

Appendix A – Strategy for housing and the prevention of homelessness and rough sleeping



STRATEGY FOR HOUSING AND THE PREVENTION OF HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING 2024 – 2029

February 2024

Contents Table

Foreword.....	3
1 Introduction	4
2 Achievements from the previous Strategy (2019 – 2024).....	9
3 Consultation	11
4 The Vision for our Strategy	12
5 Themes and priorities	12
6 Theme 1 – Housing Need.....	13
7 Theme 2 – Existing Homes	17
8 Theme 3 - Preventing homelessness and rough sleeping.....	19
9 The Evidence Base	22
10 Monitoring and Review	22
11 Glossary	23

Foreword

Most people living in Harborough District enjoy a good quality of life. However, housing affordability, access to services in rural areas, poor health and disability and ongoing cost of living pressures are significant issues for some. Ensuring the environmental sustainability of existing homes and better standards in new housing developments is also a major challenge.

Our previous Strategy for Housing and the Prevention of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping, 2019-2024 covered a challenging period, which saw the COVID-19 pandemic, which we still continue to recover from along with the ongoing pressures on our residents associated with the cost of living increases. Despite this we have been able to make significant progress in meeting the objectives set out in our previous Strategy.

This new Strategy for Housing and the Prevention of Homeless and Rough Sleeping, covers the period 2024 to 2029 and reflects our continued commitment to improving the housing conditions and opportunities for local people.

Suitable accommodation is an essential human need, contributing considerably to health and wellbeing. The impact of poor housing conditions and homelessness on physical and mental health are well known and can result in significant pressure on public services. Our Strategy sets out how we will strive to ensure that everyone has a home that meets their needs and they can afford. Enabling local people to continue to live locally in the district also contributes to the success and growth of our local economy and the communities within our district.

We can achieve this by continuing to deliver appropriate new homes, whilst making good use of existing housing. We will seek to meet the specific housing needs of older people and others who require more support.

We thank our partners and everyone who contributed to the development of this Strategy. To be able to realise the ambitions of our new Strategy we will continue to work with our partners recognising that they are key to successfully delivering the Strategy's objectives. The key themes and priorities set out in the Strategy are where we will focus our efforts over the next five years: the delivery of good quality affordable housing; improving the condition of existing homes and preventing and addressing homelessness and rough sleeping.

Cllr Jim Knight

Portfolio Holder

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Housing and the Prevention of Homeless and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 to 2029 is a strategic document that sets out the vision, themes, priorities and objectives for our district. It describes how we work towards meeting the housing aspirations and needs of our residents, including those who are homeless, or threatened with homelessness and those experiencing, or at risk of rough sleeping.

ABOUT HARBOROUGH DISTRICT

- 1.2 Harborough District (Harborough) is located in the heart of England.
- 1.3 It is a mainly rural district covering an area of 238 square miles of south and east Leicestershire. It is within the East Midlands Region, bordering Warwickshire to the west, Northamptonshire to the south and Rutland to the east. The population is mainly split between the two market towns of Market Harborough and Lutterworth; large villages of Broughton Astley, Great Glen, Fleckney, Kibworth (Beauchamp and Harcourt); as well as Scraftoft, Thurnby and Bushby which adjoin the Leicester Urban Area. The remaining population live in the smaller rural settlements, many of which have a population of less than 500.
- 1.4 Harborough cannot be viewed in isolation from its adjoining areas: it shares economic and housing markets with the other district councils in Leicestershire and particularly with the city of Leicester, which has a central economic role in the county. Leicester is a particularly important source of employment opportunities. There is cross boundary travel to work as well as people moving house across council boundaries, both within Leicestershire and to and from surrounding areas.

FACTS ABOUT THE AREA¹

- **Population:** current population is 97,600, the district has experienced growth of more than 14% over the past decade (Census 2021). The population is projected to increase to more than 105,000 residents by 2041.
- **Age profile:** 22% of the population is over 65, with 10% being over 75. The projections across Leicestershire are for a 42% increase in the over 65s and a 50% increase in the over 75s by 2041.
- **Employment:** 79% of the population are in employment, this being above the average for England.
- **Annual Pay:** Median gross annual pay of full-time employees is £34,000 (2022). Although this is higher than the East Midlands it is similar to Leicestershire and the national average.

