

Housing Strategy

Consultation Draft

May 2017



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Glossary of terms

AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
BRE	Building Research Establishment
BREEAM	Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method
CLG	Communities and Local Government
CLT	Community Land Trust
DFG	Disabled-Facilities Grant
DHP	Discretionary Housing Payment
EPC	Energy Performance Certificate
HCA	Homes and Communities Agency
HERO	Housing, Energy and Retraining Options
HMO	House in Multiple-Occupation
HIA	Home Improvement Agency
HHSRS	Housing, Health and Safety Rating System
LHA	Local Housing Allowance
MoD	Ministry of Defence
OMR	Open Market Rents
SAP	Standard Assessment Procedure
S106	Section 106
SHELAA	Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment
SHMA	Strategic Housing Market Assessment

Housing association	Also known as registered provider, registered social provider (RSL) or social housing provider. A provider of affordable housing which is registered with Government's Homes and Communities Agency.
Affordable housing	Also known as social housing. Generic term for all social housing tenures.
Social rented housing	Owned by a housing association and let to eligible households in housing need. Rents are set through the national rent regime but are generally around 50-60% of market rents.
Affordable rented housing	Owned by a housing association and let to eligible households in housing need. Rents and service charges can be set at up to 80% of market rents but tend to be capped at a lower level to ensure housing benefit can cover all eligible costs.
Intermediate housing	Owned by a housing association which is sold or rented to eligible households at a cost above social rent levels but below market levels. Applicants can have a household income of up to £80,000 per year. Priority is given to military personnel and, for a limited period, to those with a local connection to the District. Intermediate housing includes shared equity, shared ownership and intermediate rented housing.

Why housing matters

Housing and health are intrinsically linked. The home where we live and the location of that home has a massive impact on our overall health and wellbeing. Good housing policy that is strongly underpinned by planning creates strong and healthy communities. Our Housing Strategy's overarching aim is to try to meet the District's housing need. Whether that means home adaptations for older or vulnerable people; more purpose-built older people's accommodation; or more family-sized affordable and starter homes – and to try to ensure they are built where they are needed.

Whether a home has been neglected and is cold, damp and full of hazards; whether a home is under-occupied or over-crowded; or whether it is isolated or in an unsustainable location – it will have a negative impact on our lives. This Housing Strategy aims to tackle these issues. We also aim to continue to combat homelessness by tackling the root causes of it: whether it is debt, mental health or domestic abuse to list some – we aim to help people before they face eviction and a life of rough sleeping on the streets.

We know that our District is very expensive to live in – with house prices up to thirteen times higher than average wages it is almost impossible for younger people to step onto the housing ladder. Yet home ownership is their ambition. Our Housing Strategy aims to support as many innovative schemes from 'Starter Homes' and shared-ownership to micro-homes as we can to give our young people the chance to own their own home in the District where they grew up. We need to make sure we have enough older people's supported housing and accommodation for vulnerable people such as people with mental or physical ill health issues, or military personnel re-adapting to civilian life.

We want to enable as many local people that grew up in this District and who want to remain in this District to be able to do so. We will support local connection criteria for all affordable homes that we are able to in order to comply with Government policy. We believe that local connection policies help to keep families and communities together – which also promotes overall wellbeing and is a major part of the solution in preventing isolation and loneliness.

This Housing Strategy is based on policies devised by the elected members of this Council combined with a comprehensive Local Housing Needs Study that has examined the housing needs of all of our residents. We are sure it will make a major difference to ensuring people are living in the best possible accommodation to meet their needs, thereby promoting their overall health and wellbeing.

– Councillor Michelle Lowe, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Health

The journey so far

Back in 2016, the Council opted to review its existing Housing Strategy with a view to identifying more effective approaches to the provision of housing and related services within the District.

In order to kick-start the process, the Council's elected members were invited to participate in a housing strategy development workshop and which was led by the Council's Portfolio Holder for Housing and Health. Through that process participating members were able to agree a short-list of preferred options and this subsequently formed the general direction of travel. This was all then presented to a wide-ranging audience at the Council's last housing forum and with Marcus Jones MP and Minister for Local Government as its keynote speaker. At that point, and with the support of its partners, the Council committed to develop a full new Housing Strategy with the key aim of better integrating housing and health services.

A Local Housing Needs Study was subsequently commissioned and this provided a wealth of information on a wide-range of housing needs down to individual District ward level. The Council was then able to cross-reference its updated housing intelligence with feedback from members, partners and the wider community in order to develop a more detailed understanding of the District's housing requirements. At that point, the Council was able to determine its strategic priorities going forward and develop a wide-range of contributory actions - all of which are now set out in this Housing Strategy.

If required, a second edition of this Housing Strategy will be issued in order to take into account developing policy and with particular regard to the Council's emerging Local Plan, elements of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 and Government's Housing White Paper (February 2017): 'Fixing Our Broken Housing Market'.

With a significant proportion of existing and long-established housing strategy continuing to be effective, this new document only focuses on areas where updated evidence needs to be reviewed and/or a change in approach is required. Therefore, this Housing Strategy should be read in conjunction with individual housing sub-strategies and action plans.

Key policy context and supporting evidence base

With several local, county and national policies in place and a wide-range of supporting evidence, the following is just a summary of those that are key and most topical in the development of this Housing Strategy.

Sevenoaks District Community Plan Priorities 2016-19

Updated in 2016, the Council's Community Plan Priorities 2016-19 sets out a number of priorities which have helped to guide this Housing Strategy. This includes the provision of affordable housing, support for older and vulnerable people to live more independently, and wider health-related issues such as social isolation and loneliness.

Existing and emerging Local Plan

The Council is intending to update and adopt a new Local Plan by 2019 and this will set its strategic priorities through to 2035. With scope for a new policy direction through the emerging Local Plan, this Housing Strategy will be inform that process.

Housing White Paper 2017

Government has set out its proposals for future housing legislation over four chapters in its latest Housing White Paper. These are: 1) Planning for the right homes in the right places; 2) Building homes faster; 3) Diversifying the market; and 4) Helping people now. Although much of the detail is still to be agreed, this Housing Strategy broadly reflects these Government priorities.

Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2015

Completed in 2015, the Council's latest Strategic Housing Market Assessment was undertaken as part of a wider West Kent analysis and underpins the development of housing, economic development and regeneration policies. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment is a key evidence base for this Housing Strategy and the emerging Local Plan.

Local Housing Needs Study 2016

Whereas the Strategic Housing Market Assessment aims to balance the housing market, the Local Housing Needs Study was undertaken to qualify housing aspirations and provides much more detailed housing-related data down to individual ward level. This provides information across all housing types and tenures as well as a wide-range of client groups, including older and vulnerable people. Again, the Local

Housing Needs Study is a key evidence base for this Housing Strategy and the emerging Local Plan.

West Kent Housing and Homelessness Strategy

Being updated in 2017, the West Kent Housing and Homelessness Strategy sets out common areas of work and related sub-regional housing aims and objectives. In the new edition, and for the first time, the strategy will also include some general housing objectives in addition to what has previously been a document focused solely on homelessness.

Better Homes: Localism, Aspiration and Choice - A Housing Strategy for Kent and Medway

The Housing Strategy for Kent and Medway sets out several objectives, including the delivery of key infrastructure to support managed growth and housing delivery, regeneration of disadvantaged neighbourhoods, providing housing choice and affordability, retrofitting of the existing housing stock and supporting vulnerable people through good housing and support services.

West Kent Integration Deal

The West Kent Integration Deal has been created to implement the King's Fund¹ recommendations by creating a person-centred approach to the health and wellbeing of the population. This also ties in with the Kent Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Live Well Kent and the Council's own Health Inequalities Action Plan.

The Care Act 2014

The Care Act 2014 positions housing as central in the overhaul of the care system in England. The Act encourages providers to establish and develop services that: 1) Promote people's independence, connections and wellbeing; 2) Prevent or postpone the need for care and support; 3) Put people in control and ensuring that services respond to what they need; 4) Give carers a right to assessment for support; and 5) Promote the integration of health and social care.

¹ The Kings Fund: kingsfund.org.uk

Current housing profile

As at 01/04/16, there were 49,820 dwellings in the District and with a split of 85% private and 15% social sector tenures. Within the private sector, 73% of dwellings were owner-occupied and 12% private rented.

Market housing

With the supply of new housing nowhere near matching growth in demand, local property prices have continued to rise steeply. The ratio of median house price to median gross annual salary has increased by nearly ten times the rate of average annual salaries across Kent in the last twelve-years and with the District seeing the largest increase of all local authority areas. Undertaken by the National Housing Federation, research has found that the District is now the fourth most expensive local authority area in the whole of the South-East outside of London.²

	House price (£)		Income to be affordable (£)*		Actual household income (£)
	2000	2016	2000	2016	2016
Lower quartile	96,500	272,000	24,125	68,000	19,500
Median	143,250	355,000	35,813	88,750	32,500

Table 1 (Source: Local Housing Needs Study) * (Based on x3.5 household income and 10% deposit)

As demonstrated in Table 1, the District's lower quartile and median house prices have grown significantly in the period 2000-2016. The results of this growth are clearly evident when compared alongside actual household income.

Taking into account the diverse nature of the District and breaking down average area-based values, properties are found to be less expensive in Swanley and Edenbridge than, say, in Sevenoaks Town, though affordability still remains an issue across the District as a whole. With housing need and supply being that much more acute in the District's rural areas, property prices can be even greater and particularly in the south of the District.

Private rented sector

The District's private rented housing accounts for just 12.6% of the total housing stock. Combined with high rents across the District, the private rented sector does not provide a great deal of viable options for low and middle-income households. For instance, the Local Housing Needs Study found that an income of at least £43,248 would be required for an average lower-quartile private rented property in the

² Home Truths 2016/17, National Housing Federation

District. As a result, and as evidenced in several studies, there is a continuing out-migration of younger and economically-active people in search of cheaper housing elsewhere.

