

# **UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**DRAFT**

**Housing Strategy**

**2016-21**

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## Foreword from Housing Portfolio Holder

As I am sure you know Uttlesford is a beautiful rural area rated by many as one of the best places to reside in the country. This along with our commutability to London and proximity to Cambridge makes this district a most desirable place to live. This in turn inflates house prices making it difficult for young people and local families to get a foot on the housing ladder.

We also have a lack of availability in both the privately owned and rental markets of bungalows and other suitable types of property for our more mature residents. This is particularly a problem in many of our villages. This makes it difficult for people to move from larger family homes into something more appropriate for their changing needs.

Housing is a key priority for councillors in Uttlesford. The housing and planning departments are working together to help deliver the accommodation that meets the needs of those living and working in Uttlesford. We are doing this through both our new Local Plan and Housing Strategy.

I'm really proud to say that this Council is ahead of many as we started a building programme a few years ago. Having completed two phases of council built new housing in Leaden Roding, we now have an ambitious development programme replacing out of date sheltered housing with new houses and bungalows in Stansted and upgrading other sheltered housing in the District to make it fit for the future and a desirable place to grow old in.

As a council we continue to work closely with the **RCCE** to buy more time and help for Parish Councils to bring forward plans for exception sites. This provides local people an opportunity to continue to live in the areas where they already have roots and personal connections.

We believe that there are many ways of delivering housing, be it working with developers and registered providers or encouraging empty home owners to become landlords. We know times are very challenging in so many ways but we want to make the most of the opportunities that are available and I believe we at Uttlesford are up to the challenge.

Cllr Julie Redfern  
Portfolio Holder, Housing

## Summary and Introduction

The Council's new Housing Strategy draws on a wide ranging consultation with stakeholders as well as building on existing evidence and local knowledge. As the new Local Plan is drafted, the Housing Strategy will form part of the evidence base of the Local Plan alongside the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA).

The Council is committed to producing and adopting a sound Local Plan and has set out the programme for completing this work. The Council will continue to work towards the delivery of the Housing Strategy through both Local Planning and Development Management.

The new Strategy also stands alongside the HRA Business Plan, Homelessness Strategy and Developers Guide and sets out how we plan to deliver our key priorities and objectives for the next three years.

### Our key objectives

Increasing Housing Supply across all tenures

Helping People to live independently

Ensuring decent, safe and healthy homes

Creating sustainable communities

### Achievements from 2012-15

- Growth area funding gained and used to provide rural housing in Hatfield Heath
- Completion of a second Passiv haus scheme with Hastoe and a further one planned
- Delivered 284 affordable homes as part of market housing development on sites across the District.
- An annual Landlord forum
- An annual Housing Strategy conference
- Delivering 1 and 2 bed bungalows on new development sites
- New commuted sum policy that is providing a pot of funding for affordable housing development in the District.
- Successful delivery of the investment programme including the delivery of environmental improvements

- Development and adoption of a new Allocations Policy
- Implementation of an in-house Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme
- New tenancy strategy
- Brought 185 empty properties back into use since October 2013
- Assisting in the development of the Essex Landlord Accreditation Scheme
- Administered and provided 62 grants totalling £455,428 to enable disabled people to live as comfortably and independently as possible in their homes
- Administered and provided 18 grants totalling £31,167 to residents in receipt of means tested benefits to carry out home repairs and improve energy efficiency
- Investigated 105 complaints of poor conditions in private sector housing

## The National Context

### Key Policies

#### The Governments' Housing Strategy

The Government's national policies for housing have recently been updated and published in the Productivity Plan. The Plan sets out the steps the Government are going to take to ensure more homes are built that people can afford, through planning reform, progress on delivering 200,000 starter homes and the extension of the Right to Buy.

#### Legislative changes

The introduction of the Localism Act in 2011 gave local authorities new powers to discharge homelessness duties into the private sector, a new duty to introduce a Tenancy Strategy, and new flexibilities to determine housing allocations and qualification criteria. It also introduced reforms to social housing tenure which enabled social landlords to grant tenancies for a fixed length of time.

The Localism Act introduced significant housing related changes, including:

**Social housing allocations reform** – social housing is in great demand and the Act gives local authorities more freedom to develop policies about eligibility to enter the housing register. While this means that local authorities can prevent people who do not need social housing from joining the list, they are still obliged to ensure that social homes accommodate those most vulnerable.

**Social housing tenure reform** – this allows for more flexible arrangements for people entering social housing in the future by enabling social landlords to grant tenancies for a fixed length over time.

**Reform of homelessness legislation** – this enables local housing authorities to discharge their statutory homeless duty into a suitable private rented accommodation.

**Reform of council housing finance** – this enables local authorities to retain collected rent and spend it on local priorities.

**Right to buy** – Discounts increased from £16,000 to £75,000 to encourage tenants to access the housing market and buy their Council property.

The **Welfare Reform Act 2012** made the biggest change to the welfare system for over 60 years. It introduced a wide range of reforms which aimed to make the benefits system simpler. The main elements of the welfare reform were:

- Universal Credit
- Benefits Cap
- Personal Independence Payment
- Council tax benefit
- Housing Benefit

Of equal significance to the raft of new legislation passed was the dismantling of the existing infrastructure within which local authorities have been used to operating. Key changes saw the removal of regional government, the abolition of the Audit Commission and the demise of the Housing Corporation and its successor body the Tenant Services Authority (TSA). Housing associations moved from being Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to Registered Providers (RPs) and their regulation and funding was assumed by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). In the transition, regulation became 'light touch' with an emphasis on value for money and financial viability.

The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) Affordable Homes Programme introduced Affordable Rent, a new form of social housing and the main type of new housing supply. Housing providers can let a property at an Affordable Rent (inclusive of service charges, where applicable) of up to 80% of the gross market rent reflective of the property size and location. Affordable rent will also be used to support funding for future delivery.

### **National Planning Policy Framework**

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in March 2012 and sets out the government's planning policies for England and how they are expected to be applied. It provides a framework within which councils and local people can produce their own distinctive Local Plans or Neighbourhood Development Plans, reflecting the needs and priorities of their communities.

It specifies that local authorities have a duty *"to plan for a mix of housing for different groups, including older people, based on robust data, needs analysis and local demographic projections."*

It also set out the requirement for local Authorities to maintain a five year land supply of deliverable sites for housing

### **New Homes Bonus**

The New Homes Bonus was introduced during 2011/12 and has meant that for every new home and empty property brought back into use, local authorities receive the equivalent of the annual council tax raised, together with an additional £350 for

affordable units. This scheme intends to incentivise local authorities and local communities to accept and encourage residential development.

### **Help to Buy Scheme**

The 'Help to Buy' scheme was introduced to help first time buyers by providing Government loans of 20% of the price of a newly built home, with no interest to pay for the first five years of the loan. This was intended as a stimulus to generate a greater number of people able to take up home ownership and to support the building of new homes.

### **The Care Act 2014**

The wellbeing of people is at the centre of the new Care Act. Councils now have a duty to think about the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of people who need care. Councils also have a new duty to provide preventative services to keep people healthy in the first place.

The aim of the act is to put people and their carers in control of their care and support. In addition the Act will put a limit on the amount anyone will have to pay towards the cost of their care.

The Care Act contains core legal duties and powers relating to adult social care. Local authorities will be responsible for providing a broader care and support role towards the local community.

We will need to recognise and incorporate the strategy that Adult Social Care and the West Essex Clinical Commissioners develop into the Housing Strategy.

### **Implications of the 2015 Budget**

As this document is being drafted, there are many new proposals coming from the 2015 Budget and the Productivity Plan, the implications of these are not currently known and many will have an effect on our work programme and priorities in the coming years.

- 1% rent reduction for the next 4 years for social housing tenants

This has implications for both the Council and our Housing Association partners. Future development programmes are based around rental income and borrowing capacity from new and existing stock. With cuts of 1% per year, housing providers are facing significant losses to their balance sheets. Our Housing Association partners are all currently assessing the impact of this and looking at their future development programmes. This will mean that many providers cannot progress schemes that they have expressed an interest in or will be renegotiating with developers and offering lower prices for schemes.

- Extend the Right to Buy scheme to housing association tenants.

This has implications for our Housing Association partners who have not factored this into their business plans financially. It is also a concern on rural exception schemes whereby development is allowed on Greenfield sites as the properties are held in perpetuity to meet a local need, whether homes on such sites will be exempt, or other safeguards will be offered is unknown as yet. We will respond to consultation on these mechanisms once the detail is known, drawing on our depth of experience of the operation of rural exception schemes.

It also proposed the following:

- selling off the most expensive council houses when they become vacant. These are classed as properties over £xxxx
- Those on higher incomes in social housing will have to pay the market rate for their homes. That applies to those earning above £40,000 in London and £30,000 elsewhere in Britain.
- The cap on benefits will be cut from £26,000 to £23,000 in London and £20,000 in the rest of the UK. Working-age benefits will be frozen for four years, including tax credits and housing benefit

**As these proposals are developed, the Council will be looking at the impact and reviewing the Housing Strategy to take account of it.**

### **Developer Contributions**

Throughout the life of the last Housing Strategy, we were collecting commuted sums from developers on small sites and using this to fund our Council house building programme.

