run by non-residents. When you took the locally registered vehicles then took into account delivery vehicles, service vehicles (including ambulances, nurses, social workers) about 80% of the traffic had been accounted for. So the scheme possibly benefits a dozen households at the inconvenience of hundreds of local households. This was a "NIMBY" proposal to increase house values.
 7. There does not appear to have been any change in safety. In fact as described above, the new scheme is less safe and I feel it is a case of when, not if I will be involved in a collision due to this scheme.
 8. The issues of speeding, which is down to a minority of drivers, should be addressed by implementation of the law by using ad hoc speed checks if speeding is a real issue, but with two way traffic in Downs Road and parked cars there is minimal chance of speeding, except at night.
 9. There will be continued excess use of Great Northern Road from Luton Road to High Street South (A5) whilst traffic continues to build up from the town centre. In that respect there would be safer, and faster traffic flow in the town centre if the lights operated like they do in Milton Keynes with traffic flow allowed from one direction at a time in a clockwise rotation. The pedestrian lights should also be phased in, rather than on demand, so that all traffic stops whilst pedestrians cross all four roads (again to aid traffic flow), and the crossings made wider to allow for larger pedestrian volumes and quicker crossing. The time length of each flow will depend on traffic volumes but say 30 seconds North/South and 20 seconds East West and 15 seconds pedestrians but may vary on time of day with longer at peak times and shorter at night and if possible sensors cutting green light short if no traffic. Hopefully this can be addressed when the de-trunking comes.
 10. On a related matter the junction of Station Road (which leads off of Great North Road) and Church Street/Luton Road should have a Box Junction and cameras to keep the junction free.
-

All we can say is thank goodness common sense has prevailed. The one-way system has been a total nightmare for 100s of residents and of questionable benefit to so few. What a waste of Central Bedfordshire's funds!

I wholeheartedly support CBC with their intention to remove the one-way system in Downs Road.

Although I understand that CBC has to listen to a minority and make judgements accordingly, I feel that the Councillors have been misled. The complainants' claims about the volume of traffic and speeding issues were never proven with solid data. Indeed some of the data collected was, as best, inaccurate, and on occasions badly analysed to give the answer they required.

The one-way blockage has not achieved any significant reduction in overall traffic and supposed 'rat-running' as almost all traffic in this area is residential. i.e. journeys to and from work to home etc. The one-way in Downs Road has only benefitted an extremely small number of residents to the inconvenience of the rest of this area (20% - 80%).

With reference to the letter from yourself, Downs Road, Dunstable - Proposed Removal of One Way Traffic Order.

The removal seems, on balance, to be the right thing to do. The wrong thing to do was to do it in the first place where so many residents didn't want it.

Has anybody been fired who took the decision, Who was/is accountable for wasting tax payers money. Heaven knows you people haven't stopped complaining about the cut backs from central government. Reorganising the chairs on the Titanic springs to mind. Too many people with too many cars, there are no winners.

However, there is a contribution that you guys can make, as you seem to have unlimited funds.

You must take this opportunity to install traffic calming measures in Downs Road, Blows Road and Sundown Avenue. Speed humps are a pain but they work. Insist to the people in these roads that, as part of this change, they are installed.

I understand that this was thrown out a few years ago in Blows Road/Sundown Avenue by the residents. I don't know who or where these people lived, but they are probably the same people who use both roads and race track.

Where Blows Road/Sundown Avenue crosses Half Moon Lane is a very serious accident waiting to happen.

I have today received notice from Nick Chapman, Transportation Manager, Central Bedfordshire, regarding the above mentioned proposed removal of the one-way traffic order in Downs Road, Dunstable.

As a long standing resident (over 20 years) of **PARK** Road, Dunstable, I wish to record my utter disbelief that the aforementioned one-way system was ever introduced back in August 2013.

Park Road is a much smaller and quieter road than Downs Road, and indeed all the neighbouring roads, but has been forced since 2013 to endure all the extra traffic as a result of the introduction of the one-way system in Downs Road. Countless petitions and meetings have proved that the **MAJORITY** of local

residents, living in the affected area, never voted for the one-way system originally. In fact a strong group of genuinely worried residents expressed their concerns from the initial enquiry and have continued to this present date to oppose the ridiculous outcome of this one way traffic order.

I therefore wish to record my comments as follows:-

Please remove the one way traffic flow in Downs Road with an immediate effect as is possible.

Please, in future, could the council take strong note of the local resident's, that is those living in the area and affected by any changes, petitions and comments.

It has taken over two and half years of traffic nightmare and strong community backbone to make the Council see sense and restore a system which worked perfectly well for the majority of locally affected residents. Surely, it is obvious that the residents of an area would know and be able to predict any issues with any "proposed schemes"?

In conclusion, may I thank you for this long awaited notice of removal of the one-way traffic order in Downs Road as finally the fiasco can be put to bed!

Before the one way system was introduced in Downs Road the traffic was spread between all roads in the area. Now since the local traffic is forced to use Park Road and Borough Road both roads have become very dangerous. We have constant queues and horns blaring as cars try to pass each other. As time passed we expected the situation to settle down but things are still as bad as day one.

I would like to see the one way system removed for the safety and convenience of all the residents.

Further to your letter stating that the one way system at the Great Northern Road end of Downs Road is to be removed and the previous two way reinstated I would like to have my support for the action noted.

I received a note through my door advising I had missed a hand written petition that was being taken around but to email this address to advise my support.

I am writing in response to your letter of 20th January 2016 and to strongly support the proposal to remove the one way system in Downs Road. The reasons for this are as follows:

This causes great inconvenience to the residents of the whole of the surrounding area as they can no longer take the most direct route from Luton Road to their homes. Journey times are far longer due to longer queues in Great Northern Road, adding to those already trying to get out onto the A5. It seems ridiculous that the residents all have to use 3 roads instead of one. Eg instead of going straight up Downs Road, I now have to go along Great Northern, Park road, and Borough Road.

This route has to be more unsafe, as it is impossible to enter Park road on the correct side of the carriage way. Visibility is bad, and one has to stop in Great Northern Road to ensure there is no traffic coming down Park road before one enters the road. This is a narrow road in bad condition, it's not straight like Downs Road, and is clearly far less suitable to take this volume of traffic.

The extra traffic going along Great Northern Road is actually causing traffic to back up on the A5 that cannot turn right into Great Northern Road due to the queueing at the pinch point just off the A5. This cannot be a good thing. If no extra accidents have occurred I am very surprised.

Apart from anything else, this measure was taken originally without any consultation in the area, and it was clearly very unpopular with the vast majority of residents in the area. This was shown at a meeting shortly after it happened, at the local school. This meeting was attended by I would guess at least 300 to 400 people, including my husband and I. A vote was taken, and the one way system was removed due to only a handful of those present being in favour. Sadly this did not last, and following a consultation that backed up the original consensus, a permanent one way system was put in place. So much for democracy. The residents set up an association and continued to fight this with petitions and even writing to the MP, but to no avail until now.

The traffic through our road has increased since this was put in place, even though we expected that it should drop. We accept that our road is a route through the estate as should the residents of Downs road. It has always been thus. I don't understand why Downs Road was ever treated as a special case. I believe that any cutting through by non- residents may have increased due to sat nav, and also there are far more accidents on the motorway

these days, it is almost every week day rather than several a month. I believe this could be down to the removal of motorway lighting. Obviously the more building work that goes on the worse this will continue to get, until we get a north/south bypass for Dunstable which is the only answer, and it seems will never happen.

I cannot see the de-trunking of the A5 helping as one cannot stop the lorries that come through Dunstable unless there is a physical barrier. The other new roads being built in the area will only in my opinion make the traffic situation in Dunstable worse, allowing for easier cutting across from the motorway to the A5.

On a positive note, although I originally could not see that the 20mph limits would help the speeding problems we have on our long straight road, I admit that they have slowed people down, not to 20mph, but maybe 30pmh rather than the previous 40-60 mph in most cases, which is far more reasonable and safe.

In summary the removal of the one way system cannot come quickly enough for me. If it were removed I might be less angry about the vast waste of my council tax money, and time and energy used in this ludicrous venture. For sanity to prevail would now seem enough.

Having lived in Richard Street and now in Stokers Close just off Station Road we have suffered greatly from the increase in traffic, pollution and noise especially since the one way system was installed in Downs Road.

On these grounds we support the removal of this scheme because the traffic has not improved in any shape or form.

In many ways it is more dangerous especially at start and end of school because these roads are used as rat runs by those in a hurry, This is the main issue as everybody is in a hurry and has no respect for others. Traffic comes to a halt at Beginning and end of school, plus during other busy times of the day . Taking the car is a nightmare, I can walk into town but unfortunately others are too busy or like my husband disabled.

Thank you for your letter with regards to the Removal of the One-Way Traffic in Downs Road, and I must say that myself and all the neighbours in Half Moon Lane could not be happier to hear this as this sure has been a complete 'Waste of Tax payers money' once again!.

We had a meeting about this a few years ago and the vote had gone 'For Against it' to be even be put in place, but this was overturned, and now you informed us that this is will now be removed, and not before time I hate to say!

What was the point in the first place may I asked to have called for a meeting and the Residents to vote, and then to completely ignore our voice and vote for refusing to have this put in place.

Can you please tell me when this work will be taking place, and having access to it once again.

Having been forced to go down 'Parks Road' when coming back from Great Northern Road, in order to get home, I must say that 'Park Road and Borough Road, sure have had taken a lot of toll on the road use, and the roads have now been damaged and Pot Holes', and in Park Road between a House, some new 'Houses have been put up, which of course makes the traffic down there very heavy and dangerous when driving along there.

I support this proposal on the grounds: that survey data proves that it has not reduced overall traffic in the area. It has not simply shared nuisance in an equitable way but has increased congestion on Great Northern Road, inconvenienced many residents on a daily basis, altered the tradition traffic patterns in the area and reduced road safety by increasing the distance travelled and the number and tightness of turns.

The inconvenience and disturbance to a large number of Dunstable residents has been disproportionate to any benefits gained by a small group of initiating petitioners.

We would like to register that we are in favour of the proposed removal of the One-way Traffic Order. We hope that the Council will return Downs Road to it's original layout as suggested in your letter to residents on 20th January 2016 and as per the Order Title Central Bedfordshire Council (The South Bedfordshire District (Various Roads) (Dunstable and Houghton Regis) (Traffic Regulations) Order 1997 (Variation No.*) Order 201*.

The one way system in Downs Road has never worked and is still causing problems to residents in Dunstable. Speed is now a problem in Downs Road as motorists go

faster because they don't expect to meet another car until somebody tries to exit Allen Close.

To be forced to queue in Great Northern Road and then try to manoeuvre the tight bends in Park or Borough Road makes the whole area very unsafe for both pedestrians and motorists.

This problem is not going away, hasn't improved with time and Downs Road really needs to have the one way system removed.

I am a resident of Norcott Close which is not far from Downs Road, and have been affected by the one-way traffic order on Downs Road, particularly when travelling home from Luton Road.

I, and my family are in favour of changing the road back to how it was, but wish to express our annoyance that this scheme was ever introduced in the first place. It was obvious to most people that the scheme would only serve to move the traffic from Downs Road to other neighbouring roads, and when questionnaires were sent out around the area the majority of people voiced that opinion, and were against the scheme.

Once again it seems something has been pushed through the council by those with a vested interests, despite the views and interests of the majority, and council money has been wasted on a scheme, which now has to use more council money to be reversed.

Please add our names to the petition supporting the removal of the one-way traffic order in Downs Road.

We are long-term residents of xx Great Northern Road and have to suffer the impact of this one-way system:

- there is significantly worst congestion at peak times in the morning and evening
 - the congestion is significantly worst when there are problems with the M1
 - at peak times it has become far more difficult to park in Great Northern Road
 - we rent a lock-up garage in Downs Road and are now forced to drive further distance and use a number of other roads when driving to the garage, namely any combination of Park Road, Grove Road, Borough Road and Lovers Walk.
-

I would like to register my support for the removal of the existing one-way traffic order in Downs Road. Please let me know if you have any further questions.

I am very pleased that Central Beds Council has decided to reverse the one way system back to its original two way flow. I had been concerned for many months that at peak times the traffic jams that were evident down Great Northern Road could cause a major problem for the future. As you

had stated at one of the previous council meetings an increase in traffic is inevitable over the next five years. I could see a situation arising whereby the traffic could queue from the A5 all the way down Great Northern Road continuing onto Station Road and Priory Road and backing up to the A505, should this happen a major traffic jam would occur on the A505 causing grid lock in Dunstable at peak times. It is in everyone's interest therefore to keep traffic flowing and the two way system reinstated will ensure this happens avoiding major traffic jams as I have highlighted.

I am inconvenienced by the current situation as it takes on average an extra 15 minutes for me to reach home on a journey which should take 5 minutes adding to pollution in the area because of the static traffic, not to mention the extra costs involved in terms of petrol.

Please accept this email as notice that I agree that the one-way should be removed from Downs Road Dunstable (Great Northern Road to Allen Close) and that this road should be returned to its former layout.

The reason I feel this way is that the one-way has not lessened the traffic difficulties, that are experienced in most areas, but made the situation far worse and due to driver frustration and 'forcing' traffic on to fewer roads much more dangerous.

I have been informed that you are proposing to remove the one way system from Downs Road.

Since it was put in place it has caused chaos on a daily basis. Blocking off this road not only caused queues in Great Northern Road. It has also been a nightmare for homeowners who have a constant queue outside their homes and near misses with cars being forced to do a detour around the tight bends in Park Road and Borough Road. I have witnessed several scraps and bumps since these motorists have been forced to take this route.

I do hope you remove this one way system and allow the residents of Dunstable to drive and live in safety.

I am delighted that the council have re-considered the one-way system in Downs Road Dunstable. The current system has forced the traffic to be congested.

The results of your survey showed 72% wanted to remove the one-way system. However, I like many others who live in the area, have had my journey to & from my house, made longer and more difficult by the introduction of the one-way system. I'm sure that if the council had involved all the residence of the estate, who use the local roads, then the proportion of respondents in favour of removing the one-way system would have been even greater.

I look forward to the council removing the one-way system and thus easing the congestion in this area.

I write to strongly support the removal of the One Way traffic order currently in operation in Downs Road Dunstable.

I was firmly against the implementation of this from the start so sincerely hope this can now be reversed.

Besides being inconvenient and a longer route on my daily commute it has caused;-
More traffic backing up on Great Northern Road towards A5,
Exiting Downs Road onto Great Northern Road more difficult due to the extra traffic flow & backed up traffic
Difficult & dangerous entry & exit on both ends of Park Road

The greater inconvenience & danger caused by this Traffic Order affects far more residents than those of Downs Road for whom the Traffic Order was originally imposed for.

In conclusion & to clarify I support the proposal to REMOVE the One-way traffic Order on Downs Road, Dunstable from Allen Close to Great Northern Road.

I am in favour of removing the one way system.

I was against it when it was first promulgated as was every one else I spoke to at the time, so it should never have had money wasted on the scheme in the first place.

To whom it may concern.

Due to the inconvenience of the current one way traffic order, and the intolerable increase in congestion since its introduction, I would like to voice my request and sign the petition that the said scheme should be reversed to the original two way traffic system that was in place prior to the council's intervention.
I support the Removal of the current one way traffic order.

With regard to the latest consultation on the one way traffic in Downs Road, I write AGAIN to confirm my opinion that removing this system is the only fair way to move this situation forward. I have emailed you many times with my views on this subject and was very pleased to receive the latest letter. For us residents of the area, by blocking off my entry into Downs Road the only way for me to reach my house from my place of work is to turn down Park Road. This road is very small and you can't turn into it if there is someone waiting to come out of it which is a ridiculous situation. I still need to reach my house regardless which roads you block off so all you have done by putting this one way system in place is move me from one road to another. You have also created traffic queues as I sit in line and wait to get to Park Road in order to turn left, where before I would have been able to turn earlier and therefore reduce the traffic from Great Northern Road.

There were other options put forward at the time for traffic calming measures which the majority of residents preferred – measures which would have slowed us all down and perhaps deterred non residents from using our streets, but still enabled us to reach our homes in a direct route. But these options were ignored, even though they had a majority vote. A situation that has never fully been explained.

Please finally remove this unfair system and allow us to travel freely to our homes.

As opponents of the one way traffic system in Downs Road Dunstable we were very pleased to see the proposal to reverse the decision. We have sympathy with residents of Downs Road who have undoubtedly had less traffic to contend with but at the expense of many others.

At times the queues to get out onto the A5 tail back to the roundabout at top of Priory Road and beyond which is frustrating and time consuming. Nearer the A5 there is the opportunity to weave one's way through Park Road, Borough Road etc. which many feel the need to take.

Observations on the situation - irresponsible parking has a great deal to do with the congestion problem in all the roads concerned. There would appear to be a total lack of concern for what would cause others a problem. Even with the one way system in operation, parking (which is on both sides) close to the exit from Downs Road onto Gt Northern Road is often so close to the island it is difficult to get through. A stricter enforcement of sensible parking would be desirable but how this can be achieved is unclear. More double yellow lines? One side parking? Limited parking? Resident parking permits?

We trust the present one way system will be abandoned.

Other Representations

As we live on a corner house at the junction of Great Northern Rd and Downs Rd, we are uniquely situated to be impartial observers on the performance of the One-way system. This is because we have now to make a detour to reach our garage, which is situated at the back, adjoining Allen Close, and are exposed to the traffic conditions in Great Northern Rd. So many of the comments received concerning the scheme seem to be coloured by “Nimbi” sentiments, which is a condition which tends to be rife in Dunstable, as befits a town which has lost most of its employment, and what now is taking over, are low-salary jobs at Amazon and warehousing.

What you may be not aware of is that when the One-way scheme was first proposed, and a public meeting held in a local school hall, there was the nearest thing to a riot which I have seen, with a solitary policeman disappearing from sight. Your colleagues explaining the results of the detailed traffic survey had to conclude prematurely, due to the barracking! The Downside Estate, which use Downs Rd as a rat-run, were angry, partly because the whole affair had turned out to be a battle between the then Cllr Reynolds, who was against the plan, and had elected to be an “Independent”, after taking umbrage with his Conservative colleagues, and Cllr Pepworth, who had initially responded to complaints from Downs Rd inhabitants, and who, prior to him standing as “Independent”, had been a Labour councillor. Furthermore, this rankled deeply with Reynolds, who resented Pepworth sitting on Central Beds meetings, and not him.

What has happened since the scheme has been implemented is that safety has been vastly improved, both for cyclists, who have special provision made for them, and for those living in Downs Rd. We have had a car though our wall in the past, when entering Downs Rd, due to a car approaching from the opposite direction. Furthermore, as most of the houses on the straight portion of the road have no off-street parking, so a long stretch of effectively single lane road, led to vehicles racing each other, trying to reach the other end of the “narrows” before meeting a car coming from the other direction. As can be imagined, parked cars were damaged as cars tried to pass, and limited visibility, due to a plethora of white-vans, meant that cars at opposite ends of the restriction could not see each other.

Cllr Spurr decided that the needs of those living in Downs Rd, although they were numerically less than the neighbouring roads and Downside estate, outweighed their needs, and the present scheme was introduced. After an initial period when people deliberately went the wrong way, things have settled down. One can now exit from Allen Close more safely, and also from our garage, as sightlines are very restricted. However, at present, one has only to contend with traffic from one direction. Indeed, despite double-yellow lines being introduced on corners, this has only resulted in cars/vans being parked on the pavement at the corners, as the vehicle population, with splitting of houses and fresh house building off Park Road, rockets.