Private rents (mean) per calendar month		
	2010 (£)	2016 (£)
1-bed	668	835
2-bed	889	1,135
3-bed	1,246	1,458
4-bed	2,555	2,678

Table 2 (Source: gov.uk)

LHA rates per week: High Weald (£) ³		LHA rates per week: NW Kent (£)	
Shared-accommodation	77.39	Shared-accommodation	70.84
1-bed	135.36	1-bed	124.69
2-bed	176.56	2-bed	153.02
3-bed	223.19	3-bed	174.43
4-bed	336.82	4-bed	242.40

Table 3 (Source: gov.uk)

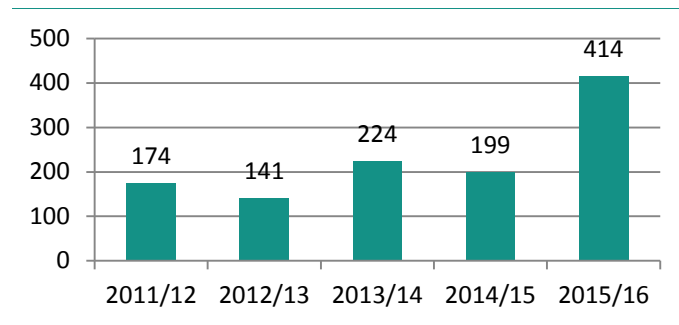
Affordable housing

There are currently 7,733 affordable housing dwellings of all types and sizes in the District and these are owned and managed by several different housing associations, with West Kent Housing Association holding the majority of the stock. Of that housing, around 91% is rented and 9% intermediate housing. In addition, there is a wide-range of supported housing for older and vulnerable people situated throughout the District. By far, the majority of the District's affordable housing is of social rented tenure and, at around 60% of open market rents, the cheapest form of subsidised housing. Since 2011, the majority of new-build rented housing has been designated as affordable rented, however, which is typically set at up to 80% of open market rents.

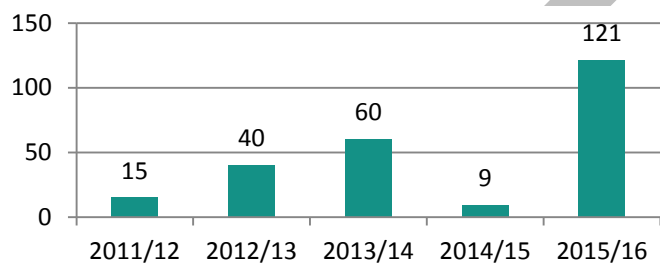
³ Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates – the maximum housing benefit which can be paid in each respective area

Housing supply (2011/12 - 2015/16)

- Total housing completions (new-build only)



- Affordable housing completions (including new-build and change of tenure)



Strategic housing priorities

Having taken into account findings from the recent Local Housing Needs Study and a wide-range of other local housing and health intelligence, the Council has established the following three strategic housing priorities for the coming years.

1. Providing a good mix of decent and affordable housing across tenures

2. Improving the quality and use of the existing housing stock

3. Meeting the needs of vulnerable and low-income households

Housing Vision

'To enable a good supply of quality housing that meets the needs of residents of the District and which is located in safe and sustainable communities to support and promote the economy and health and well-being of all'.

Who we consulted:

Priority 1: Providing a good mix of decent and affordable housing across tenures

Land

The District is designated 93% Green Belt and with 60% in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. In addition, land and property values are typically the highest in Kent and amongst the most expensive in the UK. This presents a number of challenges in the delivery of new housing and particularly affordable tenures. In such a high value area, developable land is mostly secured by private developers able to pay more than housing associations. As a consequence, land-led affordable housing schemes are very few and far between and the majority of new affordable housing is consequently secured via planning agreements on private developments.

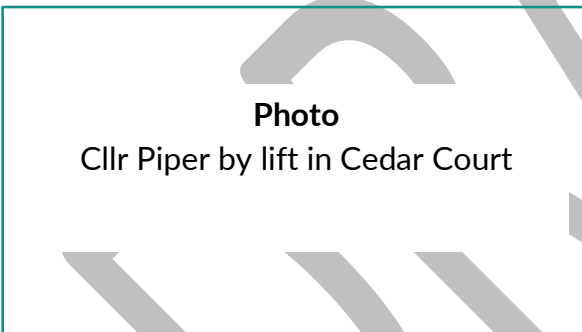
The District Council's latest Strategic Housing Market Assessment has found an unconstrained need for 12,400 homes over the period 2015-35. With a Government focus on securing development through non-Green Belt land, the Council will need to adopt an approach that focusses on supply within settlements and brownfield land. In doing so, the majority of housing is likely to come forward in the top-tier settlements of Sevenoaks, Swanley and Edenbridge and with a particular urban regeneration focus on Swanley. There will also need to be limited growth of lower-tier settlements in the District's rural areas. The Council's recent Call for Sites process will enable it to evaluate additional development opportunities across the District into the future.

With limited land, the Council will also need to continue to encourage creative development whilst continuing to maximise every opportunity for affordable housing through the planning process. For example, a good use of land could be to enable alternative employment space on a smaller footprint of an existing commercial site which is not performing a function any longer and to then utilise the rest of the site for housing. Another option could be for potential air-space development above an existing shop, station, office or other building, though this would be subject to a building's structure. These and other more creative approaches will need to be increasingly considered in the future.



Design

New housing must be designed to ensure that it meets the needs of an ageing population and remains fit for purpose long into the future. For instance, the inclusion of assistive technologies in new-build properties can help to enable a person to live independently as they become less mobile. An example would be the inclusion of a lift in a flatted development to enable an older person to continue to occupy a home as they age and become less mobile. The creation of wheelchair accessible or adaptable step-free housing is another means to support those with disabilities. As recently provided in the new supported housing scheme for adults with learning disabilities in Edenbridge, other relatively simple measures such as adjustable cookers and sinks can enable people to continue to live independently as they age.



With the recent removal of the Code for Sustainable Homes, the Building Regulations are now the key standard for affordable housing. Space standards in the social sector are set by Government's Homes and Communities Agency, though these are set to be reviewed following the issue of Government's Housing White Paper and its intention to see more housing built through increased density. A balance will be required, however, to achieve density aims whilst still enabling housing with additional space for wheelchair use.

With a rapidly increasing requirement for digital services and home working, the Council must also seek to enable the building of technology-ready housing. Latest statistics show that 5.44% of the District's population works from home compared to a figure of 3.47% for England. Not surprisingly, home working is expected to grow significantly in the coming years and the Council must step up its activity in this area

by building housing fit for the twenty-first century as well as being adaptable for future technologies.

The Council now requires that all new housing developments should have fibre broadband to pavement level in order that housing can be connected as and when the service becomes available in each area. Alongside its work to improve broadband connectivity across the District, the Council will be increasingly able to take advantage of IT-based assistive technologies in the coming years. This will better enable people to remain living independently in their own home whilst generating significant efficiency savings across sectors in the process. Building the right housing will also support the move from analogue telecommunications to fully digital infrastructure.

New housing must also be much more efficient in energy and water use. By building more efficient housing, the District can play its part in protecting the environment whilst also contributing to the Kent Environment Strategy and wider national carbon reduction targets. Costs can also be minimised for households as the price of utilities increase and this will help with overall housing affordability in the future.

Strategic priorities

The Council will consider its surplus land for housing.

The Council will seek to develop sites to maximise land use and inform future housing strategy.

The Council will promote housing that is technology-ready and with space to enable home working.

The Council will aim to pilot emerging IT-based assistive technologies as part of its emerging strategy and feed this into its new affordable housing work programme.

The Council will aim that all new affordable housing developments will be fit for life.

The Council will consider local space standards for new housing development.

Affordable housing

Government's Affordable Homes Programme has switched from a capital to revenue-based model and housing associations are required to maximise revenue on which to borrow against. To support this change in approach, Government introduced an 'Affordable Rent' tenure which enables housing associations to increase revenue by setting rents at up to 80% of open market rents. In areas such as the Sevenoaks District, however, rents at 80% typically far exceed Local Housing Allowance (otherwise known as LHA) rates and affordability issues consequently arise. To address this, the Council has generally supported housing associations to set rents at up to 80% but to a threshold of the respective LHA. In doing so, this has provided a protection net for those fully reliant on welfare benefits.

This approach has worked well though further cuts have seen housing associations increasingly struggle to achieve a financially viable position on capped rents and particularly now the freeze on inflation-indexed rent increases has taken effect. In response, the Council has agreed to relax its cap if a particular scheme is found to unviable when applying the respective LHA threshold. It is recognised, however, that the flip-side of this new approach will be a proportion of future affordable housing units being less affordable for those taking up any uncapped tenancies. That said, the District's existing affordable housing stock will continue to be subsidised at 60% of open market rents, and well within LHA levels, so the vast majority of affordable housing relets in the future will continue to be offered at the most affordable option available. By adopting this change in approach, the Council is now better able to support its housing association partners to continue to develop affordable housing in the District. However, the Council will continue to review its position in respect of capping as more information emerges about Government's proposed new rent standard which may see a return to inflation-linked rent increases when the current freeze comes to an end in 2020.