In November 2014, a Ministerial statement was published which made small developments exempt from affordable housing contributions. This had a significant impact on the Council and we were unable to collect £1.4million of affordable housing contributions from developers.

This has since been appealed by two Councils and the policy has been quashed. The government has now removed paragraphs from a section on planning obligations in the national planning practice guidance related to the small development policy and the vacant building credit.

**We will be reviewing our policies in the light of this announcement and publishing a new Developer Contributions document by the end of 2015.**

## The Local Context

### Partnerships and Policies

#### Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)

Locally-owned partnerships between local authorities and business that play a central role in determining local economic priorities and undertaking activities to drive economic growth and creation of jobs. Uttlesford works with two LEP the South East LEP (SELEP); and the Greater Cambridge and Greater Peterborough Enterprise Partnership (GCGPEP) Both are focused on helping to drive forward sustainable economic growth in our area – with local business, education providers, the third sector and the public sector working together to achieve this.

#### West Essex Commissioning Care Group (CCG)

In April 2013, the West Essex Clinical Commissioning Group became the statutory body responsible for buying healthcare services on behalf of 290,000 people in the Epping Forest, Harlow and Uttlesford districts. The commissioning group is made up of 38 general practices who work together to ensure the best possible healthcare is available to everyone in west Essex.

Representatives from the CCG sit on the Local Strategic Partnership and Health and Wellbeing Board. Working jointly will help to meet the future needs of residents in Uttlesford in the future.

#### Housing Related Support Partnership

Officers are represented on the Housing Related Support Partnership group which is made up of officers from the District Councils across Essex, County Council officers, Provider representatives, Police, Probation, mental health commissioning and Essex Drug and Alcohol Team (EDAAT).

The aim of this group is to inform and recommend the strategic direction of the housing related support (HRS) programme in Essex. It will identify opportunities for joint or aligned commissioning of services which will meet a wider range of outcomes, especially within the context of the developing Social Care, Public Health and Health agendas. The group will also look at the best use of reduced and non-ring-fenced resources.

#### Local Strategic Partnership – Uttlesford Futures

The Uttlesford LSP “Uttlesford Futures” is a collaboration of organisations including the district council, the county council, the local health service, the emergency services, the voluntary sector and statutory social care partners.

**Their vision is to bring partners together to help resolve community priorities and challenges, with a view to maximising effectiveness and sustainability.**

LSPs allow public bodies to work together on projects they wouldn't be able to do on their own. Uttlesford Futures' work is guided by the priorities that are set out in the district's [Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2018 \[143kb\]](#).

The key themes in this strategy are:

- Children and young people matter
- Staying healthy
- Developing business
- Feeling safe
- Protecting the environment
- Getting around

These themes come from a combination of priorities that have been identified as being important locally and ones which central government have said that LSPs need to look at.

The Housing Strategy works alongside the Sustainable Community Strategy and both documents aim to complement the work of each other.

### **Corporate Plan 2015-20**

The Council has recently published its Corporate Plan 2015-20 and has the following priorities:

- Remain a **low tax** Council
- Continue to listen and respond to our communities so we stay focused on the delivery of **high quality** key services that matter.
- We will have shared the benefits of growth with our communities in an **responsible** way that protects and enhances our environment
- Delivering thriving communities

### **Local Plan**

The adopted Local Plan, together with national policy and guidance, sets out the framework for development within the District. The Council is working to produce a new Local Plan and recently adopted a new Local Development Scheme which sets out the timescale and process for completing this work.

The Housing Strategy forms a key part of the evidence base for the Local Plan as well as Development Management decisions on applications and will need to be taken into account.

## **Strategic Housing Market Assessment**

Uttlesford District Council worked with the adjoining authorities of Brentwood, Broxbourne, East Herts, Epping Forest and Harlow in 2008 and commissioned Opinion Research Services (ORS) to undertake an assessment of the housing markets of these districts, which for the purposes of this study is collectively called the London Commuter Belt (East)/M11 sub-region.

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) is a framework that the district council can follow to develop a good understanding of how housing markets operate. It assesses housing need and demand and will be used to development the housing policies in the Local Development Framework.

A further update commissioned by Epping Forest, Harlow, East Herts and Uttlesford Councils was published in September 2015 and informs this Strategy.

## **The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan**

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan sets out how the Council will resource the maintenance of its homes and its investment priorities for the future.

The purpose of the business plan is to demonstrate that the council can maintain its housing assets, and deliver the levels of service, home and neighbourhood improvements. It is first and foremost a financial document, which determines how the council will meet the needs of present and future tenants, demonstrating that Government and local targets can be achieved and ensuring the long-term viability of the stock.

An effective Business Plan has become crucial since the government announced the reform of the rules governing local authority housing finance and the introduction of the self-financing system. This has been a major change in national housing finance and has introduced new opportunities for the Council's housing service but also caused exposure to risks. It is therefore critical that the HRA continues to be managed on sound business principles.

The document can be found at [www.uttlesford.gov.uk](http://www.uttlesford.gov.uk)

## Scene Setting – The Uttlesford Area

Uttlesford is a sparsely populated rural locality in Northwest Essex. The District borders Hertfordshire to the West and Cambridgeshire to the North. It is the largest District in Essex at 63,752 hectares and is mainly rural in character with two market towns - Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow, a range of key villages; Elsenham, Takeley, Great Chesterford, Newport, Stansted Mountfitchet and Thaxted and a number of smaller parishes.

Uttlesford has a population of around 83,500 (2014 figure) which is set to increase over the next 10 -15 years with new housing development. 53% of residents are aged 25 – 64. Around 30% are under 24 and 16.5% are over 65. When compared to the East of England and England, it is clear that Uttlesford has less young people and more older people. With a lower number of working age adults supporting both the retired and the young.

There are good road and rail links into London, Cambridge and Harlow from settlements in the M11 Stansted-Cambridge and A120 Stansted-Braintree corridors, although public transport in the more rural locations is poor. Stansted Airport lies within its boundaries.

### Key Messages from the evidence base

- The Uttlesford District is projected to increase from 83,500 people to 105,800 by 2035.
- The number of residents living in the district who are aged 65 and over is expected to increase from 15,800 people to 28,000.
- Growing ageing population with 1,070 people aged over 65 in Uttlesford are thought to have dementia. This figure is estimated to rise to 1,920 by 2030.
- 70% of the population own their own home.
- Average house price of £450,300 compared to regional average of £299,400 (August 2015)
- Average house price is 11 times the average income.
- Average income in Uttlesford is £24,575 per annum.

The evidence base shows that house prices are high in Uttlesford and incomes low, meaning that mortgages are unaffordable for a large percentage of our population. This places a strain on the Council's housing stock and the private rented sector. Young people, families and those providing our key services (for example care staff, teachers, cleaners etc.) are moving out of Uttlesford away from family and support to be able to buy their first home.

Our population is getting older, living longer and requiring greater care. This is already having implications for the housing market. Requirements for extra care, residential homes and a specialist dementia facility are needed to meet these needs.

## Partnership Working

Strong partnerships are an essential part of this strategy and ensures that key projects can be delivered even with limited resources. Partners include all of the Local Authorities in Essex through the Essex Housing Officers Group, Registered Providers, the Homes and Communities Agency and Essex County Council. Another key partner for Uttlesford is its Local Strategic Partnership, Uttlesford Futures which is the key driver for Uttlesford's Community Strategy.

### **Housing Strategy Conference**

As a result of the successful Housing Strategy Conference held in July 2012, the Council hosts a yearly conference to share best practice, monitor achievements and set future objectives. This has helped set the objectives for this new Housing Strategy.

### **Housing Board**

The Housing Board was set up to champion housing issues within the authority, to monitor the Housing Strategy and Business Plan and work on specific time limited housing projects. The group are currently progressing the councils new build programme and the redevelopment of Mead Court Stansted. The group includes Councillors and Tenant Forum members and reports to Cabinet.

### **The Tenant Forum**

Tenant Participation is seen as a vital link between the Council and its tenants. There is one Forum representing Uttlesford, made up of 12 Council tenants and one leaseholder from within the District. The Forum members are consulted on a multitude of different areas of the Housing Service including rent setting, repairs, housing policy, etc.

Two tenants from the Tenant Forum (one of whom is the Chairperson) also sit on the Housing Board covering housing issues.

### **Homelessness Partnership**

The Council has a homelessness partnership that meets quarterly. This is the forum for partnership working and to discuss and implement the Action Plan of the Homelessness Strategy. Partnership working underpins the delivery of a comprehensive and holistic housing options and homelessness service. Invariably the delivery of sustainable housing solutions requires the addressing of non-housing problems, this requires a multi-agency approach. As advice and support services can be delivered by an often complex and fragmented range of organisations, without partnership working and a co-ordinated approach, it is easy for people to slip through the net.