Cllr Reynolds, meanwhile, having lost his seat in the last election, was seething, and continued to distribute letters and try and introduce new forums. He admitted once, when asked directly, that the campaign was partly driven by a personal spat against Pepworth, who had risen higher in the ranks, and had been a Socialist, to boot.

Finally, he managed to engage the attention of a Conservative Cllr, Carole Hegley, Social Care & Housing, who is close to Brian Spurr. She lives in Totternhoe, miles from here. At a new meeting Brian Spurr, after hearing from Reynolds and Pepworth once more, proposed to reverse the whole scheme, saying it was unusual for opposition to continue for so long! Apparently this will cost at least £98,000, when the council is closing everything in sight and threatening to increase our council tax by 4%! How can this be justified at this point?

As it was revealed that a long running analysis of traffic movement in the area was on-going, and that it was felt that everything would change with the de-trunking of the A5 in two years time, it seemed strange to spend all our money on changes, before the de-trunking effect was experienced. Also, doing so would skew the on-going traffic analysis. Furthermore, with major infillings and new estates having taken place since the introduction of the one-way system, no provision is being made to control the traffic flow. Sleeping-policeman cannot be introduced, due to the single lane nature of Downs Rd, and the blanket 20mph zone is openly flouted.

Actually, for much of the day, traffic is quite low, so a system operated by a time-controlled traffic light or barrier, could be an effective compromise. Better still, wait for the de-trunking.

We would be very happy to discuss with you personally on site the situation, as being a Design Engineer myself, we can talk without emotions clouding the issue. Also, apologies for the length of the diatribe!

As it been pointed out in your letter the traffic problems will be looked at in 2017 when the council plans to de-trunk the A5, as a road user the one-way does not matter to me whether the one-way is removed or not, but from a tax payers point of view I believe that a decision for the removal of the one-way should not take place until the A5 de-trunking is planned.

My name is Xxxxx Xxxxxx. My partner and I; Xxxxxx Xxxxxxx recently moved to Great Northern Road, in fact this move took place on the 5th of January of this year and it was a big shock to my system where parking is concerned here. I am a nurse and as you can imagine, I work flexible shift however I dread working a long day which means leaving work at 8 pm and trying to get parking after a long, tiring shift. I literally sat in my car some nights and sob as no parking is available at that time of night. I would constantly keep driving around hoping and praying a parking space would become available soon. Sometimes when I get home I cannot get a good night sleep as I would lie in bed hoping the car would still be in one piece due to where I had to park it overnight. I also hope it doesn't get towed or ticket as it is parked on double yellow line and this is all out of desperation. Not to mention how busy the road is with traffic coming from every direction. On many occasions my only way out is the one way system route; the same route you are planning to open again for two way system.

We do not have parking permit therefore other people who do not live in this neighbourhood use it to their benefits and we the residents are suffering as a result. I cannot believe you people do not take all of this into consideration. We are paying our council tax just as everyone else and therefore should be treated fairly which is definitely not happening. There must be a solution; maybe something to reduce the traffic passing through in order for us to park our car safely especially at night; without having to be so stressed out when leaving work. Everywhere else I have lived in the past had been the total opposite to what I am experiencing. Usually I cannot wait to reach home after a long day at work to de stress myself, now I dread going home due to the stress of parking and this makes me really sad because my stress level is then increased. Please, please, can you help us the residents of Great Northern road.

I lived at 17A Downs Road when the one way system was introduced and would like to say as a former resident this system only helped a handful of residents.

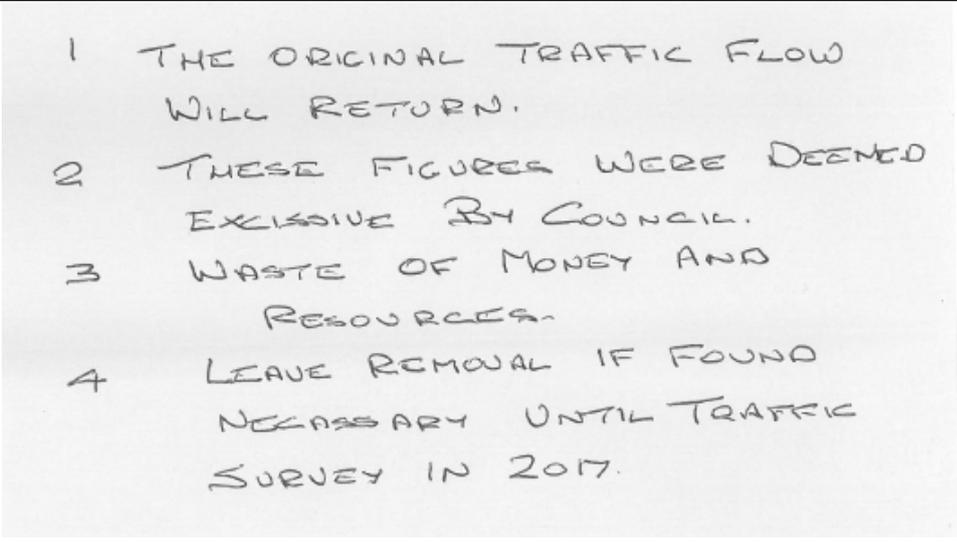
There never was more traffic using this road than the surrounding roads. The new system made my journey

home from work much longer every night. I was forced to drive via small unsuitable roads with sharp blind bends. It was a major factor in my decision to move.

Your decision to consider reversing this one way system comes too late for me but will make life easier and safer for the residents of this area.

Mrs Xxxxxx came to see me about the action the Council intends to take about the one way system in Downs Road. She made the following points :-

1. Would it not be wiser to refrain from taking any action until traffic flows in Dunstable can be analysed following the opening of the Dunstable Northern Bypass and the Woodside link road?
2. Please could no double yellow lines be installed without adequate additional parking be provided.
3. Have any results been made public from the pollution meters installed in the immediate area
4. She asked for an assurance from the Council would bear in mind the need for value for money in respect of any measures taken imminently should analysis of traffic flows following the opening the bypass and Woodside link Road show that another solution should be looked at.

-
- 
- 1 THE ORIGINAL TRAFFIC FLOW
WILL RETURN.
- 2 THESE FIGURES WERE DEEMED
EXCESSIVE BY COUNCIL.
- 3 WASTE OF MONEY AND
RESOURCES.
- 4 LEAVE REMOVAL IF FOUND
NECESSARY UNTIL TRAFFIC
SURVEY IN 2017.
-

If the one-way system at the bottom of Downs Rd is abandoned we really need pavement bollards particularly at Grove Road junction where the double yellow lines ^{are} as at the moment vehicles park fully on the corner pavement which completely obliterates driver's vision when a) leaving Grove Rd into Downs Rd b) leaving the right-of-way at the bottom of my garden (there are garages here for numbers 9-41 Grove Rd) c) People turning left out of Allen Close where they have to negotiate vehicles coming down Downs Rd as well those turning left from Grove Rd. On occasions there has been a large Transit Van parked there. (We have 4 Transit/Spunker Vans brought home at night which restrict vision).

If there are vehicles parked down the side of my back garden as well as the one of the Δ pavement you have no vision of approaching cars etc. (A large part was taken by S.Beds Council of my front garden for greater visibility many years ago.) This is now used as a parking bay because it is an easy option. On the opposite corner of Grove Rd/Downs Rd, vehicles are parked all the way round the radius which further restricts vision of approaching vehicles. At times pedestrians have to step into the road to get by.

Allen Close does have a slightly better vision but this is blocked at times because of the parking & when 2 vehicles are together on the pavement pedestrians have been forced to walk on the road. On the 4th December last a young cyclist was *knocked off his bicycle and taken to hospital - He was travelling from Air Northern Rd up the 1 way system as it is a cycleway & the car that hit him was travelling in the opposite direction. As parking is on both sides of the road traffic is restricted to the centre section. The 20mph is not being adhered to also. On our corner I have knowledge of 3 cars being written off plus a junior cyclist who was hit. I actually looked after his bike when he was taken to hospital.

Considering the financial situation and the council will be making plans to detrunk the A5 it would be better to wait until then, the council has been accused in the past of wasting our money and it may be the case that any alterations in the road layout could possible be a waste.

Please wait until 2017 when the council will be looking at the whole area.

May I initially ask why Sundown Avenue residents were not consulted in your survey?

I feel this proposal would have a negative effect on the traffic flow on the east side of Sundown Avenue. The adjoining Blows Road creates a straight road which vehicles speed on then in attempting to cut the corner at the south end of Sundown Avenue problems have occurred.

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Central Bedfordshire Council

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 17 March 2016

Parking Strategy Overview

Report of Cllr Brian Spurr, Executive Member for Communities
(brian.spurr@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

Advising Officers: , Marcel Coffiat, Director of Community Services
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This report relates to a Key decision

Purpose of this report

1. To highlight the need for a Parking Strategy
2. To seek the views of members of the proposed Vision, Aims and Policy areas.
3. To inform members of the proposed methodology and timescales.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to:

1. Members are asked to comment on the Vision, Aims, Policy and action areas of the proposed Strategy.

Background

4. Car parking is an important issue when considering transportation topics and one which is often overlooked. This is surprising as travel by car is the main mode of travel for most people and all those cars need to be parked - According to some estimates most cars spend 90% of their time parked.
5. A well planned and managed approach to parking can help us to achieve our economic, social and environmental objectives. The effective management of parking can have a positive impact by enabling more productive use of spaces making towns and local communities more attractive to visitors, thereby improving their economic viability.

6. Central Bedfordshire does not currently have an adopted Parking Strategy and there is no comprehensive approach to managing on and off street parking, provision, control and enforcement. This report sets out an overall introduction as to what is planned to be a comprehensive Parking Strategy for Central Bedfordshire and details the background and reasoning for having a Parking Strategy while proposing a Vision, Aims, Policies and proposed Actions devised upon current and future need.

Why produce a Strategy?

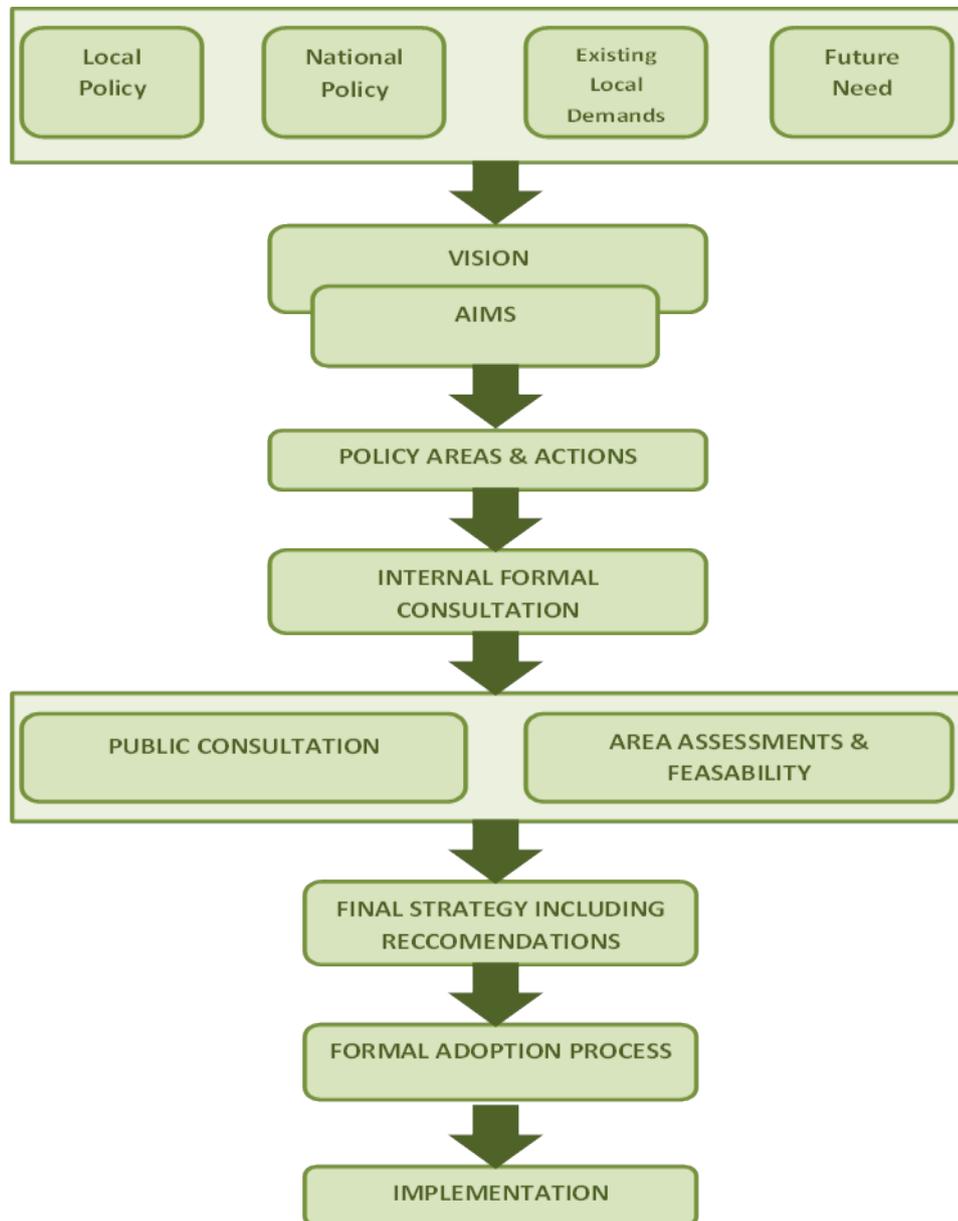
7. Parking is an issue of significant concern for local residents. Councilors and members of the public often raise issues about residents parking, inconsistency, obstructions and parking contraventions.
8. Unrestricted parking leads to congestion, obstructions, pollution and spaces being occupied by the wrong users at inappropriate times all of which is a concern for local businesses and the economic viability of the area.
9. Issues associated with parking are often inextricably linked and the remit of the Parking Strategy will be broad so as to acknowledge the complex and challenging connections between parking and environmental, economic and regeneration issues.
10. Management of parking can have a positive impact by enabling the more productive use of spaces making towns and district Centre's more attractive to visitors, thereby improving their economic viability. Furthermore, having a cohesive parking strategy can also ensure that parking in local areas can be dealt with in a fair and consistent way so improving the environment and safety for our residents.
11. Legislation requires that Parking should fall within the wider objectives of the authority for Transport, and consequently with the proposed development of the Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP) it is an ideal time to introduce a Parking Strategy - Table 1 below summaries the key reasons for why we need a Parking Strategy.

Table 1: Reasons

Reason	National	Local
Regulatory framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traffic Management Act (2004) • National Planning Policy Framework (2012) • The Equalities Act (2010) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a new Local Transport Plan for Central Bedfordshire.
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autumn Statement (November 2015) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LTP funding settlement announced (July 2014) • Emerging Community Infrastructure Levy
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Secretary of State’s Statutory Guidance to Local Authorities on the Civil Enforcement of Parking Contraventions’ (March 2015) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Five Year Plan (2015) • Market Towns Strategy • CBC Design Guide.
Existing need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislative requirements to manage parking effectively. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents parking provision – Residents parking permit schemes, local safety, schools. • Growing number of Verge/Footway parking issues. • Inappropriate or inadequate Town centre parking provision. • Operational capacity often unable to meet demand.
Future need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population growth • East West Rail and other major infrastructure projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the management and investment requirements as population increases. • Planning for the long term maintenance costs of our existing assets. • Providing innovative parking payment systems. • Supporting the economic ambitions of our town centres. • Net growth in Jobs • New Local Plan (2017/18)

Proposed approach & structure

12. The following chart summarises the proposed approach to delivering the final Parking Strategy and details the different elements required that will shape and develop a comprehensive parking strategy for Central Bedfordshire.



13. This process will form a sound and robust evidence base to justify investment, ensure value for money and provide effective schemes on the ground that will contribute towards the overarching objectives of the LTP and the priorities within the Five Year Plan.

Proposed Vision

14. Our draft Vision for the future of Parking in Central Bedfordshire is as follows:

‘The parking strategy aims to support the effective and safe operation of our roads as well as delivering solutions which enable our town and district centres to grow and helps residents and businesses access services’.

15. The Vision means creating a parking strategy that helps Central Bedfordshire deliver as far as is practicable what our current Highway Network needs in order to function plus what it needs in order to grow.
16. The Parking Strategy will contribute to the council’s vision to secure sustainable economic growth. Growing the local economy provides the resources for individuals and the authority as a whole to deliver those criteria which constitute a great places to live and work whilst the sustainability dimension ensures that it is not done so at the expense to future generations’ ability to meet the same needs and desires.

Proposed Aims

17. The overarching Vision can be broken down into nine Aims that have been chosen to guide the development of the Parking Strategy. These Aims have been created to reflect the issues which have been identified as locally important, while at the same time reflecting wider national and local policy context.
18. These Aims reflect the main impacts that transport can have on the wider community, rather than being linked to particular schemes or measures. They form the basis upon which the policies and programs contained in this document have been developed and are detailed in the following Table.

Table 2: Draft Aims of the Parking Strategy

	Aim
1	Make Central Bedfordshire and its Town Centres as accessible to residents, businesses and visitors as possible to ensure growth and prosperity.
2	Ensure that parking schemes for residents, businesses and visitors are well managed
3	Promote the safety of all road users
4	Ensure that there is sufficient and appropriate parking for new developments
5	Fulfil our statutory requirements for the parking we provide
6	Help ensure that our roads are well managed
7	Provide alternative travel choices that are sustainable
8	Provide effective enforcement of parking restrictions
9	Work in partnership with other off street providers so that we can provide the best service possible.

19. By having a focus of where we need to direct our attention we can develop robust policies for parking in Central Bedfordshire which are both informed and reactive to our residents needs as far as is practicable.

Proposed Policy Areas & Actions

20. The draft Policy areas and Actions (Appendix 1) detail proposals that show how we intend to deliver the Aims of the Parking Strategy. It is the intention to then assess the viability and impact of implementing specific policies and the outcomes will be detailed as part of the final document which will include recommendations based upon public consultation and detailed localised studies through Area Assessments.
21. There are three distinct areas of assessment which are:
- a. **QUANTITY** - How well does the supply of parking spaces relate to the level and type of demand in an area both at present and in the future.
 - b. **QUALITY** – relating to location, level of service and the design of parking facilities
 - c. **PARKING CONTROL & PRICING** – Mechanisms required for influencing who has access to parking spaces and when.

The draft Policy Areas we have highlighted have been established as a response to the work undertaken to date and will enable us to address some of the issues related to parking within Central Bedfordshire.

Consultation approach

22. A twelve week public consultation will begin in April which will ensure that the policy areas and associated actions can be assessed appropriately. The outcome of this consultation will help to guide the recommendations within the final strategy.

Area Assessments

23. A comprehensive parking assessment has recently been conducted in Biggleswade and is now being implemented. A similar study has been carried out in Leighton Buzzard. It is our intention to use these examples as best practice for other areas within Central Bedfordshire. The work carried out in these areas looked at the specific local issues related to parking and proposed detailed and financially costed options that would help to address the parking problems in those towns.
24. When undertaking the assessments the issues were considered on an 'Area wide' approach rather than in isolation, taking into account the different causes of parking problems which enabled measures to be developed that would alleviate the danger of one solution causing further issues elsewhere. The proposals were supported by detailed analysis of the impact financially and operationally which enabled all partners to make an informed decision about what measures would be most appropriate.
25. So that members can make an informed choice with regards to the impact of some of the proposed policy areas and actions it is the intention to conduct some further localised studies. Taking this into account the areas we intend to commission further assessments for are:
 - Dunstable
 - Flitwick
 - Sandy
26. As Train Stations are large trip generators there will also be smaller assessments made at the following locations:
 - Harlington
 - Arlesey (To a lesser extent so as to support work already being undertaken through the Highways Contract).
27. These assessments will enable an area wide approach to be taken to geographical areas where there are known issues with parking or that will be impacted by parking in the future.