Net affordable housing imbalance by Placemaking area 2016/17 - 2020/21⁴						
Place-making area	General needs		Older persons		Total	% by area
	1/2 bed	3+ bed	1 bed	2+ bed		
Darent Valley	40	0	3	0	43	7.1
North East	121	10	22	5	158	26.2
North West	80	10	9	0	98	16.2
Sevenoaks Urban and Surrounds	129	13	23	1	166	27.5
South	65	2	12	0	78	12.9
Upper Darent Corridor	28	26	3	3	60	9.9
Total	463	62	71	8	604	100
% by size and designation	76.7	10.3	11.8	1.3	100	

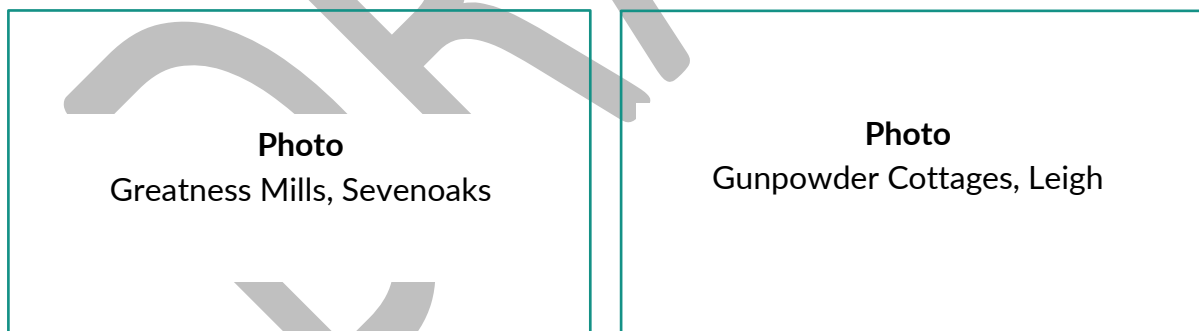
Table 4 – Sources: Local Housing Needs Study; CORE Lettings and Sales

⁴ See page 62 for the District's Placemaking areas

Intermediate housing

Intermediate housing, and particularly shared-ownership, has been an effective means to enable low to middle-income households in the District to access home ownership. In addition, the Zone Agent waiting list for shared-ownership is consistently overly-subscribed for the District and demonstrates an ongoing demand despite rising values. Intermediate housing can also enable existing affordable housing tenants to access home ownership and, in doing so, help to free-up much needed rented housing for others in need. The shared-ownership model is flexible and allows households to staircase up in stages to outright ownership or to maintain their share and rent the remainder for an indefinite period. With the housing market being volatile at present, this allows households to minimise the risk of running into negative equity and so can also provide a safety net for those already just about managing.

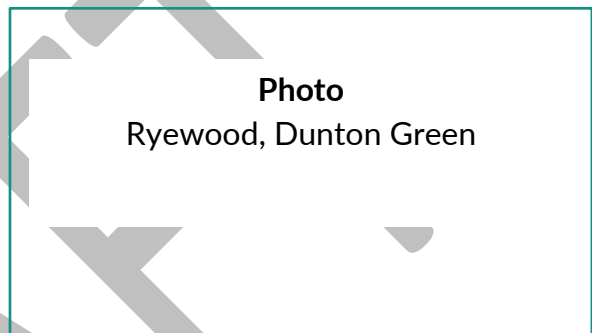
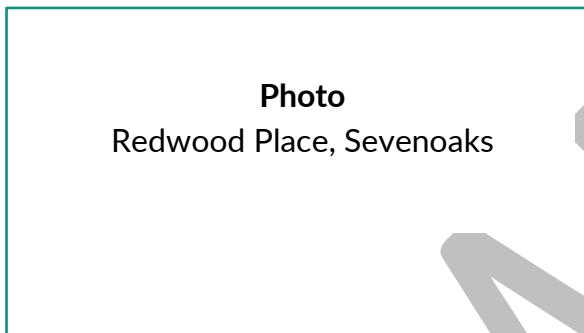
Recent research has highlighted that a significant proportion of shared-ownership resales are at the cheapest end of the market and a good and often cheaper option to buying similar products on new-build developments. Where existing shared-ownership properties are to be marketed, applicants on the Zone Agent waiting list are given first refusal in order to help others in need before being sold on the open market. As a result, and to make best use of this opportunity, the Council has started to actively market resales itself to raise awareness of this particular housing option for low-income households.



Government has set out its intention to increase home ownership through a mix of tenures and with a 10% target of all sites to include affordable home ownership. This is now to include a percentage of 'Starter Homes' set by local authorities as opposed to a previously planned mandatory 20% across all sites. The length of time before any homes could be sold on the open market has also been increased from five to fifteen-years. The Homes and Communities Agency is now exploring joint venture arrangements by purchasing land for 'Starter Homes' development and this presents a new opportunity for the Council to explore in the future. With a property value threshold of £312,500 before any discount is applied, however, the Council will be

limited in the areas it can seek to provide this product due to such high property values.

Moving forward, and to help prevent further out-migration of the District's existing and emerging workforce, the Council will work to provide a mixed package of intermediate affordable housing that can respond to local needs and sub-area markets. In doing so, this will also contribute to wider economic development strategy as set out in the Council's Community Plan. With a greater emphasis on intermediate tenures nationally and Government's Affordable Homes Programme reflecting that approach, the likelihood of creating viable schemes at maximum contribution levels will also be that much greater in the future.



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Strategic priorities

To enable a better understanding of local recruitment and retention issues with local employers and to help identify any potential joint ventures for the provision of affordable housing with larger employers, an employer study will be commissioned (to be funded through S106 affordable housing planning gains).

To maximise take-up of new shared-ownership housing for those with a local connection to the District, the Council will undertake a wide-range of early promotional activity to raise local awareness.

The Council will encourage housing associations to work towards the Chartered Institute of Housing's Shared-Ownership: Charter for Housing framework to promote the benefits of shared-ownership housing.

The Council will seek to increase its list of preferred affordable housing providers including specialist providers and those with access to a wide-range of finance options, including private institutional investment and other cross-subsidy models.

To help unlock unviable affordable housing projects, the Council will consider the use of S106 affordable housing funding to supplement projects in lieu of low or zero grant availability and/or where other viability issues may exist.

Through its company, the Council will seek to deliver a proportion of affordable housing on its own private developments as part of its growing property portfolio and objectives contained in its Economic Development Strategy.

Through the 2016-21 affordable homes programme, the Council will work with the Homes and Communities Agency in order to identify any sites suitable for it to purchase directly for 'Starter Homes' provision.

The Council will seek new investment opportunities for affordable housing through the Kent & Medway Economic Partnership.

Affordable rural housing

With limited opportunities for housing development in the District's rural areas, the Council seeks to deliver the majority of rural affordable housing through its rural exceptions site policy. If a local housing need exists and is evidenced through an independent study, affordable housing can potentially be built on Green Belt land for those in housing need and with a local connection to the respective village. To

evidence need in the District's rural areas, the Council part-funds Action with Rural Community in Kent to undertake housing needs surveys. Being a typically contentious area of housing strategy, the provision of affordable housing is lengthy and involves a great deal of community and parish council involvement. Key to the successful delivery of affordable housing is the guarantee that all exceptions housing remains for local people and in perpetuity. Government has also announced that local connection rules can apply to 'Starter Homes' provision on rural exceptions sites and this is seen as a positive for the Council's affordable housing work programme by introducing another intermediate product.

In early 2017, the Council was successful in receiving funding from Government to develop affordable housing in its rural areas through the setting up of Community Land Trusts (otherwise known as CLTs). In order to maximise this funding, the Council will work with Action with Rural Communities in Kent and its West Kent local authority partners to create a West Kent hub to promote rural housing development across the wider area and through measures including the sharing of expertise, resources, training, publicity and promotional events.



Strategic priorities

The Council will cross-reference data from the Local Housing Needs Study and undertake a review of its future approach to the provision of affordable housing in the District's rural areas having regard to the revised Kent Rural Housing Protocol 2017.

The Council will review its remaining land in order to identify any possible development opportunities and any potential joint ventures with partners by combining sites.

Where values permit, the Council will aim to provide an element of 'Starter Homes' on future rural exceptions sites.

Through the Community Housing Fund, the Council will work with Action with Rural Communities in Kent, and Tonbridge and Malling and Tunbridge Wells borough councils to develop a West Kent community-led housing hub to promote development in rural areas and encourage the creation of CLTs.

Additional action to be considered in the Local Plan review:

To adopt a rural policy that allows specialist housing on exceptions sites.

Private rented sector

With significant local demand, private rents in the District are typically high and do not offer many options for other than higher income households. The District's private rented sector is also one that now caters for a much more diverse range of people than ever before. For instance, the Local Housing Needs Study has found that higher income households in the District are often renting privately whereas in other parts of the country they would typically purchase. In addition, the two Local Housing Allowance (otherwise known as LHA) rates in the District do not reflect the actual cost of local lower-quartile private rents. With higher earners being able to pay and being perceived as less risky in terms of arrears, there is very little incentive for the District's private landlords to consider LHA rates when marketing their homes.

As a result, welfare-dependent households are often prevented from accessing the private rented sector due to affordability issues. In many cases, shortfalls can be considerable and way beyond the scope of most low-income households unless a top-up is made via Discretionary Housing Payment. As evidenced in several studies,

this contributes to a continuing out-migration of younger and economically-active people in search of cheaper housing elsewhere. As a result, the District is seeing a diminishing local workforce at a time when the local population is also ageing at a rapid rate. In order to improve housing options across the private rented sector, the Council needs to offer a range of landlord incentives to better encourage private landlords at the lower end of the market to accept welfare-dependent households. Although several incentives are already in place, the Council will consult the District's private landlords to identify other possible incentives to encourage take-up.

Institutional private rented sector

The emerging institutional private rented sector has been identified as a potentially significant means to tackle the District's housing crisis. This has also been recognised as a national priority with Rent-to-Buy housing featuring in Government's White Paper. Being a tenure which is typically purpose-built and with good management standards, this could also help to drive up standards in the existing private rented sector by pressuring private landlords through what would be a new and highly competitive product. With Government's intention to introduce more family-friendly tenancies of up to three-years as opposed to six to twelve months, institutional providers would also likely be well placed to deliver on this objective.

Several housing associations across the UK have started to develop private rented housing in order to generate a rental income surplus in lieu of low or zero grant and to cross-subsidise the delivery of affordable housing. Although this has not yet occurred in the District, the Council will need to increasingly explore this option with its partners in the future and as part of a wider package of affordable housing products.

Strategic priorities

In partnership with the South East England Council's group, the Council will request that Government reviews the District's Local Housing Allowance rates with a view to an increase across its two broad market rental areas.

The Council will review related data down to ward level in the Local Housing Needs Study and feed this into the review of the Local Plan.

To support the delivery of high standard private sector rented housing, the Council will work with providers to create policy-compliant schemes at the lower end of the market and seek to negotiate nominations agreements whereby those with a connection to the District will be prioritised.

The Council will work with its housing association partners to explore suitable cross-subsidy projects with an element of private rented housing.

The Council will consult private landlords to identify other potential incentives and seek to develop a more attractive landlord package.

Through its company, the Council will explore direct provision of private rented housing.

