

March 2021

BCP homes – our commitment to our communities, 2021-26

Issues and opportunities paper for the
council's housing strategy



BCP
Council



Foreword



With an overarching BCP Council vision for **‘vibrant communities with an outstanding quality of life where everyone plays an active role’**, this housing strategy has an underpinning role of ensuring a safe and secure home for all our residents is a cornerstone outcome. This strategy also supports the scale and ambition set out in ‘Our Big Plan’ recently launched for Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) to be one of the best coastal places in the world for people to live, work, invest, and play.

BCP Council wants everyone to have a good quality home that they can afford and that meets their needs. Housing strategies play a key role in delivering against this objective, supporting equality and creating effective place-making, informing housing investment and service delivery and ensuring the delivery of the right homes in the right places.

This new strategy starts its journey in challenging times and ever-increasing uncertainty, where homes have been a COVID-19 sanctuary for many, however Grenfell has reminded us to be ever vigilant. The new post EU transition marketplace that we are in, will have an impact on housing and on a global scale, as will issues such as climate change – all of which this strategy must evolve and respond to.

Housing strategies do not work alone, they influence and are influenced by many other complementary strategies. Individuals and families enjoying good quality, well managed housing is essential to health and wellbeing, enhancing the lives of adults and the life-chances of children. Housing not only provides shelter but promotes stability and a sense of wider community identity. Strategic planning through this strategy for the continued and effective provision of housing and related services in the BCP area is therefore a key priority.

Nationally, housing as an issue is more high profile than it has been for decades. Central government has announced a series of policies to ‘fix our broken housing market’ and backed these up with substantial new funding streams intended to accelerate construction and tackle infrastructure barriers. Fire safety and homelessness agendas are also key priorities nationally.

This strategy is a real opportunity to shape and deliver a vision for our BCP area and we would really welcome your input as this document and agenda takes shape, so that we can deliver what we need to collectively. It is split into two parts and identifies a priority and opportunity that hopefully engages everyone.

We are clear that the housing agenda set out here is about more than the bricks and mortar, it is about ‘homes’. This document sets out our proposed commitment to our communities, to shape the agenda and create the very best housing outcomes for our area. Your feedback will help inform **‘BCP homes – our commitment to our communities’**.

Councillor Robert Lawton, Portfolio Holder for Homes

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Introduction

This document is the collective focus of a formal consultation discussion to help shape the council's new housing strategy: 'BCP homes – our commitment to our communities'.

It sets out to provide a guide to the numerous housing issues that the council and residents face and the suggested priorities and opportunities as to how those issues might be met. It aims to have something for everyone within its contents.

In this document we are inviting people to provide comments and let us know if we have identified the right issues, priorities and opportunities.

We would like your feedback on the whole document preferably, but if you want to share your views on just one of the Priorities, we still want to hear from you, but particularly to the questions in [our survey](#). Your feedback will help shape the final strategy.

We are collating data alongside this on our local housing market to inform the final strategy and accompanying action plan which will be presented to the council's cabinet for approval this summer.

In April 2019, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council (BCP Council) replaced the previous councils:

- Bournemouth Borough Council
- Christchurch Borough Council
- Borough of Poole.

There are now better opportunities for business, growth and prosperity across the area under the new council, which now has 33 Wards and 76 Councillors.

BCP Council is the 10th largest urban authority in England, currently serving a population of almost 400,000 which is expected to grow. With this comes high demand for council services against a backdrop of unprecedented challenges that has seen core funding for local services continue to decline.

The creation of BCP Council is one of the most complex local government reorganisations the country has seen in 45 years. Good progress is being made in harmonising the delivery of services and BCP Council is in the middle of a full transformation programme.

It is important that we hear as many views as possible to help agree where our future focus needs to lie.

Purpose of strategy

– why do we need it?

All local housing authorities have a responsibility to produce a housing strategy to detail how they will undertake their strategic housing role. This 2021 strategy will replace any housing strategies that the previous legacy councils had in place and is one of the key issues facing the BCP area as a whole.

BCP Council adopted its overarching Corporate Strategy in February 2020, which is being revised for the coming financial year. It is the beginning of a golden thread linking service, team and personal performance to the council's objectives. It is the key component that will lead the council's corporate approach to personal and performance management. BCP Council has also launched 'Our Big Plan' which sets out a very clear and ambitious vision, with multiple projects that will deliver big changes across our whole area and support the creation of new jobs, growth for businesses, and livelihoods for our families.

This housing strategy is a high-level document setting out a clear vision with strong leadership for BCP Council to ensure that housing, planning, economic development and regeneration work together and are integrated to best influence the housing market.

This final strategy document is proposed to cover a five-year period and provide an overview for our area that considers both national legislation and priorities combined with our local context. It will set out our vision, priorities and importantly an action plan containing our objectives and how we intend to deliver them.



The strategy will steer delivery outcomes that make our area work by improving services, and connections between services for residents to ensure continued sustainability of a good quality life that everybody can enjoy. It needs to ensure that housing is integrated as one of the key components of the Corporate Strategy, the Big Plan and Local Development Plan.

A housing strategy is necessary to provide context to the local housing needs and set out a plan for what we must do to address that need. It details our vision for housing along with identified priorities and then sets out targets and actions on how we intend to manage and deliver the strategic housing requirements.

The need for a decent home in a location where the household can realise its potential is well documented. The high cost of housing and slower pace of earnings within our area has resulted in the cost of home ownership rising beyond the means of many individuals and families.

It is recognised that not all households will wish or indeed have the means to be homeowners. All households should be equally provided for with public and private sector opportunities, enabling all residents to be able to live in a decent home. There are those residents both old and young, who may require the assistance of the council to secure the right home for them, whether that is through the housing register, supported and assisted living, or through residential care.

There is a determination that by working together with the public and private sectors there can be creative solutions to the challenges. This strategy provides a focus for those interested and involved in supporting and influencing initiatives that provide the right home for all BCP residents. It is important that this strategy delivers outcomes that work and needs to ensure that it succeeds in achieving much of this at pace and scale.