## **Private Sector Landlords Forum**

Locally and nationally some of the worst housing is in the private rented sector, and the Council has recognised the need to work proactively with landlords and letting agents to achieve improvements. The Council organises a private sector landlord forum once a year. Topics have included the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation, tenancy deposit protection schemes, the Local Housing Allowance and bringing Empty Homes back into use.

## Consultation

### **Housing Conference**

A successful Housing Conference was held on 3 November 2014 to help inform the new Housing Strategy. District and County Councillors, Parish Councils, key partners and Officers came together to hear about and debate future issues and initiatives that will affect the Council in the next three years. Presentations were made about the new allocations policy, rural housing, future provision of Gypsy and Traveller sites, findings from the emerging Strategic Housing Market Assessment and an update from Essex County Council about delivering the health and social care agenda.

Workshop groups then addressed the key issues in more detail. Discussions included the need for a new key worker policy to meet the needs of low paid workers providing services in the District (in particular health workers), exception site housing to meet the needs of the older population (maybe include some private/shared ownership, Gypsy and Traveller sites distributed across Uttlesford, incorporating health facilities as part of new developments.

### **Registered Providers (RP) Event**

An event was held with our RP partners to discuss our affordable housing development programme, how our current policy is working and look for ways to work together more closely.

A lively debate took place about clustering on schemes, the provision of lifts in blocks of flats, parking courts, scheme viability. This has helped us scope our new Guide for Developers which will be published in 2015.

### **Learning Disability Action Group and meetings with service users at Home Farm Trust**

Officers took part in Local Action group meetings with providers, support services and service users to understand the issues faced by the Learning disability community. A workshop was held with service users living in Uttlesford and East Herts to understand their aspirations for their future housing need and a follow up session held with staff who manage Home Farm Trust in Ugley.

Service users have agreed to help us pull together an easy read copy of the Housing Strategy. This will help them understand the future housing policies of the Council and ensure that they can help influence them.

## **Workshops and home visits with older people**

Workshop sessions were held in Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow along with some home visits for those less able to access our workshop sessions. The aim was to understand the future needs of older people living in our District in order to better plan for their needs.

## **Research with young people**

We carried out a survey within one of the local schools, to find out what their 16-18 year old pupils felt their housing options were in the future. Many were planning to go to university and anticipated staying in those areas afterwards, others wanted to move to London. Very few saw their future in Uttlesford due to the cost of house prices and private rental costs.

## **Health and Wellbeing Group**

This group work towards one of the themes in the Sustainable Communities Strategy. Their work helps inform and set future priorities in the Housing Strategy. The group consists of health professionals, Essex County Council, Mind, Citizens Advice Bureau, Council for Voluntary Services Uttlesford, West Essex Clinical Commissioning Group, Alzheimer's Society, Age UK, Carers UK.

## **Tenant Forum/Housing Board**

The Tenant Forum and Housing Board play a key part in the preparation of this new strategy from influencing new policy to monitoring key progress made.

## **Parish Councils**

All of our Parish Councils will be given the chance to comment on this new Housing Strategy through the consultation process and their comments will be considered and used where possible. Their comments were very useful in the drafting of the last Housing Strategy.

## Housing Needs, Supply and Demand

### The Housing Market

There are approximately 32,862 properties in the Uttlesford District. 28,286 of these are in the private sector and 2,833 are owned by the Council. Smaller numbers are owned by Registered Providers and the Ministry of Defence.

### Renting in Uttlesford

As with most areas, there are three main types of landlord in Uttlesford – The Council, Registered Social Landlords (RSL's) and Private Landlords. The Government's subsidy system for building and maintaining Council and RSL homes leads to them being able to charge a lower rent than most private landlords.

The table below shows the average Council social rents per week in Uttlesford.

Table 1: Average social rents per week

<b>BEDS</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Average (£)</b>
Bedsit	Flat	81.39
1	Flat	81.16
2	Flat	91.99
3	Flat	102.89
1	Bungalow	90.88
2	Bungalow	100.55
3	Bungalow	104.36
1	House	95.52
2	House	103.50
3	House	111.66
4	House	122.47
5	House	115.61

Source: UDC data August 2015.

The average monthly private rent in Uttlesford is:

Table 2: Average monthly private rent

	Saffron Walden	Stansted	Great Dunmow
1 bed	£650	£700	£750
2 bed	£900	£995	£800
3 bed	£1350	£1200	£1200
4 bed	£1650	£1600	£1450

Source: Research completed on Rightmove, August 2015.

The lack of private rented properties in Uttlesford has meant that rents charged are high. This has implications for low earners and those living on Local Housing Allowance. As can be seen in the tables below, the LHA rates do not cover the costs of a rental property in the District.

### Local Housing Allowance (LHA) Rates

A Local Housing Allowance rate is the maximum amount of eligible rent that local authorities can use in the assessment of a housing benefit claim which falls under the LHA scheme. LHA rates are applicable from the 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016

Table 3: Cambridge area (i.e. North of the Uttlesford District)

Number of Bedrooms	Category	Weekly Amount	Monthly Amount
Shared Room Rate	A	£80.52	£348.92
1 Bedroom	B	£126.05	£546.22
2 Bedrooms	C	£140.74	£609.87
3 Bedrooms	D	£168.45	£729.95
4 Bedrooms	E	£218.16	£945.36

Table 4: Harlow and Bishops Stortford (i.e. South of the Uttlesford District)

Number of Bedrooms	Category	Weekly Amount	Monthly Amount
Shared Room Rate	A	£68.08	£295.01
1 Bedroom	B	£133.32	£577.72

2 Bedrooms	C	£164.79	£714.09
3 Bedrooms	D	£198.11	£858.48
4 Bedrooms	E	£279.69	£1211.99

Table 5: Stevenage and North Herts (i.e. West of the Uttlesford District)

Number of Bedrooms	Category	Weekly Amount	Monthly Amount
Shared Room Rate	A	£72.04	£312.17
1 Bedroom	B	£122.36	£530.23
2 Bedrooms	C	£155.37	£673.27
3 Bedrooms	D	£186.46	£807.99
4 Bedrooms	E	£238.80	£1034.80

Source: UDC Data 2015

### House Prices

The attractiveness and desirability of the Uttlesford District has a major effect on house prices and land values. The average house price here is currently £450,300 compared to the regional average of £299,400 (Hometrack, August 2015)

Table 6: Average House Price

Breakdown by bedroom size	Price
1 bed flat	£123,300
2 bed flat	£172,100
2 bed house	£257,300
3 bed house	£331,700
4 bed house	£521,600

Source: Hometrack August 2015

Affordability is still a problem in Uttlesford; this is measured by affordability ratios. These show the relationship between income and house prices. Data shows that average house prices in Uttlesford are almost 11 times the average income. Mortgages are calculated on 3.5 times household so this shows how unaffordable property is for those on an average income.

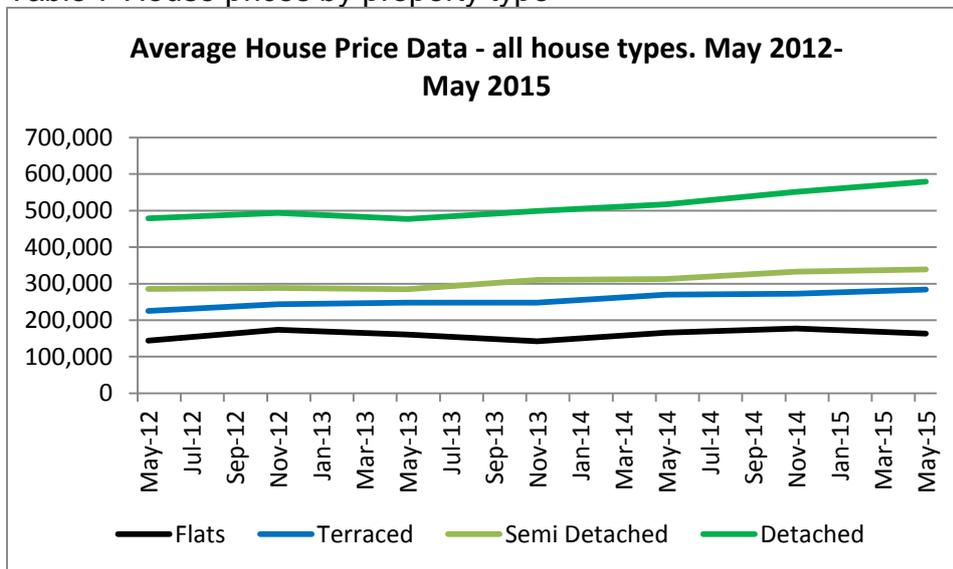
If you look at house prices in the lowest 25% price band, households will still need 8 times their income to buy a property.

An example: Mr and Mrs Smith want to buy a 2 bedroom house in Saffron Walden. They have a good deposit so only require an 85% mortgage. The mortgage payments equate to £197 per week assuming a 2.88% mortgage rate. To private rent a property, it would cost £184 per week and the supply isn't available to meet the demand.

Table 7 shows the average house prices by property type in Uttlesford between May 2012 to May 2015.