¹ All data is 2023 unless otherwise stated.

- **Claimant count:** In August 2023 1.6% of residents who were aged 16+ were claiming unemployment related benefits. This is lower than in surrounding districts.
- **Health and Disability:** 45% of the population aged 65 and over are currently living with a long-term health problem or disability. This percentage is forecast to increase by 71% by 2041.
- **Existing housing:** 77% of homes are owner occupied, 14% privately rented and 9% affordable housing. Housing condition is generally better than average, but poor standards still exist and the cost of living pressures are compounding this, particularly in relation to problems with damp and mould.
- **House prices:** The average house price is £376,000, the highest in Leicestershire, having increased by 16% since 2019.
- **Market rents:** The average private market rent of £840 per month is higher than the average rent for Leicestershire.
- **Affordability:** Properties to buy and rent are less affordable in Harborough than the other districts in Leicestershire.

HOUSING NEED

- **All Tenures:** The Harborough Local Plan 2011 – 2031 sets a target for additional homes across all tenures of 557 new dwellings per year. A new Local Plan is currently being prepared and is expected to be adopted during the lifetime of this strategy.
- **Affordable Housing:** The new Local Plan will consult on a requirement for 40% of new homes to be provided as affordable housing.
- **Specialist Housing:** There is a need for good quality homes to meet specific housing and support needs. It is estimated that there will be a shortfall in supply of 1500 homes (all tenures excluding residential care and nursing home places) specifically designed to meet the care and support needs of older people by 2041.
- **Number on the Housing Register:** There are 857 households currently registered with Harborough Homes waiting to secure the tenancy of an affordable home.
- **Homelessness:** During 2022/23 640 households approached the Council for advice and help due to homelessness or the threat of homelessness.

THE COUNCILS PRIORITIES:

- 1.5 This Strategy supports the Council's wider corporate objectives.
- 1.6 The following diagram illustrates the linkages between the various strategic documents.
- 1.7 Insert diagram
- 1.8 The Council's Corporate Plan 2022-31 includes the ambition to:
- "...ensure there is housing to meet local needs of people of all ages."*
- 1.9 The Plan's aspiration in respect of new developments is to:
- "... create a sense of pride in our district by ensuring that we build and create new, resilient communities that recognise the unique nature of the district, with a strong focus on good design to ensure developments are in line with our agreed planning guidance. We will look to ensure that housing across a range of prices and tenures is available to meet local demand and help our residents to remain in the district.....and to reduce the potential for homelessness."*
- 1.10 The Plan recognises the important role housing has to play in assisting with meeting the objective to promote health and wellbeing, particularly around living independently
- "Our residents will be able to live more independent lives, with the right support and guidance in place to allow this."*
- 1.11 This is further reflected in the Council's Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2027, which has a cross cutting theme of "Quality Homes for All", recognising that poor housing conditions can have a negative effect on a persons health. It has the following objectives:
- Promote high design standards for new housing;
 - Improve living accommodation within the district;
 - Support vulnerable adults and older people to remain independent in their homes;
 - Provide energy efficiency advice and measures; and
 - Build services and pathways to housing for vulnerable groups.
- 1.12 The Young Persons Opportunities Plan 2023-2028 has an objective of increasing awareness and availability of suitable and affordable housing for young people.
- 1.13 The Rural Strategy 2023-2028 has an ambition to meet rural housing needs and ensure rural homes are fit for the 21st century working with local landowners and developers to provide high quality housing that is genuinely affordable and designed to help combat fuel poverty.