28. It is intended the studies within each of these areas will assess the parking related issues associated with; town centres, train stations, schools, workplaces as appropriate to the particular town.
29. The assessments will produce detailed and evidenced recommendation's that will then inform a prescribed policy approach for each area and generate a long list of schemes and an implementation programme for members to consider in the Final Draft Strategy.

Timescales for Adoption

30. It is proposed that the Parking Strategy is in place by late 2016, this would enable the full consideration of the process by members, the public and other stakeholders alike. The timeframe is set out in Table 3 below

Table 3: Timetable for Adoption

Date	Milestone
March 2016	Approval of Vision, Aims, Policy Areas & Actions of the Proposed Parking Strategy.
April - July 2016	Public Consultation – Vision, Aims, Policy Areas & Actions
	Conduct Individual area assessments
July - Sept 2016	Prepare final document with recommendations based on consultation and area assessments
Sept 2016	Presentation of Final Strategy to OSC
Oct 2016	Executive
Nov 2016	Full Council
Dec 2016	Implementation

Options for consideration

31. Members are invited to comment on the proposed Vision, Aims and Policy Areas.

Council Priorities

32. The Parking Strategy is an important tool in helping to deliver the Council's priorities as illustrated in the above report. Either directly or indirectly it helps to facilitate:
- Enhancing Central Bedfordshire
 - Great resident services
 - Improving education and skills
 - Protecting the vulnerable; improving wellbeing
 - Creating stronger communities
 - A more efficient and responsive Council.

Legal Implications

33. No direct legal implications however we have a duty under the Traffic Management Act to manage parking effectively.

Financial and Risk Implications

34. At this stage there are no financial implications for the council, as specific proposals are developed the Finance Officer will be consulted as appropriate.

Equalities Implications

35. We have conducted an 'Equality Impact Assessment Relevance Test' as part of the initial approach to developing the Parking Strategy and this show there would be no negative impact upon vulnerable groups within our communities it is not thought that a full EIA is needed at this stage.
36. We will seek further advice from the Equalities Officer as the Strategy and any specific proposals are developed. However we do anticipate that the Parking Strategy will make a positive contribution towards the council's obligations to the Equalities Act.

Implications for Work Programming

37. Following further detailed assessments and public consultation a draft Parking Strategy will be presented to OSC in Sept 2016 for full consideration before being presented to Executive in October and Full Council in November.

Conclusion and next Steps

38. Work will commence on assessing the impact of the proposed policies and actions at a more detailed level which would then enable members to make an informed decision on the impact of the Parking Strategy and the proposals as detailed in this report.

39. The final report will detail the short medium and long term recommendations for parking within Central Bedfordshire that would support the council's objectives of providing the capacity for growth, ensuring fast and efficient connectivity to jobs and opportunities and assist in creating safe and attractive communities where people want to live and businesses want to invest in line with the emerging Local Transport Plan

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Policy Areas & Actions
- Appendix 2 – Verge & Footway Parking
- Appendix 3 – Residents Parking

Draft Parking Strategy – Proposed Policy areas and Actions - Appendix 1

No	AIM	POLICY AREA	ACTIONS
1. QUANTITY One of the most important considerations is to determine how well the supply of parking spaces relates to the level and type of demand in an area, both at present and in the future and to decide whether more or less space should be provided.			
1.1	1.	Car Parking Provision: Town Centres	In town centres, the authority will work with our partners to provide and manage capacity to cater for the needs of shopper and visitor parking.
1.2	1	Car Parking Provision: Train Stations	At stations, the authority will work with partners, to endeavour to ensure parking capacity meets current and future demand as part of a wider consideration of access options. Additional provision will be supported where evidence highlights.
1.3	1	Car Park Provision: Interchanges	At appropriate locations the authority will advocate and support where appropriate the development of Interchange facilities to enable parking provision for all modes of transport.
1.4	4	Car Parking Standards: New Residential Developments	Parking Standards as stipulated in the Design guide will be implemented and reviewed as appropriate.
1.5	4	Car Parking Standards: New Commercial Developments	Parking Standards will be developed in line with the emerging Local Plan and LTP4.
1.6	4.	Parking Standards & Capacity: Schools	New schools or schools which are expanding will be expected to demonstrate how parking will be accommodated so as to minimise any detrimental affect upon the surrounding neighbourhood or safety of the pupils.
1.7	1,7	Parking Provision: Park & Ride (Strategic)	The authority will support the provision of both bus-based and rail-based Park and Ride facilities where it can be demonstrated that there is a demonstrable need.
1.8	1,7	Parking Provision: Park and Ride (Local)	The authority will advocate the provision of “pocket” Park and Ride sites which utilise existing car parking provision.
1.9	1,6	Parking Provision: Freight (Lorry Parks)	The authority will assess the requirement for the provision of overnight lorry parking facilities within Central Bedfordshire
1.10	4	Parking Provision: Freight (in new developments)	New developments should ensure that sufficient space is allocated for the accommodation of vehicles associated with the movement of freight associated with the operation of the site.

No	AIM	POLICY AREA	ACTIONS
2. QUALITY			
Quality issues relate to location, levels of service and design of parking facilities.			
2.1	1	Location: On and off street provision	Parking provision will be appropriate to the journey purpose within our Town & District Centres.
2.2	1	Accessibility & Choice: Public Off street parking	The authority will seek to improve the overall quality and standard of the car parking provision provided where practical and affordable.
2.3	1, 7	Accessibility & choice: Bicycles	The authority will seek to improve the provision and security of cycle parking in towns, schools, local centres, health centres and key public transport stops in support of the emerging cycling strategy
2.4	1,7	Accessibility & Choice: Taxi ranks	The council will periodically monitor demand for taxi bays and spaces that are underused that could be reallocated for other uses.
2.5	1,4,7	Accessibility & Choice: On Street Car clubs	The council will support the use of car clubs within the authority by enabling the provision and enforcement of on-street car club bays where there is evidenced demand.
2.6	5	Social Inclusion & Equality: Mobility Impaired	The authority will support the introduction of Shop mobility facilities where appropriate and where there is evidenced demand.
2.7	5	Social Inclusion & Equality: Disabled Bays Town and District Centres	The authority will ensure that on street disabled bays are located close to facilities so as to enable mobility impaired people to reach these areas with ease.
2.8	6	Environment & Street design	The authority will periodically review the effectiveness of existing 'lines, signs and bays' in order to minimise street clutter and ineffective restrictions.
2.9	6	Environment & Street Design	When designing and revising any parking equipment (lines, signs or machines) they will be designed and installed with the aim of minimising any negative impact to the existing streetscape.
2.10	1,4	Environment & Street Design	The authority will ensure that any new parking provision minimises any negative impact on the local environment.
2.11	1,4	Environment & Street Design: Conversion of front gardens for parking spaces	The authority will take into account the wider considerations when assessing applications for the conversion of gardens into off-street parking areas.
2.12	1	Environment & Street Design: Footway & verge parking	The authority will apply a graduated approach in each instance where a verge or pavement issue is reported. (Appendix 2 as a specific example)

No	AIM	POLICY AREA	ACTIONS
3. PARKING CONTROL & PRICING			
Policies and mechanisms are required that can be used for influencing who has access to parking space and when.			
3.1	1	Tariff's & Pricing: On & Off Street	Any future charges for parking will be developed to ensure there is a reasonable balance between the demand for parking and the supply while also ensuring that parking revenues cover costs.
3.2	2	Tariff's & Prices : Permit schemes (General rule for all i.e business permits)	The authority will ensure all permit schemes are priced to cover their whole-life costs and set at a level that covers all associated costs incurred by the council.
3.3	1	Tariff's & Pricing: Off street (Free Parking)	In the case of 'Special Events' the authority will only operate/endorse free or unrestricted parking in those car parks owned and operated by itself or by town/parish councils where specific criteria are met.
3.4	1	Tariff's & Pricing: On street	The authority will consider introducing pay and display for on-street parking where appropriate.
3.5	1,3	Restricting & managing parking: Freight (laybys)	Restrictions will be applied to limit long stay parking in laybys across Central Bedfordshire where there is a demonstrated need.
3.6	2,3	Restricting and managing parking: Road Safety & traffic flow (Schools)	The authority will apply a graduated approach in each instance where issues are received about school related parking problems.
3.7	2,3	Restricting & Managing Parking: Disabled Bays (On-Street)	The authority will assess requests for Disabled bays on an individual basis to ensure that the most suitable and cost effective solution is achieved. Interventions will thereafter be reviewed on a five year basis.
3.8	2	Restricting and managing parking: New Residents parking scheme requests	The authority will only consider petitions requesting a residential parking zone where a specific criterion has been met and the full costs of the scheme can be met by the residents. (Draft within appendix 3)
3.9	2	Restricting and managing parking: Residents parking	The council will carry out periodic reviews of existing schemes and seek to rectify any schemes that are ineffectual.
3.10	6	Restricting & Managing parking New Restrictions (Yellow lines, Loading Bays, Bans)	The authority will apply for Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO's) to restrict parking or loading at locations such as junctions or where parking would cause safety or congestion problems, requests will be assessed on an individual basis and prioritised based on Cost/Impact/Congestion/Safety ratio.
3.11	1	Restrictions & managing parking: Advisory lines (parking cages, h-bars)	The authority will consider requests for installing non enforceable advisory lines where the full cost can be met by the resident; the authority will also review periodically and remove any ineffectual or redundant markings as deemed appropriate. .
3.12	5	Restricting & managing parking : Town centre new residential developments	The authority will consider permitting residents of new residential properties or conversions in town centres to purchase a residents permit for use within the town centre long stay car parks where feasible.
3.13	9	Partnerships	The authority will development mechanisms with local partners to ensure that the policies and actions of the Parking Strategy can be delivered in

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Proposed approach to Footway/Verge Parking – Draft Parking Strategy Appendix 2

Verge and footway parking places significant additional costs on the authority as a result of unsightly damage caused to verges, footways, footpaths, kerbs and landscaped areas. Such parking also places costs on other statutory undertakers whose plant is at risk of damaged when buried beneath parked areas not designed to withstand the pressure of loaded vehicles. Where such parking is uncontrolled, the authority faces a legal liability.

In recognition of the above, Central Bedfordshire Council introduced a ban on parking on the footway, or on footway verges, in all roads in the authority. As the enforcement of this ban is decriminalised, the authority can take action where this is considered reasonable. Such consideration will be triggered on receipt of a request for action from the public or a local councillor.

In each instance where a verge and pavement issue is reported, the authority will apply the following graduated approach to deal with the issue:

1. Consider distributing letters to the owners of offending vehicles requesting politely that they desist from parking on the verge and footway; monitor compliance
2. Install lining as appropriate to demarcate parking spaces wholly within the carriageway; monitor compliance.
3. Install physical measures as appropriate to prevent vehicles from driving onto the footway or verge; monitor compliance. Examples of measures will include raised kerbs, bollards, bunds, rocks, etc.
4. Erect signs and apply enforcement.

Footway & Verge - Exemptions to the Ban

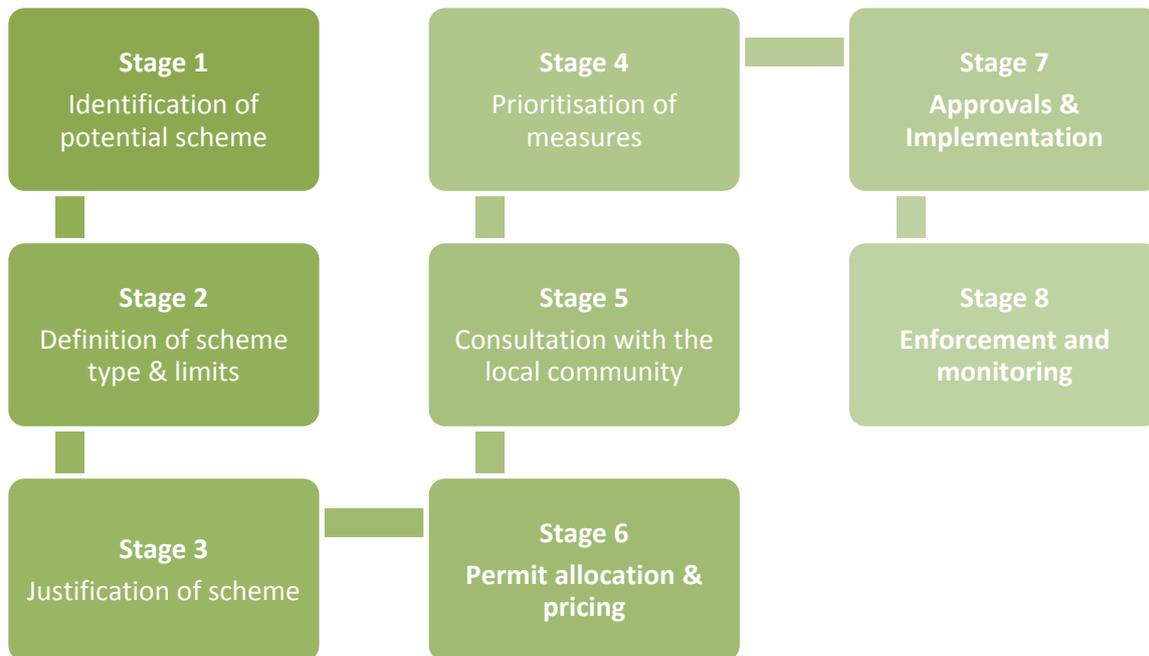
The following elements will be taken into consideration when assessing the feasibility of initiating an exemption to the 'Verge or Footway ban':

1. The width of the road and the appropriate clearance widths required (this will vary on the type of road and its usage).
2. The volume and nature of traffic using the road.
3. Access requirements for emergency vehicles.
4. The width of the pavement.
5. Safety considerations for pedestrians and other drivers.
6. The implications of any exemption for footway parking in terms of traffic and pedestrian movement.
7. Whether or not there is off-street or alternative parking available nearby.
8. Whether alternative measures can be introduced, such as –
 - Banning parking on one side of the street while permitting it on the other.
 - Introducing one-way working and permitting carriage way parking on both kerbs.

Appendix 3 – Parking Strategy proposed approach for Residents’ Parking Zones

At present, there are only a limited number of residents’ parking zones in operation in Central Bedfordshire (Flitwick, Dunstable, Leighton Buzzard and Biggleswade). It is recognised that in some locations there is increasing demand from the local community to control the negative effects of non-residential on-street parking.

Given this, a process has been developed that sets out how Central Bedfordshire Council intends to investigate, implement and operate residents’ parking zones across the authority’s area. The council will use the following steps in determining the creation of a new parking zone:-



Stage 1: Identification of Potential Scheme

Stage 1 of the process will be based on evidence from a significant proportion of the local community, Town or Parish Council or by the council itself. The council encourages residents to register requests for consideration of a residents’ parking scheme through its highways help desk or via the web site.

Before the council proceeds with any formal investigation it will seek the opinion of

the town or parish council who cover the area of the request in question. If the relevant Town or Parish Council does not support the request then the council will take no further action unless there are extenuating circumstances. Following on from this request, it is at the council's discretion where and when to conduct surveys to analyse the presence or severity of the problem. The council has set the following as the standard criteria for the level at which local community consultation may take place.

Criteria which Provides Evidence of a Residential Parking Problems

Daytime problem - 60% of available kerb space is occupied by non-residents vehicles for more than 6 hrs during which 85 % of the available kerb space is occupied by all parked vehicles.

Nighttime problem - 40% of available kerb space is occupied by non-residents' vehicles for more than 4 hrs during which 85% of the available kerb space is occupied by all parked vehicles.

The cost of developing residents' parking scheme is high and in some cases schemes do not justify the cost of further development if there is not a readily identified problem. There is also significant risk to the council of promoting schemes which may not be self supporting. No schemes will be implemented unless there is a sound financial case which will justify the expense of the scheme and its enforcement and will be financed in full by the residents.

Stage 2: Definition of Scheme Type and Limits

Stage 2 of the process follows on from the site observation and an approval that the criteria for a Residents Parking Scheme have been met. It is at this stage that the type and limit of the scheme needs to be agreed. The scheme could address a long stay or short stay problem.

Long stay problem – Shared Use

A 'Type 1' scheme is one in which existing or proposed parking restrictions are believed to place a disadvantage on the residents. In this case, residents' parking permits could be allocated, and restrict parking to two hours for example, in order to allow access to local facilities but prevent all day parking in the area.

Short Stay Problem – Exclusive Use

A 'Type 2' scheme would arise where the demand for parking by residents and visitors is currently greater than the existing number of parking spaces. In this case, restrictions are required to provide an equal advantage to residents and visitors to park.

Stage 3: Justification of Scheme

This stage involves gathering the evidence from Stages 1 and 2 to assess the feasibility of promoting a scheme. From the evidence of a problem at Stage 1 and identification of the possible type of scheme at Stage 2, an assessment can be carried out as to the scope and impact of implementing a scheme. From this, the possible capital and revenue implications can be calculated. These must be set out in a report showing the conclusions of the findings to date. This will support the consultation and marketing process. The report should provide justification for the scheme or the need for support from the Highways Dept to progress.

Stage 4: Prioritisation of Measures

If there are a number of requests for schemes then the council must prioritise these. The promotion of schemes is costly and with only a finite amount of funding to implement, it is likely that requests will be prioritised based upon the residents ability to meet the funding requirements in order to implement the scheme. Rankings will also be completed against common criteria such as scale of parking problem assessed in Stage 1, the likely cost of implementing a scheme and local community support for the scheme. This will provide a ranked list of requests that can be progressed as funding is achieved by the residents in order to facilitate the request.

Stage 5: Consultation with the Local Community

Developing a strategy for whom and how residents are consulted needs careful preparation. The council needs to identify the area which will be consulted, a methodology and also set a budget. The streets adjacent to those under investigation can also be considered in the consultation process. The views of surrounding local businesses and any within the proposed area are also important in the potential implementation of a scheme.

The council will therefore not adopt a minimum consultation response rate for schemes and will use a majority of 66% or above of all households to carry the vote.

Stage 6: Permit Allocation and Pricing

Stage 6 of this process involves setting permit entitlements and charging. In terms of residential entitlement, this may be based upon a maximum number of permits per household, e.g. one, two or in some cases three or more. In other cases, permits have been allocated based on the availability of parking spaces e.g. 75-100% – allow two permits/household and visitors' permits. Visitor permits may be

awarded by the number of people aged over 18 in a household, at set amounts per year or as above based on space availability. The number of business permits also needs to be considered.

Permits will not be issued to households where there is off street parking available.

In terms of charging, current annual permit costs are reviewed each financial year and will normally increase by the percentage Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in existing schemes relevant at that time of the review. A review of neighboring authority charges will also be undertaken every 5 years and charges adjusted in line with neighboring averages. The cost of permits will increase for each and every vehicle registered to an address within the proposed zone. This is to give fair opportunity to all to park within streets with limited kerb side space.

Stage 7: Approvals and Implementation

Stage 7 of this process is the approvals and implementation stage. At this point there needs to be a reflection made on the consultation process. New or amended Traffic Regulation Orders need to be drafted as part of the implementation process. This stage provides an opportunity to invite formal objections to the scheme. These must be resolved or overridden by the appropriate elected member committee before the scheme can be implemented.