Housing is cross cutting across so many services – the diagram below sets out just a few of the key documents this strategy needs to align with. However, there are many other corporate plans and strategies that this document needs to complement – such as the Children & Young People’s Plan and the 2050 Climate Action Plan.



It is vital that this document directly takes its lead from the council's Corporate Strategy, the Big Plan and then also closely links with the Local Plan which will set out the overall intentions for BCP Council over the next 15 to 20 years. This plan will set out the council's growth plans required to meet both current and future needs for housing, economy, and infrastructure – including transport, schools, and health and care facilities.

Housing forms the basis of many work areas within the council and pulls together the strands of each service provision. This is within a context of reducing public sector budgets and dealing with higher demands such as the Climate and Ecological Emergency. BCP Council as an organisation has committed to reduce the impact of climate change and become carbon neutral by 2030. It is also committed to protecting and enhancing the environment, and the need to protect finite resources whilst addressing a wide range of housing requirements. The council will work with partners to see how soon the BCP area as a whole can become carbon neutral, ahead of the national target date of 2050.

Vision – what we hope to achieve

Our proposed vision is:

“

to provide a **safe, secure** and **sustainable**
home where it is needed and thereby

enabling people the opportunity to **live well**

”

In arriving at this vision, BCP Council has set out clear values supporting vibrant communities with commitment for sustainability, investment, and wellbeing. The ambitious objectives set out in the Corporate Strategy require housing to provide a significant contribution to help achieve those objectives. The delivery plans include several actions to address poverty and other deprivations whilst implementing robust strategies – such as this one – that strives to increase growth, improve health, wellbeing and safety, and reduce inequalities.

This proposed vision highlights the proactive role that we collectively need to take on the housing agenda with the ultimate outcome of the right homes in the right places.

BCP Council is committed to growing and nurturing a healthy, functioning local housing market that provides high quality decent homes to support communities. The council is expanding its own development programme and will work closely with developers, private landlords, communities and other participants in the sector to achieve the vision outlined in this strategy.

Where people cannot afford to access homes through the open housing market, BCP Council is ambitious to work collaboratively with partners to find innovative solutions for removing affordability barriers and to grow the stock of homes including affordable options. The council is dedicated to ensuring people on low incomes, encompassing some of the most vulnerable members of our society, have access to safe, secure, high quality housing in places where the need is. This means working effectively with social landlords and other service providers.

The council recognises the vital role the housing sector plays in supporting local economic growth. It is devoted to ensuring the growing labour force has access to high quality homes in the right places to fully meet their health and wellbeing needs. The council is committed to ensuring future housing growth and improvements to existing housing stock are delivered in a manner sensitive to the area's environment and local communities.

BCP Council is working collaboratively to ensure homes meet standards that support carbon reduction.

Achieving the 2030 carbon neutral commitment across BCP Council will help public, community and voluntary service providers make more effective use of resources and services to support the health and wellbeing needs of the BCP area's population.

The importance of collaboration and partnership working in sharing and achieving this vision cannot be emphasised enough. The council must engage and continue to engage with individuals, local communities, private developers, private and social rented landlords, other public and voluntary sector organisations, the business community, and other parties active in the local housing market.



Priorities – five areas of focus

We propose this strategy focuses on five key priorities as follows:

1. Meeting future growth needs.
2. Preventing homelessness and rough sleeping
3. Improving housing options, opportunities and choice for all.
4. Empowering and co-creating neighbourhoods where residents wish to live in and be part of the community.
5. Improving safety and sustainability across BCP's housing.

We are proposing these ambitious housing priorities in order that BCP Council can deliver the shared corporate and housing visions. The overall housing agenda is vast, cross cutting and place-shaping. It is important that we put our energy and resources into the right priorities over the next few years.

There are many priorities within each of these, as set out below in this document, but some of the key areas of focus over the next few years are proposed to include:

- The council playing its part in **directly delivering new homes** by building out its programme of sites at scale and pace across all tenure types.
- Making sure that **homelessness** is prevented as much as possible through proactive early intervention and support needs.
- Proactively **understanding unmet specialist housing, care and support needs** for our most vulnerable, and bringing additional housing schemes forward to help meet needs.
- Making our **10,000 council housing stock** even better in meeting the needs of our tenants.
- Making sure **fire safety** across all our homes is top of our agenda.

The new strategy aims to help us deliver these important agendas, and much more.

Context and background

The following sets out some of the local and national context which is important to consider when shaping our new strategy.

National policy context

This document sits within the context of a wide range of national strategies and policies. Housing issues have become a prominent feature in the national agenda over the last few years, with the focus being around boosting supply to support the economy, meet housing demand and, increasing home ownership.

The Grenfell Tower tragedy triggered a new national debate around the quality and management of social housing, and the poverty and inequality affecting so many of those for whom social housing is their only option. These combined with major welfare reforms such as Universal Credit, focusing more on improving management and conditions in the private rented sector, and changes in how health and social care is commissioned, will all have an influence on our final strategy.