Average figures for flats have risen by £19,384, terraced properties have risen by £58,488, semi-detached have risen by £53,552 whilst detached properties have risen by £99,836. Over the past 2.5 years, terraced properties have risen the greatest by 26%.

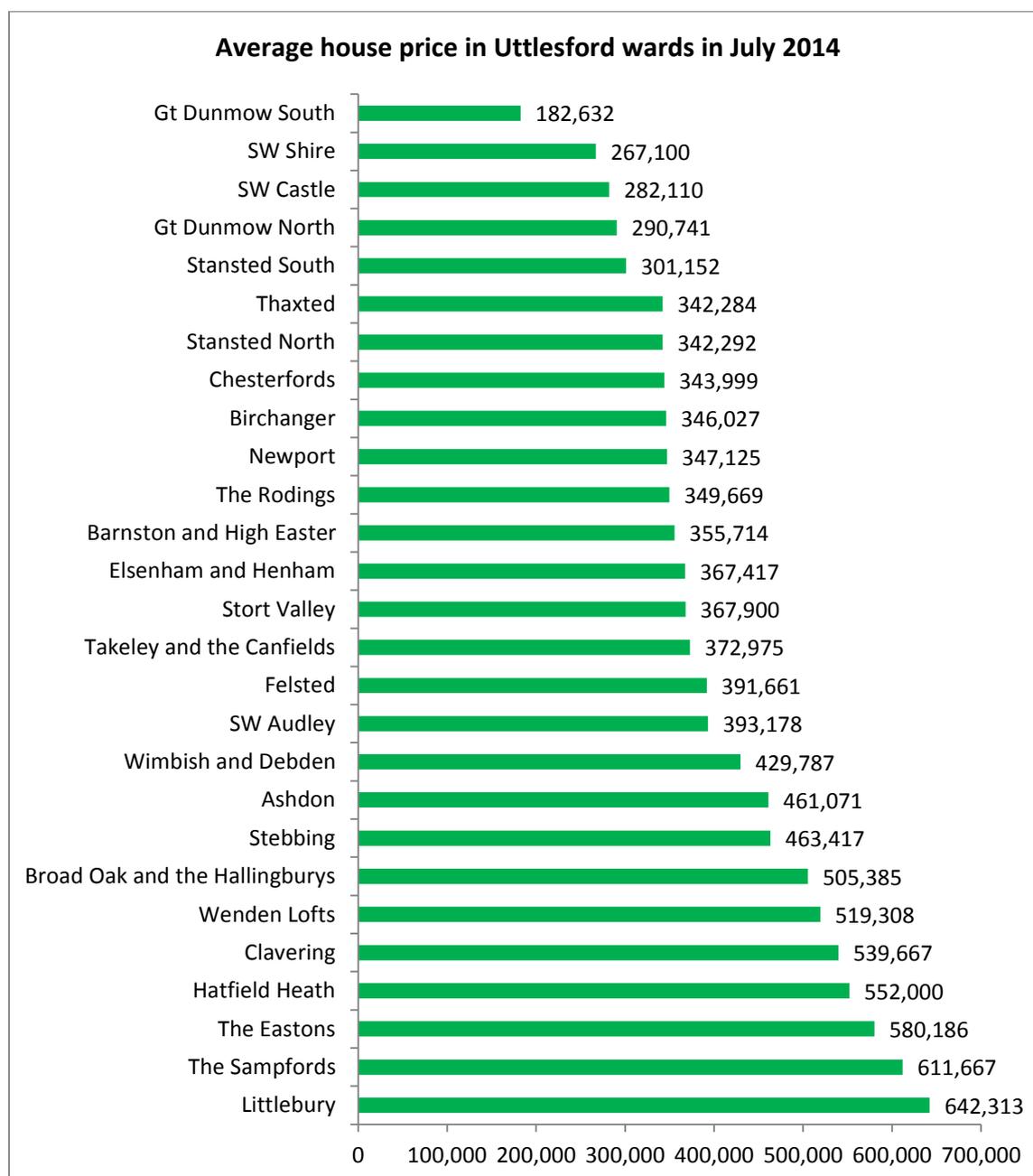
Table 7 House prices by property type



Source: *Hometrack Aug 2015*

The chart below (figure 15) shows the lowest average price is Gt Dunmow South with £182,632 compared to the highest average price in Littlebury with £642,313.

Table 8 Average house prices



Source: *Hometrack July 2014*

### Shared Ownership

Residents interested in home ownership but whose household income is insufficient to meet their full housing needs may be eligible for Shared Ownership. This model allows the applicant to purchase up to 75% of the property with rent paid on the remaining share. Properties are managed by Registered Providers.

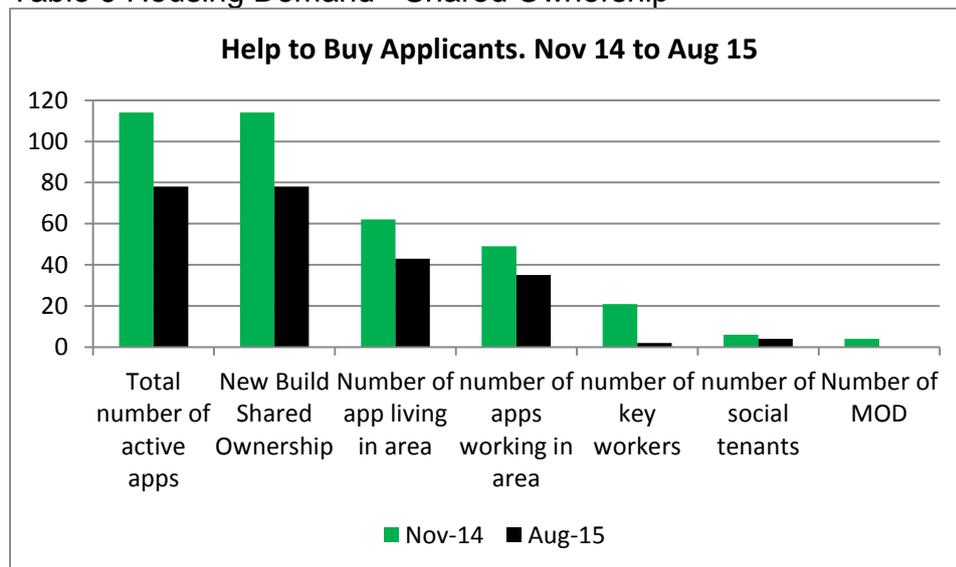
The following data is provided through the Help to Buy website which manages all applicants. Applicants are registered for all products from the Help to Buy agent which could include an equity loan. The registrations data does not indicate which financial product applicants are interested in.

The number of applicants registered for this model is given in Table 9. A comparison of data for Nov 2014 and August 2015 highlights the continuing interest in the model.

The total number of interested applicants amounted to 114 for 2014 reducing slightly to 78 for August 2015. The number of applicants who are social housing tenants has remained similar whilst more Key Workers were registered in November, 2014 than August 2015.

A refresh of the data was carried out earlier this year which may account for the differences in figures. However, the data is a useful benchmark to highlight the interest and financial ability of residents to access home ownership.

Table 9 Housing Demand - Shared Ownership



Source: (Help to Buy Aug 2015)

## Housing need and demand

Housing need and demand is measured and assessed from a variety of sources, this can include formal studies and information already held by the Council.

### Identifying Housing Needs

For some years, Government guidance on housing and planning has emphasised the requirement for local authorities to assess local housing need and develop strategies to address that need. This assessment process has generally been achieved by conducting Housing Needs Surveys. The Council last undertook a District-wide Housing Needs Survey in 2002, covering the period

from 2002 to 2007 and an update of this work took place in 2004. In 2006 a framework was introduced under Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3) for carrying out Strategic Housing Market Assessments, with final guidance published in March 2007. These assessments continue to provide information on the level of need and demand for housing locally, but they also contribute to the sub regional and regional levels of planning.

### **Strategic Housing Market Assessment**

A Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) analyses the entire local housing market, which is likely to be wider than the local authority boundaries. It forms a crucial part of the evidence base that informs the Local Plan. A survey was initially conducted in 2010 comprising of six districts in the sub region, including Uttlesford, Brentwood, Broxbourne, East Herts, Epping and Harlow, who joined to form London Commuter Belt (East) and commissioned Opinion Research Services (ORS) to undertake a comprehensive SHMA. The research used secondary data from sources such as the UK Census, Homes and Communities Agency, HM Land Registry and the Office for National Statistics, along with a qualitative consultation programme with a wide range of stakeholders. This research has now been updated, the study was carried out in partnership with East Herts, Epping and Harlow Councils and was published in September 2015.

Headline findings showed:

6.6% of households in the LCB M11 east are overcrowded. However when looking at those living in the social rented sector, 13% were overcrowded in Uttlesford.

Over the 22 year period between 2011 and 2033 it is projected there will be an additional 36,899 households living within the SHMA study area. 9,877 additional households will be living in Uttlesford.

It is predicted that across the study area there are 13,291 households in housing need, 576 are currently in housing need with a further 2,541 needing affordable housing between 2011 and 2033 in Uttlesford.