Stage 8: Enforcement and Monitoring

Stage 8, the final stage of the process is applied when the scheme is in effect. The council will decide the level at which to monitor or enforce the scheme. In most cases a residential parking scheme is defined as a low priority within the council's overall traffic management issues. If the council receives a significant number of complaints from residents and compliance is low, it may then be necessary to enforce the scheme further.

Central Bedfordshire Council

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

17 MARCH 2016

TITLE OF REPORT: - HOUSING STRATEGY 2016-2021

Advising Officers: Jason Longhurst, Director of Regeneration & Business
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John Goody, Principal Housing Officer
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Purpose of this report

1. This report provides the Committee with an update on progress in relation to the review of the Council's Housing Strategy
2. The report also invites comments on the draft Housing Strategy which is currently undergoing an internal stakeholder consultation before it goes out to wider public consultation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to:

1. Consider the draft document and provide feedback prior to wider public consultation.

Overview and Scrutiny Comments/Recommendations

3. The Housing Strategy 2012-2016 is being reviewed and brought up to date to reflect recent changes in national policy. The new strategy runs from 2016-2021 and responds to changes in housing policy at national level and changes in the housing market. It also takes into account the evidence in the recently completed Strategic Housing Market Assessment about housing needs in Central Bedfordshire. It considers how housing of all types and tenures can be delivered through the planning system and by other means.
4. In preparing for this review initial work and consultation was undertaken by consultants Three Dragons to inform the housing strategy. Following this officers have undertaken workshops with external stakeholders: one with housing providers, the other with voluntary sector. This drew out a number of issues and challenges. A further workshop was held in February with PFMT to identify a vision for housing in Central Bedfordshire and to get a better understanding of Members and Senior Officers priorities around future housing delivery in CBC. This

workshop looked at the challenges and identified some mechanisms to help tackle these as well as taking into account members priorities.

5. The revised Central Bedfordshire Housing Strategy focusses on these housing challenges and sets out a plan to help deliver a broad range of types and tenures of homes to meet them. . The strategy provides insight into the housing market and population, including what drives housing choices and how we engage with the market to deliver housing and promote economic growth. This is described, assessed and prioritised through the wide range of evidence studies, guidance, strategies and plans the Council has produced, which in turn have informed this strategy. These cover a range of specific areas, features and topics.

What is the Housing Strategy?

6. The Housing Strategy:
 - a) Sets out the council's proposed approach to address the housing challenges that we expect to affect the area, over the next 5 years.
 - b) Outlines the main national, regional and local housing priorities that will affect Central Bedfordshire over the next five years.
 - c) Will be a document focussed on enabling housing delivery across a range of types and tenures, closely linked to and implemented through the future Local Plan.
 - d) Is an overarching Housing Strategy that provides links and signposting to other strategies that are relevant to housing.

What the Housing Strategy does?

7. By providing this overview of the existing local evidence base, with associated strategies and plans, the Housing Strategy demonstrates how the Council meets a range of requirements associated with national policy and legislation, this includes:
 - The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF);
 - Laying the foundations: A housing strategy for England
 - Impact of the Localism Act 2011
 - Impact of the Welfare Reform Act 2012
 - Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) Affordable Homes Programme 2015-2018
 - Care Act 2014
 - Emerging Housing and Planning Bill
8. As national policy and legislation is regularly amended or reinterpreted, having an overview of this in the Housing strategy, which can be easily updated, helps clarify the Council's understanding of what is required to meet the housing challenges the Council faces.

How will the Housing Strategy be used and next steps

9. The Housing Strategy has a number of functions, these include, but are not limited to :
 - a. Providing the strategic housing evidence base for the housing policies in the new Local Plan for Central Bedfordshire.
 - b. Interpreting what the local evidence base means with respect to national policy and clarifying how this information is used.
 - c. Providing the strategic housing direction for the Council and support for Housing Services through the delivery of homes to meet the housing needs of Central Bedfordshire.
 - d. Providing a signpost to relevant strategies with a direct link to housing
 - e. Providing a strategic housing evidence base for other future Council plans and strategies

10. The draft strategy is currently being circulated to internal stakeholders for comment until the end of March and meetings are being held with key officers. Following internal consultation and this committee meeting, the strategy will be prepared for public consultation and will be circulated to include the previous workshop participants. It is anticipated that the consultation will start in April for a period of 6 weeks. The strategy will then be finalised before being presented to Executive (programmed for June) for formal endorsement.

Council Priorities

11. The Housing Strategy supports all of the Council's priorities, with the most relevant being:
 - a. Enhancing your local community - This strategy will enable new housing to be developed in the right locations and ensure that it is high quality sustainable housing.
 - b. Promote health and wellbeing and protecting the vulnerable - Ensure that housing stock helps to cater for future demands, particularly the needs of older people and vulnerable households through the provision of appropriate homes.

Corporate Implications

Legal Implications

12. The Housing Strategy reflects how a number of legislative and national policy requirements would be applied in Central Bedfordshire. The focus of this largely relates to planning policy, in relation to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the Housing Act and the Housing and Planning Bill.

Financial Implications

13. There are a number of financial implications as a result of the Housing Strategy. These include: demand and consequent cost to the Housing revenue account (HRA), the received commuted sums for affordable housing, demand and consequent cost of housing people in temporary accommodation, Disabled Facilities Grants, and funding from external sources such as the Homes and Communities Agency - National Affordable Homes Programme.

Equalities Implications

14. The Council is strongly committed to providing everyone with the opportunity of a decent home and to providing affordable housing which meets demonstrated local needs.
15. Evidence of local need shows a continuing shortfall of affordable housing in Central Bedfordshire. A variety of demographic and social factors, coupled with pressures generated by economic growth and in-migration mean that a substantial number of households are unable to rent or buy in the open market.
16. There may be an impact on some vulnerable groups, which relate to the Welfare Reform Act, and the introduction of the Benefit cap. There are issues with the Spare Room Subsidy, for people who are disabled and require a carer to stay overnight and with a Domestic violence victim who requires a safe room within her home from the perpetrator.

Sustainability Implications

17. The Housing Strategy will ensure all new and regeneration schemes concerned with housing will aim to meet the highest levels of sustainability compatible with best value and technical feasibility.

Conclusion and next Steps

18. Comments are currently being sought on the Housing Strategy from internal colleagues, asking for their views on how the local evidence base detailed within the strategy can be used to shape and provide the focus for future policy and action.
19. Following internal consultation the Housing Strategy will go out for full public consultation.
20. Once completed, the outcomes of this process will be used to shape housing policies in the new Local Plan for Central Bedfordshire.
21. The Housing Strategy will then be taken to Executive for endorsement as technical guidance as the Council's Housing Strategy. This is in relation to a range of functions including strategic planning and development management purposes.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Housing Strategy

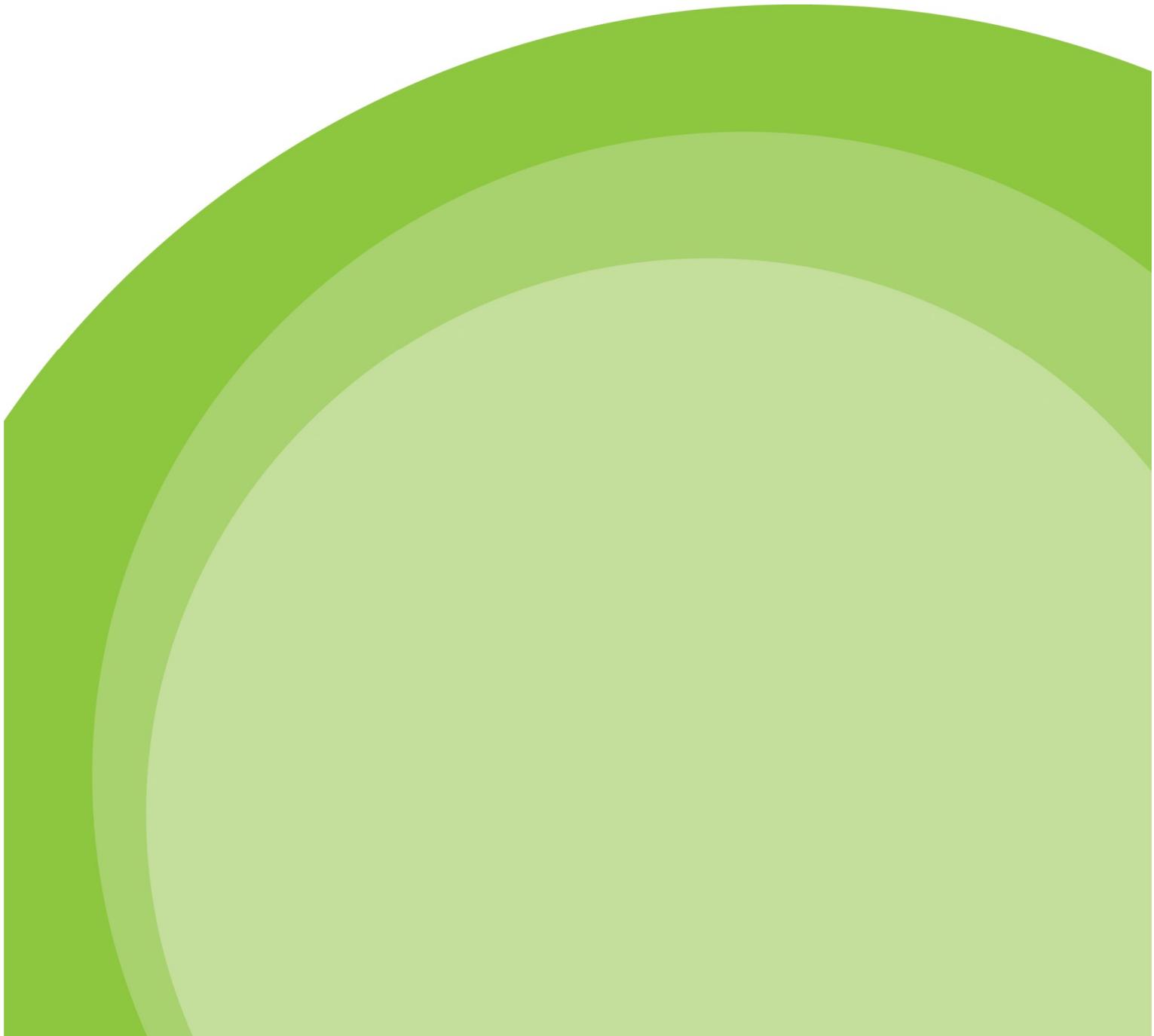
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Housing Strategy

2016 to 2021

DRAFT VERSION 1

FOR INTERNAL CONSULTATION



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Foreword

The Housing Strategy identifies what the key challenges for housing are over the next five years and what the Council and its partners are planning to do to overcome them.

Central Bedfordshire is a great place to live and invest in. A place where all residents are able to contribute to and benefit from sustained prosperity. Housing is key to the success of a community, important to quality of life and health and wellbeing.

With a growing and ageing population we must plan and meet the housing needs of Central Bedfordshire and ensure the positive impacts on local finances, education, health and building stronger communities are realized. By meeting housing needs we will support our other strategic ambitions such as growth, jobs and training opportunities and make Central Bedfordshire a great place to live for our residents.

New homes are needed for a broad spectrum of households including people struggling to get on the housing ladder, family homes, and accessible properties or specialised accommodation for people with support needs.

Through the use of planning powers and effective partnerships with Registered Providers (RPs) and the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) we will ensure that the right type of homes are provided to create mixed and sustainable new communities. We will also work with our partners to ensure new homes are of a high quality and good design and will remain affordable.

This means the links between housing and other agendas needs to be clear. This Strategy sets out how we can be more responsive to the economic, environmental and social challenges that local people are experiencing and how the right types of housing can help address those challenges.

Executive Summary

Central Bedfordshire Council's Housing Strategy for 2016 – 2021 sets out our vision and plans for housing over the next five years and demonstrates our approach to housing across the area, working in partnership, to deliver more for our residents and communities.

It identifies the issues we face as a Council around ensuring the delivery of new homes and the challenges for housing services over the next five years in the context of a growing population, new government policies, a fast changing local housing market and a challenging economic climate.

The Housing Strategy contributes towards the Council's wider strategic aims and priorities and as it needs to take account of key national, sub regional and local strategies and evidence. The Council has a lead role in:

- Assessing and planning for the current and future housing needs of the area
- Encouraging a supply of new homes to be built across all tenures
- Supporting the local economy by having the right number of homes of the right tenure and price for our growing community
- Increasing the delivery of affordable rented housing
- Making best use of existing housing stock
- Enabling people to be housed in good quality private sector housing
- Promoting housing related support services
- Working with a range of partners to achieve the best possible outcomes for local people.
- Enabling the delivery of attractive housing options for older people.

The Housing Strategy directs to a range of documents covering the different themes, published or in preparation. This Housing Strategy focusses on key issues facing Central Bedfordshire such as housing supply, affordability, an ageing population and the housing needs of vulnerable people.

There are four key themes that have been identified in the Housing Strategy.

1.	Enabling sustainable communities
2.	Affordable housing delivery
3.	Meeting the housing needs of older persons
4.	Meeting the housing needs of vulnerable people

Theme 1: Enabling sustainable communities

This theme focuses on the wider delivery of all types of housing and predominantly how we get the market to meet our housing needs and get

people into home ownership. The affordability issues within Central Bedfordshire and the affect on local employment is explored within the theme. There is a focus on the design of homes and how we can ensure the existing stock can help meet housing need.

Theme 2: Affordable housing delivery

This themes focus is on affordable housing delivery and the need to deliver 364 homes per year to meet the identified need in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and the tenure mix that we will require. How we work in partnership with Registered Providers to deliver affordable housing is identified and how we can work together with a mixed economy approach to enable delivery. It also touches upon the ability of the Council to deliver and build affordable housing.

Theme 3: Meeting the housing needs of older persons

This theme focuses on the growing older population in Central Bedfordshire and the need to create attractive housing options for older people to live in. We need to create a range of products to ensure that larger homes can be freed up and that older people have homes where they can remain part of the community and reduce social isolation. We want to enable homes that are fit for purpose and can be changed and adapted as peoples care needs change. There is also a focus on reducing the costs to Adult Care, Health and Housing by the creation of attractive older person accommodation.

Theme 4: Meeting the housing needs of vulnerable people

This theme looks at transforming people's lives by ensuring that there is choice and control for those who need to access services to combat homelessness. Working with partners and stakeholders to identify the housing needs of vulnerable people helps ensure any intervention takes place at an early stage as a preventive measure. This guards against potential later, more involved and costly assistance and provides the best outcomes for vulnerable people.

An action plan has been developed with key objectives and accountabilities to ensure delivery (appendix *).

Our Vision

This strategy sets out our vision for housing in Central Bedfordshire and how we are going to deliver it. Our vision statement is:

“We want Central Bedfordshire to offer a range of great housing options in sustainable locations for all residents in our community, to support their social wellbeing and economic aspirations.”

This Housing Strategy aims to identify the housing challenges in the area and sets out a plan to meet them. We want the right housing for all in mixed income and tenure sustainable places. Implementing and sustaining the vision is dependent on a range of other factors and we seek to identify those connections in this document.

We intend to deliver mixed tenure housing in the regeneration opportunity areas where future housing capacity and potential for jobs creation is greatest. The Council wants to deliver affordable housing across Central Bedfordshire and work with our partners to increase the amount and quality of new housing. We also want to deliver more choice for affordable, ownership and rented housing. We believe a wider range of choices could be developed through innovative working between the Council and Registered Providers.

Central Bedfordshire Council's Five Year Plan has a commitment to six priorities¹ which are:

Priorities	How the Housing Strategy contributes
Enhancing Central Bedfordshire	This strategy will enable new housing to be developed in the right locations and ensure that it is high quality sustainable housing.
Great Resident Services	Enabling sustainable housing delivered in areas where services can be delivered and reached easily by residents.
Improving Education and Skills	Meeting the housing needs of families ensures children are protected from harm and have a stable environment to take up educational and other opportunities.
Protecting the Vulnerable; improving wellbeing	Ensure that housing stock helps to cater for future demands, particularly the needs of older people and vulnerable households through the provision of appropriate homes.
Creating stronger communities	Housing will be developed in strategic locations with good infrastructure links that will integrate new development and benefit established communities.
A more efficient and responsive Council	Delivering housing options that are range of types and tenures that are affordable for our residents.

¹ http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/our-five-year-plan_tcm6-70374.pdf#False

Private sector led development will be the main driver for development of housing and this is primarily targeted at owner-occupiers. However we must enable and engage the market to deliver all the housing we need going into the future. The current SHMA identifies we need to deliver 29,530 homes between 2011-2031 which equates to 1475 homes per annum.

Strategic housing market assessment

The Council will be commissioning further updates to the SHMA as part of the preparations for the Local Plan. The Housing Strategy takes note of the findings of the current study and the key implications for the Housing Strategy.

Key Housing Challenges in Central Bedfordshire

The under delivery of housing is a national issue. Nationally 243,000 new homes are needed per year to meet the housing shortage. The Elphicke-House Report, "From Statutory Provider to Housing Delivery Enabler: Review into the local authority role in housing supply", sets out the challenge that Councils face. It encourages Councils to take on a leadership role in the area for the delivery of affordable housing. To date, the role has been developer-led which inevitably will be subject to market forces and developers' priorities. Whilst the Council does not seek to control the market, it wants to facilitate the creation of a 'mixed economy' where a range of agencies can work separately, and sometimes together, to deliver shared priorities set out in this strategy document. The following key housing challenges have been identified.

- How do we provide the right housing for the population growth across Central Bedfordshire and ensure inclusive and sustainable communities.
- How do we enable the market to deliver our housing needs.
- How do we ensure delivery of affordable housing to attract and retain key workers and people employed in central Bedfordshire.
- How do we maximize the delivery of a range of affordable housing types and tenures and what are the delivery options.
- How do we get the most out of partnership working with Registered Providers and Developers and raise the standard and quality of housing in the area.
- How do we deliver a range of attractive housing options for our ageing population.

- How do we deliver housing and provide support for the most vulnerable and those with specialist needs in our community.
- How do we respond to the impact of government policy on housing e.g. Welfare reform, National Planning Policy Framework, Housing and Planning Bill.

Four key themes have emerged from the challenges identified:

1.	Enabling sustainable communities
2.	Affordable housing delivery
3.	Meeting the housing needs of older persons
4.	Meeting the housing needs of vulnerable people

Fundamental to the delivery of the strategy is the action plan and evidence base which is appended to this document. We will ensure that the strategy meets its challenges and priorities and remains fit for purpose through robust monitoring of the action plan.

Strategic Context

National Context

Laying the foundations: A housing strategy for England²

The national strategy aims to address concerns across the housing market and identify a package of reforms that will get the housing market moving again and lay the foundations for a more responsive, effective and stable housing market in the future.

Amongst the proposals in the Strategy of particular relevance to planning for housing are:

- The Strategy will “work with the grain of the market – encouraging lenders sensibly to give buying power to those willing and able to support home ownership, and allowing housebuilders to respond better to demand”.
- A £400m Get Britain Building Investment Fund; this programme will be managed by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and will aim to unlock up to 16,000 homes on stalled sites and boost the economy. Starting in July 2012 developers will compete for funding to take forward "shovel-ready" projects which meet the right criteria, among them a commitment to affordable homes.
- “More support for local areas that want to deliver larger scale new development to meet the needs of their growing communities – through locally planned large scale development – with a programme of support for places with the ambition to support new housing development on various scales”. The Strategy suggests that these developments could take advantage of "streamlined and collaborative planning".
- An additional £50m allocated, on top of the £100m already confirmed, to tackle the worst concentrations of empty homes, bringing vacant properties back into use.
- Supporting and encouraging more individuals to build their own homes through a Custom Homes programme, including making available up a £30m new fund to support provision of short-term project finance;
- A mortgage indemnity scheme, in which Government will underwrite part of the risk, could help up to 100,000 people. The House Builders Federation said the lack of mortgage availability since 2007 had been "the biggest constraint" on new homes and the indemnity scheme

²

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7532/2033676.pdf

would help to address this.