- 1.14 Other relevant strategies include the Empty Homes Strategy which sets out the Councils approach to bringing empty properties back into use and the Private Sector Renewal Strategy. Through the Lightbulb Partnership, the Regulatory Reform Order provides wider support for vulnerable residents to remain in their homes through alternative interventions than the mandatory disabled facilities grants. The Regulatory Reform Order also enables the Council to use specific Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) funding for wider purposes, supporting our strategic priorities which integrate health, wellbeing and housing, for the benefit of local residents.
- 1.15 The Council recognises that most landlords provide an essential supply of good quality, well managed accommodation. However, where necessary the Council will take appropriate enforcement action against landlords to ensure tenants are living in safe and suitable accommodation. The Council introduced Financial Penalties for non-compliance with relevant legislation as an alternative to prosecution during 2023.
- 1.16 The Housing and the Prevention of Homeless and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 to 2029 has been developed taking into account the wider Council strategic objectives, which are reflected in the themes and priorities that have been identified.

THE HARBOROUGH LOCAL PLAN

- 1.17 The Local Plan is the Council's principal planning policy document and sets out the vision, objectives, and planning policies for the Harborough District.
- 1.18 A new Local Plan is being produced and this Strategy sets out the housing priorities that need to be considered as part of the development of the new Plan.
- 1.19 The currently adopted Local Plan runs from 2011 - 2031 and has the following vision for the development of new homes:

“New housing will reflect local needs in terms of type, size and tenure and enable equality of access to suitable accommodation. Older people will have increased access to accommodation to suit their changing needs and affordable homes will have been delivered to enable a new generation of home owners to get onto the housing ladder and to meet the needs of those unable to afford market housing for sale.”

- 1.20 Specifically, the current Local Plan includes a requirement for a number of new properties on allocated sites to be accessible by people with disabilities.

OVERVIEW OF THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

- 1.21 External factors have a significant impact on the delivery of the Housing and the Prevention of Homeless and Rough Sleeping Strategy. The following will continue to have an impact on our operating environment over the coming years.

- Slow economic growth forecast for the UK economy, which impacts on the prosperity of our district and our residents.

- Impact of new legislation such as the Environment Act, the Social Housing (Regulation) Act, Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act, the Levelling and Regeneration Act/Bill, Renters Reform Act/Bill.
- Uncertainty around national policy that affect us at a local level, for example changes to planning policy.
- The increased standards to improve energy efficiency and meet net zero carbon targets for both new and existing homes.
- Continued volatility in markets both locally and nationally, with concerns remaining around costs of energy, materials and supply chains.
- The cost of living pressures for our residents.
- The financial constraints and pressures on the Council and its partners as a result of all of the factors in the external environment.

2 Achievements from the previous Strategy (2019 – 2024)

NEW HOUSING SUPPLY

- The last five years has witnessed a step up in affordable housing completions. 2021-22 provided the highest number of annual affordable home completions homes, with the delivery of 231 affordable properties.
- A more focused, proactive approach to working with developers and Registered Providers (RP) leading to earlier engagement through the planning process and improved delivery of affordable housing.
- Increased supply of shared ownership homes to assist in meeting the need for more affordable home ownership.
- Undertook research and hosted a workshop for partners to gain a better understanding of the reasons for the low supply of 1 bed flats in the district, resulting in the identification of options to address the shortfall.
- In partnership with Platform Housing Group and supported by a financial contribution from the Council we were able to provide much needed family accommodation at the Rosehill development including 4 homes with 4 bedrooms and a home with 5 bedrooms. These would not have been delivered without our intervention.
- By working with RP partners we were able to convert a market housing scheme to a totally affordable housing scheme, comprising 27 brand new homes, including 4 bedroom houses and bungalows, thus increasing the supply of much needed affordable housing.

EXISTING HOMES

- Prior to the recent rise in fuel costs, improvements were being made year on year in reducing fuel poverty.
- Enabled the installation of insulation to 1,295 homes using ECO3 funding, saving around 43,102 tonnes of carbon across the lifetime of the measures.
- Licensed all applicable Houses in Multiple Occupation.
- Responded quickly to the Homes for Ukraine scheme, ensuring safe housing for refugees.