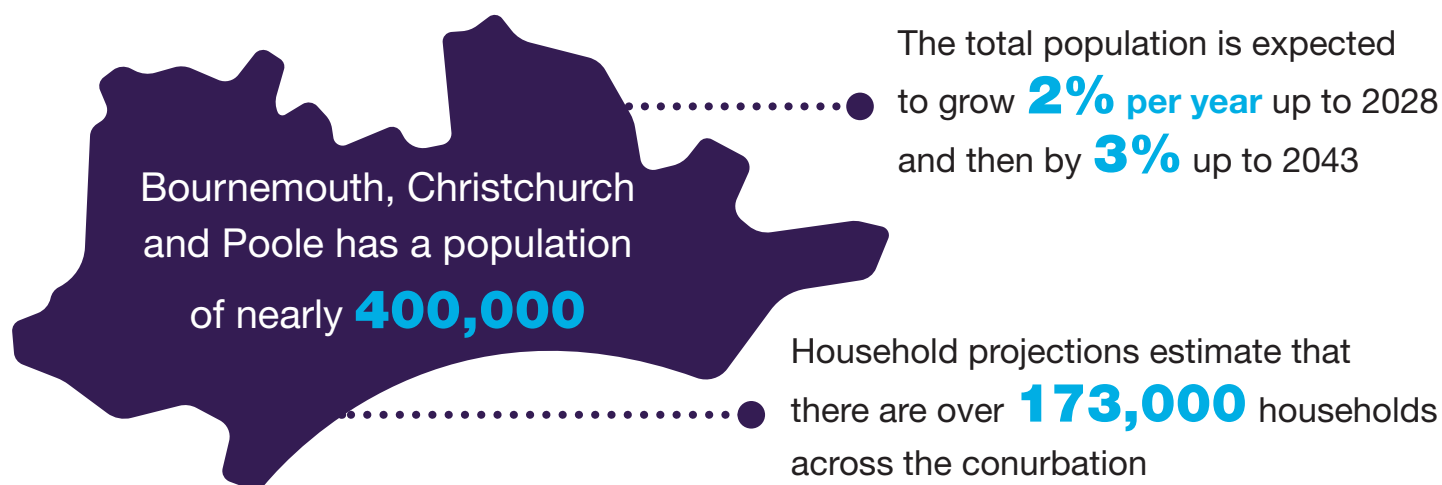
In September 2017, the government published a consultation document titled 'Planning for the right homes in the right places' with a view to reforming the planning system to speed up the delivery of new homes. Further legislation changes following this has brought in new national planning policy guidance for councils. In August 2020 the government launched its white paper titled 'Planning for the Future'.

The paper sets out several proposed planning reform changes and was combined as a consultation. Some of the proposed options, if introduced, would bring substantial changes to the planning process such as a revised scrutiny process for the adoption of Local Plans and a different mechanism for establishing affordable housing including the introduction of a new product called 'First Homes' on new build schemes.

Homes England's Strategic Plan – (2018/19 to 2022/23) pledges that – “over the next five years we'll help more people in England to access better homes in the right places by: providing expert support to priority locations, addressing the barriers facing smaller builders, supporting modern methods of construction (MMC), delivering home ownership products, such as Help to Buy, unlocking and enabling land, providing investment products, including for major infrastructure, and supporting the affordable market to help create overall a more resilient and diverse housing market”.

Homes England (HE) has just started to provide initial details of their latest Affordable Housing Programme which will cover 2021 to 2026. Up to £7.39 billion will be made available from April 2021 to deliver up 130,000 new affordable homes outside of London. The funding will be available to develop new affordable housing including rented products along with low-cost home ownership options such as shared ownership and rent to buy.

Housing market in the BCP area



The latest (2018) demographic growth projections also indicate that it is an ageing population that is predominantly contributing to this. The BCP area is above the average, with over 65s representation at 21.54 per cent compared with 18 per cent in England. The population of over 65s is expected to increase to 24.19 per cent by 2028.

The local economy generates around £9.7 billion with around 42 per cent generated by real estate, financial and insurance, and the wholesale and retail sectors. The area also has growing specialist sectors such as the digital economy. Around 197,500 people of working age are employed in the BCP area. Most economic data pre-dates the COVID-19 pandemic so the statistics do not reflect the impact this has had on the local, national and global economy. Current local data reveals those claiming unemployment related benefits has increased from around 2.7 per cent in March 2020 pre-COVID to around 6.5 per cent in July 2020.

In recent years, population growth in the area has been driven by migration. Around a quarter of net migration (both internal and international) comprises those aged 18 to 29, with many moves both in and out of the BCP area due to students moving to and from university.

In terms of deprivation, the BCP area is ranked 160th out of 317 English local authority areas where one is the most deprived. Its overall ranking suggests the area scores within the mid-range across all English local authorities. However, more detailed data reveals that there are pockets of deprived areas with nine out of 233 of these smaller areas being within the most deprived 10 per cent in England.

Our area is a beautiful, desirable place to live and has a strong and diverse local economy which is continuing to grow. Our geographic location provides many attributes for the area such as the airport, ferry port, natural harbour and extensive beaches, expanses of natural heathland, and leisure and tourism.

These attributes from a regeneration and development perspective present a huge challenge to balance in order for growth to continue, but ensure natural habitats are protected. It also reduces the amount of available land required to meet our growing housing needs and meet the supply identified by the government.

Housing supply

The government's white paper 'Fixing our broken housing market' sets out proposals on how they intend to reform and boost the housing supply and, over the long term, create a more efficient housing market.

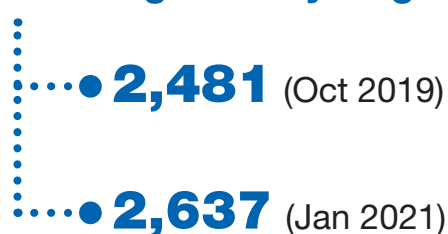
Within the council's Corporate Strategy, 'Dynamic Places' is one of the objectives that looks to address housing supply with several actions detailed under 'invest in the homes our communities need'.

The government's main aims through the white paper are:

- to streamline and modernise the planning process, including shortening the timescales for Local Plan preparation
- to provide a greater focus on effective community engagement at the plan making stage and a digital-first approach
- to bring a new focus on design and sustainability
- to improve the system of developer contributions to effectively deliver infrastructure
- to ensure more land is available for development where it is needed in order to meet local housing and commercial needs, including the revival of town centres.



Housing delivery targets for the BCP area



This is linked to affordability ratios year on year.

There has been a significant amount of debate within the government regarding the methodology it should use to calculate the number of new homes each council area is required in order to meet annual housing delivery targets. BCP Council's figure was set at 2,481 (at Oct 2019), this is linked to affordability ratios year on year and currently (Jan 2021) the figure stands at 2,637 new homes being required.

A new Local Plan is being prepared which will supersede current adopted Local Plans in the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole areas. The Local Plan is being prepared to an accelerated timeframe with adoption scheduled for late 2022. The new Local Plan will seek to identify a range of new allocations for land to improve the supply of new housing. BCP Council will work closely with Dorset Council and New Forest District Council regarding the delivery of any unmet housing demand if it cannot be met in the BCP area.