Market housing

The District's market housing requirements are very different to that of affordable housing. The Local Housing Needs Study has been able to compare demand with the existing housing stock profile in order to identify any mismatches between availability and aspirations. Whereas a need exists for additional one and two bed dwellings in the social sector, the Local Housing Needs Study has found that 72.1% of owner-occupied households intending to move in the next 5-years would like 3-bedrooms or more. In addition, 55.3% of those households have stated a preference for a detached house. It should be noted that a proportion of those intending to move will be looking to do so outside of the District, however.

Although generally high across the District, property values are that much higher in the District's commuter towns and villages as well as in areas with good quality private and state primary schools. As a whole, the local housing market reflects the generally affluent nature of the District. Through consultation as part of the Local Housing Needs Study, local estate agents have all confirmed that the District's housing market remains strong and with demand far outstripping supply.

With a growing population and a far greater proportion of older and retired households anticipated to stay put in larger housing as time goes by, demand for larger and executive housing will likely increase into the future. That said, the Council will also need to enable the delivery of smaller and more appealing housing for those wishing to downsize to more suitable housing.

Strategic priorities

The Council will cross-reference local market intelligence with data from the Local Housing Needs Study and feed this into the Local Plan review and with a particular emphasis given to the need for market housing for older people.

Modular housing and micro-homes

Government has recognised the part that modular housing has to play in a move towards wider construction methods. Having looked at several modular housing products, the Council has identified this form of construction as a good opportunity to enable the delivery of low-cost housing. By using off-site construction methods, development times can be significantly reduced and this would allow for rental income to be generated much more quickly. In doing so, this would create efficiencies through much shorter forward-funding timeframes.

Modern micro-homes have also been identified as having the potential to deliver high density development through creative design and good use of land. In doing so, this could also result in a much more affordable and increasingly fashionable housing solution and particularly for the District's younger people and first-time buyers. Micro-homes could also be developed as 'Starter Homes' or shared-ownership products and create a more affordable housing solution. With a higher than average anticipated turnover rate, this could also be a potential recycling solution through shared-ownership and open market resales, thereby multiplying the positive effects of related housing strategy well into the future.

In its latest Affordable Homes programme 2016-21, the Homes and Communities Agency has stated that it will expect to see an increasing quantity of innovative housing construction within its programme and with advantages matching its core criteria relating to value for money and speed of delivery.⁵ There is significant potential for this form of housing in the District, therefore, though the availability of suitable mortgage finance will need to be closely monitored as the sector develops.

⁵⁵ HCA Shared-Ownership and Affordable Homes Programme 2016 to 2021 Prospectus (April 2016)

Strategic priorities

The Council will cross-reference specific Local Housing Needs Study data on micro-homes with wider market research and feed this into local housing strategy and the emerging the Local Plan.

Through its company, the Council will aim to develop a pilot micro-homes scheme on one of its housing developments and use this as a blueprint for similar development elsewhere in the District.

Should a pilot prove to be successful, the Council will also seek to work with the Homes and Communities Agency, housing associations and other partners to deliver additional micro-homes schemes.

The Council will explore external funding opportunities for modular housing, including Government's Accelerated Construction initiative.

The Council will explore other larger modular products with a view to widening its enabling role through alternative construction methods and related business models.

The Council will share any consequent best practice in this new area of modular housing provision.

Self-build and custom housebuilding

Regulations now require that local authorities operate self-build and custom housebuilding registers for those seeking to acquire serviced plots of land and to enable a sufficient supply of land suitable for self and custom build housing to meet demand on the respective register. The Council is also required to consider expressed need when developing its housing strategies and considering plans for new housing on its own land. As at 01/05/17, the Council had received 31 expressions of interest and this will be used to inform the ongoing review of the Local Plan.

Being a Government priority and another potential solution to the District's growing housing need, the Council will need to increasingly consider this form of housing in developing housing strategy. Delivery of self-build housing will also contribute to meeting the objectively-assessed housing need as set out in the Council's Strategic Housing Market Assessment.

Strategic priorities

The Council will cross-reference data from the Local Housing Needs Study with self and custom build registers and other local intelligence in order to determine the true level of need and develop a subsequent plan of action.

The Council will also seek to work with the Homes and Communities Agency, housing associations and other partners to explore the delivery of self-build and custom-build housing.

The Council will work with the Right to Build Taskforce to further develop its current database and to prepare plans for land identification and allocation.

Through its recent Community Housing Fund and additional Self and Custom Build Housing funding allocations, the Council will explore the potential to develop a joint West Kent approach with its partner local authorities.

The Council will share any consequent best practice in this developing form of housing provision.

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Priority 2: Improving the quality and use of the existing housing stock

With such a high level of local housing need, the Council must continue to develop housing strategy which helps to improve, preserve and make best use of the District's current housing stock. In doing so, there will be less pressure on new development and local housing strategy will be that much more effective. As well as preserving the District's housing stock for future use, improvements can also contribute to a wide-range of health outcomes and reduce housing costs. For example, low-carbon retrofit can improve the condition of a property whilst helping to tackle health inequalities and reducing living costs in the process.

Housing stock condition

Undertaken by the Building Research Establishment (BRE) in 2016, the Council's latest private sector housing stock condition survey has estimated that 19% of properties in the private sector have category one hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). The total cost of mitigating those hazards is estimated to be £19.4 million. As would be expected, the District's affordable housing stock is generally in a better condition on indicators relating to hazards, disrepair and energy efficiency. This is, in part, due to wide-ranging improvement programmes to the affordable housing stock in the years leading up to the 2010 Decent Homes Standard.⁶ The District's affordable housing stock is now maintained at that level or beyond through several ongoing improvement and maintenance programmes.

As per the national picture, private dwellings perform the worst across key hazard indicators including excess cold, fuel poverty, fall hazards and disrepair. With housing condition being a key determinant of health and contributing to health inequalities, there is a continued need for provision of assistance in housing renewal. With limited renovation grant availability, the Council must seek to improve the District's housing stock through a combination of support, advice and enforcement powers. The Council is due to review and update its Housing Renewal Policy and this will set its private sector renewal policy moving forward.

⁶ Decent Homes Standard - minimum standard of housing conditions for all those who housed in the public sector

Photo
Example property in disrepair

Photo
Example property improvements

Strategic priorities

The Council will review and update its Housing Renewal Policy placing much greater emphasis on health outcomes.

The Council will review its enforcement role to identify any further potential regulatory interventions to improve the private sector housing stock condition.

The Council will monitor progress on the Decent Homes Standard and also work with providers to explore a potential local housing standard.

Energy efficiency and fuel poverty

The Council's latest private sector housing stock condition survey has found an average SAP rating of 54⁷, which is a measure of the property's thermal performance. This is almost on a par with the national level of 55. The survey also found that 14.3% of owner-occupied and 21.3% of private rented dwellings in the District are estimated to have Energy Performance Certificate (EPC)⁸ ratings below band E, which is a poor rating. Again, the private sector housing stock fares worse than the social sector and is reflective of generally poorer standards in the sector nationally.

Low-carbon energy retrofit measures are essential to tackle fuel poverty and positively contribute to a wide range of health outcomes. In doing so, this also helps to maintain and improve the housing stock whilst reducing the District's carbon footprint to contribute towards a targeted 34% reduction in carbon emissions by 2020. Around 9.92% of the District's residents suffer fuel poverty, which is slightly below the county average of 9.85%. With a higher level of solid-walled properties in the District's rural parishes and several areas not having access to mains gas, more people tend to experience fuel poverty. Not surprisingly, older people are more at

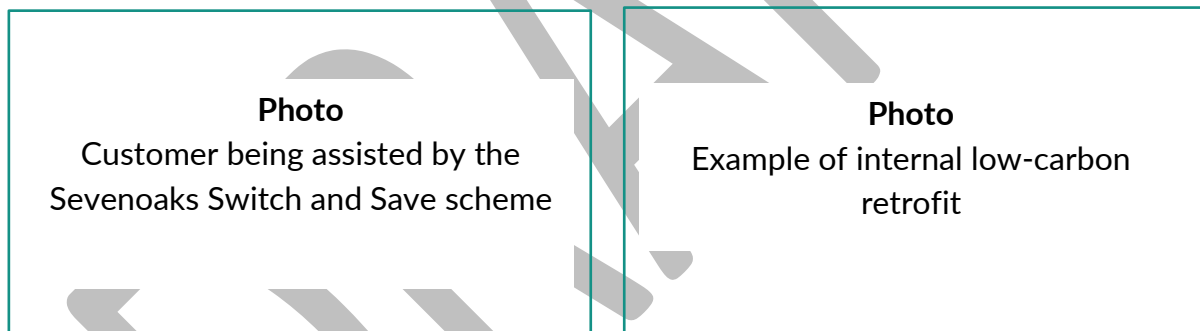
⁷ SAP – Standard Assessment Procedure: quantifies a dwelling's performance in terms of energy use per unit floor area

⁸ EPC: Energy Performance Certificate – rates the thermal efficiency of a building

risk of fuel poverty with the most common category one hazard found in homes of older people in the District being excess cold.

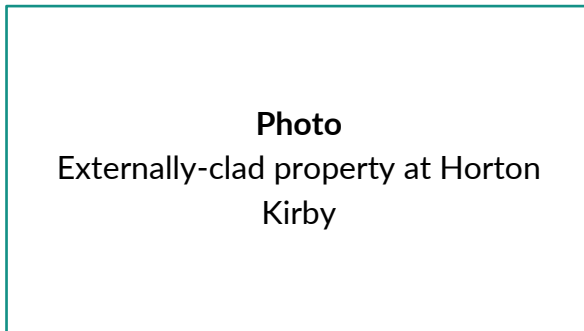
This can have serious knock-on effects such as chest complaints and increased risks of slips, trips and falls. In turn, this can result in older people spending lengthy periods in hospital and, as a direct consequence, become more infirm over time. More worryingly, research has found that there is a 23% increase in deaths from heart attacks and strokes during the winter months.⁹ Children can also suffer the consequences of cold housing with increased risk of respiratory problems, low weight gain and slower developmental progress.