- Reduced the number of long term empty homes from 528 in 2020 to 443 at February 2024.
- Supported the countywide Lightbulb Partnership to enable vulnerable residents to remain safe and well in their own homes, including adaptations, affordable warmth and preventing falls.
- Through the Lightbulb Partnership, enabled more targeted support including:
 - Safe Spaces, a multi-agency approach to dealing with hoarding issues.
 - Introduction of a Housing Occupational Therapist to reduce delays in patients returning home from hospital.
 - Assistive Technology and Dementia service to help people remain independent and improve their confidence.

HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION

- Maintained low levels of homelessness and rough sleeping during the early years of the Strategy.
- Continued to deliver an effective advice and assistance service to people facing homelessness, seeking to prevent this where possible.
- Minimised the use of B&B as temporary accommodation for 16/17 year olds and families with children, this now being a rare occurrence.
- Established an outreach service for rough sleepers, in partnership with North West Leicestershire District Council.
- Reviewed our policy for lettings to affordable housing, Harborough Homes, to ensure it is transparent, fair and accessible to all.
- Introduced a new case management system to improve the efficiency of our service.

3 Consultation

- 3.1 In developing our new Strategy we have consulted with a wide range of partner agents.
- 3.2 In May 2023 we held a Housing Summit which was a critical event in the evolution of the Strategy. The Summit was attended by various organisations involved in housing issues in Harborough, including private developers, neighbouring Local Authorities and RPs. We also sought views from partners who were not able to attend the Summit.
- 3.3 The Summit focused on the supply of affordable housing and the prevention of homelessness and rough sleeping in particular and provided a forum for discussion and ideas, along with identifying the various challenges. These challenges are explored in more detail under the individual Strategy themes.
- 3.4 The Summit enabled a shared understanding of the issues facing the Council and its partners and has made a key contribution to the contents of the Strategy.
- 3.5 It has influenced the emerging themes, objectives and priorities that have been identified and we have subsequently checked and tested them with our partners to ensure they are the right ones.
- 3.6 Following the production of the draft Strategy we undertook a consultation with partners, stakeholders and local residents in January/February 2024.
- 3.7 This consultation provided a positive response with support for the themes, priorities and objectives identified. Our partners, including organisations from the RP and supported housing sectors expressed their willingness and enthusiasm to work collaboratively with us to deliver our strategic objectives.

4 The Vision for our Strategy

4.1 The vision for our new Strategy is:

“There is good quality and appropriate housing to meet local needs, offering choice and opportunity to our residents, including those who are vulnerable, facing homelessness or discrimination.”

5 Themes and priorities

5.1 The themes and priorities for the Strategy are set out in the following sections, along with the challenges we have identified.

5.2 The themes for our Strategy are:

Theme 1 - Housing need

Theme 2 - Existing Homes

Theme 3 - Homelessness Prevention and rough sleeping

6 Theme 1 – Housing Need

THE CHALLENGES

Meeting Housing Need

- 6.1 The 'Leicester & Leicestershire Housing & Economic Needs Assessment' 2022 (HENA) estimates that in order to meet housing need across all tenures, 534 additional homes per annum are required between 2020 and 2041. The need for affordable housing results in a requirement for around 400 affordable homes per year throughout the period of this strategy.
- 6.2 There are around 857 households on the Housing Register and most are under 55.
- 6.3 The number of lettings in 2022/23 was 273, around 200 of these were new build properties, demonstrating the low rate of turn over of the existing stock of affordable homes. If new build completions decline as is forecast this will exacerbate this problem further.
- 6.4 The longest waits for accommodation through the Housing Register is for four and five bedroom homes, at 576 and 595 days respectively. For applicants for 1 bed homes the wait is an average of 291 days.
- 6.5 The Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) 2017 identified a need for 5 additional pitches and 26 pitches for travelling show people. (A new GTAA is currently in progress).