Of the 3,117 households requiring affordable housing in Uttlesford, 8% need a 1 bed, 47% need a 2 bed, 40% need a 3 bed and 4% need a 4 bed house.

**The policy implications from the SHMA will be considered by the Planning Policy Working Group in October 2015 and the Housing Strategy will be updated to reflect this.**

## **Housing Supply**

### **Delivery of Affordable Housing**

The Council are very successful in delivering affordable housing in partnership with registered providers. During 2012/15, 284 properties were completed. These properties are allocated to those on our Housing Register.

The Council has a good programme moving forward with the total numbers of units projected to be completed between 2015-2020 amounting to 3,733 with 1,330 being delivered as affordable housing. Further details of this programme are available in Appendix 2 and 3.

### **Rural Housing**

Since 1989, we have provided 350 affordable homes in rural areas through the rural exception policy. Schemes have recently completed in Hatfield Heath and Arkesden with future schemes progressing in Little Hallingbury, Wimbish, Newport, Hatfield Broad Oak and many more. Further details of this programme are available in Appendix 2 and 3.

The key to success is supporting Parish Councils to bring forward rural housing schemes to meet the needs of their local communities. This will be developed through the use of Neighbourhood plans in the future.

After a rural scheme has completed, we survey the residents allocated the properties, the local residents living close to the scheme and the Parish Council.

Research has shown that

- 100% of respondents were allocated a property based on the local connection criteria.
- 86% rated their property either excellent or good, 14% satisfactory
- 95% of local residents agreed that the affordable housing had benefitted the local community
- 48% were attending local groups in the community.

The research has given the Council a greater knowledge of what is successful/not successful in a scheme, has shown how it has allowed young people to remain in the village and that they were allocated to those with a local connection. It has also encouraged Parishes to move forward with affordable housing schemes in their area.

### **Housing Register**

As at August 2015, there were 954 applications on the housing register, of those applications 397 were in bands A-D and considered to be in housing need.

## **Choice Based Lettings**

In 2007 the Council agreed that a Choice Based Lettings (CBL) scheme should be developed for Uttlesford. The government had set a target that all housing authorities should be operating a CBL scheme for allocating social housing by 2010. The government considers that CBL schemes can enhance mobility between areas and tenures and provide a balance between the needs of prospective tenants and choice and so may contribute to sustainable neighbourhoods.

The Council joined a Consortia of five other Local Housing Authorities (Broxbourne, Epping Forest, Chelmsford, East Herts and Brentwood), and 25 registered social landlords and successfully bid for government funding to assist with the development and initial set-up of a CBL scheme. The CBL scheme called HomeOption went live in November 2008.

Since that time, the Council have also introduced an online application form and moved from a points based lettings system to a banding system. This has made it clearer for applicants to understand the process and know where their application sits in terms of priority.

We have also introduced a new Allocations Policy which places greater emphasis on those with a local connection. This policy was introduced in January 2015 and will ensure that those applying for housing have the relevant links to Uttlesford before joining our housing register.

## **Lettings through Home Option**

Between April 2014 and March 2015, a total of 281 properties were let via the Home Option system, 178 of these properties were Council owned. Where properties become empty the Council have set targets on its various properties from the date the key is returned to the date the next tenant gets the key to their new home.

The Council needs to ensure that with an increase in demand for social housing that its own stock is used in the most effective way. In some cases an increase in the void period may be because possible tenants did either not bid or did not wish to take up the offer of that property. This is particularly an issue for some of the Council's sheltered housing schemes where average re-let times are higher than general needs properties.

## **Older Persons Housing**

The Council currently provides 406 units of older persons accommodation spread across the District. This ranges from one and two bedroom bungalows to flats and bedsits. Some of these schemes are no longer fit for purpose and we have been updating and regenerating them during the life of the last Housing Strategy.

However the need for more accommodation for older people is growing as our ageing population grows.

Table 10: Uttlesford Population aged 65 and over, projected to 2030

	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2030</b>
People aged 65-69	5,100	5,200	4,700	5,600	6,500
People aged 70-74	3,600	3,800	4,900	4,500	5,300
People aged 75-79	2,800	2,900	3,500	4,600	4,300
People aged 80-84	2,100	2,100	2,500	3,100	4,100
People aged 85-89	1,300	1,400	1,700	2,000	2,600
People aged 90 and over	800	900	1,200	1,600	2,100
<b>Total population 65 and over</b>	<b>15,700</b>	<b>16,300</b>	<b>18,500</b>	<b>21,400</b>	<b>24,900</b>

Source: Poppi August 2015

The charts below show the number of people requiring supported housing growing significantly in the next 15 years.

Table 11 People aged 65 and over living in a care home with or without nursing in Uttlesford, by age, projected to 2030

	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2030</b>
People aged 65-74 living in a LA care home with or without nursing	0	0	0	0	0
People aged 75-84 living in a LA care home with or without nursing	0	0	0	0	0
People aged 85 and over living in a LA care home with or without nursing	0	0	0	0	0
People aged 65-74 living in a non LA care home with or without nursing	25	26	27	29	33
People aged 75-84 living in a non LA care home with or without nursing	109	111	134	172	187
People aged 85 and over living in a non LA care home with or without nursing	314	328	414	513	656
<b>Total population aged 65 and over living in a care home with or without nursing</b>	<b>448</b>	<b>465</b>	<b>575</b>	<b>714</b>	<b>877</b>

Source: POPPI 2014 data

Table 12, People with dementia living in Uttlesford, projected to 2030.

<b>Dementia - all people</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2030</b>
<a href="#">Show by gender</a>					
People aged 65-69 predicted to have dementia	65	65	59	69	81
People aged 70-74 predicted to have dementia	101	105	134	123	145
People aged 75-79 predicted to have dementia	157	164	204	268	245
People aged 80-84 predicted to have dementia	251	262	298	369	486
People aged 85-89 predicted to have dementia	261	283	339	417	495
People aged 90 and over predicted to have dementia	268	268	357	474	622
<b>Total population aged 65 and over predicted to have dementia</b>	<b>1,104</b>	<b>1,146</b>	<b>1,391</b>	<b>1,720</b>	<b>2,075</b>

Source: POPPI 2014 data

Table 12 shows that the numbers living with dementia in Uttlesford will almost double in the next 15 years. This will have an impact on the housing we need to provide and the services to support those living with dementia.

## Supported Housing

### Learning Disability Schemes

There are two learning disability schemes in Saffron Walden. They provide 12 units of accommodation at Ferguson Close (Family Mosaic) and 3 at Gallows Hill (Family Mosaic)

Officers from the Council are represented on the local Learning Disability Action Group (LAG); this group helps the Council to look at future and current need in the District and creates effective partnership working.

### Mental Health

There are two schemes for mental health consisting of 8 units at Station Street, Saffron Walden managed by Granta and 3 at St Edmunds Field, Great Dunmow managed by Springboard that have been refurbished.

There is a requirement for a new scheme to replace the units at Station Street as it is no longer fit for purpose. The residents currently share a bathroom and kitchen which does not encourage them to live independently

Officers are working with Metropolitan Housing Association to identify a future location for the scheme that will meet the needs of those with mental health needs.

### **Physical Disability**

For those with a physical disability, we request bungalows as part of our affordable housing requirement. However we will be working with the Housing allocations team throughout 2015/16 to analyse the data they hold and begin to build properties that meet the needs of those on our register.

### **Young Parents Scheme**

This scheme is in partnership with Brentwood and Epping Forest Councils and has provided 12 units of supported accommodation for young parents living in Uttlesford, Brentwood or Epping Forest. The scheme has been provided on a new development in Ongar and provides the three Councils with nominations to the project. It provides the young parents with the skills they need to care for a child, access benefits and housing to ensure they can move on to manage their own tenancy.

As can be seen below, the Council do not have a significant problem with young parents presenting as homeless and could not justify a scheme in the District, partnership working with Epping Forest and Brentwood meant a more viable option

Table 13: Acceptances from young parents, 2012-15

<b>Year</b>	<b>Acceptances</b>
2012	2
2013	4
2014	1
2015	2

*Source: Homeless data from Housing Dept. (August 2015)*

### **Bromfield House**

The Council continue to work with Genesis Housing to develop Bromfield House as a first class facility offering supported housing to 16 – 25 year olds. It is staffed 24 hours 7 days a week and residents have support plans which they work on with staff. They are regularly reviewed to ensure that goals are being achieved. Staff meet with Council staff on a quarterly basis to update on residents progress and the Council facilitate move on accommodation when clients are ready to move out of a supported environment. This has worked really well and residents are moving on successfully and living an independent life.

