

Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel – 18 June 2025

Housing Development Plan Update

Purpose	To consider a revised version of the HRA Housing Development Plan (HDP) looking back on completed actions over the last 7 years and establishing the position for the next 3 years.
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	The Housing Development Plan was introduced in 2022 to provide a strategic and operational framework for the council’s affordable housing development activities. The revised version brings the plan up to date reflecting delivery since the 600 homes target was adopted in the 2018 Housing Strategy, and by providing an updated context for the coming three years; refreshing the primary objectives, the standards, and the procedures related to development activity.
Recommendation(s)	To note the updated Housing Development Plan and the achievements to date.
Reasons for recommendation(s)	In April 2026 the housing strategy target (“seek to provide an additional 600 new council owned homes”) will be reached. Although the target period is coming to an end the council remains committed to delivering more affordable homes in the future as confirmed in the 2024 Corporate Plan. As the council enters a new phase of development, the revised HRA Housing Development Plan will provide an updated strategic and operational framework setting out the priorities and principles that will be applied to development activity over the coming three years.
Ward(s)	All
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Steve Davies – Housing and Homelessness

Strategic Director(s)	Richard Knott – Strategic Director, Housing and Communities.
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Introduction and background

1. In December 2018 the council adopted a new housing strategy which set out a renewed vision to create balanced communities for the residents of the New Forest District by providing a range of housing options that are affordable and sustainable.
2. To help meet the vision an ambitious building and acquisitions programme was defined as a strategic priority in which the council would seek to provide 600 new council homes for the period to 2026 with social rent, affordable rent and shared ownership tenures.
3. Under the same strategic priority, the council confirmed it would advance and implement a Housing Development Plan to provide a framework for future investment and defined principles.
4. It is now seven years since the Housing Strategy target was adopted and three years since the first HDP was introduced. The revised document provides an update to the original Plan capturing progress over the period and providing an updated framework for development decisions and activity going forward.
5. As drafted the HDP sets out the aims, objectives, policies and processes that frame the council’s approach to developing new affordable housing. It supports the council’s Housing Strategy and the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and reflects the aims and objectives of the Corporate Plan.
6. The HDP is coming to the end of its life and needs to be refreshed, ready for the next phase of development and arising opportunities over the next three years (2025/26 to 2028/29).
7. Arranged in 13 sections the Housing Development Plan incorporates the following key themes and content:

The Local Policy context

8. Incorporating people and housing priorities from the 2024 Corporate Plan and the commitment to continue working with landowners,

partners and developers to enable sustainable and affordable homes for the future. Making the connection to the Housing Strategy and Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategies, and affordable housing resulting from Local Plans (District and National Park).

The need and demand for affordable housing

9. Highlighting the number of households (2,034) currently seeking forms of housing for rent through the council's Housing Register, and the demand for shared ownership (941 households) from the shared ownership 'Expression of Interest' list.

Development objectives and delivery to date

10. Documenting progress that has been made towards the overarching Housing Strategy target, and how development related actions from the Housing Strategy have been fulfilled.

Tenures

11. Setting out the tenures that continue to be delivered by the council for affordable housing including social rent, affordable rent and shared ownership.

Targeted development and local connections

12. The rationale and the focus on development to meet the needs of those on the Housing Register; the scope to provide homes from a variety of sources across urban and rural parts of the New Forest district, and the objective to prioritise affordable homes for those with a local connection wherever possible.

Development standards

13. The council is committed to delivering high quality and sustainable affordable housing. Whilst it is a given that all newly built homes will meet building regulation standards, where opportunities exist and it is viable to do so, the council will build homes to higher standards, including the proposed Future Homes Standard (being published in the Autumn) and the Nationally Described Space Standard.

Procurement routes to development

14. Sets out the different procurement routes that are available for development; the use of frameworks, and the council's membership of the Wayfarer Consortium through which Homes England grant funding is secured.

Financing development

15. How development connects to the Housing Revenue Account and the emerging HRA Business Plan. The scale of the approved Capital Budget and the role of borrowing in the future.

Development risk management

16. Identifying the nature of risk in development and the need for risk management strategies, and the procedure if risk escalates.

Internal procedures

17. How consultation is undertaken surrounding new development: how support is sought from internal teams, and how support is required from Members of the Housing Development Panel to submit bids and to progress Portfolio Holder decisions to enter contracts.

Governance, monitoring, audit and review

18. The structure and membership of the Housing Development Panel. The need to comply with Homes England guidance in connection with grant funded schemes and to accord with audit requirements.

Appendix 1: 2018 to 2026 Development Analysis

19. The table at Appendix 1 provides an analysis of acquisitions and developments in three categories: those that have been completed over the last 7 years, those that are due to complete in the current financial year, and those that are in contract and scheduled to complete after April 1st, 2026.
20. However, it should be noted that the Development Team has also undertaken several major refurbishment and long-term empty property schemes over the last 7 years. These have not been included in the table as they have not resulted in additional homes, albeit the return of 16 homes back to use.

Corporate plan priorities

21. The HDP and related development activities support the council's Corporate Plan "People Priority 1"; Helping those in our community with the greatest need and "People Priority 3": Meeting Housing Needs.