Affordability

- 6.6 Homes in Harborough are 21% more expensive than the average for Leicestershire and 39% higher than the East Midlands regional average.
- 6.7 Lower quartile house price, at £255,000, is 18% more expensive than the lower quartile house price for Leicestershire and 46% higher than for the East Midlands.
- 6.8 Median and lower quartile house prices are more than nine times higher than median and lower quartile incomes. This makes Harborough is the least affordable district in Leicestershire.
- 6.9 The average private rent is £720 per month for a 2-bed property.
- 6.10 Average private sector rents are generally above the level of benefits payable to assist those on low incomes with their housing costs.. For example, a lower quartile rent for a 2-bed property is £650 per month, whilst the Local Housing Allowance (used to calculate Housing Benefit for tenants renting from a private landlord) is only £580 per month. The Local Housing Allowance is due to be increased from April 2024 but the gap will remain significant.

Housing Supply

- 6.11 Over the last 5 years an average of 850 new homes per year of all tenures have been built. The new Local Plan is currently being developed with a target of 340 new dwellings per year between 2020 and 2041, this is over and above existing development commitments during this period.
- 6.12 New affordable homes delivery has been above the level specified in the current Local Plan over the last 5 years, with an average of 200 homes per year being completed.
- 6.13 Over the next 5 years 179 new affordable homes per annum are forecast to be completed. This reduction in delivery reflects the challenging economic environment and the financial constraints and pressures impacting on development partners.
- 6.14 There is a lack of affordable housing in rural areas due to limited development opportunities and the reduction in the number of existing affordable homes as a result of the impact of the Right to Buy.
- 6.15 Owner occupation is the main tenure in Harborough, with the private rented sector (at 14% of total stock) being one of the lowest in Leicestershire. This is considerably below the national average of 20% of dwellings being for private rent.
- 6.16 The HENA advises that 40% of all new affordable homes should be 1 bedroom, however in the last 5 years less than 20% of all affordable homes built have been 1 bedroom.

Priority 1 Increasing the supply of affordable housing

Objective: To secure the development of appropriate affordable housing and attract housing investment into Harborough.

What we will do:

- 6.17 Build effective working relationships with appropriate housing development partners to provide new affordable homes across a range of tenures.
- 6.18 Work with RPs and developers that are able to offer options for affordable homeownership to assist working-age residents to remain in Harborough.
- 6.19 Provide leadership in seeking to ensure that homes are designed to increase energy efficiency and are built to a high standard, enhancing the neighbourhoods in which they are built.
- 6.20 Build relationships with Government Agencies to maximise public sector funding opportunities.
- 6.21 Identify opportunities for external finance and investment to help secure development opportunities.
- 6.22 Work with RP partners to identify and bring forward land opportunities that are particularly suitable for affordable housing.

- 6.23 Ensure, wherever possible, that Local planning policy is applied to maximise the delivery of affordable homes within new housing developments.
- 6.24 Increase the number of homes delivered through the “First Homes” initiative.
- 6.25 Explore options identified in our recent research into this issue to increase the supply of 1-bedroom homes.
- 6.26 Establish the opportunities for commercial premises, such as redundant shops and office space, to be converted to provide homes.

Priority 2 – Build new homes that enable people with health and disability issues and support needs to live more independently

Objective: To increase the supply of specialist housing to meet the needs of the most vulnerable groups, such as those who require support with mental health, learning and physical disabilities or young people leaving care.

What we will do:

- 6.27 Work with partners to develop supported housing schemes that respond to the identified needs of older people.
- 6.28 Work in partnership with Leicestershire County Council Adult Social Care and Specialist Extra Care Housing Providers, to more fully understand demand and the investment required to provide appropriate accommodation.
- 6.29 Progress the proposed extra care housing schemes at Lutterworth East as part of the strategic development of that site.
- 6.30 Progress plans, in partnership to develop a multi-use facility which include extra care housing in Market Harborough.
- 6.31 Incentivise developers, using innovative approaches in planning to enable the provision of bungalows on a site-by-site basis.
- 6.32 Work with our RP Partners to devise more robust processes to streamline access to new supported/adapted accommodation.