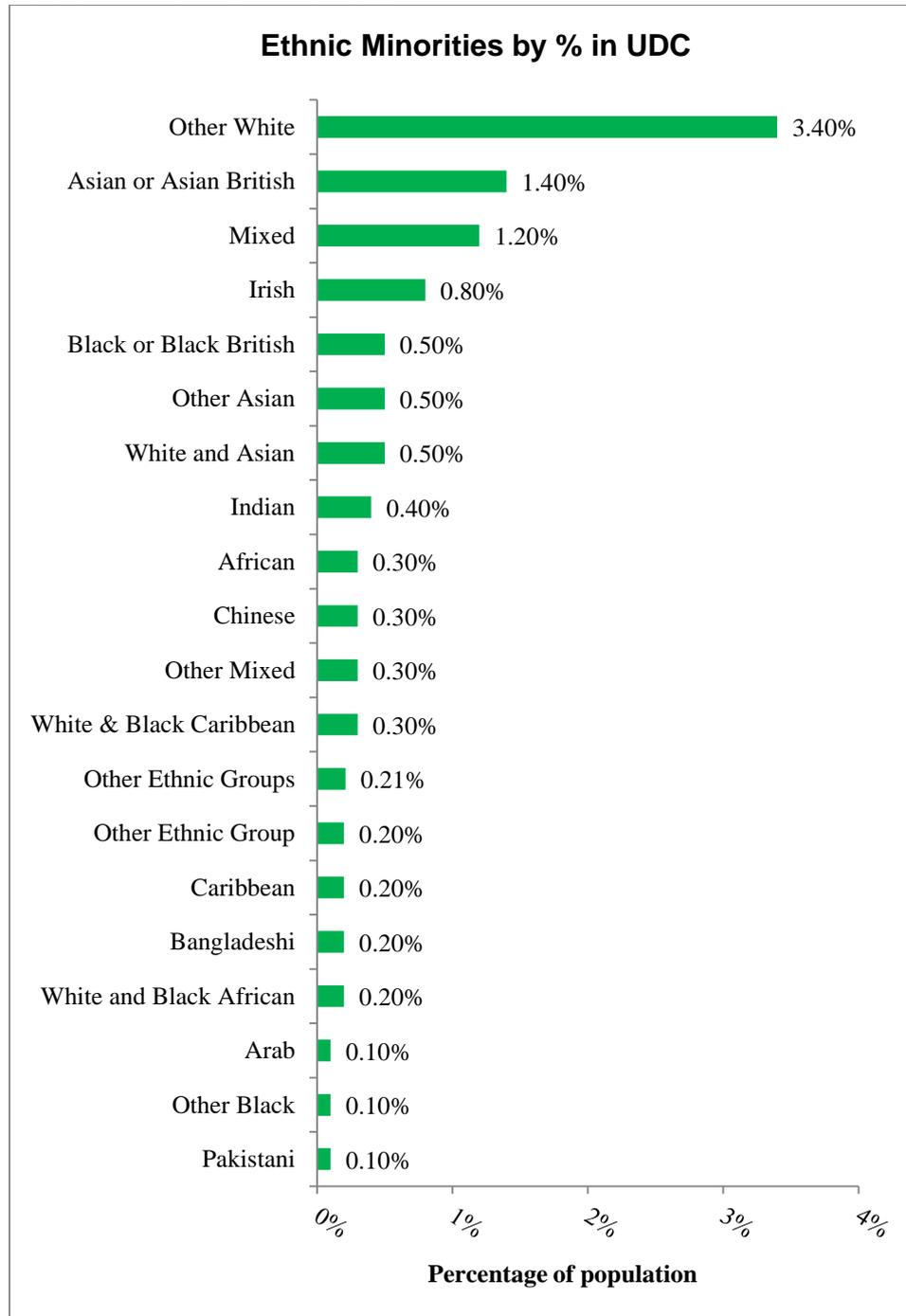
### **Black and Minority Ethnic**

The Council must promote and monitor the needs of those in minority groups. As part of this requirement, Officers took part in the Essex wide research Facing the Facts. This was delivered through the Essex Housing Officers group and looked at

the Housing requirements of the BME population in Essex. Engagement with communities in Uttlesford was difficult as our population is so small.

The current population of Uttlesford indicates the following:

**Table 14: Ethnic Minorities**



Source: (Census 2011)

The population of Uttlesford is predominately White with 96.6% of the population stating this as their ethnicity whilst 92.3% considers themselves to be British.

The total percentage of Ethnic Minorities in the district is 3.40%. The breakdown of these communities is given in Table 14. Other White is the highest with 3.40% whilst Arab, Other Black and Pakistani amount to only 1% of the population.

The Council recognises that the information it holds on needs and demand for this group is not complete. Further research then needs to be carried out over the life of this strategy to investigate the housing needs of this group further.

## Gypsy and Travellers

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Planning Policy for Travellers sites sets out the Governments policy for travellers sites. It is the responsibility of Local planning authorities to assess their need for traveller sites and to plan for sites over a reasonable timescale. To increase the number of traveller sites in appropriate locations with planning permission, to address under provision and maintain an appropriate level of supply.

Uttlesford currently has the following sites within the District.

Table 15: Private Gypsy and Traveller Sites in Uttlesford

Location	Sites	Total caravans
Barnston	1	0
Broxted	2	3
Clavering	1	1
Great Dunmow	1	2
High Easter	1	1
High Roding	1	3
Little Canfield	1	4
Little Hallingbury	1	5
High Easter	1	5
Radwinter End	1	2
Stansted	1	10
Stebbing	1	3
Takeley	1	8

Source: Data taken from [www.iform.co.uk](http://www.iform.co.uk) Feb 2015.

Table 16: Public site owned and managed by Essex County Council

Location	Sites	Total caravans
Felsted	17	25

Source: Data taken from [www.iform.co.uk](http://www.iform.co.uk) Feb 2015.

Table 17: Unauthorised sites yet tolerated

Location	Sites	Total caravans
Barnston	1	2
Lindsell	1	1

Stansted	1	2
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*Source: UDC data Sept 2015.*

The Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment (2014) concluded that Uttlesford needs to provide 26 additional pitches over the period 2013 to 2033. These will be identified through the ongoing Local Plan process.

## Addressing Our Key Priorities

### 1. Increasing Housing Supply Across all Tenures:

The Council has an ambitious programme of development moving forward to ensure that we meet the needs of local people living in the District along with meeting specialist housing needs. This is a key priority for the Council throughout the life of this strategy.

#### **Council house building**

Having completed two phases of council built new housing in Leaden Roding, we now have an ambitious development programme replacing out of date sheltered housing with new houses and bungalows in Stansted and upgrading other sheltered housing in the District to make it fit for the future and a desirable place to grow old in.

We will also be looking at all Council owned land to ensure that we make the best use of the resources available and maximise development potential in the District.

#### **Developing affordable housing as part of market led schemes**

We will continue to deliver affordable housing on market led sites, working with registered providers to ensure that the completed homes meet local need and that tenants receive a good service from their landlord.

The Council will continue to expect 40% affordable housing on market led sites delivered in partnership with one of our registered providers. Full guidance is published in our Guide for Developers which is available on our website.

For a number of years, we have been working with Registered Providers on market led schemes and also rural exception sites to deliver affordable housing. During this time, our partners have changed, new providers have expressed an interest in working in Uttlesford, whilst others can no longer build viable schemes and have stopped developing here.

As with our own housing and part of good practice, we monitor our performance and ensure that our tenants gain a good service from us as a landlord. We are planning to extend this further and analyse the performance of our registered providers as landlords, to ensure that those who are allocated a Housing Association property are provided with a good service. This work will be carried out through 2015/16.

During 2015/16, we will be exploring the proposals published in the Governments Productivity Plan. We will be working with our Housing Association partners and local communities to understand how we can provide starter homes for young first time buyers.

## **Rural housing**

Delivering rural housing on exception sites is an important priority in Uttlesford. In the last 3 years, we have delivered schemes in Arkesden, Wimbish and Hatfield Heath. Future schemes are progressing in Little Hallingbury, Great Hallingbury, Newport, Chrishall and Hatfield Broad Oak.

The key to our success is supporting parish councils to bring forward rural housing schemes to meet the needs of their local communities, and ensuring that rural housing continues to be delivered in our villages. This will be developed through our neighbourhood plan process over the coming years.

## **Growth Area Funding**

We were fortunate to receive an allocation of Growth Area funding in 2010 for two affordable housing schemes on rural exception sites. The first scheme in partnership with Hastoe Housing completed in February 2015 and residents have now moved in. This scheme is built to Passiv haus standards and means that residents will experience very low heating costs in their homes.

The second scheme is progressing well and should be submitted for planning during 2015. This will provide 34 homes in Newport for local people in partnership with Hastoe Housing.

## **Key Outcomes in delivering this Strategy:**

100 affordable homes delivered per year

40% affordable housing gained on market led sites.

3 rural housing needs surveys carried out and a site secured for rural housing in one of our villages

15 new Council homes built per year

Development review completed and sites identified for sale or Council own development.

Growth Area Funding scheme completed in Newport

SHMA findings implemented across all Council Policies

## 2. Helping People to Live Independently

Helping people to live independently is an important priority in this strategy, whether they are living in the Councils sheltered housing, a supported housing scheme, in their own home or in a private nursing or residential facility. We want to ensure that our residents have choices when they need support and we intend to deliver this through our action plan.

### Older Persons Housing

The Council has an ambitious programme of development to ensure that its sheltered housing schemes meet current needs. The Mead Court redevelopment in Stansted is on site and progressing well. This scheme will complete by September 2016 and will provide 29 houses and bungalows for affordable rent and 4 flats to be used as temporary accommodation.