In order to assist those struggling with energy bills, the Council has created an energy comparison and switching service to help people onto cheaper tariffs. The Sevenoaks Switch and Save service is available through an online facility and freephone service which can enable a person to compare and switch providers. Periodic energy switching surgeries are also offered and have been found to be particularly beneficial by enabling the Council to identify wider issues of concern and where support can be given. To date, the Council has enabled 163 switches and achieved combined savings of £46,950 in first year savings alone.



Funded by £4.02m grant from Government's Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC), the Council was also part of a joint project with Dartford Borough Council and Kent County Council to deliver external wall insulation and other low-carbon retrofit measures on hard-to treat properties. As well as improving thermal efficiency of the housing stock, the project also tested new technologies for efficiency by measuring positive health impacts through a subsequent monitoring programme. The Council was also successful in securing grant funding to test new IT-based retrofit technologies and this is part-way through completion. This will all help to inform future low-carbon retrofit strategy, both locally and nationally.

⁹ Excess Winter Mortality in England and Wales – Office for National Statistics (GB)



With Government's Green Deal programme now withdrawn and no replacement scheme at the time of writing this Housing Strategy, the Council must tackle energy efficiency and fuel poverty in other ways and until such time as a new national grant programme is introduced. In the interim period, the Council is working with its partners through the Kent and Medway Sustainable Energy Partnership in order to develop local strategy that prioritises the most vulnerable people in need.

For instance, the Warm Homes scheme provides a one-stop shop for those looking for insulation measures such as cavity and loft insulation or new energy efficient boilers. This is focussed on vulnerable and low-income groups experiencing high energy costs. Key priorities are set out in the Council's Climate Local Sevenoaks document. The Council has also recently submitted its latest biennial report to Government which sets out progress in this area of its work in the past two-years and also includes key objectives for the next two.¹⁰

Strategic priorities

The Council will develop local energy efficiency and fuel poverty strategy in the interim period and until such time as a new national initiative is introduced.

The Council will analyse results from its testing of modern retrofit technologies as part of its strategy to health-proof housing and produce an options report for the Housing and Health Advisory Committee to consider as potentially new energy initiatives.

The Council will, where required, integrate energy strategy with health strategy through the Health Action Team.

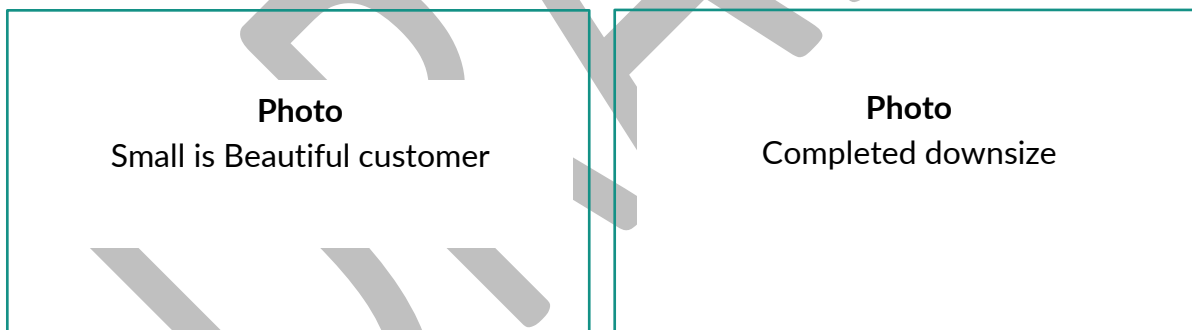
Once received, the Council will review EPC data from its recent stock condition survey and develop strategy to tackle properties with low ratings.

The Council will undertake another campaign to help raise awareness of the Sevenoaks Switch and Save scheme.

¹⁰ Home Energy and Conservation Act 1995 (HECA) report

As per the national picture, there is a high level of under-occupation across the District. The Council's key area of influence in this work programme is the social sector, however, and particularly in respect of older people. As would be expected, evidence has shown that older people tend to stay put if there are no suitable options in the local area where friends, family and support networks exist. This can result in many people remaining in homes that become unsuitable as they age and increase the risk of accidents and ill health. Local estate agents have indicated that the main drivers for older people looking to downsize are seeking more age-suitable accommodation, releasing equity for the future and, as is becoming more common, to provide a substantial deposit for their children.

In order to aid the downsizing process, the Council works with housing associations to help people to downsize into more manageable housing and can offer or signpost to a wide-range of support services such as the arranging of removal companies, house and loft clearances, through to setting up utilities accounts or appointing lawyers. Part-funded by the Council, the Small is Beautiful scheme has assisted 82 social tenants to downsize to more suitable housing in the last 3-years. For those wishing to stay put, the Council can offer disabled-facilities grants (otherwise known as DFGs) and other assistive technologies to support independent living, but this is not always the best and safest option. In such cases, the Council and its partners will work with the household in order to identify a wide-range of other support services.



If the Council is to make any great strides in this area of housing strategy, it must seek to enable housing which is much more appealing to those considering a move and in the areas where people already live. In doing so, demand for long-term care would be reduced with occupants being in more accessible and adaptable housing. With limited developable land, this is an ongoing challenge and the Council will need to expand its enabling role to one that is much more flexible.

Over-crowding

Conversely, the Council must continue to tackle overcrowding as this can have a negative effect on the health and wellbeing of those living in such circumstances. Overcrowding can also indicate hidden homeless people through sofa-surfing, for

instance. The Local Housing Needs Study has found that a total of 1,922 households in the District are classed as overcrowded according to the national Bedroom Standard.¹¹ With such a high mismatch in households to housing, this is a key area which needs to be tackled in a variety of ways through developing housing strategy.

Strategic priorities

The Council will cross-reference data relating to under-occupation in the Local Housing Needs Study and update its existing Under-Occupation Action Plan.

The Council will cross-reference data relating to over-crowding in the Local Housing Needs Study and undertake an options appraisal for future strategy.

The Council will undertake further investigations with estate agents in order to identify any ward-specific limitations and/or issues for older people wishing to downsize.

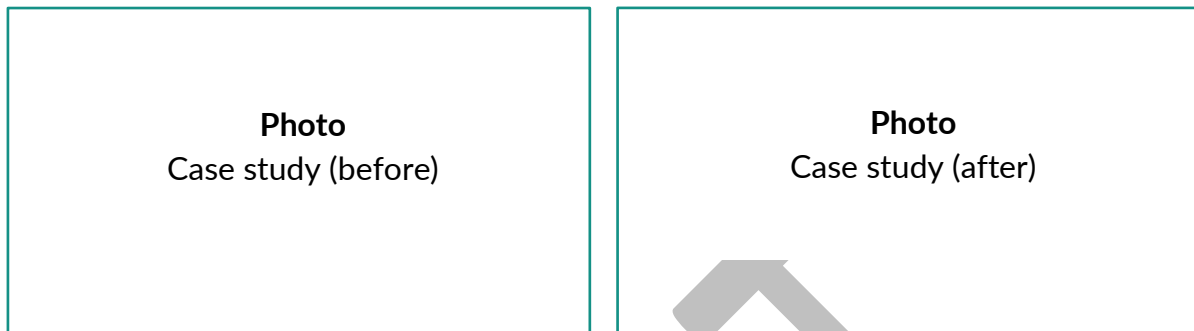
Long-term empty homes

Returning long-term empty homes back into use is part of the Council's wider strategy to tackle local housing affordability. As at 01/04/17, there were 324 long-term empty homes in the District. Long-term empty homes are defined as those having been vacant for 6-months or more and this is the point at which the Council will seek to intervene. Housing can remain empty for a number of reasons with examples being periods of probate, projects for future occupation or property owners seeking any uplift in property values and not wanting tenants in the meantime.

The Council provides support to property owners in several ways and this can range from simple advice and signposting through to repayable grant assistance to bring a property back up to a marketable standard. Being a key and existing housing resource, the Council will continue to focus local housing strategy on reducing the number of long-term empty homes in the District. In doing so, this will not only provide housing which is typically at the lower end of the market but also help to address any related anti-social behaviour or environmental impact that may occur as a result of properties sitting empty for lengthy periods.

¹¹ Section 325 of the Housing Act 1985

In its White Paper, Government has also indicated that it will continue to support local authorities in making best use of the existing housing stock by proving the same level of New Homes Bonus for bringing an empty home back into use as that of a new-build property. There is an added incentive to consider in this work programme, therefore.



Strategic priorities

Through developer contributions, the Council will explore the potential for a new bespoke product to provide repayable grant assistance for first-time buyers to purchase long-term empty homes at the lower end of the housing market.

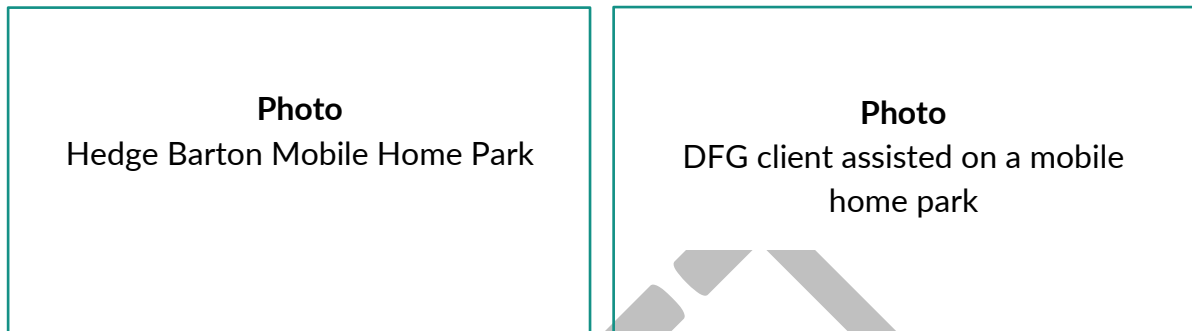
The Council will link up its long-term empty housing and commercial work programmes to identify joint solutions to return back to use premises such as empty shops with vacant accommodation above.

The Council will review and update its Empty Homes Action Plan when it expires at the end of 2017/18.