Priority 3 - Address housing affordability and supply issues in rural communities

Objective: To meet rural housing needs and ensure new rural homes are fit for the future.

What we will do:

- 6.33 Support the development of new good quality homes in rural areas,, contributing to the economic viability and sustainability of those communities.
- 6.34 Ensure there is appropriate evidence of the need for affordable housing in rural settlements, supported by a robust local Housing Needs Survey and including starter and retirement homes.

- 6.35 Involve parish councils and communities in the development of planning policy ensuring they have the opportunity to inform decisions on how development impacts on their area. Including supporting and enabling the development of Neighbourhood Plans.
- 6.36 Encourage housing development that supports good community connections and engagement between new and existing residents, where possible incorporating community led housing schemes.
- 6.37 Work with developers and local communities to ensure new housing development includes appropriate investment in infrastructure.

Priority 4 - Increase the focus on ensuring suitable housing is developed for people with experience of multiple disadvantage

Objective: To recognise the particular needs of this cohort and increase the opportunity to access appropriate housing solutions.

What we will do:

- 6.38 Work with partners to maximise funding opportunities to increase the supply of appropriate housing for young people, this should be self contained accommodation whenever possible.
- 6.39 Work with Leicestershire County Council to meet identified need, ensuring the right safe accommodation is available for people who have experienced domestic abuse.
- 6.40 Work with partner agencies, to respond to and address gaps in housing provision for individuals with specific mental or physical health needs, where lack of suitable accommodation is identified as being particularly acute.

Priority 5 – To increase our understanding of the accommodation needs of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community

Objective: To ensure the housing needs of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Community are recognised and suitable provision made.

What we will do:

- 6.41 Carry out a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) jointly with neighbouring Local Authorities. This will update the previous needs assessment and inform the relevant policy in the new Local Plan.
- 6.42 Utilise the outcomes to update the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller needs assessment to inform and support the implementation of the new Local Plan as well as identifying where the Council needs to be proactive in developing sites.

7 Theme 2 – Existing Homes

THE CHALLENGES

- 7.1 Increasing levels of fuel poverty since 2017, now affecting over 4,000 households.
- 7.2 Identifying and tackling poor standards, particularly in the private rented sector and homes occupied by vulnerable people.
- 7.3 Making the transition to net zero carbon and the need to reduce carbon emissions recognising the particular characteristics of the district such as the number of homes in rural areas, more houses and few flats and large number of properties built before 1900.
- 7.4 Increasing demand for home adaptations for people with physical disabilities - the number of applications for adaptations has steadily increased from 73 in 2019 to 86 in 2023.
- 7.5 Bringing the number of empty homes back in to use. As at the end of Q2 23/24 there were 806, of which 136 had been unused for over two years.

Priority 1 - Improve standards in privately owned and rented housing

Objective: Improve living conditions and increase environmental performance of homes in the private sector.

What we will do:

- 7.6 Continue to work with the Green Living Leicestershire Partnership to access funding from National Government to deliver retrofit programmes for low income households in the least efficient homes.
- 7.7 Continue to support delivery of the ‘Warm Homes Project’ and ‘Collective Energy Switching.’
- 7.8 Ensure Houses in Multiple Occupation and other shared houses are safe and well managed, meeting all legal requirements.
- 7.9 Work with private landlords and housing associations to ensure that the properties they let are of good quality and managed effectively, taking enforcement action where necessary.
- 7.10 Ensure residential caravan sites are appropriately licensed, managed, and maintained appropriately

Priority 2 – Enabling people to stay safe and well in their own homes

Objective: Provide adaptations, assistive technology and other support that enable people with disabilities or health issues to live in their own homes for longer.

What we will do:

- 7.11 Continue our support to the Leicestershire Lightbulb Partnership².
- 7.12 Work with health, social care and community partners to identify people with the highest need for our support and target our offer to them.