Hatherley Court, Saffron Walden – Remodelling of existing sheltered scheme. A Planning application has been approved and a start on site programmed for April 2016.

Reynolds Court, Newport – a new build redevelopment of an existing sheltered scheme. Planning application submitted. Start on site targeted for October 2015.

We will continue to request 1 and 2 bed bungalows on S106 schemes, this means that older people can downsize to accommodation that is fit for purpose but still maintains their independence. It also meets a need for those with a physical disability who require accommodation on one floor.

As part of S106 obligations, we have negotiated with developers to provide two independent living schemes. One in Saffron Walden and one in Great Dunmow. These will provide a mix of affordable rented, shared ownership and units for sale to meet the needs of those over 65 who require an element of care in their home. This will complement our sheltered housing service and the private retirement villages and care homes in the District.

The Council continue to encourage residents to organise activities in sheltered housing. This includes armchair aerobics, bingo, coffee mornings, computer training and visits out of the schemes. This helps combat social isolation often experienced by older people living alone or supporting a partner with health issues.

### Specialist housing to meet local needs

As part of our consultation on the Housing Strategy, we met with providers of **learning disability** schemes in the District and also spent time with service users living in Uttlesford. It became apparent that service users wanted to live independently rather than having to share facilities.

We are already progressing a scheme in Saffron Walden to provide a number of flats for those with a learning disability and funding has been gained from Essex County Council. This will be delivered during 2016/17. The scheme will enable service users to live a more independent life.

We are also having early discussions with one of our providers in Ugley along with Essex County Council to look at the possibility of providing a number of independent living flats for those currently residing in residential care. This would help meet the needs of those wanting to lead a more independent life.

We will continue to further liaise with current providers of specialist housing to ensure that their needs are met in the District. A review will be carried out to assess the housing requirements of those with **mental health** issues to ensure their housing needs are met.

We currently require developers to build new homes to lifetime homes standards. These standards apply to all new housing including blocks of flats for both social housing and private housing. We also require developers to provide an element of wheelchair accessible housing in new developments over 10 properties. These properties are important in helping us meet the needs of residents who use a wheelchair or those with a mobility problem.

We will also be working with a care provider to progress a dementia scheme that is planned in Uttlesford. This scheme will help meet the increasing needs of those with high level dementia, which is levels 5, 6, and 7 on the Global Deterioration Scale for Assessment of Primary Degenerative Dementia who we currently struggle to accommodate and as a result residents need to be relocated outside the district.

In the last Housing Strategy we identified the need for a scheme for those at risk of **domestic violence**. A piece of Council owned land was identified and a partner chosen. This scheme is now progressing and will complete in 2016/17.

We also identified the need for another **homeless facility**. We currently work with Genesis Housing on a scheme in Saffron Walden that successfully meets the needs of single (often young) people who approach the Council as homeless. It helps them get back on their feet, provides them with advice and support and helps them move on to independent living. We are now looking to provide a scheme in Great Dunmow, a site will be identified in the Local Plan and we are talking to partners about how to progress this. This scheme will emerge through the life of this strategy

### **Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)**

The Council administers and provides DFGs allowing disabled people to live as comfortably and independently as possible in their home. Since 2012, 54 grants have been awarded to a value of £456,943. The Council works in partnership with a Home Improvement Agency who are available to act on behalf of the applicant if the applicant chooses to engage their services.

In 2014 the funding allocation for DFGs has passed from central government to Essex County Council (ECC). Historically the funding allocation for DFGs has been one of the lowest in the Country and the Council regularly adds to this funding from its own capital budget. We will work with Essex Health and Wellbeing Board to increase our funding allocation.

### **Home Repair Assistance**

The Council offers discretionary grant assistance to occupiers of dwellings and mobile homes to carry out essential structural repair work or improvements. All applicants need to be on a means tested benefit to receive the grant, which is up to £3000 or up to £5000 in the case of mobile homes where thermal insulation or energy efficiency measures are carried out in addition to repairs. For additional work over the grant limit, an interest free loan of up to £7000 can be given, which becomes repayable once the property is sold or the applicant no longer lives there. Since 2012, the Council has provided 12 HRA grants totalling £34,587. We will continue to offer this service to those in need.

### **Key Outcomes in delivering this Strategy:**

New mental health facility provided.  
New learning disability scheme provided  
UDC Wheelchair standards reviewed and used as policy.  
Access Group visit to new build bungalows and findings used to improved future schemes.  
Extra care scheme delivered in Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow  
Dementia scheme delivered  
5% bungalows delivered on all market led sites  
Sheltered housing upgraded.  
Supported housing scheme for vulnerable adults built.  
Domestic violence scheme built  
Homelessness Strategy published.  
Allocations policy reviewed.  
Documents published in easy read format

### **3. Ensuring Decent, Safe and Healthy Homes**

We expect that our residents should be able to live in a decent home, that is safe and is not detrimental to their health. This priority looks at how we ensure that our residents live in good quality healthy housing.

#### **Council Housing**

The Council has published a HRA Business Plan covering the period 2015-2045. This gives detailed information about how the Council will maintain and manage its housing stock. The information below is just a summary. For more information, please visit our website [www.uttlesford.gov.uk](http://www.uttlesford.gov.uk)

#### **Stock figures**

The Council's stock, as at 1 August 2015, was 2,805 rented properties. In addition to the tenanted stock there are 122 right to buy leasehold properties that the Council continue to manage.

The Council's stock consists of traditionally constructed houses, flats, and bungalows. The stock is mostly low rise, although varied in archetype. There are no high-rise flats. All non-traditional build properties, such as Airey and PRC houses, have been re-built however there are a small number of Swedish units.

#### **Programme of council housing stock improvements**

The council is continuing to deliver a significant programme of investment in the first five years of the HRA business plan - the largest investment in the stock/service for many years. Since the introduction of self-financing over £11.2million has been spent to improve the standard and availability of council housing.

#### **Energy Efficiency/Sustainability**

The Council has a strong commitment to energy efficiency and sustainability. A key strategic objective of the business plan is to tackle climate change by reducing the carbon emissions from the Council's housing stock. This will also address tenants concerns about fuel poverty, reducing the cost of heating by improving insulation and replacing electric systems with modern oil or gas central heating systems.

There are a number of homes (around 250) with solid walls that have poor thermal efficiency. Some of these have recently been upgraded and their thermal efficiency is being reassessed. Others will be prioritised for investment programmes in the short term.

## **The Councils development programme**

Our Council housing development programme is now established and includes a number of sheltered schemes, garage and infill sites, and excess garden land being assessed for development viability. This will create a number of homes for those on our housing register. Negotiations are on-going with the HCA to bid for National Affordable Housing Programme (2015/18) Affordable Housing Grant in the future.

## **Private sector housing**

The private rented sector makes up an important part of the housing market in UDC. 13% of all households in the district are privately rented. In the past 10 years the percentage of privately rented housing has increased by 5%.

The Council provides advice, assistance and enforcement on matters such as safety, disrepair, overcrowding, and energy efficiency in owned or rented homes, including Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and mobile homes. In addition, the Councils provides a range of home improvement services offering assistance with home repairs, improvements and adaptations.

Poor housing has a direct link to poor health, comfort and mental wellbeing. The work undertaken by the Council contributes directly to the health, protection and wellbeing of residents

Since 2012 Environmental Health Officers have investigated 172 complaints relating to poor housing conditions .

Due to the economic climate and challenges around housing demand and supply it is likely that the private rented sector is likely to continue to grow. This sector is the most under regulated sector of housing and contains the highest proportion of non-decent homes. In 2008, less than 50% of private rented homes housing people on benefits were considered decent.

One of the key challenges we face is how to improve standards in the private sector when the property maintenance and energy efficient are at the discretion of the landlord. We are therefore looking at opportunities to raise awareness with tenants and landlords to ensure high standards are achieved. Our participation and marketing of the Essex Landlord Accreditation Scheme is one example of this.

We are keen to continue to raise standards in the private rented sector and plan to commission a stock modelling survey in 2015 to provide the Council with data on key housing indicators that will allow us to focus our resources and target specific housing related problems.

Since October 2013 we have employed a temporary empty homes and housing officer. This has increased our ability encourage owners to bring their empty home into better use through cooperation and using enforcement provisions if necessary. The enforcement provisions include the power to compulsory purchasing a property. Other provisions include the application of Empty Dwelling Management Orders

(EDMO) that gives the council the right to possession of the dwelling but not ownership. Since 2012 the Councils intervention has resulted in 185 properties brought back into use. We hope that this post will be made permanent and the work will continue throughout the life of the Strategy.

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) are known to present a high risk in terms of general property standards and fire safety. Larger HMOs require a license to operate although the Council has identified only 1. We will utilise the skills of the empty homes officer to identify more HMOs and implement initiatives working with our partners in the fire service to address any hazards.

In 2015 and beyond, it is our intention to contribute to the Council health and wellbeing agenda. As part of this work we attempt to measure the cost savings to the NHS from the Councils interventions.