Affordability

Housing affordability presents challenges in meeting housing needs in the BCP area. House prices across the area have consistently remained high and continue to remain difficult to attain for many households.

The average house price was £256,579 in Bournemouth, £339,932 in Christchurch, and £301,426 in Poole (all mid 2019). When measured against the average salaries, it put the affordability level of a mortgage requirement at 12.4, 9.3 and 8.3 times the income level, respectively. This in turn places private rents at a significantly high level where a typical three-bed home costs on average £1,100 per calendar month.

The affordability levels manifest themselves with a high volume of homelessness issues which continues to increase. The overall number of homeless applications has risen sharply over the last year. There were 4,256 applications in 2019/20 compared to 3,696 the previous year. This represents a rise of 15 per cent. Approximately a fifth of applicants are under the age of 24 and it is also worth noting that this age group faces other significant disadvantages such as lower mean incomes or salaries and increasing job insecurity, with a resulting disproportionate reliance on renting.



The average house prices in the BCP area (mid 2019)

Bournemouth	Christchurch	Poole
£256,579	£339,932	£301,426

Renting a typical 3-bed home costs, on average, **£1,100** per calendar month



The total number of homeless applications



2018/19	3,696 applications
2019/20	4,256 applications
	15% ↑

Housing needs



There are almost **4,500** households on the housing register, who are in need of affordable housing.

We acknowledge the substantial number of residents in current housing need within the BCP area, as they seek advice and support in terms of accessing affordable housing. There are almost 4,500 households on the housing register requiring affordable housing.

There also appears to be a relatively high proportion of older people being at risk of, or actually becoming homeless, with approximately eight per cent of applications being from people aged 60 or over. Local data also indicates that single people account for a significant majority of homelessness cases in the BCP area, representing 64 per cent of applications. Nationally, single people represent approximately 30 per cent of the population.

The growth in older people will be a key driver of the future housing market. This will change the demand for housing, in particular it is likely more adaptable and specialist housing will be needed. Suitable housing and neighbourhoods can significantly improve life in older age, while unsuitable housing can be the source of multiple problems and costs for services such as social care and the NHS in particular.

The Housing Learning and Improvement Network (Housing LIN) published a toolkit in 2012 called 'Housing in Later Life: planning ahead for specialist housing for older people'. This provides standardised rates for estimating the demand for a range of specialist older person housing, based on the population aged 75 or over. In total, the LIN model suggests that 245 units of specialist accommodation may be required for every 1,000 people aged 75+. Based on these rates, an increase of 6,300 in the 75+ population of the area over the next five years, could require an additional 1,500 units of specialist accommodation by 2025, with a further 850 units required by 2030. However, this is assuming there is no current unmet need, and therefore demand could be even higher.

The BCP area is very reliant on the private rented sector for resolving housing needs and homelessness demand, rents are high and genuinely affordable self-contained move-on accommodation is in limited supply. The main cause of homelessness is the end of a private rented sector tenancy, with other common reasons being due to a family being no longer able to accommodate and relationship breakdown.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the government increased Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates to the 30th percentile, which increased the welfare support private renters could claim. This change was welcomed following the four previous years of frozen LHA rates, which saw local market rents increase and low-income households having to find additional income to make up rent shortfalls.

LHA rates will not remain at the 30th percentile as the government has chosen to freeze the rate in cash terms from 2021/22. For many households, private rented sector properties locally will increasingly become an unaffordable option and in limited supply of genuine affordable rents. Increased pressure on homelessness services may result.

Joseph Rowntree Foundation suggested that five per cent of private tenants in England are already in arrears, around 200,000 households, while 30 per cent are worried about paying their rent in the next three months (November 2020). A situation which will not only challenge renters but also landlords alike who rely upon rental incomes to sustain and maintain those homes.



Private rented sector's overall housing numbers



In the BCP area, the private rented sector accounts for 23 per cent of the overall housing numbers compared to 18 per cent as a national average. There are particularly high pockets in some of our areas. There are a number of local households that rely on the private rented sector due to the affordability issues around home ownership. A private rented home often brings about a level of instability which in turn impacts on a family's outcomes and children's learning. Despite this, the demand outstrips the supply and this in turn puts an increased pressure on the council to meet its homelessness statutory duties. Going forward we need to continue to implement new ways of intervention and prevention of all types of homelessness including rough sleeping.

The need for private rented options combined with affordability means that Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMOs) feature strongly in our area. They can present challenging management issues and can impact on the community.

The council has also retained housing stock in both Bournemouth and Poole. There are approximately 5,100 council homes in Bournemouth and a further 500 leasehold flats where residents have previously purchased the property under the Right to Buy legislation. These are managed by an in-house team who deal with the allocation of homes, as well as advice on rent payments, anti-social behaviour and general tenancy management.

The housing stock in Poole is managed by Poole Housing Partnership (PHP) an Arm's Length Management Organisation (ALMO), which was set up under the government scheme to bring private investment for improvements to homes.

PHP maintain strong links with BCP Council but operates as a separate company, overseen by a management agreement with the council. They are a non-profit-making organisation managed by a board of directors. The council-owned housing stock in Poole consists of approximately 4,600 rented homes and 548 leasehold properties.



BCP Council received over **£42 million** in rent from its **10,000+** Bournemouth and Poole council housing stock in 2020/21, which has been used to pay for repairs, improvements and management of existing homes, and the provision of new homes.

The housing stock is managed differently across Bournemouth and Poole. A review of how housing management services can be delivered in the future has been completed and the recommendations from this are currently being considered.

By maintaining the ownership of its housing stock, the council has opportunities to use its assets to increase development opportunities and contribute to the overall housing needs across the conurbation.

As a result of extremely challenging financial times, many councils have sought commercial opportunities to generate income. BCP Council has three housing related wholly owned companies to help deliver efficient services and provide longer-term income generation for the council.

Bournemouth Building Maintenance Limited (BBML), Seascope South Limited and Seascope Homes and Property Limited are the three wholly owned companies. The former two companies provide maintenance and construction services, the latter provides a tenancy management vehicle.