Options appraisal

22. There is no statutory requirement to adopt a Housing Development Plan – it is a discretionary document which provides an informal framework to capture the council’s housing development activities.
23. However, the HDP provides background information on the rationale for development: guidance on the standards it aims to meet; the scope of ambition, and the operating, financial and governance procedures that apply.

Consultation undertaken

24. None arising directly from this report.

Financial and resource implications

25. In February 2025 council approved a budget of £15.2m for the Housing Acquisition and Development Programme during 2025/26, and same annual provision was indicatively set out for 2026/27 and 2027/28.
26. Going forward the 30-year HRA Business Plan will inform the available financial capacity to continue developing and delivering additional affordable housing.

Legal implications

27. Where development requires the acquisition of land or buildings S17 (1) (a) and (b) of the Housing Act 1985 provide statutory powers to (a) acquire land as a site for the erection of houses and (b) acquire houses, or buildings which may be made suitable as houses, together with any land occupied with houses or buildings.

Risk assessment

28. As documented within the Housing Development Plan, many aspects of the development process incorporate risk: from the acquisition of land to uncertainties that surround the liquidity of building contractors, to unforeseen delays that can affect critical delivery timelines. During the key stages of any development project the council therefore undertakes steps to mitigate risk, e.g. land and ground investigations, legal due diligence on proposed land acquisitions and development agreements, external valuations to underpin value-based assumptions, and financial checks to ensure the solvency of contractors.

29. However the need to manage and mitigate risk continues throughout the life of every development project, so Project Managers maintain active Risk Registers and are required to escalate risks to senior officers when these are identified.

Environmental/climate and nature implications

30. The Housing Development Plan confirms the council's commitment to delivering high quality and sustainable affordable housing wherever opportunities exist, and it is viable to do so.
31. 28 new homes have already been built to meet the proposed Future Homes Standard and another 42 are currently under construction. Incorporating very high levels of fabric insulation, air source heat pump technology and in many cases solar roof panels, homes that are built to this standard significantly reduce levels of carbon emissions whilst also making homes more affordable to run with reduced heating and hot water costs.

Equalities implications

32. Affordable homes for rent that are developed and delivered by the council are allocated in accordance with the Housing Register Allocation Policy. Homes for shared ownership are sold in accordance with the council's adopted shared ownership policy and the requirements of Homes England, having regard for any local connection requirements that are contained within legal S106 Planning agreements.
33. New social housing is provided to meet a wide range of housing and personal needs, but particularly for housing register applicants whose current housing does not meet their needs whether this be through disabilities, ASB, over or under occupation etc.

Crime and disorder implications

34. In terms of council commissioned new developments, 'Secured by Design' principles will be considered at design stage. Where developments incorporate accommodation with higher-risk considerations, CCTV and surveillance equipment is utilised.

Data protection / Information governance / ICT implications

35. No personal data is associated with the content of the Housing Development Plan or this report.

New Forest National Park / Cranborne Chase National Landscape implications

36. Opportunities to deliver affordable homes under the Housing Development Plan are being taken within all areas of the district including the New Forest National Park and the Cranborne Chase National Landscape.

Conclusion

37. When the '600' Housing Strategy target was set in 2018 the ability to deliver different affordable housing tenures was partly introduced to enable to the council to bid for large scale S106 opportunities that were forecast to arise through Strategic Sites in the emerging Local Plan.
38. However, when many of these sites were delayed - during Covid and the building cost crisis - the council opportunistically pursued several land-led openings and schemes for urgently needed temporary accommodation. It is therefore very pleasing that despite earlier delays, progress on Strategic Sites has escalated over the last 2 years and the council's "S106" pipeline has grown. Since 2018 the Council has secured a total of 80 x S106 homes however a further 103 are now in contract, and 136 more are currently in negotiation.
39. In terms of the overall programme (but excluding 'S106'), the council has secured significant allocations of external capital grant funding since 2018 to help subsidise the provision of homes for social rent, affordable rent, shared ownership and 'Housing with Support' (Temporary Accommodation). To date the council has been allocated £12m from Homes England, £4m from the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, plus £324,000 through the Brownfield Land Release Fund.
40. Considering the Housing Strategy target itself and the action to "*seek to provide 600 new council homes for the period to 2026 with social rent, affordable rent and shared ownership tenures*", we are confident that at least 551 homes will have completed or be in contract by April 2026. A figure that comprises 325 homes for social rent, 99 for affordable rent, 75 for Temporary Accommodation, and 52 for shared ownership. N.B., with 136 more homes currently in negotiation the final commitment figure is likely to increase during the current year.
41. The revised Housing Development Plan will continue to provide a strategic and operational framework for the future, and new opportunities that are expected to come forward from a diversity of

sources including council-owned regeneration sites and council-owned land.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 2025 Revised Housing
Development Plan

Background Papers:

Housing_Strategy.pdf

Shared_Ownership_Policy.pdf

Greener_Housing_Strategy.pdf

Affordable_Rent_Policy.pdf

Homelessness and Rough
Sleeping Strategy