**Mobile homes** - The Council is responsible for the regulation of mobile homes used for habitation, the main provision being by means of licensing to protect the health, safety and welfare of the occupants. The Council licences 38 caravan sites totalling 237 caravans. Since the introduction of the Mobile Homes Act 2013 the council will be better able to make sure site owners are complying with the terms of their site licence.

## **Energy efficiency**

Fuel poverty and excess winter death are issues in Uttlesford. The latest Local Authority profile indicates that 9.4% of the Uttlesford districts households were deemed fuel poor (based on the "Low income, high cost" methodology) in 2012. This is less than the national average (10.4%), but the highest in Essex. (Essex highest: Uttlesford 9.4%, Essex lowest: Basildon 6.1%).

From 2011 - 2012 there were 54 excess winter deaths in Uttlesford. This is around 29.5% additional deaths, this is higher than the national average (16.1%) (Essex highest: 33.8% Braintree, Essex lowest: 11.73% Rochford).

We are rolling out the Government Green Deal ECO programme to target energy inefficient properties and deliver better health outcomes essential to reduce cold weather related illness and winter mortality.

We are also offering a scheme whereby residents can sign up to reduce utility bills by switching provider. This scheme is working really well and providing savings for residents.

The Council requires the development of new build properties to meet national sustainable standards across all tenures to ensure that high levels of energy efficiency can be embedded within high quality development.

## **Key Outcomes in delivering this Strategy**

Climate Local Strategy delivered.

Empty Homes brought back into use

Landlords Forum held

Winter campaign successfully run

Disabled facilities grants allocated

Home repair assistance grants allocated.

BRE Survey commissioned and action plan implemented.

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) action plan developed and implemented

Funding gained for improvements to private sector house condition.

Improvements to Council stock continue to be completed

HRA Business Plan published.

Tenant Regulatory Panel reports to Housing Board with review findings.

#### **4. Creating balanced communities by delivering sustainable, safe, attractive and healthy places to live while meeting local housing needs.**

We want to create balanced communities with a mix of tenure type and size, good amenities and services and healthy places for people to live and work.

##### **Creating Sustainable Communities**

As new developments are planned, planning, housing and health colleagues within the Council will work together to ensure that adequate facilities are provided alongside housing. This will include community facilities, health centres and schools.

##### **Health and Wellbeing**

We will work with Uttlesford Futures to ensure that the Housing Strategy can inform the West Essex Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

We will continue to take part in the Health and Wellbeing group and the wider Local Strategic Partnership. These groups help us to understand the wider issues in the District, inform our work plan and progress projects together. This includes a project we are progressing which will help us understand the needs of the ageing population in Uttlesford and how we meet these needs in the future. This will be completed during 2015/16 and published jointly.

We are also planning to work with other providers represented on the Health and Wellbeing Board to ensure that we understand other specialist requirements in Uttlesford. This includes The Alzheimer's Society, Carers UK and Mind.

##### **Economic Development**

Economic Development is a priority in Uttlesford, with thriving town centres and successful businesses providing key services.

The Economic Development Strategy seeks to enable people, communities and business to be what they want to be by providing:

- Help to start and stay in business
- Help to start exporting or export more
- Access to superfast broadband
- Help for town centres with their viability and vitality
- Help for business to expand in or locate in Uttlesford
- Help to persuade more people to visit Uttlesford

This document is available on our website [www.uttlesford.gov.uk](http://www.uttlesford.gov.uk)

The priorities in the Economic Development Strategy are critical for a sustainable community, residents need to be able to live and work in a sustainable location with good service centres.

## **Equalities**

We want to ensure that all of our residents experience the same level of service when approaching the Council. Inclusion is very important to us and we are working towards the Achieving Level of the Equality Standard. This involves analysing our services and ensuring they all reach the same high standard. Our Single Equality Duty Scheme helps us to ensure this.

We are committed to completing an equality impact assessment on all of our new policies as they are published to ensure they meet this standard.

For the purposes of Equality Impact assessments undertaken by the Council, we also consider 'Rurality' due to the nature of the district. To ensure that we understand who makes up our communities, we try to work with groups and information available to us, to ensure that we maintain inclusion as a strong theme for cohesion. In developing this understanding, we work principally with the following groups;

The Uttlesford Area Access Group, Support4Sight, Deaf Blind UK, Council for Voluntary Services Uttlesford, the Volunteer Centre, Uttlesford Community Travel, Uttlesford Taxi Forum and the Uttlesford Transport Forum, the Tenants Forum, individuals and groups from our larger ethnic populations of Eastern European and Nepalese residents.

We also work with parishes and Carver Barracks, where rural isolation can reduce access to services to meet a community need. We want to make Uttlesford a safe place to live and projects around Hate Crime and Anti-Social behaviour are put in place to do this. The Council has supported the Essex Pride event each year and has flown the Rainbow Flag to support staff and residents and had also undertaken an exhibition to support Disability History month and included many local organisations in putting this together.

**Black and minority ethnic requirements** - As our evidence base shows, the majority of residents are white British, however we want to ensure that our housing and services meet the needs of the whole community. We will continue to analyse data about the District, review our housing waiting list and ensure that those from BME communities are treated fairly and have the same chances available to them as the wider community.

**Gypsy and travellers** – Gypsies and Travellers were captured as a distinct ethnic group for the first time in the 2011 Census and make up 0.2 % of the overall population. Currently there are 43 Gypsy and Traveller pitches on 17 private sites with permanent planning permission, 17 pitches on one county council owned site and 1 Travelling Showpeople site within Uttlesford. However the Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment (2014) concluded that Uttlesford needs to provide 26 additional pitches over the period 2013 to 2033. Progress on this will be made through 2015/16 alongside the new Local Plan.

We want to ensure that Gypsy and Traveller rights and needs are integrated in our policies and services.

### **Meeting the needs of our Council tenants**

We will continue to relaunch the tenant participation service under the 'Get Involved' banner and visit local areas holding community fun days. These have been really successful in encouraging residents to engage with Council services.

Annual tenancy inspections are now in place and ensure that tenants are given the help and support they need in maintaining their tenancy.

We have successfully set-up a tenant regulatory panel who are delivering comprehensive co regulatory framework. Their current project will pull together service standards for sheltered housing.

An Anti-Social Behaviour policy has recently been put in place which will give greater guidance for staff and residents when there are problems in a neighbourhood.

### **Housing for local people**

We have also introduced a new Allocations Policy which places greater emphasis on those with a local connection. This policy was introduced in January 2015 and will ensure that those applying for housing have the relevant links to Uttlesford before joining our housing register.

All of these documents can be found on the Councils website [www.uttlesford.gov.uk](http://www.uttlesford.gov.uk)

### **Anti-Social Behaviour**

The Council doesn't tolerate anti-social behaviour and has a dedicated officer focusing on this issue. Their role is to work with the local community and partner organisations to tackle anti-social behaviour and improve community relations.

Uttlesford District Council is a member of the District wide Community safety partnership (CSP). This group pledged their commitment to a set of anti-social behaviour standards set by the Home Office in 2010.

Uttlesford Community Safety Partnership also works alongside Uttlesford District Council to reduce the occurrence of hate crime and provide an appropriate response to any reports received. Alongside all the relevant agencies, the Council actively encourages the reporting of hate crimes and incidents.

## **Floating Support**

Funded by Essex Supporting People and provided by Family Mosaic, Floating Support is a short-term service that **provides support to vulnerable people, regardless of their tenure**, who may be experiencing problems with maintaining their accommodation or have health or other issues which affect their ability to cope with day-to-day living.

Their aim is to enable people to live independently in the community and assist with looking at housing options for those in need of a home. They also provide assistance for those with tenancies or owner-occupiers. With the intention of gradually reducing the support as the situation improves, they can work with residents for up to two years or until they no longer need the support.

## **Working with Service Users**

We will continue to involve service users in shaping the services that they use and that affect their lives. This will be through the tenant forum, ongoing consultation events with older people, young people, those with specialist needs etc. We will continue to host a yearly Housing Strategy conference to create a chance to debate key issues and update and inform the Housing Strategy.

We will publish an easy read executive summary of the Housing Strategy to ensure that all service users can understand and shape our priorities.

## **Key Outcomes in delivering this Strategy**

BME review data published and a way forward identified.  
Equality impact assessments completed on new documents.  
Economic Development Strategy delivered  
Gypsy and Traveller sites identified and delivered.  
Progress made on meeting equality standards.  
Service users fully involved in key decisions.  
Housing Strategy informs the West Essex Health and Wellbeing Strategy  
Easy read executive summary of the Housing Strategy published.

## Monitoring the Housing Strategy

The Housing Strategy has been written at a time when Government policy is changing, as these proposals are developed, the Council will be looking at the impact and reviewing the Housing Strategy to take account of it. This will be done in consultation with the Housing Board and will need to be approved by Cabinet.

The Housing Strategy action plan will be monitored and updated twice a year, a report will then be presented to the Housing Board and Tenant Forum.

Our Housing Strategy Conference will be held annually to discuss progress on the Housing Strategy, set new targets and celebrate success.