BCP Council's Preventing Domestic Abuse Strategy runs from 2020 to 2023. Local housing data states only a proportion of victims fleeing domestic abuse are found refuge accommodation, with only 2.9 per cent being placed in refuge and 82 per cent being placed in alternative temporary accommodation such as hostels and B&Bs.

As part of the Domestic Abuse Bill, the council is committed to reviewing support and accommodation commissioning arrangements across the BCP area. The annual needs assessment will provide the opportunity to establish the support and accommodation needs of local victims and families who wish to stay in the area and remain safe, as well as those fleeing from other areas.

BCP Council has made commitments in the local offer for care experienced young people (care leavers) to include the following:

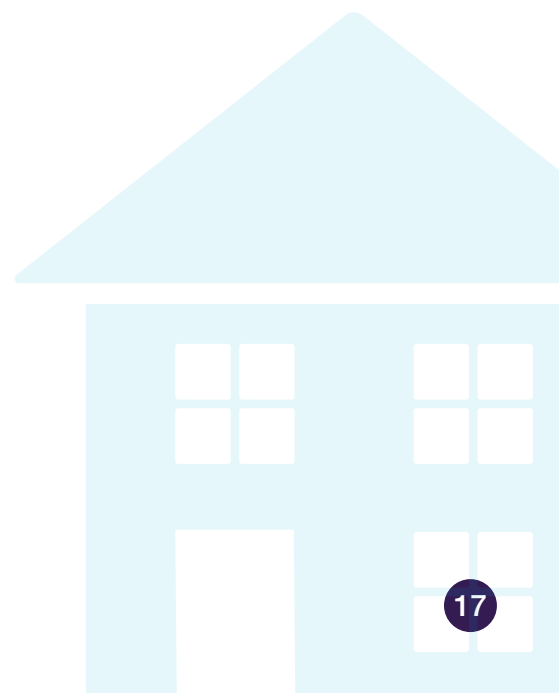
- Care experienced young people in BCP are considered a priority for housing that best meets their needs. This includes social housing, supported housing, housing first or housing led accommodation and, housing made available in the private rented sector.
- Where local lettings plans are put in place for newly developed homes, care experienced young people will be one of the preferences for allocation of any properties that meets their needs.
- For young people that are 18 years plus, there is currently and insufficient amount of suitable affordable move-on accommodation locally. The council needs to facilitate increased supply for this type of accommodation.

The prevalence of mental illness in the population is anticipated to rise as the population increases. A review of housing for clients who experience poor mental health is timely and necessary to ensure that the provision is adequate to meet the demand.

For learning disabilities and autism, this includes meeting the accommodation needs of young people as they prepare for adulthood. A specific matter relating to autistic young people and adults is meeting future needs, especially given that the number of people with a diagnosis is growing.

A review of extra care provision is expected to come forward in 2021/22 to help identify current unmet needs and future provision required.

A priority is for people who currently live out of area to live more locally, and to live in the community rather than hospital / residential settings. Currently if someone has a serious mental illness, the choice of accommodation is limited, and a key aim will be to improve the situation and reduce the inequality in choice and opportunities.



Overview of priorities and key opportunities

The following section provides some context for each of the five proposed priorities and identifies the proposed opportunities for addressing the issues raised.

Priority 1 – Meeting future growth needs

BCP Council has many challenges to overcome in terms of being able to deliver the future housing supply required. Our geographical location is a beautiful and desirable place to live, and it has, over time, created high property and land values which can test the financial viability of many developments.

Our location also presents several environmental protection issues which are extremely important for our environment but can also constrain development. Our extensive coastline brings in the need for flood risk assessments, our large areas of heathland that are spread across the conurbation are protected and our transport infrastructure is inadequate – as along with Cornwall, we are the only county that doesn't have a motorway system.

The council has ambitious plans for growth to create the homes people need alongside a thriving economy. We want employers to be able to attract a skilled workforce, and for lower skilled workforces to be able to remain living and working in the area.

This priority seeks to support the corporate strategy action which is to invest in the homes our communities need. We have some significant council-owned sites and we are proactively exploring options to ensure that these can be delivered for housing at pace and scale, along with meeting the necessary infrastructure requirements in order to support development.

National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) requires local authorities to assess overall housing need during the Local Plan period. In addition, NPPG also states that plan-making authorities need to assess the need for housing of different groups and reflect this in planning policies particularly having regard to deliverability. This work is forming part of the evidence base that is supporting the current review of the council's Local Plan.

To calculate affordable housing need, NPPG states that "Strategic Policy-making authorities will need to estimate the current number of households and projected number of households who lack their own housing or who cannot afford to meet their housing needs in the market".

Affordable housing being defined by the NPPG as “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 for essential local workers”. The number of new affordable homes across the BCP area over the last two years has averaged 89 properties per year. This is significantly below the number of homes required. Understandably, households in the greatest need are housed in advance of those with a lower need in accordance with BCP Council’s new Allocation Policy. The need for affordable housing in the BCP area is growing, as fewer households can afford rising house prices or rising private monthly rents.

The housing delivery test action plan approved by cabinet in 2019 sets out several objectives that need to be met in order for the council to reach its expected housing targets.

BCP Council will be approving and implementing a Council Newbuild Housing and Acquisition Strategy (CNHAS) in 2021. The purpose of the strategy will be to set out the council’s intentions and ambitions for developing new housing at pace and scale on its own surplus land assets.

The CNHAS strategy will develop a programme of sites – delivering at least 1,000 new homes – by 2026, using surplus council-owned land and acquire additional land and properties where appropriate. It will set out the need for a wide variety of tenures and property types – general needs housing, supported and specialist, for young and older people.

The council’s Big Plan commits to act at scale to deliver more than 15,000 new homes for people of all incomes – both through our own investment and by supporting and enabling developers to build homes- both private and housing associations, with a sustainable mix of tenures of apartments and houses, to suit a range of incomes.

The council’s internal Housing Delivery team will acquire additional land and property as necessary to bolster the dozens of existing sites in their portfolio to ensure that the 1,000 new homes are achieved – as a minimum – in the next five years.