Priority 3 – Tackling Empty Homes

Objective: Reduce the number of long term empty homes and manage the impact these have on our communities

What we will do:

- 7.13 Review our policy and procedures relating to empty homes to ensure we have appropriate tools in place to deal with these, including exploring opportunities to lease properties with other agencies.
- 7.14 Work proactively with owners of empty homes to assist them in bringing their properties back into use for housing.
- 7.15 Make best use of enforcement powers where appropriate to reduce the impact of problematic, long-term empty properties.
- 7.16 Raise awareness and ensure the public are informed about the Councils approach to addressing empty homes.

² This is subject to consideration by the Cabinet in 2024.

8 Theme 3 - Preventing homelessness and rough sleeping

THE CHALLENGES

- 8.1 Increasing number of people presenting to the Council as actually homeless or seeking information and advice, this service demand has more than doubled from 306 in 2019/20 to 640 in 2022/23.
- 8.2 The number of households assessed as homeless and owed a relief duty³ has more than tripled over the past five years from 49 in 2018/19 to 182 in 2022/23.
- 8.3 Increasing numbers of people are owed a relief duty having lost their previous home through experience of domestic abuse – in 2022/23 this related to 51 applicants, 28% of applicants owed a relief duty.
- 8.4 Insufficient, suitable temporary accommodation within Harborough – around 70% of placements are out of area. Specifically, there is a gap in provision of domestic abuse safe accommodation across Leicestershire compared to the level recommended by the Commission for Europe (1 space per 10,000 population which would equate to 70 units). In 2022 there were only 21 units of safe accommodation, a gap of 49 spaces,
- 8.5 For applicants owed a relief duty in 2022/23, the main reasons for loss of their last settled home were domestic abuse (28%), family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate (28%) and end of assured shorthold (private rented) tenancy (17%).
- 8.6 Where a main duty⁴ is assessed (applicant is homeless, eligible, in priority need and not intentionally homeless), the main reason for having a priority need is that the household has dependent children. However, the number of people who are vulnerable (due to age, physical or mental health or domestic abuse) has increased in recent years.
- 8.7 Rising cost of temporary accommodation – the Council spent over £280,000 on temporary accommodation for homeless households during 2022/23, an increase of 40% on expenditure during 2019/20.
- 8.8 Housing insecurity, particularly in the private rented sector. During 2022/23 57% of households owed a prevention duty were homeless as a result of loss of a private rented home.
- 8.9 Lack of affordable housing for single people under 35 is a problem due to the lack of suitable one-bedroom and shared properties. The local housing allowance rates applied to private rented housing restricts benefit payable for this age group to a single room in a shared house.

³ Where temporary accommodation is provided pending assessment of a main duty to secure accommodation.

⁴ Applicant is homeless, eligible, in priority need and not intentionally homeless.

Priority 1 – prevent homelessness where possible, and where it does occur ensure it is rare, brief and non-recurring

Objective: Focus our activity on prevention and early intervention to support those threatened with homelessness and adopt a person centred response to supporting and accommodating those who become homeless.

What we will do:

- 8.10 Review the adequacy of our resources dedicated to preventing homelessness and seek to ensure this is given the priority it requires.
- 8.11 Continue to respond to approaches from people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness in a way that is person centred, trauma informed, appropriate and timely.
- 8.12 Work with landlords seeking to end a tenancy, resulting in a threat of homelessness, to prevent eviction wherever possible.
- 8.13 Work with social care, health, criminal justice and the voluntary sector to ensure appropriate support is in place for individuals who have experienced multiple disadvantage and who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and ensure a multi-agency approach to delivery⁵.
- 8.14 Support private landlords and registered providers to bring homes in their ownership, including empty homes, into use for those who are homeless and/or who have more complex housing and support needs.

Priority 2 - Respond to an increasing number of people who become homeless as a result of experience of domestic abuse.

Objective: Increase the number of units of safe accommodation for people experiencing domestic abuse in Harborough.