- A commitment that for every home bought under the “reinvigorated” Right to Buy scheme, a new affordable home will be built.
- The Government will launch an independent review into investment in the private rented sector as it seeks to spark institutional investment.

National Planning Policy Framework 2012³

In 2012, the Government published the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The key change this brought about was that Local Authorities were now obliged to assess needs and set their own housing targets whereas previously housing targets were set out for them in Regional Plans. It also introduced a ‘duty to co-operate’ with neighbouring authorities.

The NPPF requires Local Authorities to respond positively to wider opportunities for growth’ making it clear that it is Government policy and that there should be a significant ‘boost’ in the supply of housing.

Impact of the Localism Act 2011⁴

This Act has had a transformative effect on the way housing authorities operate. The aim of the act was to devolve more decision-making powers from central government back into the hands of individuals, communities and councils. The act covers a wide range of issues related to local public services, with a particularly focus on the general power of competence, community rights, neighbourhood planning and housing. The key measures of the act were grouped under four main headings;

- new freedoms and flexibilities for local government
- new rights and powers for communities and individuals
- reform to make the planning system more democratic and more effective
- reform to ensure decisions about housing are taken locally.
- Councils are able to place homeless households in suitable private rented sector housing under new powers in the Localism Act (“discharge of homelessness duty into the private sector”)

³https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/60777/2116950.pdf

⁴<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/contents/enacted>

- More flexibility for councils to set their own Lettings policies to meet local needs and circumstances.
- Landlords allowed to offer "flexible" or fixed term tenancies of (usually in practice) a minimum of five years.

Section 173 of the Localism Act also provides greater flexibility to use certain revenue streams, such as the Housing Revenue Account and 'right to buy' income, for housing development.

Impact of the Welfare Reform Act 2012⁵

The Welfare Reform Act has presented enormous challenges to the Council as households on low incomes have experienced a large squeeze on their incomes. This has placed significant pressure on some of the most vulnerable households to sustain their tenancies, particularly those in private rented accommodation.

Housing Benefit changes affecting social housing tenants:

- Capped payments of Housing Benefit;
- An increase in non-dependent deductions in Housing Benefit;
- A reduction in housing benefit for working age household's under-occupying by 1 bedroom or more.
- Benefit claimants will have their benefits capped at £26,000 (for families) and this will include the allowance for rent.

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) reductions affecting tenants in the private rented sector and social housing sector:

- LHA caps introduced for each size of property;
- Rates set to reflect the bottom third of private rents;
- An increased age limit from 25 to 35 for shared accommodation rate.

Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) Affordable Homes Programme 2015-2018⁶

Through the Affordable Homes Programme 2015-2018, £1.7bn capital grant funding has been made available nationally outside of London to fund affordable housing over the three year programme period. Registered Providers can charge affordable rent (up to 80% of market rent) on the rented accommodation they build. Section 106 schemes cannot benefit from grant funding. Registered Providers are expected to maximise the number of new

⁵ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2012/5/contents/enacted>

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/affordable-homes-programme-2015-to-2018-guidance-and-allocations>

affordable homes delivered with the available grant funding, supplemented by their own contributions

The new 2016 to 2021 Affordable Homes Programme, will have continuous market engagement (CME) but will continue to operate for shared ownership bids only and there is a clear onus on home ownership.

- Help to Buy, £4.1bn - 135,000 homes
- Starter Homes, £2.3bn - 200,000 homes
- Affordable Rent, £1.6bn -100,000 homes

Right to Buy

This government scheme gives people the chance to buy the council house they are currently renting at a discounted rate. Right to Buy allows most council tenants to buy their council home at a discount of up to £77,900. From 2016 the Right to Buy will be extended to Housing Association tenants. Housing associations will be able to use sales proceeds to deliver new supply and will have flexibility to replace rented homes with other tenures such as shared ownership.

The Elphicke-House Report - From statutory provider to housing delivery enabler: Review into the local authority role in housing supply, January 2015⁷

The review considered how councils can help to increase housing supply for their communities across all tenures. It found that councils could change, from being statutory providers to being Housing Delivery Enablers and have a primary role in setting out a vision for the development of their areas. It identifies how Councils can be proactive in creating housing opportunity working closely with businesses and other partners to share ideas and experience. They can also actively use their own assets and knowledge to unlock housing opportunities and deliver more homes, to build strong and sustainable communities.

The Report identified five key areas in developing a dynamic delivery approach to enabling housing development

- Community leadership and strategic clarity
- Creating housing opportunity
- Business leadership
- Management of housing supply
- Shaping a stronger housing finance market

7

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/398829/150126_LA_Housing_Review_Report_FINAL.pdf

Housing and Planning Bill 2015-2016

The Housing and Planning Bill⁸ was published on 13 October 2015. The supply side measures in the Bill are focused on speeding up the planning system and delivering more housing. There is a clear focus on home ownership, with measures to facilitate the building of Starter Homes, self/custom build housing and the extension of the Right to Buy to housing association tenants following a voluntary agreement. The Bill introduces the following.

- Provision for a 'homeownership criteria' to ensure housing associations introduce the Right to Buy or provide 'an equal or greater level of support to tenants to help them into homeownership.
- A duty on councils to consider selling vacant high-value housing and provisions for councils to make a fixed payment to government each year.
- Powers to reduce regulatory control over housing associations.
- A general duty on councils to promote the supply of Starter Homes and provisions to require Starter Homes when granting planning permission.
- Duties on local authorities to keep a registers of people seeking land for self build and custom housebuilding.
- A range of measures aimed at the private rented sector including measures to deal with rogue landlords and letting agents, rent repayment orders and easier arrangements for recovering abandoned premises.
- Introduction of 'banning orders', to stop bad landlords from letting properties for at least six months and the introduction of a database of rogue landlords and letting agents and measures to make rogue landlords re-pay housing benefit to local authorities.
- Measures to force 'high-income social tenants' to pay up to market rents and powers to allow HM Revenue and Customs to share information to help verify social tenants' declarations on their incomes.
- Powers for the government to ensure that all councils get Local Plans in place by 2017, or face intervention.
- Automatic planning permission in principle on brownfield sites.

⁸ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/lbill/2015-2016/0087/16087.pdf>

Local Context

Central Bedfordshire is largely rural and contains a mix of attractive market towns and villages, with concentrations of population in the towns of Ampthill, Sandy, Biggleswade, Arlesey, Flitwick, Leighton Buzzard/Linslade, Dunstable and Houghton Regis.

Despite being largely rural Central Bedfordshire sits just outside London and between Oxford and Cambridge. It is bordered by two major towns Milton Keynes and Luton with London about an hours commute away. This has resulted in significant pressure for growth. The Council has already embraced a level of sustainable growth and has, as of 31/12/2015, 413 sites with planning permission which if built will yield a total of 6,126 new dwellings of which 1,557 will be affordable units.

The population of Central Bedfordshire is growing. The current population is 264,500 this is expected to rise by 20% to 318,630 by 2031. The population is ageing and people aged 65 and over account for just under 17% of the total; however this is expected to increase to 23% of the population by 2031.

There are currently 104,991 households in Central Bedfordshire this is expected to rise to 131,986 by 2031 which is a 26% increase and is an increase of 1,350 households per annum.

The predominant tenure is home ownership accounting for 74% of the housing stock. Social housing stock accounts for 13% of all housing and there is a thriving private rented sector which also accounts for 13% of the housing stock. The Council owns approximately 5,115 affordable/social rented properties, mostly in the south of the area and there are approximately 10,700 properties are owned by housing associations across the entire area.

There were 716 lettings by the Council and housing associations in 2014/15. 177 people were accepted as homeless, and there were 665 completions of affordable sale properties (provided as either shared ownership or Help to Buy) and 145 completions of units for affordable rent.

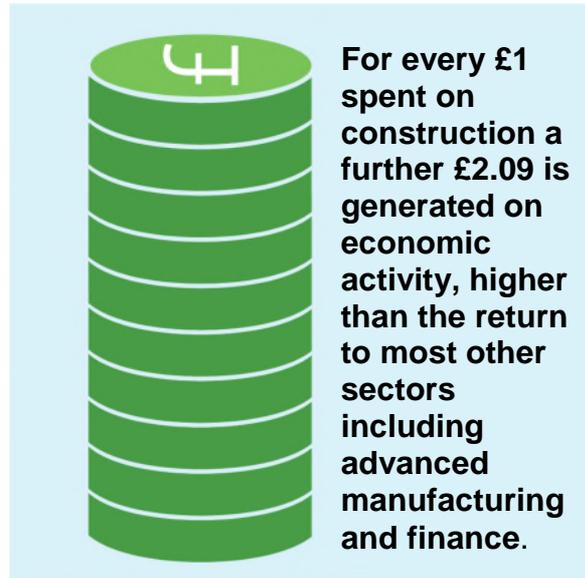
Affordability of housing is one of the most critical issues in the area with the average house price over £210,000, so getting on the housing ladder is unattainable for many. This is despite the fact that the average wage in Central Bedfordshire is higher than the national average so house prices are still unaffordable for many residents. Private rents are also high, and rising which therefore makes it difficult for people within the private rented sector to save up for a deposit for a mortgage.

Housing, economic growth and regeneration

Investment in new housing can be a key driver for economic growth and regeneration. Expenditure on house building creates jobs for construction workers and those in associated occupations, with 'knock-on' effects on

demand in the broader economy. Improving housing stock and conditions can also play a critical role in district wide renewal programmes.

Effective regeneration requires a multi-faceted approach. To achieve this, housing initiatives must be linked with initiatives around economic growth, jobs, education and training, social inclusion and health. We recognise good quality, reasonably priced housing as a driver for a thriving sustainable economy. To attract and retain the highly-skilled workers that Central Bedfordshire businesses require, we must offer a high-quality built and natural environment and housing of sufficient quality.



Further evidence of the importance of housing to growth is provided in the work of the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). These are partnerships between local authorities and businesses set up in 2011 under the direction of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. Their purpose is to help determine local economic priorities and lead economic growth and job creation within the local area.

With a population of 264,500 Central Bedfordshire is the largest authority in SEMLEP (South East Midlands LEP) and we have more than 11,500 businesses and with 2000 start ups each year we contribute almost £4.5 billion to the national economy. Since 2012 government has encouraged LEPs to recognise the key contribution that housing makes to economic growth and has provided funding through the LEP 'route' to help facilitate housing growth, along with skills, transport and other infrastructure requirements.

Housing investment is an essential part of any regeneration programme. Upgrading or replacing run-down housing can make a major contribution to the renewal of residential neighbourhoods or mixed use areas such as our town centres, particularly when combined with initiatives relating to employment, education and health. High quality housing attracts skilled workers, which in turn provides incentives for business to set up or relocate to an area. More homes for sale helps more first time buyers and more affordable homes cuts waiting lists, this in turn can reduce costs to the Council.

Central Bedfordshire has growth pressures with lots of development coming forward. There are opportunities to direct and align the growth with our needs so that in identifying planning policies for new housing we are seeking not

only to provide additional homes, but also to support other regeneration objectives.

Local Plan

The council is in the process of producing a new Local Plan which commenced on the 15th February 2016. The Local plan will set out the policies to meet the housing growth identified in the SHMA.

This Housing Strategy will inform the housing policies of the Local Plan. The Local Plan will take into account new housing need figures and will respond to changes to national planning guidance. The Plan will be underpinned and informed by a range of evidence studies. These include options for growth, a review of the greenbelt, a sustainability appraisal and economic market assessments.

There are four key elements of our approach to the Local Plan:

- focusing large-scale growth along major transport routes
- making sure that there is local infrastructure in place to support new homes and jobs
- easing pressures across the wider area by identifying further sites that can accommodate growth and that are supported by good transport links
- recognising the importance of protecting Central Bedfordshire's historic settlements and unique landscape

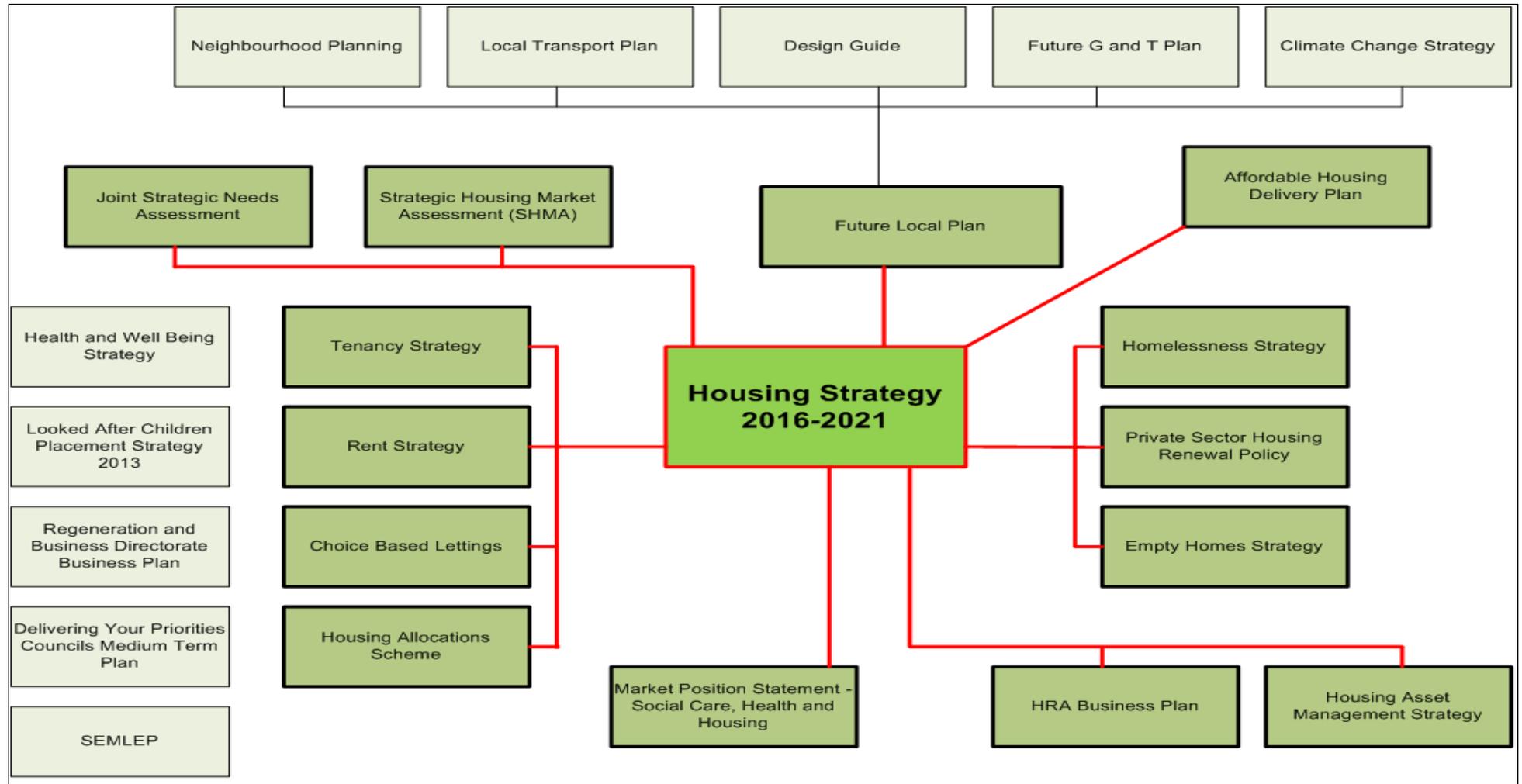
The Local Plan will include a range of new sites for housing including:

- new settlements of 2,000 or more dwellings
- urban extensions of 500 or more dwellings
- sites between 10 and 500 dwellings
- employment uses of over 10 hectares

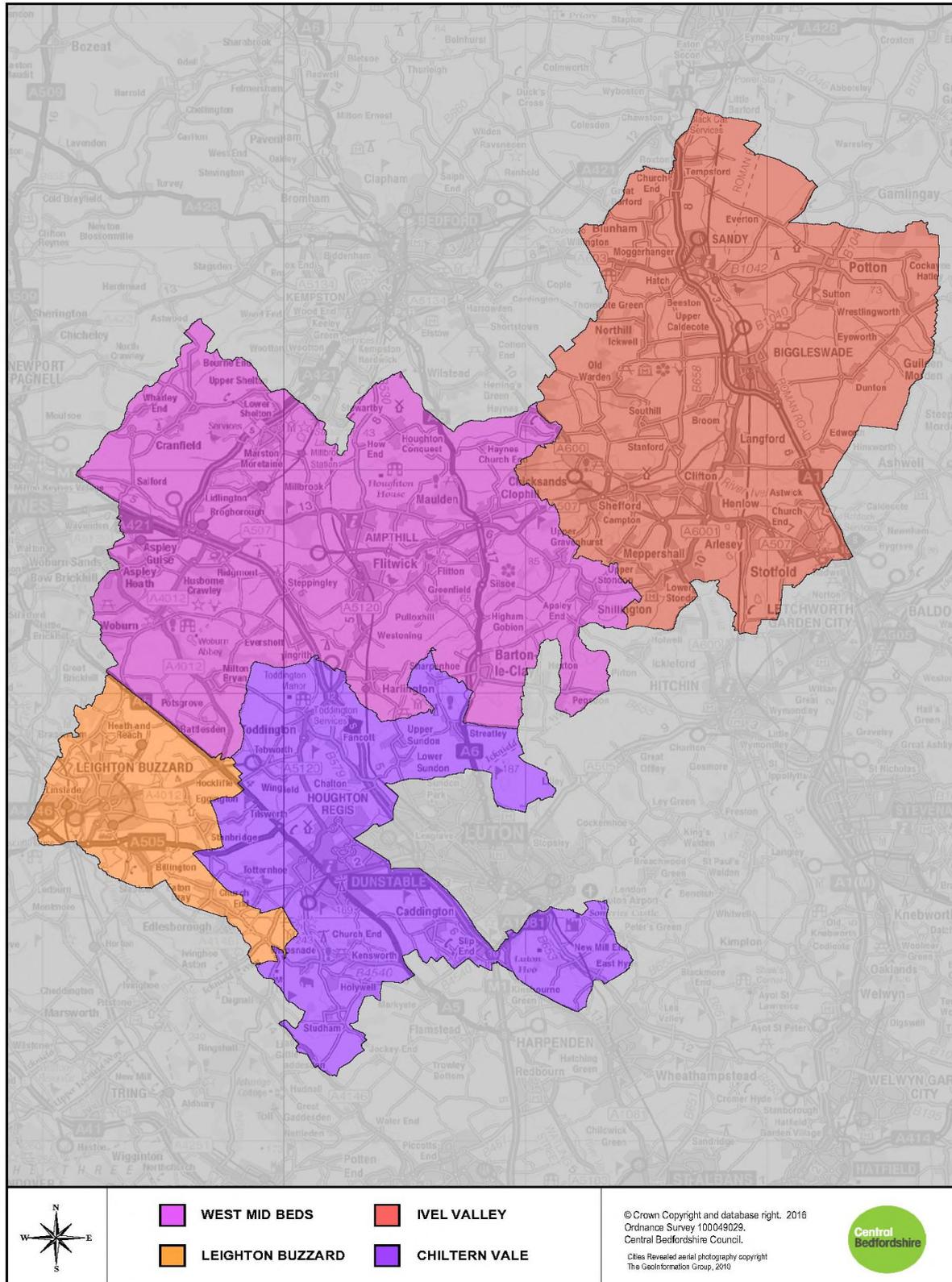
We aim to submit the Local Plan to the Planning Inspectorate in December 2017.