These homes will be quality places, with good space standards, high sustainable credentials and be built using both traditional and an ever-increasing number of Modern Methods of Construction (MMC), they will be safe and secure, accessible and of good design.



Key opportunities for meeting **priority 1**

- To support the wider work within the BIG Plan to deliver more than 15,000 new homes for people of all incomes.
- To scale up the delivery of homes on our own land with a strategy for developing a direct delivery programme of sites of at least 1,000 homes over the next five years with a mixture of tenure types.
- Embracing opportunities presented by Seascope Homes and Property Limited (our wholly owned Housing Company) and other delivery vehicle options in scaling up development of private sector homes on our own land and additional property acquisitions.
- Work in partnership with registered housing providers and developers to help increase the supply of all types of housing.
- Seek to attract investment into our area promoting BCP Council as an area open for business, and creating effective engagement with housing associations, private developers, funders and agents. With the housing service working jointly and proactively alongside Economic Development and Growth and Infrastructure colleagues.
- Engagement and consultation to ensure the Local Plan delivers the homes the area needs.
- Develop a new affordable housing policy with supporting guidance, taking a more equitable approach to viability.
- Promote and explore housing solutions that encourage students, young people and essential workers to remain in the BCP area.
- To explore opportunities and encourage the introduction of Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) in developments.
- Increase the housing choice in town centres including a consideration of existing surplus retail and office space and improving affordability by introducing a range of housing models and tenures.
- Continue and enhance community capacity building initiatives such as Community Led Housing Schemes.
- Consider how developments can incorporate wider benefits such as community enhancements and economic growth opportunities.

Priority 2 – Preventing homelessness and rough sleeping

In December 2019 the Homelessness Reduction Board and the BCP Homelessness Partnership adopted a vision and values that demonstrate a wider commitment to ending homelessness, and to homes being places of safety, where people can develop, prosper and maintain good health and wellbeing.

The vision and values adopted demonstrate the need for collaborative and innovative joint working across multiple agencies, services and sectors, and that this work must be open to new ideas, best practice and emerging approaches from around the country and the wider world.

The first Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole is currently being co-produced with local partners and stakeholders from across the sector. This corresponds with the value placed on joint working and thinking as we seek to put an end to homelessness and its impact in our area. It is expected to be adopted by April 2021. The strategy will set out a full action plan that will be monitored.

Key opportunities for meeting **priority 2**

- Working towards no one sleeping rough or living in places which are not designed as a home, such as tents, vehicles, squats, or non-residential buildings.
- That anyone staying in emergency or temporary accommodation has a rapid rehousing plan specifying their appropriate move-on housing which is suitable and affordable, with support being accessible and flexibly delivered.
- Everyone threatened with homelessness is provided with the advice, assistance and support they need to prevent their homelessness and for people who leave institutional settings or survivors of domestic abuse, housing pathways are in place which ensures they do not become homeless.



Priority 3 – Improve housing options, opportunities and choice for all

The council needs to consider carefully all its housing needs in order to achieve the actions within this priority and provide solutions. Whilst there continues to be an ongoing need to support access to general family housing there is always a requirement to meet specialist housing demands also.

Supporting evidence must be reviewed to inform those needs, and in order to be able to provide options. This includes older persons housing, supported housing that serves mental health, learning disabilities, autism, probation, domestic abuse, people with addictions, and care experienced young people (care leavers) as well as many other specialist needs. Equality impacts will be carefully considered whilst reviewing the supporting evidence to ensure that no individuals or groups are disadvantaged.

Housing adaptations and assistive technology enable disabled people and people with mobility impairments to continue to live independently in their own homes. Adaptations restore privacy, confidence and dignity to individuals and their families, and significantly improve people's health and quality of life. It is important that this service provides efficient access to the grants that people are eligible for, in order to assist with this.

We will continue to develop partnership working with appropriate organisations to ensure that sufficient support is available for those at greatest risk in our communities, including young people, families with young children, young people leaving care, ex-offenders, those suffering from domestic abuse, and asylum seekers. Where purpose-built accommodation is required, we will work with both commissioners and developers to secure appropriate accommodation on new developments.