What we will do:

- 8.15 Work with Leicestershire County Council to identify opportunities to provide safe accommodation within Harborough and work with partners to deliver suitable homes.
- 8.16 Develop and strengthen relationships with agencies that provide accommodation and support those who are experiencing domestic abuse in Leicestershire.
- 8.17 Seek to provide a smooth transition in to move-on and permanent accommodation for those made homeless as a result of domestic abuse.

⁵ Multi-agency protocols already exist demonstrating how we will work together to support young people leaving care, 16/17 year olds, people leaving prison and being discharged from hospital. These will continue to be developed.

Priority 3 - Minimise the number and recurrence of rough sleeping instances.

Objective: Work with partner agencies to quickly identify a rough sleeping situation and ensure the most appropriate and sustainable accommodation and support solution for every individual rough sleeper.

What we will do:

- 8.19 Continue to work closely with statutory and voluntary services, including the countywide outreach service, to identify rough sleepers and support the first stage in their recovery journey.
- 8.20 Identify any gaps in supported housing provision for specific client groups or individuals and develop creative solutions to meet their needs, for example, Housing First.
- 8.21 Review the reasons for repeat rough sleeping and homelessness and work with partners to put arrangements in place to prevent this 'revolving door' of homelessness.

Priority 4 – Ensure a suitable and sufficient supply of temporary accommodation for homeless households

Objective: Develop and deliver a plan to increase the supply of good quality, temporary accommodation within Harborough to meet needs, and specifically to prevent the need for 16/17 year olds and families with children to be placed in B&B.

What we will do:

- 8.22 Gain greater understanding of unmet need for temporary accommodation, in terms of numbers, type and location, to enable regular robust forecasting and forward planning..
- 8.23 Explore alternative options for creating additional temporary accommodation including, flats above shops, the 'spare room model' and leasing arrangements.
- 8.24 Work with RP partners to establish whether there are opportunities in their existing stock to use homes as temporary accommodation (for example, difficult to let accommodation).
- 8.25 Research the funding opportunities available to support the provision of temporary accommodation.
- 8.26 Review the viability of investment of Council resources in provision of temporary accommodation and develop a Business Case and Procurement Strategy by Autumn 2024.
- 8.27 Work pro-actively with partners to source and deliver opportunities that will provide additional units of temporary accommodation in line with the Strategy.

9 The Evidence Base

- 9.1 The Strategy for Housing and the Prevention of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping is supported by a range of evidence, which is summarised in the associated Evidence Base document which contains the full data and background information.

10 Monitoring and Review

- 10.1 The Strategy for Housing and the Prevention of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping is supported by a delivery plan, which sets out what will be done, when, and by whom to enable delivery on each of the key themes and priorities.
- 10.2 During the 5 year period of the strategy, new priorities may emerge and national policy may shift its focus. The Strategy will be kept under review to ensure that its themes and priorities remain relevant and appropriate.
- 10.3 It will be reviewed periodically, along with the supporting action plans.

11 Glossary

Affordable Housing

Housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers); and which complies with one or more of the following definitions: Housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers) – the National Planning Policy Framework [National Planning Policy Framework - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/426273/NPPF-2019.pdf) provides the latest definition.

Community led housing

Housing which has been built or improved and brought back into use by local people living within a community.

Disabled Facilities Grant

The statutory Disabled Facilities Grant regime provides the framework that enables the Council to administer grants for aids and adaptations to help residents remain independent in their own home for longer

Extra care housing

The term 'extra care' housing is used to describe developments that comprise self-contained homes with design features and care and support services available to enable self- care and independent living.

Harborough District Local Plan

The plan that sets out detailed policies and specific proposals for the development and use of land in Harborough District. It guides most planning decisions.

The Leicester & Leicestershire Housing & Economic Needs Assessment 2022

Provides updated evidence regarding the overall need for housing including the type and mix needed which is then used to inform local and strategic plans in Leicester and Leicestershire.

Older person's household

A household where all members are over 65.

Registered Provider

The term registered provider is defined in the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 as a provider of social housing.

Regulatory Reform Order

The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (RRO), enables local authorities to set their own policy for helping households maintain and adapt their homes so that they are safe for people to live in.