The Housing Strategy will also provide links and signposting to other Central Bedfordshire strategies and guidance that will contribute to addressing the housing challenges identified within this strategy. The diagram below shows the relationship with other strategies produced by the Council with direct (red) and indirect (black) links.

Housing Strategy relationship and signposting to other Central Bedfordshire strategies and guidance



Central Bedfordshire area map



Theme 1: Enabling sustainable communities

	Key Objectives
1	Identify the gaps in our housing market and target them
2	The current target to deliver 1,475 new homes over the next five years is subject to change. Any change will be reflected in the new planning policies we are developing as part of the Local Plan
3	Enabling the right housing for the projected population growth across Central Bedfordshire
4	Enabling the market to deliver our needs
5	Ensuring delivery of housing to attract and retain key workers into Central Bedfordshire

The Council will continue to monitor demographic and household changes, and other housing market signals, so that we can target resources in the most effective way. Housing growth is needed across Central Bedfordshire to provide sufficient homes for people to live in and for businesses and local services to continue to thrive. At the same time, we need to protect our existing communities, ensuring that they are resilient and that they can link with and benefit from the advantages arising from housing growth. We need to take particular care to ensure that people who are vulnerable or potentially vulnerable, are not left behind and are able to share in the benefits that growth can bring to Central Bedfordshire.

Central Bedfordshire continues to have good rates of delivery of housing of all tenures as identified in the table below. There are a significant number of units in planning system already and we are driving them forward to ensure we can make up any shortfalls in housing and deliver more in the future.

Year	SR	AR	SO	Int Rent	First Buy	Help to Buy	Total Affordable units	Total built Market & Affordable units
2011/2012	234	-	122	24	52	-	432	1,310
2012/2013	54	44	89	-	131	-	318	966
2013/2014	22	55	63	-	13	284	437	1,264
2014/2015	6	139	146	-	-	519	810	1,522

SR = Social Rent, AR = Affordable Rent, SO = Shared Ownership, Int Rent = Intermediate Rent

The Council is working with partners to support the wider housing market and deliver more affordable homes to meet the rising need for affordable housing and the scale of the challenge is set out in the SHMA.

Housing need by tenure

Market housing is the largest tenure in Central Bedfordshire and continues to grow with 75% of the need in this tenure category and many people aspiring to be homeowners. We will continue to support access to the home ownership products provided through mechanisms such as Shared Ownership, Starter Homes and Help to Buy and maintaining the delivery of new market housing. However it is important that we deliver the right housing in the right places that enhances the economic and social capital in Central Bedfordshire.

Future Housing need over the next 20 years: SHMA 2011 -2031 Housing Need by Tenure (2015 update)⁹

Tenure	Amount of Housing	Percentage
Market Housing	22,100	75%
Intermediate Housing	2,060	7%
Social Housing	5,370	18%
Total	29,530	100%

Affordability

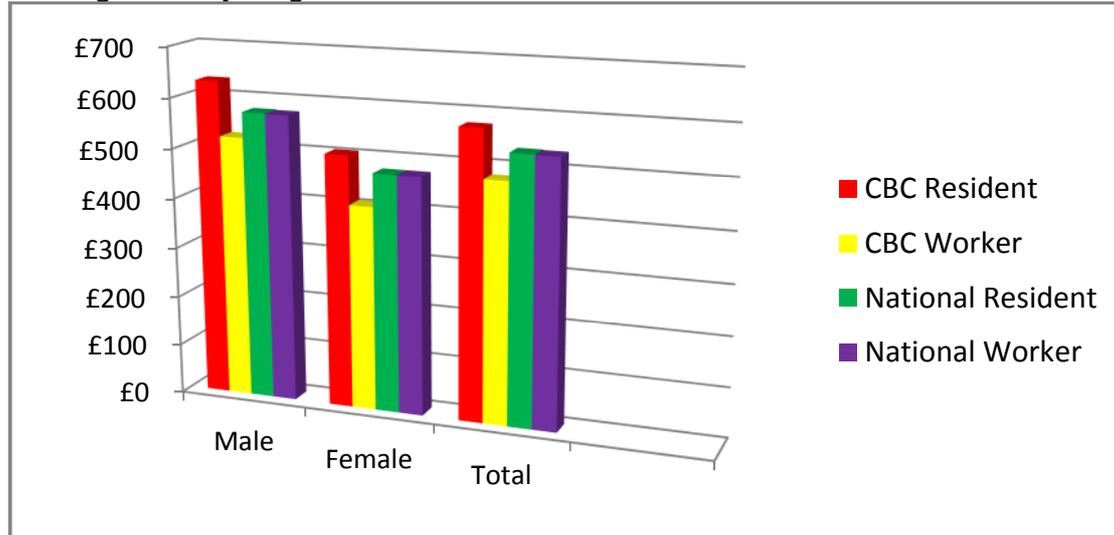
Affordability of housing is a key issue in Central Bedfordshire and we need to enable people to get on the housing ladder. It is especially important for people who work in the area to be able to live in the area. The Financial Policy Committee recommended mortgages should be at 4.5x income. The average wage for a resident Central Bedfordshire is £575 which would equate to an annual wage of £29,900. The average weekly wage for worker in Central Bedfordshire is £533 with equates to an annual wage of £27,716. Compared to the average house price of approximately £210,000 in Central Bedfordshire the average house price would require a household income of £46,666 to be able to get a mortgage. So it would be unattainable to get on the housing ladder on the average wage and impossible for those on low wages as the lowest quartile house price is 8.3x higher than the lowest quartile income/wage in Central Bedfordshire.

Currently households looking for shared ownership housing will require a stable income of between £20-30,000 approximately as well as the ability to raise a deposit and obtain a mortgage. Help-to-Buy, which has been delivered in Central Bedfordshire, requires a higher income which could be higher than £60,000. Therefore the opportunity to get on the housing ladder is limited for many.

⁹

http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/2015%2010%2023%20Luton%20%20CB%20SHMA%20Update_tcm6-70119.pdf#False

Average weekly wage for residents and workers in Central Bedfordshire.



The average wage of a resident in Central Bedfordshire is higher than the average wage of a worker in Central Bedfordshire. This means that people are commuting out of the area for work and could possibly mean that important employable skills sets are being lost to elsewhere. It is therefore important to push for the right housing products to ensure that key skills sets are retained and are employable in Central Bedfordshire. Engaging with local business and industry will help identify what housing is needed for the skills sets they employ and enable it in suitable commutable locations.

We aim to ensure that if you work in Central Bedfordshire you can live in Central Bedfordshire. Key to this is intermediate products such as Shared Ownership available to people who work in the area. We want to enable delivery of these types of products for key workers in key sectors; however we do not see this as the traditional key worker definitions from the public sector. Central Bedfordshire has a rich diversity of private sector employment from trade, engineering and other industries across the area. We have to ensure that these employees are also able to get onto the housing ladder and that they are aware of and able to gain access to these products.

Creating more mobility in the intermediate sector is important so people can move from one product to another and on to market housing, to help us make the best use of the homes we have available and enable products that better meet peoples' needs. It is important to encourage more social housing applicants into intermediate housing where suitable and will work with our Registered Providers and partners in the development industry to do this.

Help to Buy

We have enabled a large amount of delivery of Help to Buy units which is the government's flagship home ownership scheme. We have currently the 3rd highest amount of Help to Buy units delivered nationally. The way Help to Buy works is the Government lends up to 20% of the cost of a new-build home, so

that only a cash deposit from 5% is needed and a 75% mortgage makes up the rest. The scheme is open to both first time buyers and existing home owners. Because of government support, lenders taking part are able to offer home buyers more high-loan-to-value mortgages (80-95%). This has enabled many people to get on the housing ladder within Central Bedfordshire and has been very successful.

There is a range of affordable housing products that need to be delivered but the message coming from central government is that home ownership is central to affordable housing delivery and policy, with the Housing and Planning Bill at the forefront of this. The Housing and Planning Bill includes a duty on Local Planning Authorities to promote Starter Homes and provisions to require their inclusion in schemes as part of the affordable housing package. It also emphasises:

- Maximising the release of underused previously developed land to be used for starter homes
- Enabling communities to allocate land for the properties through their neighbourhood plans
- Bringing forward proposals to ensure every reasonably sized housing site includes a proportion of starter homes
- Promoting starter homes by bringing forward regulations that would exempt developers from levies that are sought when building homes, such as the Community Infrastructure Levy
- Monitoring how effective local authorities are in delivering starter homes developments

Viability

Only financially viable schemes will deliver affordable housing. This means that schemes must be large enough to generate an affordable housing requirement, in areas with values that will support the delivery of affordable housing, and free of infrastructure requirements which will undermine the financial viability of the schemes. There is now limited government funding for Registered Providers and they will be more cautious about development commitments and therefore we need to create of a positive environment to support investment and development in Central Bedfordshire.

The housing market in the area is strong however local land costs remain relatively high. With more development planned, both locally and nationally, the construction industry is reporting that skill shortages are becoming an issue as well as shortages of building materials. This has the knock on effect on build costs which continue to rise, which will affect the financial viability of

schemes. This has led to incidences of developers wanting to renegotiate section 106 agreements on financial viability grounds.

Changes in planning regulations have also had a major impact and there is a strong emphasis on viability assessments with the new regulations making such assessments easier to apply for and to take to appeal and the approach to land value within those assessments have all exercised a downward pressure on affordable housing.

However we will continue to take a robust approach to scrutinising claims of financial viability issues, to maximise provision of affordable housing on all new developments.

Grant Funding

The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) are currently closing the 2015 - 18 Affordable Homes Programme. This will be replaced by the 2016 - 21 Affordable Homes Programme, the details of which will be published in the upcoming months. Bids for grant for affordable rented homes are no longer being accepted; new grant is currently only awarded to shared ownership schemes.

It is very likely that the new programme will concentrate on low cost home ownership schemes rather than the provision of affordable rented homes. Grant that has already been allocated will remain and it is important that schemes with HCA grant are able to complete. However alongside the recent reduction in rents by 1% pa for 4 years on Registered Providers and Local Authorities there will be significant impact on revenues which mean that the delivery of affordable rented homes will be harder,

We are currently in dialogue with the HCA about possible sites for Starter Homes pilot schemes and are taking a proactive approach to development by engaging early with the HCA on new programme initiatives. Where possible we will seek direct funding from the HCA. Alongside this it is essential that we support our Registered Provider and development partners to promote their sites to obtain HCA grant and other possible funding streams when developing in Central Bedfordshire.

Planned Housing Delivery

The withdrawn Development Strategy identified four strategic urban extensions (SUEs) which could deliver large numbers of housing and infrastructure in the future across Central Bedfordshire at Houghton Regis, Land North or Luton, Land East of Leighton Linlade and the Wixams adjoining Bedford Borough. Overall if these sites are developed they will provide approximately 13,400 dwellings, around 9000 already have planning permission.

Strategic Urban Extension	Dwellings (approx.)
Houghton Regis North 1	4,700
Houghton Regis North 2	1,500
Land North of Luton	3,200
East Leighton Linslade	2,500
Wixams Park	1,500

Rural areas

Small and medium sites also play an important role in contributing to our housing targets and meeting local housing needs and ensuring people can remain in their local communities. Central Bedfordshire has a large amount of small rural communities where small and medium sites can be promoted and progressed to provide housing to meet local need and enhance the communities living there. It also enables development opportunities for small and medium sized local builders in the area who otherwise would not be able to develop large sites.

We have been proactive in identifying housing need in local areas, 32 housing need surveys have been carried out since 2007. (N.B. 9 surveys are now older than 5 years and thus considered out of date in planning terms). A need for 278 units of affordable accommodation has been identified: 196 for Affordable Rent and 82 for Shared Ownership. We have delivered 6 rural exception sites since 2010 which are let to local people in accordance with a local lettings policy to ensure that that identified local needs are met. There is a cascade mechanism in rural exception local lettings, which means that those with a housing need in neighbouring parishes form the second preference group after those in the parish itself.

Affordability problems are particularly acute in the rural areas and a lack of reasonably priced housing can mean that people have to leave the communities they have grown up in to find housing. This can have an impact on sustainability of villages, in particular facilities such as schools, shops and healthcare. Along with this we have had many parishes undertaking Neighbourhood Plans; we are involved with enabling this process which is helping to identify sites to meet local housing need.

In order to deliver local communities housing needs, it is vital to work with Parish and Town Councils. We work with Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity (BRCC) to engage Parish and Town Councils and local communities to ensure that they have involvement with the development of rural exception sites and ensure that local housing need for local people is met.

Design Standards

The Council places great emphasis on the need for new development to be of the highest possible quality, ensuring that the places created now provide a

lasting legacy and are locally distinctive. In line with the national housing strategy, in which the Government emphasizes that homes need to be well designed, of the highest quality and environmentally sustainable.

We promote, via housing and planning policy, the building of Lifetime Homes. This involves designing houses so that they can be adapted for the changing needs of families, particularly if a member of the family becomes disabled. Nationally there is a specific set of criteria that must be met to achieve the Lifetime Homes Standard; as well as the benefits for future tenants; this improves the chance of grant funding from the HCA. It is not always appropriate for every home to be designed to this standard, particularly when designing new Council homes which may not be eligible for grant funding, given that it can result in an initial configuration which does not suit the household who may well occupy the property for many years. Therefore Central Bedfordshire has created a Design Guide with the standards that we want housing to achieve.

The Central Bedfordshire Design Guide¹⁰ sets out the key principles and standards to ensure all new development is of the highest quality. It sets out the Council's expectations in relation to layout, street developments, parking provision and home dimensions and is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. We want all new development to be sustainable and of the highest quality.

Planning policy

The new Local Plan will identify a range of sites in sustainable locations to deliver housing growth. The policies on housing, informed by this housing strategy will shape the form and tenure of housing being built alongside other factors such as viability outlined above. Development Management and the Council's pre-application advice, play a key role in providing clarity about development opportunities to land owners and the development industry. The production of Development Briefs and Supplementary Planning Documents also guide how development comes forward and what form it takes.

The plan led approach gives us some control over the locations, types and volume of houses that are constructed. It is nearly always preferable for new housing to be built on previously developed 'brownfield' sites. But developing these sites can be extremely expensive and render construction non-viable. In order for us to deliver more of the homes that we need, it is essential therefore to allow some building to also take place on undeveloped 'greenfield' sites.

Permitted development rights can now also be applied to office conversions. Office conversions to residential use carried out under permitted development rights but incur no affordable housing obligations.

¹⁰ <http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/planning/strategic-planning/urban-design.aspx>

Self-build

The Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 places an obligation on local authorities to keep a register of potential self/custom builders and to make land available for self/custom build. The policy is intended to “increase routes available to home ownership” and should help to increase overall housing supply in Central Bedfordshire. Whilst most land provided for self-build projects is sold at market value for residential land, land on exception sites can be made available at a lower price which reflects the restrictions placed upon the type of housing which can be provided there. This can contribute to an increase in affordable housing provision. Housing built on exception sites is expected to remain affordable in perpetuity.

The Self Build Register will help gauge the level of demand from people wanting to build their own home in the area and we would look to support this through site allocations and policies in the Local Plan.

Existing Housing Stock

The predominant tenure is home ownership accounting for 74% of the housing stock. Social housing stock accounts for 13% of all housing and there is a thriving private rented sector which also accounts for 13% of the housing stock. The Council owns approximately 5,115 affordable/social rented properties, mostly in the south of the district and there are approximately 10,700 properties owned by housing associations across the entire district. Making best use of the existing housing stock is key for Central Bedfordshire. There are three parts to optimising existing housing:

- Raise standards in the Private Rented Sector
- Deliver the best use of existing housing
- Reduce empty homes

We want to promote the best use of Central Bedfordshire’s current housing stock and facilitate partners to build the type of housing that is needed for the future needs of the districts population and its environmental sustainability. In order to meet some of the demand within Central Bedfordshire and improve the housing offer for people, it is important to work with the housing that we have, making sure that our current resource is optimised and that we are working towards increasing standards.

Empty Homes

Central Bedfordshire has 1,200 to- 1,300 empty homes which are only a small proportion of the housing stock. This is around 1.5% of the total number of houses and some vacancies are required to allow for movement within the stock. However all of these long term empty properties could potentially

provide much needed additional homes. The Empty Homes Strategy 2010-2015 sets out the action plan to address this issue.

Central Bedfordshire Council maintains a priority register for properties which have been empty longer than five years. The list is generated via Council Tax which relies upon the owners of the properties declaring them as empty to the Council.

There are several initiatives available to property owners to enable the empty properties to be brought back into use. From these initiatives, there will be the scope to explore nomination rights for the Council in order to have the properties as an affordable tenure.

Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO)

On some sites, either allocated for housing in the local plan or with a planning consent which are not coming forward for delivery, the Council will consider the use of CPO powers if the RP or Council is unable to secure the land by negotiation.

This power is given by S.17 Housing Act 1985. However, the prior consent of the Secretary of State is required to take this course. That prior consent is quite separate from, and in addition to, the final confirmation of the Orders in due course.

Such landowners would not be prejudiced, since a CPO would not be confirmed until Central Bedfordshire could prove that the scheme was deliverable and that planning consent had either been secured or there were no obstacles to such consent. Accordingly, the landowners would receive compensation reflecting the full development value of the land.

If it became clear that a CPO was the only way to bring a site forward, this would be subject to a further report to Executive. The Council will also need to secure the authority of the Secretary of State to use CPO as a means of ensuring sites come forward for development.

Proposals to address the challenge
Develop a pipeline of opportunities for a further 7,375 homes for the period 2016-2021 which can support bids to the HCA.
Respond positively to changes to the planning system to support the increased opportunities and flexibilities to deliver new housing. A proactive response will place the Council in the best position to shape the development to meet the needs of the community.
Use Council assets and work with partners to identify suitable public sector land to build affordable homes and explore ways to acquire land for affordable housing development now and in the future.
When disposing of its own land the Council has the power both to sell at less than full market values in order to provide additional affordable housing over

and above plan policy requirements.
Identify previously developed land and buildings that could be made available for residential use and work proactively to address the challenges in bringing them back into use.
The Council will work with housing providers (including housing association and self/custom builders) to explore innovative mechanisms for land disposal which aim both to increase the overall supply of affordable housing and to increase the quality and variety of market housing provided.
Work with the construction industry to explore ways to improve the housing supply chain through efficiencies and volumisation to increase the supply of new homes.
Explore the use of new technology and innovation such as modular construction in order to increase the supply and reduce construction time of new homes.
Continue to refine our understanding of the housing market in Central Bedfordshire to ensure that we are able to best meet existing and future needs and regularly update our Strategic Housing Market Assessment.
Engage local business' to find out what housing needs there are for their employees.
Promote our design guide and direct developers to deliver the specifications identified within it to meet our needs.
Create a technical guidance document on the housing standards we expect in the area for affordable housing e.g. Lifetime Homes, wheelchair accessible and mobility standard homes.

Fairfield Park, Stotfold



Theme 2: Affordable housing delivery

	Key Objectives
1	Maximise the delivery of affordable housing in Central Bedfordshire and provide for a wide range of housing needs.
2	Deliver 364 affordable homes per annum as identified by the SHMA 2015 update
3	Create more mobility in the intermediate sector so people can move from one product to another and on to market housing, to help us make the best use of the homes we have available
4	Optimise the value of our own assets; improving those we want to keep and disposing of those that are not financially or socially viable, so that our housing portfolio aligns with our long term needs
5	Get the most out of partnership working with Registered Providers and Developers and raise housing quality standards

The SHMA update 2015 shows that there is a requirement for 364 Affordable Homes per annum. Affordable Housing is not been limited to the provision of housing for affordable rent but includes intermediate tenure housing which has been almost entirely made up of different forms of low cost home ownership.