Key opportunities for meeting **priority 3**

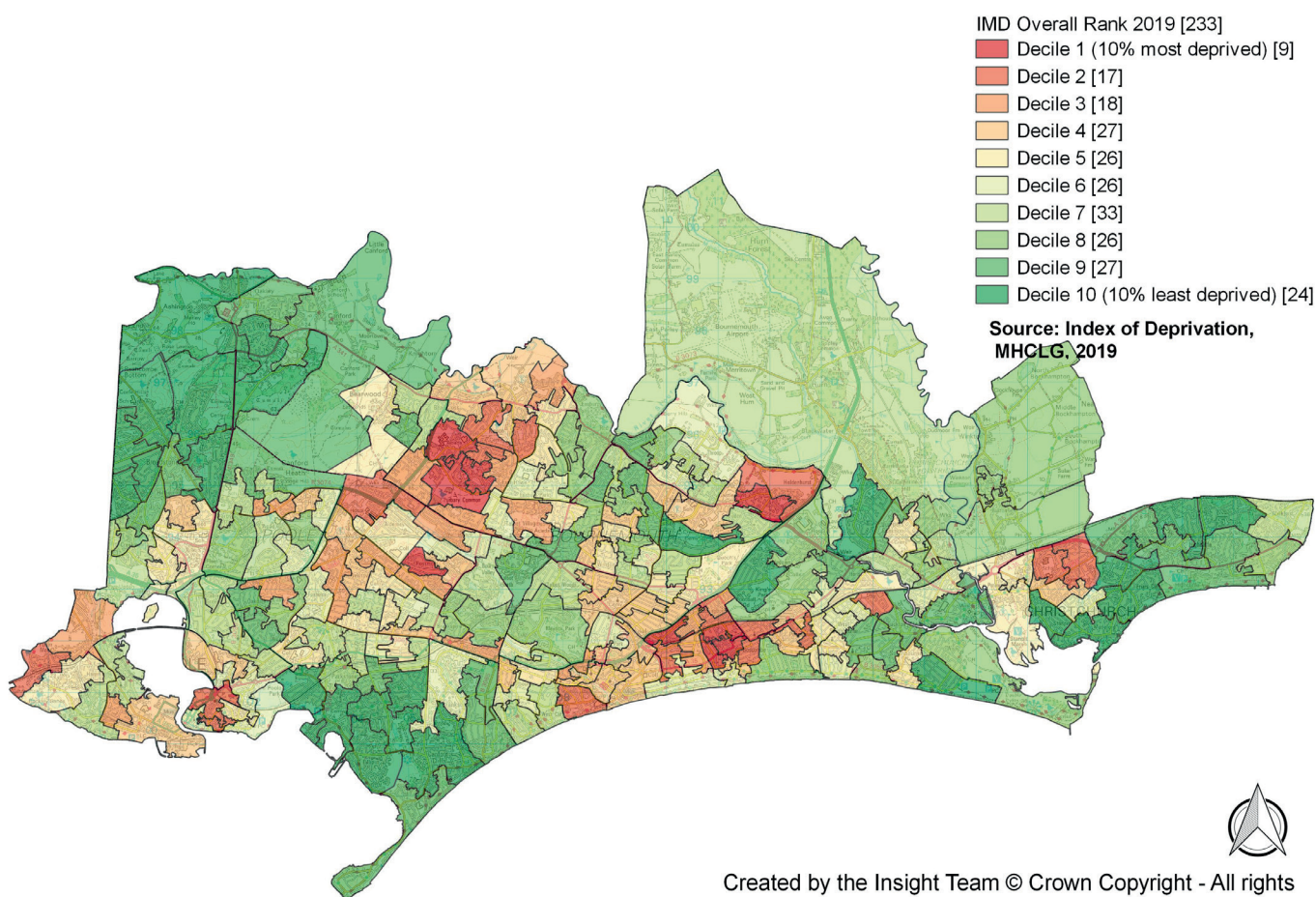
- To work proactively with partners to identify unmet specialist housing needs and work to secure additional housing options to meet the needs of vulnerable people including joint commissioning where appropriate.
- To continue working collaboratively with housing providers and developers to bring forward more homes for vulnerable people that offer a range of housing options and provide local leadership on what is required for the area.
- Ensure there is a broad spectrum of housing solutions for the older population which promotes independence and minimises the need for costly residential and nursing care.
- To invest in the development of bespoke accommodation for individuals with complex needs to enable them to continue to live in the area and be near their families.
- To implement commitments made for care experienced young people (care leavers) and other young people which include priority for housing where appropriate that is suitable for needs and local letting plans on new development to help meet needs.
- To promote assistive technology, including new technological solutions, and increase take-up to help more people remain independent.
- Provide services that support adaptation requirements to enable people to live safely and independently in their own homes.



Priority 4 – Empowering and co-creating neighbourhoods where residents wish to live in and be part of the community

The BCP area has an outstanding environment, with strong employment prospects. The profile of our communities is changing, and the council has committed to connecting and empowering communities so that everyone feels safe, engaged, and included.

We have a higher proportion of older residents and a smaller proportion of younger residents compared to the rest of the country. The council therefore serves an increasingly diverse population. There are some very affluent areas across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, but there are still a number of areas and wards that show high levels of multiple deprivation which is known to have an impact on people's general health and wellbeing.



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BCP Council wants to ensure fairness to everyone through the planning and delivery of services. This is demonstrated by the equality and diversity commitments contained within the council's Corporate Strategy.

We want to continue to work with our diverse communities and empower people from different backgrounds, cultures, faiths and beliefs, to create a place where all local communities can connect and thrive.

Building new communities in which people want to live requires considerable planning to ensure we have the right mix of homes in terms of sizes, types, and tenures. We also need to ensure early provision of appropriate infrastructure, retail, leisure and other services such as green spaces, and links to the natural environment, to enable residents to live settled healthy lives from the outset.

The council is committed to working with communities to enable them to become established, supporting community cohesion and long-term sustainability. To support well balanced and sustainable communities, Local Letting Plans (LLPs) for the allocation of affordable housing are used for larger developments.

The government white paper 'Charter for Social Housing Residents' sets out to raise the consumer standard of social housing and meet the aspirations of residents. The council has over 10,000 council homes under its ownership and it is therefore crucial that we build on the good standards that embrace the white paper actions.

With a rapidly ageing population, BCP Council is keen to promote a range of housing options to accommodate people and families throughout their lifetime across all tenures, to enable them to live safely and independently for as long as possible. This could be through the provision of 'downsizer' accommodation to provide more choice to older people who want to move to smaller and more suitable accommodation, and to enable them to remain in their local community if they wish to do so. This can also help to free up family homes. In relation to affordable housing, local lettings plans may also be used to give priority to older people wanting to move to smaller homes particularly in new housing developments.

We know that loneliness and isolation is one of the biggest issues that may affect older people, and we will promote homes that are well located to services and facilities and well-integrated into the community, where people of all ages can help support each other.

Key opportunities for meeting **priority 4**

- Encourage sustainable and resilient communities by having targeted enforcement services that address rogue landlords and any anti-social behaviour issues.
- Ensure that housing is developed alongside the provision of appropriate social and physical infrastructure.
- Continue to work creatively and proactively with partners and communities to improve the integration of housing, health and social care and to support service transformation.
- Ensure excellent service delivery across all of our 10,000 council homes, driving forward improvements, and agree and implement the alignment of activities, strategies and policies across the two neighbourhoods of Bournemouth and Poole.
- To embrace the actions set out in the government white paper 'Charter for Social Housing Residents' and improve consumer standards.

Priority 5 – Improve safety and sustainability across all housing in the BCP area

**“ Dame Judith Hackitt’s report states that
Residents must feel safe and be safe
and must be listened to when concerns
about building safety are raised ”**

The Grenfell tragedy brought about legislative changes to address flammable cladding and insulation systems along with councils being responsible for monitoring and reporting data returns to MHCLG (Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government) via a system called Delta.