Mobile homes

With over 600 permanently-occupied mobile homes situated on twelve mobile home parks and several other single plot pitches, the District has the highest level of provision in Kent. In the main, mobile homes are occupied by those aged 55 and over and typically provide for an appealing retirement option. As would be expected, mobile homes can quickly deteriorate and, in the process, also lose value. This can often create a situation whereby an occupier is living with serious disrepair and no means to fund essential works. In turn, this can render the occupant at risk of accidents and poor health. Thermal efficiency is also seriously compromised as a mobile home deteriorates and residents can suffer fuel poverty and ill health as a direct consequence. With heating systems typically fuelled by electric or LPG, energy costs are also higher and this can see a greater proportion of mobile home residents suffering fuel poverty in comparison to those in conventional housing.

Through its site licensing powers, the Council monitors the District's mobile home parks as part of its routine inspection programme. With a growing older population and mobile homes consequently occupied for that much longer, it is likely that disrepair levels will grow over the coming years. As a result, the Council will need to monitor the situation and, if required, consider additional positive interventions to help to maintain the condition of mobile homes as they age.



Strategic priorities

The Council will track occupancy to disrepair rates and review housing and health strategy accordingly.

The Council will actively promote Disabled-Facilities Grants (DFGs) on mobile home parks to raise awareness.

The Council will actively promote its Sevenoaks Switch and Save Service on mobile home parks to help reduce energy costs amongst older occupiers.

Houses in Multiple-Occupation (HMOs)

Commonly known as HMOs, houses in multiple-occupation typically include several separate households in one building. There are currently seven 3-storey HMOs situated in the District and a further 250 smaller HMOs with 2-storeys or below. At present, only those HMOs with 3-storeys or above fall within national licensing requirements and the majority of the District's HMOs are not licensed, therefore. Instead, the Council inspects non-licensable properties through the Housing, Health and Safety Rating System and this helps to maintain standards across the sector. Government is currently reviewing legislation with a view to potentially extending licensing to HMOs with 2-storeys and five or more people sharing facilities. Being high-risk housing, the Council must continue to focus its efforts on raising standards across the District's HMO stock and work to prevent the creation of any new sub-

standard HMO accommodation as demand for low-cost housing increases in response to restricting welfare reform.

Strategic priorities

The Council will monitor developments with the potential extension of licensing and, if required, introduce a new inspection programme for the District's smaller HMO stock.

The Council will set up a multi-agency network to help raise awareness and report any new sub-standard HMO accommodation being set up in the District.

Preserving the existing affordable housing stock

Where it can, the Council must work to preserve the District's existing affordable housing stock in order to provide affordable housing solutions long into the future. With housing associations increasingly looking to dispose of housing stock in peripheral areas and with low supply to support business operations elsewhere, the Council must continue to negotiate transfers to other more local housing associations. With the removal of the consents regime and housing associations no longer needing the Homes and Communities Agency's approval to dispose of stock as part of deregulatory measures, this will become an increasingly difficult challenge, however.

The Council also recognises the importance of the District's smaller housing associations and how these organisations can be important in meeting the housing needs of older and vulnerable people. This is particularly the case with many having a detailed knowledge of the local area in which their housing is situated. To demonstrate its support, the Council has assisted a number of almshouse providers to undertake essential maintenance works and upgrade facilities in line with the Decent Homes Standard. The Council has also assisted local organisations to introduce rent restructuring programmes as part of a move towards self-sufficiency.

Quote from Margaret Hyde Almshouse Trust:

"The Housing Department of the Council has played a significant and valuable role in their support of the Margaret Hyde Almshouse Trust based in Chiddingstone. In particular, their financial generosity has meant we have been able to carry out essential work thus ensuring long-term sustainability."

Quote from Sevenoaks Almshouse Charity:

“After many years of very frequent repairs to the slate roofs at Sevenoaks Place Trustees were keen to completely refurbish the roofs, and during 2013 this work was undertaken by local contractors. Financially the project was huge for us, and without the financial support of the Sevenoaks District Council the Sevenoaks Almshouse Charity would have had to delay the work significantly. Maintaining these grade 2 properties is inevitably expensive and the Charity is committed to providing good quality comfortable semi-sheltered housing for elderly folk in the Sevenoaks area. We are very grateful for the involvement and support of the Council.”*

Photo
SDC-funded works at Margaret Hyde Almshouses

Photo
SDC-funded works at Sevenoaks Almshouses

Strategic priorities

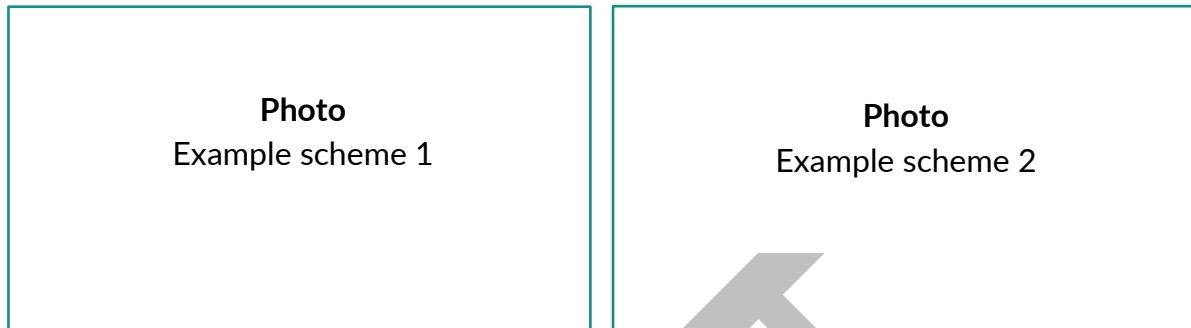
The Council will expand its support to almshouses charities and other small providers through a variety of means in order to improve the housing stock condition and create more effective business operations.

The Council will hold a forum for almshouses and other small affordable housing providers to create a support network and share good practice with those organisations that have already benefitted from its assistance.

Fixed-term tenancies

Developed in response to the Localism Act 2011, the Council’s Tenancy Strategy recommends the use of fixed-term tenancies to ensure that the District’s future affordable housing stock is occupied by those in most need. With the Council having no power to require the use of such tenancies, however, this is a recommendation only and the majority of housing associations retain lifetime tenancies. With recent deregulation measures, however, the use of fixed-term tenancies is once again under discussion. As a result, the Council will once again recommend fixed-term tenancies to make best use of its limited affordable housing stock by addressing under-

occupation and tackling low-level anti-social behaviour. To support this approach, the Council will increasingly look to work with housing associations with fixed-term tenancy policies on new developments and through relets of the existing affordable housing.



Strategic priorities

The Council will review its Tenancy Strategy with a view to working towards fixed-term tenancies on new affordable housing developments and on relets of the existing affordable housing stock. This will include the option to support selective use for high demand areas, adapted properties and encouraging higher income households into tenures such as shared-ownership.

The Council will work with housing associations to address low-level anti-social behaviour through improved tenancy procedures and monitor progress of the Government review into housing associations' powers in relation to anti-social tenants.

Right-to-Buy

Government has set out its intention to introduce a new Right-to-Buy scheme which will include, for the first time, properties owned by housing associations. Having transferred its housing stock back in 1989, all of the District's affordable housing is now owned and managed by housing associations. With far greater discounts being proposed through the new Right-to-Buy scheme, the Council is anticipating an increase in take-up and further consequent loss of much-needed affordable housing. Any loss of stock through this scheme would have an obvious effect on strategic housing management with there being no control as to where stock is sold. As such, this initiative has the potential to undo any positive steps achieved through the years to provide more balanced housing provision in the District.

The new Right-to-Buy scheme could also potentially see District's rural areas affected

the most with those communities having already lost much of their affordable housing stock through the original Right-to-Buy programme. With the lengthy and often highly contentious rural exceptions site route already a challenge, the replacement of any stock would be far from straightforward. As currently proposed, portable discount arrangements would also likely be impractical. If Government does extend Right-to-Buy in rural areas, therefore, this will be at odds with local housing and wider community strategy in relation to rural sustainability.

Government has also advised that it intends to prevent local authorities from excluding the Right-to-Buy in their affordable housing stock delivered through private housing companies. As a result, the Council will need to consider its position with any future affordable housing development plans through its company.

Strategic priorities

The Council will lobby Government for stronger exclusions to the Right-to-Buy in rural areas.

The Council will review its position with regard to affordable housing on projects delivered through its company as and when Government clarifies its position on Right-to-Buy.

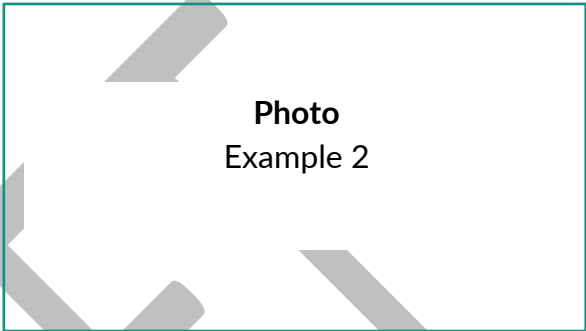
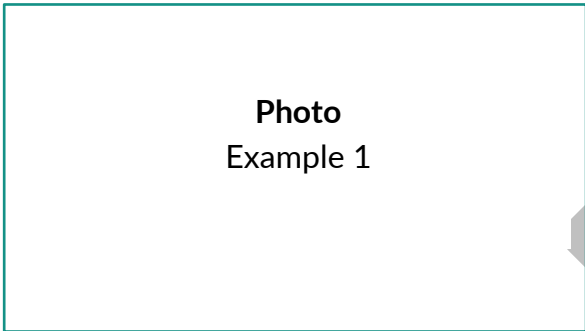
Pay-to-Stay

Under recent deregulatory measures, housing associations now have the option to introduce pay-to-stay schemes whereby those earning over £30,000 can be charged up to near-market rents on an incremental scale. In doing so, this can generate additional revenue to be reinvested in new affordable housing whilst also encouraging higher earners to consider more suitable forms of housing such as shared-ownership. As with fixed-term tenancies, the pay-to-stay initiative is a key opportunity to ensure best use of the District's limited housing stock and one which would support the delivery of housing strategy. As with fixed-term tenancies, however, the Council will have no control as to whether housing associations introduce such a scheme and it is not currently known if this is likely to be used by its partner providers.