The balance between affordable rented housing and affordable low cost home ownership is significant. The SHMA analyses income levels in relation to housing costs. On the assumption that all those who can afford Affordable Rent without Housing Benefit could afford Shared Ownership and that 35% of household income is assigned to housing there is a need for 27% affordable housing at a 73% affordable rent and 27% intermediate tenures.

In order to maximise provision of affordable housing the council will continue to seek, as a minimum, 30% of new homes to be provided as affordable housing in the South (former South Beds district) and 35% in the North (former Mid Beds district) at a mix of 73% affordable rent and 27% Intermediate tenure as per our current plans on all qualifying sites of 4 units and above. At this tenure mix the SHMA identifies that of the 364 affordable homes delivered per annum 265 should be for affordable rent and 99 units for intermediate tenure.

Section 106 Legal Agreements

In negotiating S106 affordable housing contributions the Council has operated a practice over many years of seeking 63% rented housing and 37% shared ownership as per the SHMA 2014. The national affordable housing

programme does not allow for grant funding to be used on any Section 106 schemes. Due to the reductions in grant available for S106 sites many schemes fell short of the Council's overall policy requirement of 30% affordable housing due to financial viability issues. The mix of affordable housing tenures also became an element in the negotiations with applicants. In recent times the Council has negotiated the tenures and accepted different affordable, intermediate products and homeownership products to ensure schemes are financially viable and can be delivered. The new tenure mix of 73% affordable rent and 27% intermediate tenure will put further pressure on the viability of schemes and delivering much needed affordable rent. Despite increasing sales values in the area, Registered Providers are reporting that they are finding it difficult to compete with private developers in both urban and rural areas as a result of increasing build costs¹¹ coupled with smaller economies of scale.

On S106 sites the Council has to balance meeting the need for Affordable Rent demonstrated by the SHMA against supporting access to owner-occupation. The duty that will be in place from a date in 2016 to promote Starter Homes and the need to consider the viability of schemes will be an issue for the Council but we will ensure that we seek an appropriate mix of affordable tenures to meet housing needs identified in the SHMA.

Partnership Working

We know we cannot deliver all the housing that is needed alone. We need to work with the private sector to unlock sites with planning permission to increase housing supply. We will establish and enhance the key relationships with Registered Providers and Developers.

The Council must consider the views of its Registered Provider partners. Elements of Shared Ownership within a scheme can be an important factor in the financial viability of the scheme for RPs. The implications of the July 2015 budget change to a CPI-1% rent regime and the voluntary agreement on the Right to Buy will vary between RPs. An element of cross-subsidy from Shared Ownership to Affordable Rent may be necessary to enable sites and make them viable.

Registered Providers are reporting that the announcement in the budget to cut rents by 1% pa for 4 years will have a significant impact on their revenues. Subsequently their ability to deliver homes for affordable rent has been impaired and they are looking to increase other tenures such as shared ownership, Help-to-Buy and open market sale to ensure sites are viable going forward.

We believe there is scope for a 'mixed economy' approach to housing delivery whereby all sectors are contributing, the private sector (with affordable housing secured through planning obligations) and Registered Providers who

¹¹ BCIS accessed 27/10/15 shows increase of 22.5% over last 3 years in Bedfordshire

provide new affordable housing as their core business, and the council delivering affordable housing directly. Most of the new affordable housing provided in recent years has been through Registered Providers, and we will continue to work with them in their plans for development going forwards. An important element of this strategy is to enable Registered Providers and developers to initiate the delivery of more affordable homes and also generate more value through other initiatives offering social and economic inclusion.

When selecting Registered Providers to work with on Section 106 sites, we ask developers to consider the long term management of affordable housing as well as the construction and initial sale or letting of the properties. We aim to ensure that the provider has a local base from which to manage affordable homes in Central Bedfordshire. This is to ensure the properties are well-managed and it is an important benefit not only to the tenants of the properties but also to the residents in the surrounding area. This in turn can assist future housing development, because local people are more likely to support a planning application if their experience of affordable housing was of it being well managed by an organisation with a commitment to the area.

Social and affordable rent

Social rented and affordable rented housing is required for sections of the population who will only be helped by the provision of rented housing at below market rates. This population concerns the Council directly through the Housing Register and the Homelessness Duty.

The housing register stood at 2,258 (Oct 2015) Band 1 and 2 households accepted registering some level of housing need. We want to ensure affordable rents remain affordable in the area. The affordability of affordable rented housing (with rents set at 80% of market rents) is an issue with larger dwellings (4 bedroom plus) in certain areas of the district. We expect Registered Providers to monitor the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) level in relation to affordable rents and to manage the risk of rents being unaffordable to tenants on housing benefit and where possible provide rates lower than the max 80%. Our Rent Strategy provides the information on acceptable affordable rent levels in the area.

Intermediate housing

Intermediate Housing has been defined to include intermediate rent, shared ownership and shared equity products. Intermediate rents were set at 80% of market rents and has been overtaken by affordable rent as the rents are calculated on the same basis. Shared ownership is the predominant form of low cost home ownership. Initial shares purchased in Central Bedfordshire are typically 35% - 40%. To be eligible household income is capped at £60,000. Shared Equity creates a purchase price for buyers at 75 - 80% of open market values. The income and deposit required are therefore significantly higher than for Shared Ownership and again out of reach for many.

Intermediate housing can provide a 'step up', but should not always be for life in Central Bedfordshire. Having a flexible policy would enable us to help more people, as properties can be re-let or sold as people move on to their next step on the housing ladder. We will therefore continue to engage with our partners across the housing sector to review how intermediate housing can facilitate mobility, so people don't get 'stuck' with no way of progressing on their housing journey.

Affordable housing should be high quality, attractive and not be readily identifiable within a new housing development. Through planning and the Design Guide we will promote high quality new homes, appropriate to their environment which enhances the surroundings for new tenants and their neighbours. Planning policies require affordable housing to be 'pepper potted' within market housing and be tenure blind. We will promote sustainable developments, which give a good space standard of dwellings to all new future occupants and can be adapted as households change over time.

Housing Asset Management Strategy (HAMS)

Self financing provides the Council with the opportunity to review its approach to asset management, redevelop unsatisfactory housing stock, building new homes and regenerating areas. The Housing Revenue Account can provide the resources to not only improve our own stock but deliver much needed affordable housing in Central Bedfordshire. The HAMS advocates an approach that combines a comprehensive maintenance, remodelling and regeneration programme that may include demolition as well as building new homes.

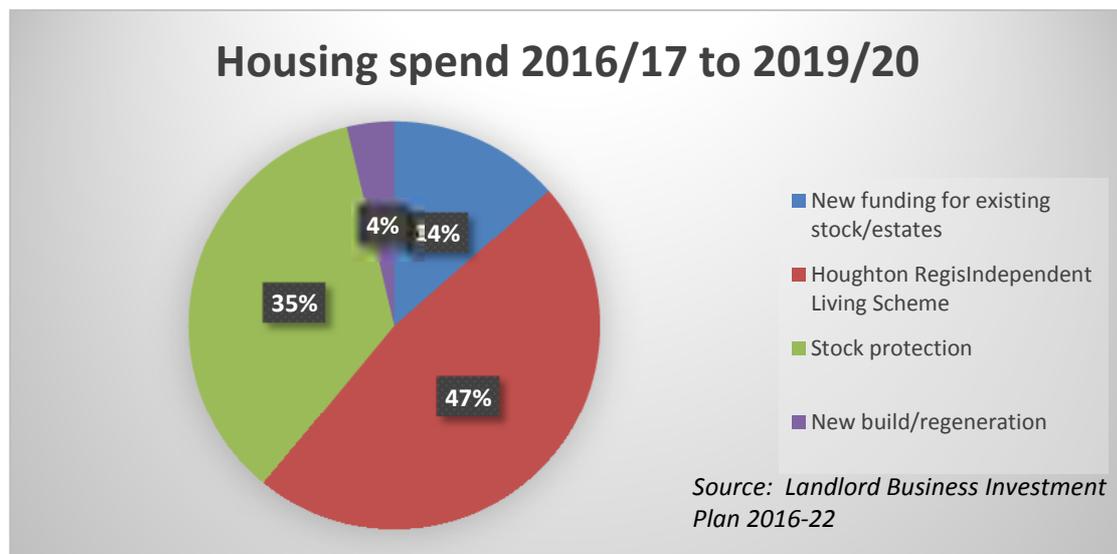
Two Priorities within the HAMS are focused on increasing housing delivery.

- Identify land to build new homes, primarily on a shared ownership basis, in locations where people need and want to live and where the need is not being met by others.
- Identify and evaluate opportunities for increasing the housing stock across tenures through new build, acquisition and management (e.g. Registered Provider (RP) disposals, repossessions & properties previously sold under the Right to Buy, managing other stock).

The Council is in a fortunate position to have a Housing Revenue Account (HRA) business plan that is healthy and has sufficient headroom to borrow funding to enable the options to build more affordable homes. However the amount of additional money the authority can borrow is capped at £65m. The reduction in social housing rents by 1% per annum over the next four years has affected the Council's income and potential to develop and investment capacity. To enable the delivery of the much needed affordable new homes moving forward, it will be important to look at alternative models to help deliver new homes that can work with the Council's HRA Business Plan to deliver more value for money. This can range from identifying land, HRA, General Fund or non-council owned, to build a variety of mixed tenure homes,

including sale and shared ownership, in locations where people need and want to live.

The Central Bedfordshire Council Housing Landlord Service has the potential to develop and operate as a wholly owned social enterprise. The HAMS is predicated on the organisation acting commercially, increasing both its scope and income, providing services across the Council and to the community. Self financing provides the opportunity to develop new business models, providing broader and more flexible services and generating additional income and creating the ability to deliver affordable homes.



Over the next four years the Council expects to spend an average of £15.5m on the housing capital programme. Approximately half the total spend (47%) is going on the proposed Independent Living Scheme at Houghton Regis. This scheme will also contribute to town centre regeneration and follows on from similar developments at Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard.

Proposals to address the challenge
Delivery of a minimum of 364 affordable homes per annum, which will be a range of types and tenures to meet a range of housing needs across the area. Of the 364 affordable homes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 265 homes will be for affordable rent per year • 99 homes will be for intermediate tenure per year
Review how our housing and planning processes can be utilised to deliver schemes more quickly, giving priority to schemes that deliver our objectives. Registered Providers have housing stock and asset value, a good proportion of which has been generated from increasing land values in the area; we want to see some renewed development interest.
Consider using identified or future commuted sums (this is money secured from developers as 'payment in lieu' to the Council for not delivering

affordable housing onsite) or other sources of investment (such as public sector land) to assist with achieving the delivery of affordable housing that we set out in this housing strategy document.

Deliver more housing using the Council's land holding. Where the market is not delivering our needs we can deliver ourselves an example of this is Priory View, Dunstable an 83 bed Extra Care scheme.

Optimise the value of our own assets; improving those we want to keep and dispose of those that are not financially or socially viable, so that our housing portfolio aligns with our long term needs.

We want to build more of the right type of homes across all tenures, including smaller properties and homes that are attractive to older people wishing to downsize.

Ensure that the Council has nomination rights to new affordable homes in Central Bedfordshire.

Provide information to the public which allows them to better understand what homes are available and how they can get them and identify how much demand there is for them.

Flitton and Greenfield rural exception site

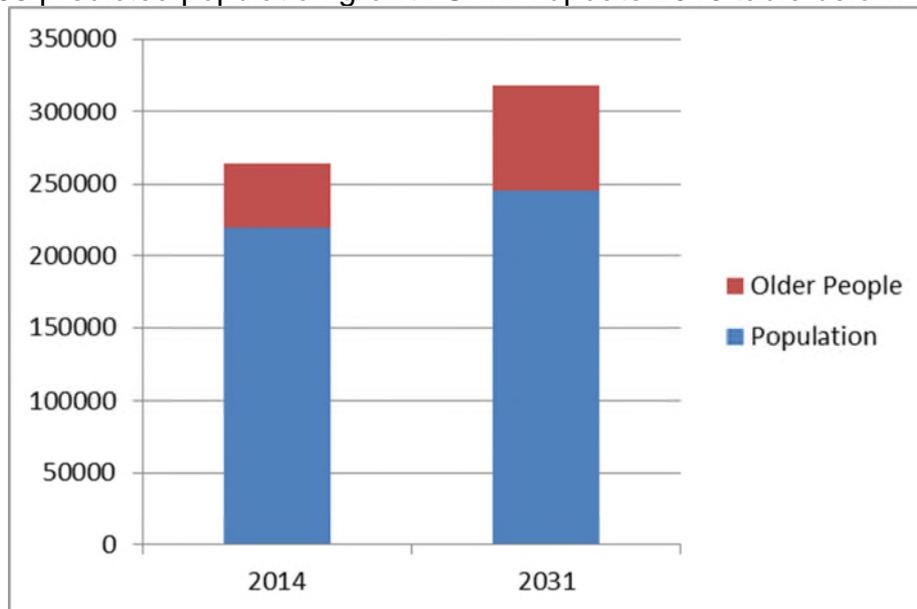


Theme 3: Meeting the housing needs of older persons

Key Objectives	
1	Provide an attractive range of housing options for older people and reduce the pressures on adult and health care services
2	Deliver suitable housing for older persons to enable downsizing and free up larger properties in the housing stock
3	Ensure that the provision of accessible housing and housing options for older persons are improved
4	Ensure the provision of flexible and personalised care and support to enable people to live independently for as long as possible as their care needs develop with age

An ageing society is one of the greatest challenges for housing and national government has identified this as an area where significant changes need to be made, not only in the actual buildings but in challenging society's perceptions of what housing for older people should mean. The number of older people in Central Bedfordshire is expected to increase. One of the key issues for this strategy will be how we plan for an ageing population and particularly the over-65s, not only in terms of how we manage the existing housing stock, but also any new provision.

Over-65 predicted population growth SHMA update 2015 table below.



Our Local Plan is required to comply with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which places specific emphasis on the needs of older people, identifying them as a diverse group with a range of needs, abilities and preferences and who require a range of different types of housing:

“accessible, adaptable general needs housing for those looking to downsize from family housing and the full range of retirement and specialised housing for those with support or care needs.”

Current National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) describes the need to provide housing for older people as “critical” both to support their own wellbeing and to make effective use of the housing stock by freeing up “houses that are under occupied.” The NPPG seeks the full range of need for older persons’ accommodation from “particular types of general housing, such as bungalows” through sheltered, enhanced sheltered, Extra Care, to registered care to be assessed and broken down by tenure.

Research shows that older people prefer to retain the same tenure arrangement if they move. The majority of older people in Central Bedfordshire are owner-occupiers (76.9%), representing a large pool of potential customers with significant resources that are likely to be interested in market sale accommodation. By providing and enabling an attractive housing option we can free up occupied larger homes both in the private and social housing sectors. We need to enable a range of options regardless of whether they rent or own their own property. In regards to the social sector this work has already begun with the development of two extra care schemes at Priory View, Dunstable and Greenfields, Leighton Buzzard.

Meeting the Accommodation Needs of Older People team (MANOP) estimate that providing Extra Care accommodation offers potential cost savings in three areas of adult social care expenditure:

- The diversion of those with the highest care needs away from residential care
- A saving in the ‘per hour’ cost of domiciliary care compared to delivery to people living in their own homes
- A (small) reduction in the amount of care people need in Extra Care as opposed to living in their own homes.

However it is not just about building large facilities as many people want to stay within existing communities. Mainstream housing that is designed with older people in mind such as bungalows and homes without stairs, ground floor apartments and apartments with lifts are an important part of the equation.

We need to deliver mobility standard and wheelchair accessible units in sustainable locations in a range of tenures. Accommodation that is suitable for older person’s needs, should be located close to town and neighbourhood centres, as it brings customers to local businesses and gives residents easy access to goods and services and combats social isolation experienced by many older people.

The SHMA Update 2015 considers a need for a range of specialist retirement housing broken down between types and tenures.

Future need identified for specialist older person housing units from SHMA 2015	
Extra Care for sale	520
Extra Care for rent	260
Leaseholder Schemes for the Elderly	2,100
Total	3,340

The total requirement for Extra Care is very similar to the MANOP tenure-blind calculation of 861 units to year 2030. 170 units each of enhanced sheltered accommodation for rent and sale and 100 units for people with dementia are also identified.

As older people have higher levels of health problems (including dementia) and disability there will most likely be an increased need for support and care. This could be provided either in the form of specialist housing, or adaptations and/or floating supporting in their existing home.

Adaptations are important, as they enable older people to remain living in their own home and can prevent a move into specialist accommodation. However they are not often cost effective. On the Disabled Facilities Grant scheme Central Bedfordshire spends approximately £2.5m per year adapting properties. Of the £2.3m spent in 2013-14, £1.9m was spent on properties not owned by the Council, ones which were privately owned or rented either from Registered Providers or other landlords. We want to provide a wider range of housing options for older persons and reduce the pressures on adult and health care services.

Accessible Housing

The ageing population is likely to have increased need for flexible, spacious accommodation which is already suitable for or can be adapted to accommodate wheelchair users. We recognise that we need to respond to these needs and to offer a range of housing choice to all households.

Recent changes to Building Regulations (Part M) have introduced 3 categories of dwellings.

- Category 1: Visitable dwellings – Mandatory, broadly about accessibility to ALL properties
- Category 2: Accessible and adaptable dwellings – Optional, similar to Lifetime Homes
- Category 3: Wheelchair user dwellings – Optional, equivalent to wheelchair accessible standard.

The housing we deliver now must be future proofed with these standards. We must maximise the opportunity for older people to remain in their existing home as they age by increasing the availability of housing that is designed

with this in mind. Housing must be flexible to personalised care and support to enable people to live independently for as long as possible as their care needs develop with age.

Central Bedfordshire has been split into four localities based on the NHS Clinical Commissioning Group areas, when assessing the older population. The four localities are Chiltern Vale, Leighton Buzzard, Ivel Valley and West Mid Beds (see map page 19). Each has their own identified needs and has its unique characteristics, but the following trends apply to all:

- A growing number of older people
- High levels of owner occupation
- Reasonable levels of affluence
- A significant proportion of older people funding their own care

Older accommodation needs change and this is a challenge. Many older people have equity and live in larger under occupied homes however there are not attractive options in the market for them to leave their current accommodation. The accommodation for older people is a largely untapped market which presents exciting opportunities. We are keen to help create new partnerships to enable creative solutions that are financially viable and sustainable which deliver a wide range of attractive accommodation types for older people.

The emerging Meeting the Accommodation Needs of Older People in Central Bedfordshire, Investment and Development Prospectus 2015-2020 identifies what we want from the market to provide for our growing older population.

Under occupation and down-sizing

It is frequently the case that larger family homes become under occupied once any children have grown up and left home. Freeing up these larger under occupied properties has proved challenging for many years. Current initiatives to help this include:

- Relocation assistance
- Financial incentives
- Housing Options Advice
- Prioritising down-sizing households for new build
- Developing extra care as alternative provisions for elderly and potentially vulnerable households.

Proposals to address the challenge

Creation of the Meeting the Accommodation Needs of Older People in Central Bedfordshire, Investment and Development Prospectus.