This reporting is on a range of private sector housing work such as caravan sites and high-risk residential buildings (HRRB).

The council is proactively looking at how it can improve its council housing stock through retrofitting, together with the wider housing sector, and is carrying out major work on its tower blocks in Poole. BCP Council is undertaking a piece of work to assess the construction of any private buildings over 18m within the conurbation, as required by MHCLG. Some properties have already been remediated to ensure they are safe, with a series of ongoing planned inspections to continue. Formal notices under Housing Act 2004 will be used where necessary to remediate any flammable cladding and/or insulation systems to ensure the safety of the occupants.

BCP Council has an effective fire safety programme for its own homes that incorporates fire risk assessments and completion of any subsequent remedial actions. Within blocks of flats, steps are taken to ensure that escape routes are kept clear, fire safety measures are adhered to and that repairs and improvements are carried in a competent manner, so that fire safety is not compromised. Where there are concerns that a resident may pose a fire safety risk, steps are taken to improve the situation and refer to the fire service if necessary.

Proposed changes to legislation through the Building Safety Bill will place additional duties on landlords to ensure that there will always be someone responsible for keeping residents safe in complex buildings and will introduce additional processes to improve standards of safety for residents. The council needs to make sure this is delivered across the BCP area.

Everyone has the right to live in a decent home. Whilst the council has an ambitious programme for building new homes in future years that are well designed, and energy and water efficient, we must not forget that the majority of residents live in their existing homes. Many of these homes are older and are likely to be less efficient, less well insulated, more expensive to heat and may have further defects. If the council is to achieve its Climate and Ecological Emergency carbon reduction targets, then measures are needed to give appropriate advice, assistance, and grant aid to improve the energy efficiency of these homes.

Improving thermal efficiency not only reduces emissions, but also reduces energy costs and keeps homes warmer. Cold and damp homes threaten good health and reduce quality of life. Improving residential energy efficiency is particularly important in tackling fuel poverty. It is estimated that there are 14,902 (8.1 per cent) of BCP households at risk from fuel poverty. Households would be in fuel poverty if living on a lower income in a home which cannot be kept warm at reasonable cost.

In 2014, the government introduced a fuel poverty target for England to improve as many fuel poor homes as is reasonably practicable to a minimum energy efficiency rating of Band C, by the end of 2030. This target has been adopted by the council and its Affordable Warmth Partners and would significantly help towards achieving local and national climate change targets.

Empty homes are recognised as a wasted resource, depriving people of a home and contributing to the need for more housing. It is only when properties stay empty longer than six months without any obvious signs of renovation or rental that we would define them as true empty homes. They can be a blight on local communities and may prevent investment in the area. The most recent figures reported to the government from our Council Tax records suggest that there are approximately 311 empty properties in the BCP area that have been empty between two and five years and a further 81 have been empty for more than five years.

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) are a vital source of housing, traditionally providing housing at the more affordable and transient end of the housing market, but in recent years used by a wider cross section of economically active tenants. New guidance on extending the size and type of HMO to be mandatory licenced has resulted in over 1,400 licensed HMOs across the BCP area.

The private rented sector (PRS) in the BCP area accounts for 23 per cent of the current housing. It provides an important contribution to the housing offer and flexibility to directly support our continued job-led growth for existing and incoming labour forces.



Typically, the PRS sector has not been the tenure of choice, mainly due to affordability, concerns of security of tenure, and property conditions. The most common hazards reported to the council relate to overcrowding and space standards, excess cold, and damp and mould growth.

During January and July 2020 (extended due to COVID-19) BCP Council consulted on the introduction of selective and / or additional licensing.

Additional licensing was proposed boroughwide for all HMOs with three or four occupants from two or more households. Selective licensing was proposed to include certain areas where the evidence was present that may be required. At present the council are considering the findings of the consultation in order to agree the way forward.

The council is responsible for the issue and compliance of licences granted to relevant caravan sites. At present site conditions and fees are being harmonised across the council. Licence conditions include fire, spacing, and types of caravans permitted.

The same team is also responsible for rogue landlord enforcement. This is an area that the council wants to expand on and are currently reviewing the best way to facilitate this.

In terms of the council's own housing stock, efficiency and sustainability are considered when carrying out improvements to existing homes. This includes energy efficient boilers, heating control upgrades, LED replacement lighting, and replacement double glazing. There will continue to be challenges around costs and feasibility when carrying out works to properties that will contribute to the government's target for net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

This area of work will also be influenced by developments in national policy and planning for the retrofit of existing homes will form an important part of the council's long-term business plan for council housing.



Key opportunities for meeting **priority 5**

- Ensure all housing stock across the BCP area meets new fire safety requirements in line with the national improvement agenda in terms of fire safety. This is in relation to the council's own stock as well as influencing the private sector to ensure safe homes for all.
- Make private rented sector housing safe for tenants and continue to challenge poor quality housing (this includes licensing of houses in multiple occupation HMOs). Work in partnership with the private sector to ensure that their housing stock is maintained and managed to a high standard and within the legislative framework.
- To develop a 'tackling rogue landlords' strategy to address those landlords that require consistent enforcement and help to safeguard residents.
- To work collaboratively with private sector landlords to improve property conditions, standards and accessibility for local residents in housing need.
- To ensure empty properties are not detrimental to communities (in terms of risk/nuisance/wasted resources) by focusing resources to help address the most problematic.
- To lead by example on our new developments for sustainability by having a robust policy for design and approach.
- To work in partnership with registered providers (housing associations) to ensure their stock and management meets required standards.
- Invest in the fabric of our council homes for optimum energy and water efficiency, and ensure they remain good quality homes that people want to live in.
- Work with partners to deliver free energy efficiency advice and measures to homes and continue to bid for funding from the government and others in order to direct grant aid to households.
- To implement a minimum standard of Energy Performance certificates to achieve D for social homes and private rented homes across the BCP area.

We are inviting people to let us know if we have identified the right issues, priorities and opportunities in this paper.

Your feedback

Please complete [our survey](#) to help us all shape our strategy: BCP homes – our commitment to our communities. The consultation closing date is **21 May 2021**.

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