Sub-letting and unlawful housing

With the District and wider UK housing market as it is, there is a growing demand for cheap and sub-standard housing for those who cannot secure a property elsewhere. As can be regularly seen in town and cities across the UK, properties are being crudely and dangerously sub-divided into multi-occupancy housing and also illegal

premises such as sheds or shipping containers set up as a form of low-cost housing. Although not currently a significant issue in the District, the Council has identified a small number of cases in the area and it is anticipated that this will grow over time if not tackled effectively. As a result, the Council must seek to raise awareness of these issues and highlight the risks involved to encourage those living in such accommodation, or in the vicinity, to come forward and make it aware. Again, and in order to tackle this issue, the Council must seek to provide affordable and low-end market housing solutions for households typically at risk of taking up such accommodation.



Strategic priorities

The Council will set up a multi-agency network to help raise awareness and encourage the reporting of any new illegal and/or sub-standard premises being set up in the District that it can then tackle.

Priority 3: Meeting the needs of vulnerable and low-income households

Housing options and homelessness prevention

The Council is legally required to assess and prevent homelessness in the District as part of a Government focus on homelessness prevention. With growing affordability issues and fewer consequent housing options, preventing homelessness is an increasingly difficult challenge and one that needs to be tackled in several different ways. For instance, the Council currently offers rent-in-advance, deposit bonds, tenancy sustainment services, the use of Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP), welfare benefits support and wider financial appraisals.

The Council has developed a holistic approach to housing options in recent years and this helps to identify solutions bespoke to the household or individual in need. For instance, the Council's HERO officers will consider wider issues associated with housing need including employment, training and debt matters. In doing so, specific plans of action can be developed and ones which will often result in the client being supported into employment or training as well as housing. Already an award-winning scheme which has been rolled-out to West Kent Housing Association, Kent County Council and local children's centres, the HERO service has transformed the Council's housing options approach and helped it to deliver wider community strategy in several different priority areas.

Photo
HERO client

Photo
Housing advice officers on
telephones

Following a successful bid for Government's Trailblazers' Funding, the Council is currently developing and expanding its HERO service. New and improved, the service will also now include wider health assessments as part of the Making Every Contact Count ambition. Delivered through targeted community outreach services and in partnership with GP surgeries, children's centres and housing associations, this project will help to minimise a wide-range of negative impacts on both physical and mental ill health associated with poor housing situations.

For those in emergency need, the Council has access to 55 units of temporary accommodation and with plans to increase its supply. In the past, however, there

have been several cases of tenants in temporary accommodation falling into arrears and finding their ability to move into permanent occupation consequently restricted. As a result, the Council's housing staff work with affected households to try to reduce arrears and prepare for a tenancy in conventional housing. Following a successful bid for grant through the Behavioural Insights Project, further support is now to be offered in relation to tenancy sustainment.



The availability of good quality housing advice is essential to enable people to make informed decisions about their housing options. The Council provides a wide-range of housing information and in several formats. With a growing older population, and the vast majority wishing to live independently, there will be an increasing demand for information in larger text and other formats. In order to ensure that housing-related information can be received, read and understood by the groups for which it is intended, the Council is working with partners to achieve the NHS England 'Accessible Information Standard' which aims to ensure that people with a disability, impairment or sensory loss can access suitable information in order to effectively communicate with support services.¹²

The Council is exploring a wide-range of activities to better interact with and support private landlords to take on clients through its private sector lettings scheme. In partnership with Tonbridge and Malling and Tunbridge Wells borough councils, the Council also holds regular landlords' forums and these are aimed at encouraging private landlords to take on clients in housing need through a number of incentives such as grants, landlord insurance and ongoing tenancy support. Periodic joint housing forums are also held and these help to provide up-to-date information on housing legislation and standards, tax and finance issues, and energy efficiency options.

¹² <https://www.england.nhs.uk/2016/08/accessible-information-standard/>

Photo
Landlords' forum

Photo
Housing information event

Strategic priorities

The Council will develop and launch its new Super-HERO service.

The Council will work with its West Kent partner local authorities to adopt and implement the new West Kent Housing and Homelessness Strategy.

The Council will monitor developments with the Homelessness Reduction Act and undertake a full review of its homelessness services when related associated guidance is issued.

The Council will undertake a survey of private landlords to identify potential incentives to encourage take-up as part of a new landlord package.

The Council will evaluate the GP housing advice pilot with participant outcomes and feedback to determine future models for delivering targeted holistic advice services as part of an integrated health hub.

The Council will implement a tenancy sustainment training programme through the Behavioural Insights Project.

The Council will monitor developments relating to the Renters' Rights Bill and Housing (Tenants' Rights) Bill and, where approved, promote additional related rights to those seeking and occupying the District's private rented housing.

Sevenoaks District Housing Register

As at 01/04/17, there were a total of 803 households registered on the Sevenoaks District Housing Register and with the majority requiring 1- or 2-bed properties. With just 249 relets in the year 2016/17, need is typically growing. With growing levels of in-migration, particular pressure points can be created in the local housing

market and those with a long-established local connection to the District can find themselves having to out-migrate in search of cheaper housing elsewhere. This can then result in a loss of essential workers important to the economic development of the District's towns and villages. Although the Council actively promotes mobility in the housing market, and particularly to support the wider economy, there is a need to prioritise local people as part of its work to prevent the breaking up of families, support networks and wider communities – all of which is occurring at an increasing pace. This approach ties in with several objectives, including the aim to tackle social exclusion and loneliness amongst older people.

With a rapidly-changing policy environment, a review of the Sevenoaks District Housing Register is being undertaken to ensure that it remains fit for purpose. In doing so, income thresholds are also to be reviewed in order to ensure that they remain pitched at the correct local income levels.

Total housing association lettings (through Council nominations)			
2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
383	327	338	249

Table 5 - Source: ELASH data

Households on register as at 01/04/17	
1-bedroom	456
2-bedrooms	260
3-bedrooms	65
4-bedrooms +	21
Total	803

Table 6 - Source: Sevenoaks District Housing Register

Strategic priorities

Following the review of the Sevenoaks District Housing Register, and if required, the Council will make adjustments to its policy to better meet local housing needs.

Supporting people to remain independent in their own homes

Evidence consistently shows that the vast majority of older and vulnerable people wish to continue living independently in their own homes. As a result, adaptations and floating support will be increasingly important as time goes by and a key objective of local housing and wider health strategy is to enable that to happen.

Setting the budgetary framework for housing-related support in future years, the Kent Supporting People Strategy is key to the future delivery of floating support services in the District. Key objectives of the strategy are to prevent long-term occupation of supported housing by better supporting transitions back into conventional housing, redressing the balance between accommodation-based services and floating support, and redesigning services for other client groups where a greater need arises. Again, the Council's Local Housing Needs Study will be fed into the ongoing review of Supporting People services as part of the cross-agency assessment process.

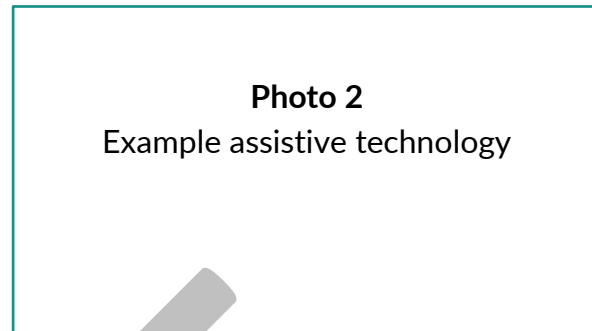
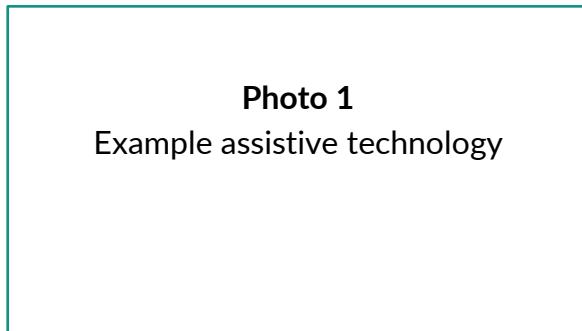
In partnership with Tonbridge and Malling and Tunbridge Wells borough councils, an innovative hospital-based service has been introduced in an effort to help patients ready for discharge to return home more quickly. In doing so, this will help to free-up hospital bed spaces whilst reducing pressure on a wide-range of acute services and helping to avoid relocation-induced loneliness. As part of this project, the Council will also explore the possibility of setting aside a small number of extra care units as temporary accommodation for those leaving hospital and in preparation for a safe return home.

Evidence shows that the effects of a forced move can significantly affect a person's overall health and wellbeing. In addition, care and support costs for specialist housing can be significant and place further strain on already stretched care budgets. The provision of Disabled Facilities Grants (otherwise known as DFGs) and other assistive technologies can mean the difference between a person staying put in their own home or having to move into specialist accommodation. Assistive technologies can also help to save money across health and social care services. It makes sense to continue to invest in this area of the Council's work, therefore, and to build on the work programme as the local population ages.

In order to maximise funding to best effect, the Council must continue to work with Clinical Commissioning Groups (otherwise known as CCGs) and other health and social care professionals to develop integrated strategies and to consider the pooling of resources if more can be achieved. Being linked to the Council's hospital discharge scheme, there is significant scope to achieve positive outcomes across community strategy as well as there being a clear business case for such an approach. This area of the Council's work has already been stepped up in the last year with its DFG budget being significantly increased to £977k in 2017/18.

A multi-agency referral form has also been developed and provides a checklist of issues across housing, health and wider well-being services as part of the Council's developing housing and health strategy. Through this work, officers will be trained to

identify and prescribe health improving measures and/or refer clients on to specialists across a range of disciplines. This will help the Council to better contribute to a wide-range of health outcomes through a developing out-of-hospital care system.



Strategic priorities

The Council will feed results from the Local Housing Needs Study into the Sevenoaks District Local Strategic Partnership and its sub-groups to determine group priorities going forward.

The Council will cross-reference Local Housing Needs Study data with the Supporting People needs analysis and subsequently work with Kent County Council, the NHS and other care providers to identify common priorities.

The Council will cross-reference Local Housing Needs Study data and related priorities with a wide-range of third-sector partners, including but not limited to the Sevenoaks Seniors' Action Forum, Mencap and Age UK as part of the strategy development process.