Facilitate the development of six affordable extra care schemes by the end of

2020 plus two more in areas of greatest demand and a minimum of 480 units across the board.
Deliver one scheme of 80 apartments or more in each locality area and two additional schemes in areas of high demand. Actively promote the development of extra care schemes, providing a range of tenure from affordable rent to market rate sale.
Encourage the development of open market extra care schemes to provide apartments for sale and private rent. Work with architects, Registered Providers and developers to design homes that take into account the needs, expectations and aspirations of older people.
By the end of 2020 reprovide the capacity in the seven Council-owned care homes (249 places), in homes that have modern physical and environmental standards.
Work with current care home operators that wish to improve the physical and environmental conditions in their homes by remodelling or reproviding.
Encourage developers to build mainstream housing that is designed with older people in mind such as bungalows and homes without stairs, such as ground floor apartments and apartments with lifts as part of new residential developments and that are attractive to older people.
Negotiate the delivery mobility standard and wheelchair accessible units in sustainable locations in a range of tenures where we have evidence of need.
Enable accommodation that is suitable for older people located close to town and neighbourhood centres, as it brings customers to local businesses and gives residents easy access to goods and services. Reduce social isolation experienced by older person by delivering inclusive housing schemes.
Enable the supply of good quality care home places, encouraging new care homes to be developed in areas that have a shortage.

Priory View, Dunstable: 83 bed Extra care development



Theme 4: Meeting the housing needs of vulnerable people

Key Objectives	
1	Delivering housing and providing support for the most vulnerable and those with specialist needs
2	Prevent and respond to homelessness
3	Improve quality and access to affordable housing and private rented housing for vulnerable people
4	Support residents experiencing long-term unemployment to overcome barriers and move towards employment
5	Work with housing partners on meeting the requirements of the Care Act 2014 to help provide integrated care, support and prevention services

Homelessness

The demand for affordable housing in Central Bedfordshire brings with it problems of homelessness. It is therefore vital that the Council continues its strong work to prevent households becoming homeless. The number of homelessness acceptances has fluctuated in recent years peaking last year at 177 homelessness acceptances.

Homeless acceptances (P1E data)	
2015/16 (up to end of Q3)	119
2014/15	177
2013/14	124
2012/13	159

Although this strategy is prioritising the delivery of new homes, the very real issues of rising homelessness and decreasing access to housing mean that there needs to be a focus on early intervention, prevention and enabling access to housing. Inherent within this will be a focus on intervention that can reduce the number of specialist interventions and prevent crisis. In order to achieve this, the Council will focus on working in partnership to bring resources together in order to maximise the impact of any interventions.

The Homelessness Strategy 2015 -2020¹² sets out 5 key priorities.

- Priority 1: Improve the provision of a range of housing options and services to effectively prevent and reduce homelessness.

¹² http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/15-04-27-Homelessness-Strategy-2015-2020-v3_tcm6-14311.pdf#False

- Priority 2: Increase Housing Supply to meet the accommodation and support needs of homeless people.
- Priority 3: Reduce the use of temporary accommodation and bed and breakfast.
- Priority 4: Minimise the impact of welfare reform, while assisting homeless People to access opportunities for employment, education and training, and support them to raise and meet their aspirations.
- Priority 5: Develop an integrated partnership approach to tackling homelessness

Homeless households are usually offered temporary accommodation pending permanent rehousing. A lack of available temporary accommodation is resulting in increased use of bed and breakfast accommodation which is not only unsuitable for most homeless applicants but exceedingly expensive to provide. At 30/6/15 there were 64 households in temporary accommodation of which 17 were in bed and breakfast, including 13 households with children. We need to look at ways of securing more flexible temporary accommodation in the housing portfolio where we can ensure it is of a high standard and reduce costs where necessary.

Through the Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan¹³ 2015 and JSNA 2014¹⁴ Central Bedfordshire has made a clear commitment to increasing both accommodation based support and move-on units. More specifically, it is looking at setting up a shared accommodation pilot as well as taking on a former HMO (house in multiple occupation).

The following initiatives are being used to increase housing supply:

- Council's new build homes programme
- Targeted approach to the allocation of social housing to those in housing need
- Enabling chains of moves to free up social housing
- Lets Rent scheme to increase supply in the private rented sector
- Shared houses to meet the housing needs of single under 35 year olds

¹³ http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/15-02-20-Homeless-Strategy-Action-Plan_tcm6-65440.pdf#False

¹⁴ <http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/jsna/default.aspx> Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) assesses the health needs of the local population in order to improve the physical and mental health and well-being of individuals and communities.

Forging strong partnerships with Registered Providers, and working in collaboration internally we can identify opportunities for development of affordable rented homes, including on Central Bedfordshire Council owned land. A clear concept of need linked to nominations to end product can be established, sharing risk and looking at how products such as Help-to-Buy and Starter Homes can be used to facilitate the provision of rented homes for the acute end of housing need.

Where people approach us for social housing we assess their level of housing need. Households that are either currently homeless, at risk of homelessness, or living in unsafe or over crowded housing, are considered to be in the greatest need. Other households may have lesser degrees of need. We house as many people as possible, but where there is not an available home from Council or housing association stock we sign post to other options such as renting privately.

Private Rented Sector

One of the major causes of homelessness locally is due to the termination of an assured shorthold tenancy. Nationally the termination of an assured shorthold tenancy is the main cause of homelessness. In order to effectively prevent homelessness arising from the private rented sector a range of prevention tools are required including early intervention and immediate responses to problems as they arise.

The private rented sector accounts for 13% of the housing stock. The potential of the private rented sector to meet housing needs is important. The Council is able to discharge its homelessness duty with offers in the private rented sector provided the initial tenancy is available for one year. However the affordability of decent accommodation and access to it are key issues. The availability of accessible private rented sector is limited primarily by the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) limits on rents that are eligible for Housing Benefit which are not attractive to most private landlords. LHA is currently frozen but rents continue to increase, potentially resulting in an increase in future numbers requiring affordable rented tenures and people being priced out of the private rental market.

The Council has a statutory obligation to take action against unsatisfactory landlords in certain circumstances, especially where they are deliberately letting homes which are unfit to live in and not undertaking appropriate remedial action. We will meet our obligations and publicise enforcement action to dissuade others from doing the same.

Lettings agents and property managers are now legally required to join one of three Government approved redress schemes. This now means that tenants and private sector leaseholders will be able to complain to an independent person about the service they have received. The Council will take enforcement action against those who are not members of an approved

scheme and letting agents who do not display their fees in accordance with the regulations.

Central Bedfordshire Council's Lets Rent initiative facilitates housing in the private rented sector by assisting in matching tenants with properties and providing a deposit which the landlord pays into a national deposit protection scheme. It also allows for discharge of homeless duty into the private rented sector. 63 lettings were secured between April and August 2015 by working with landlords and agents, providing deposits and guaranteeing rent. By attracting new landlords to this service at this rate we can discharge our duty to the private sector to house those in need. A Homelessness Prevention Budget of £138,000 for 2015/16 funds deposits and rent in advance paid in cash as landlords are reluctant to accept a bond or rent guarantee with the potential for payments to be refunded to the Council at the end of a tenancy and recycled into additional payments.

Employment

The majority of people who approach the Housing Solutions Service in Central Bedfordshire are economically inactive, yet many homeless people want to work. Homeless people can face multiple and complex barriers to finding and staying in employment. We will help homeless people to access opportunities for employment, education and training, and support them to raise and meet their aspirations.

We would like to break the long recognised links between social housing and unemployment. Changes to Government guidance on allocations, mean the Council will have greater freedom to use social housing as an incentive, to encourage applicants into work alongside the housing provision for applicants in the 'reasonable preference' categories to whom we have a duty.

Care Act 2014

The Care Act introduced the well being principle where local authorities must promote the wellbeing of adults in a number of its functions. A number of these aspects are relevant to homeless people such as physical and mental health and emotional well-being, participation in work, education, training or recreation, social and economic wellbeing and suitability of living accommodation. Suitable living accommodation includes adaptations, assistive technology and advice and assistance on housing options.

Under the Care Act:

- The suitability of living accommodation is explicitly listed as part of the definition of well-being, which sets the tone for the whole Act.
- Housing is now clearly referenced as part of local authorities' new duty to promote the integration of health and care.

- Registered providers of social housing are now explicitly listed as one of the partners a local authority must co-operate with when considering and planning a person’s need for care and support.

The Care Act requires local authorities to be proactive to prevent, delay or reduce the need for social care support and this applies to the whole population, whether or not they currently use services. Local authorities will need to work with other organisations to identify people who might have support needs that are not being met and to make available services that will enable a person to stay independent.

Looked After Children Placement Strategy 2013

Section 22G of The Children Act 1989 requires a council to take steps, as far as reasonably practicable, that secures accommodation for looked after children within the authority’s area and which meets the needs of those children. Councils should consider the number of accommodation providers in their area that is sufficient in the Council’s opinion and take account of the range of accommodation in their area capable of meeting different needs.

There are other groups who may require specialist forms of housing, including those with physical, sensory and learning disabilities. As well as requiring a percentage of homes to be built to wheelchair design standards, we will work with health and social care partners to identify what mix and location of housing is required to meet the needs of those groups.

There is a particular need to address the increasing challenge of providing the right homes and support for vulnerable people in ways that meet their needs and preferences. A coordinated approach is needed for housing, social and health care provision by a range of agencies, to ensure the services people need are provided efficiently and effectively.

Proposals to address the challenge
Ensure the best use of the Council’s Housing Stock to meet customer need, through the Allocations Policy, the Annual Lettings Plan, tenancy sustainment approaches and shared tenancies.
Provide a simpler pathway to access advice on all types of housing needs. We will continue to manage demand and assist households at risk of homelessness through homeless prevention advice, although the number of preventions has fallen in the last year. Preventions will include assistance to remain at home or assistance to find alternative accommodation.
Reduce the use of temporary accommodation and bed and breakfast and minimise the use of unsuitable and expensive bed and breakfast accommodation. Review of our approach to temporary accommodation to ensure that it meets the current needs, eliminates the use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation and supports our approach to use private sector offers to

discharge the homeless duty.
Improve access to the private rented sector by continuing the Let's Rent Scheme and engaging landlords and promoting the scheme. Explore suitable measures to support households to sustain tenancies in the private rented sector. Target our work with landlords to those properties in receipt of housing benefit to ensure they meet minimum quality standards
Maintain a register of adapted and accessible properties to make it easier for people with disabilities to find a home that meets their needs.
Closely monitor the impact of welfare reform to both households and housing sector income and seek to minimise negative consequences.
Ensure that the Housing Solutions service actively works with customers to raise their aspirations and help them to access employment, education and training.
Work with our partners in the health and wellbeing sector to provide appropriate and effective housing related support for vulnerable people.
In partnership explore the feasibility of developing a social enterprise to create employment opportunities for homeless customers.
Identify and establish learning disability and other vulnerable clients housing needs across Central Bedfordshire.

Implementing the Strategy

In order to address the challenges identified in the Housing Strategy we need to work together with our partners. An action plan has been developed with key objectives and accountabilities to ensure delivery.

The Housing Strategy priorities will be monitored by and Central Bedfordshire Local Plan Delivery Board (CBLP). The action plan will be monitored and reviewed annually so that it is responsive to emerging needs, policy and legislative changes and achieves the priorities contained within it.



A great place to live and work

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Write to Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House,
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Appendix: Evidence base

Housing Need Data

- Need to deliver a minimum of 1475 homes per annum for the next five years which will be a range of types and tenures.
- Affordability is worse than the national average in Central Bedfordshire. The lowest quartile house price is 8.3x higher than the lowest quartile incomes.
- September 2015 the average house price in Central Bedfordshire (CBC) was £210,800.
- Average weekly wage resident CBC in Male £632, Female £505, Average £575 = Annual wage £29,900
- Average weekly wage worker in CBC Male £524, Female £408, Average £533 = Annual wage £27,716

Assessing affordability by household type and age (Source: ORS Housing Model based on Census 2011 and Department for Work and Pensions)

	Under 25	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Percentage unable to afford market housing						
Single person household	22%	9%	17%	22%	25%	27%
Couple family with no dependent children	12%	4%	6%	8%	7%	12%
Couple family with 1 or more dependent children	54%	22%	10%	7%	10%	14%
Lone parent family with 1 or more dependent children	84%	76%	49%	36%	44%	60%
Other household type	40%	24%	22%	19%	17%	11%

- SHMA Update 2015 identifies a need for 27% affordable housing at a 73% affordable rent and 27% Intermediate Tenure split.
- SHMA Update 2015 recommends that 364 new affordable homes are delivered each year to meet emerging demand.
- 665 completions of affordable sale properties, 145 completions of units for affordable/social rent in 2014/15
- Housing Stock
74% Home ownership
13% Social housing

13% Private rented sector

- There are 5205 homes in the CBC portfolio
Houses account for half (50%) of the total stock;
1808 flats in blocks of two to five storeys
153 bedsit properties,
133 maisonettes,
773 bungalows.
- CBC housing stock accounts for 6% of the total housing in the district and 36% of the affordable housing.
- As of 31/12/2015 we had 413 sites with planning permission for a total of 6,126 new dwellings of which 1,557 were affordable units.

Older Person Data

- Currently 5,010 people aged 85 and over.
- 20,000 older home owners (aged 65 and over) and just over 1,000 social rented tenants have two or more spare bedrooms.
- 76.9% of older residents own their home. 17.0% rent from a social landlord, 3.6% privately rent and 2.5% live rent free.
- Over 15,000 people aged 65 and over who are unable to manage at least one personal care task and by 2030 this is predicted to rise to over 24,000 people.
- Over 3,000 people living with dementia in Central Bedfordshire and this number is predicted to rise to 5,400 by 2030.
- In 2011 40,275 people aged over 65, projected 73,315 people aged 65 or over by 2031.

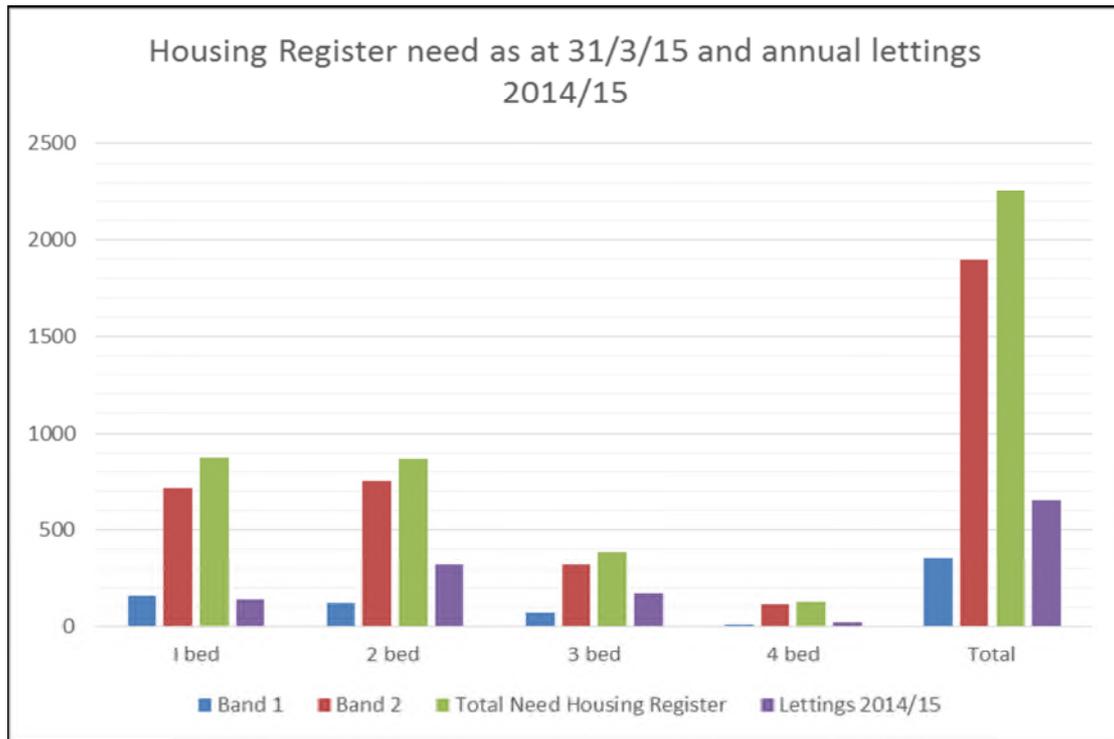
Homelessness and Housing Data

- The housing register stood at 2,258 Band 1 and 2 households accepted registering some level of housing need as of October 2015.

Homeless acceptances (P1E data)	
2015/16 (up to end of Q3)	119
2014/15	177
2013/14	124
2012/13	159

- 57% of homeless households are people under 34 years old and 16% are aged under 24 years old.

- 40% of households accepted as homeless are female lone parents.



In order to assist allocations to the most vulnerable households, the following quotas have been set for 2015/16

Direct lets for urgent and emergency situations	10%
Vulnerable people	15%
Homeless households	15%
Transfers	30%
Housing Register	30%
Total	100%

- 3,235 households claiming Local Housing Allowance (LHA) in the private rented sector. LHA is currently frozen.

Monthly private sector rent levels in CBC

	Mean	Lower Quartile	Median	Upper Quartile
Room	£389	£338	£383	£455
Studio	£491	£395	£463	£538
1 bedroom	£519	£475	£525	£550
2 bedroom	£664	£600	£650	£700
3 bedroom	£863	£750	£825	£900

4 bedroom or more	£1,207	£950	£1,100	£1,300
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Source Valuation Office Agency September 2014

Affordable Housing Definitions

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) defines affordable housing in the following terms:

"Social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Affordable housing should include provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision."

There are various types of affordable housing; these are all designed to meet a particular need according to local incomes and house prices. The following sections will help to explore the various types or tenures within affordable housing.

Social Rented Housing

Social rented homes are owned by either local authorities or registered providers of affordable housing (RP's). These organisations charge a rent which is set by government guidelines through the national rent regime.

These rents are typically quite low and are generally affordable to the majority of people.

Eligible households are those that can demonstrate that they are a British citizen or a citizen of another country with the right to stay in the UK. Those from an EU accession or another country must have no restrictions on how long they can stay in the UK and they must have recourse to public funds.

The majority of occupants will either be earning a low wage or household income and tend to receive assistance from housing benefit. The amount of housing benefit or local housing allowance (LHA) received usually covers the costs of the rent.

Councils and RP's can continue to deliver social rented housing if they can make it financially viable without government subsidy.

Affordable Rented Housing

This is the preferred rented tenure of the Government.

Affordable rent is subject to rent controls that require a rent of no more than 80% of the local market rent (including service charges, where applicable). As

local market rents vary from place to place, these are measured by the amount of local housing allowance administered in a particular area.

Intermediate tenures

The term 'intermediate housing' describes a range of homes for sale and rent provided at a cost above social rent, but below market levels subject to the criteria in the National Planning Policy Framework's affordable housing definition above.

These can include shared equity (shared ownership and equity loans), and intermediate rent.

Homes that do not meet the National Planning Policy Framework definition of affordable housing such as "low cost market" housing, may not be considered as affordable housing for planning purposes.

Shared ownership (sometimes called homebuy)

An occupier will typically buy/mortgage a share of the new build property from a housing association. The association keeps ownership of the remaining share and the occupier will pay rent on this share, as you would to any other landlord. In Central Bedfordshire the rent on the remaining share is derived from 1.75% of the property value.

An occupier can buy anything up to a 75 per cent share in the property. However in Central Bedfordshire, the share for sale is initially set at 40% of the properties open market value with the ability of people to purchase additional shares in the property over time; this is known as 'staircasing'.

For the reasons above, households best suited to shared ownership will be on a moderate household income. The eligibility criterion requires that households earn less than £60,000 a year as a household to qualify for shared ownership housing.