As Part of its strategy to health-proof housing, the Council will seek to utilise new plug-and-place IT-based assistive technologies to improve support packages for older and vulnerable people remaining independent at home.

The Council will seek to maximise DFG funding through the Integration and Better Care Fund.

The Council will work with extra care housing providers to explore the possibility of allocating a small number of units as temporary accommodation for older people leaving hospital.

Supported housing

Supported housing can assist a wide range of groups, including younger and older people, those with physical and mental ill health, sensory disabilities, people recovering from drug and alcohol misuse, victims of domestic abuse and those at risk of offending or re-offending. The provision of supported housing is also key to prevent delayed transfers of care by creating a better functioning social care system. Being such a wide-ranging area of housing strategy, the Council works with a number of partners across the housing, health and social care sectors to ensure that supported housing is developed, refurbished and remodelled in line with evidenced need and as identified by the Kent Commissioning Body.

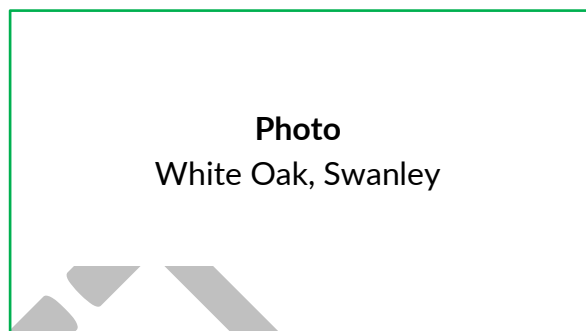
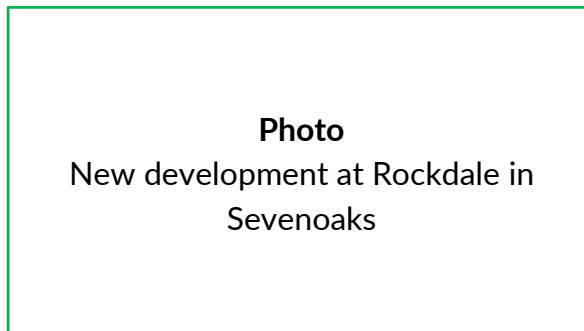
Setting out the policy and budgetary framework for supported housing in the coming years, the Kent Accommodation Strategy is key to the future delivery of supported housing in the District. Several local priorities have been identified, including the need for additional supported housing for a range of client groups including those with learning disabilities, mental health needs and vulnerable younger people. As would be expected, accommodation for older people is identified as needed and particularly extra care housing as part of a reduction in the reliance of care home places. That said, the phasing out of old care home provision will need to run in tandem with the development of more modern and purpose-built care homes with en-suite facilities and other space and design standards, including dementia-friendly measures.¹³ To demonstrate a need, there is an average of thirteen clients moving into residential care in West Kent each month and who would otherwise be suitable for extra care housing.

The Kent Accommodation Strategy also sets out the County Council's intention to review existing provision across all accommodation types in order to identify any schemes which would benefit from remodelling to cater for other client groups in greater need. As part of a cross-agency needs assessments approach, and to support this work, the Council's Local Housing Needs Study covers need across all vulnerable client groups. All related evidence will be fed into this ongoing review and to support the future provision of supported housing with a clear evidence of need in the District.

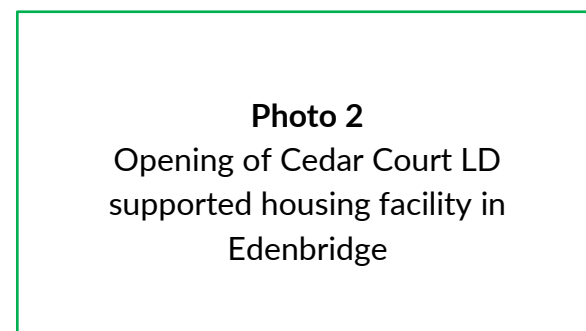
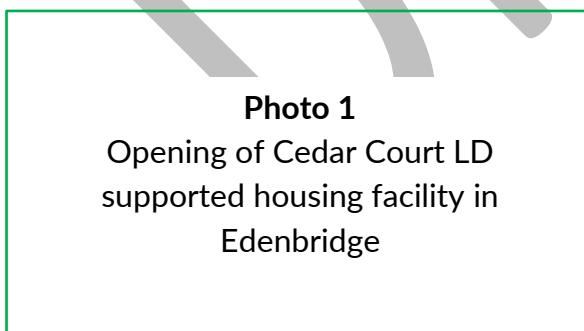
The Council also supports housing providers to remodel existing facilities to extra care, where possible, with White Oak Court in Swanley and Hollybush Court in Sevenoaks being recent examples of good practice. The Rockdale scheme in Sevenoaks is another good example of a housing scheme for older people which provides a choice of high and low-level supported housing options and is located

¹³ KCC Accommodation Strategy Older Persons' Care Home Design Principles, Oct 2015

central to the town in easy reach of a range of services. Rockdale has also recently managed to improve and increase its stock numbers to provide additional housing for local older people and all within its existing boundaries. Again, and through more efficient use of the existing housing stock, the Council is less reliant on land and new development.

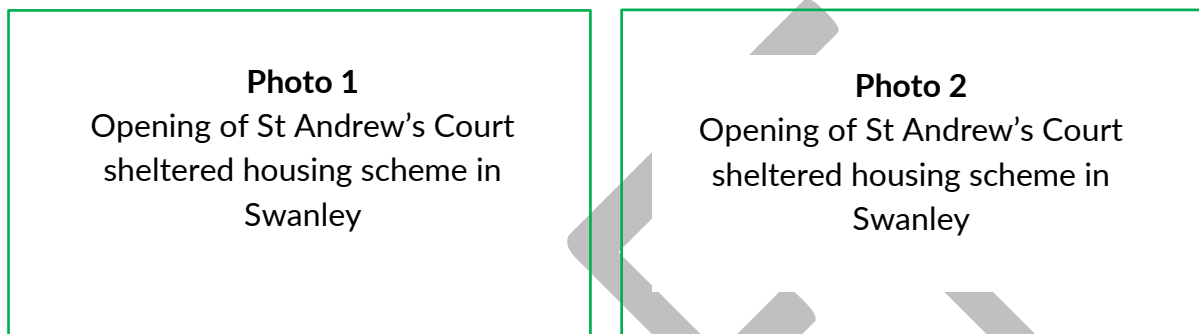


Completed in March 2017, West Kent Housing Association's new housing facility for adults with learning disabilities is another good example of enabling new supported housing through the development of existing land or by remodelling the existing stock. Part refurbishment and part new-build, this new facility provides nine self-contained apartments and a range of communal services. In order for the project to go ahead, the Council contributed £100,000 from developer contributions towards project costs totalling around £1-million. Through its partner, Mencap, the Council was also able to provide the housing association with an additional £5,000 to purchase a wide-range of equipment to help improve life skills for the new occupiers. This project is an example of how the Council and its partners are contributing to the Alternative Models of Care project as well as the NHS Clinical Commissioning Group's Mapping the Future programme.



Key to supported housing provision is the creation of well-designed and appealing schemes. Older people, for instance, increasingly resist supported housing schemes with a more institutional-type feel and instead favour modern products which are more akin to conventional housing. Opened in March 2017, the new £3.8m Moat Homes sheltered housing scheme in Swanley has provided 28 one and two-bed

apartments for those aged 55 and over. Demolished to make way for this new facility, the old St Andrew's Court's bedsit units fell below modern space standards with no lifts and several corridors too narrow for wheelchair use. The new scheme has been designed to 'Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation' (HAPPI) principles.¹⁴ In addition, the scheme has shared gardens and courtyards and is situated just 5-minutes from the town centre and in easy reach of a wide-range of services. Such design standards will be key when working up new supported housing projects in the future and the Council will continue to consult end-users to ensure it enables the right type of housing through the emerging Local Plan.



In 2019, Government will introduce a new funding structure for supported housing which will be linked to the Local Housing Allowance (otherwise known as LHA). With the LHA not taking into account the types of buildings and associated facilities required for supported housing and complex and costly service charges, there is a growing concern that the new funding structure will not only cause issues for existing schemes but prevent providers from delivering any new schemes. In fact, there is local evidence of this occurring already and there is much caution across the sector. Government has indicated that it intends to introduce a ring-fenced budget to top up any shortfalls, but this will likely be prioritised by geographical area and client group. The end result could be that some client groups and/or areas may lose out to others, as with the Kent Supporting People programme. With older people's accommodation accounting for around 70% of all supported housing and conventional sheltered housing not being commissioned, there is an additional concern as to the future workings of the proposed system in relation to older people.

¹⁴ HAPPI - https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/378171/happi_final_report_-_031209.pdf

Strategic priorities

The Council will feed evidence from the Local Housing Needs Study into the Kent Accommodation Strategy as part of the cross-agency assessment process and as part of the Adult Social Care Transformation Programme.

The Council will work with the Kent commissioning bodies and a range of providers to seek to establish additional provision to complement existing services and in line with latest evidence from the Local Housing Needs Study.

The Council will seek to ensure that a proportion of outdated social sector care home provision is replaced with modern purpose-built care homes which also provide specialist dementia care and extra care schemes (in line with need identified in the Local Housing Needs Study and KCC Accommodation Strategy).

The Council will work up bids for supported housing grant under the Homes and Communities Agency's 2016/21 grant programme and taking into account the non-mainstream housing guidance Housing Our Ageing population: Panel for Innovation (HAPPI) principles.

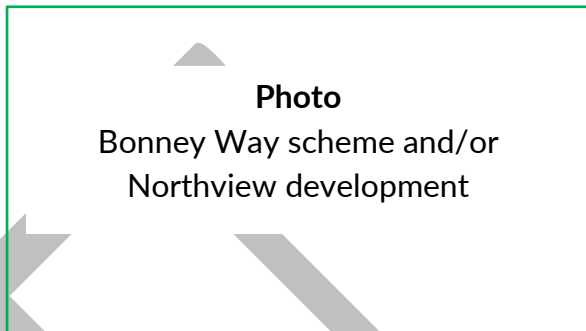
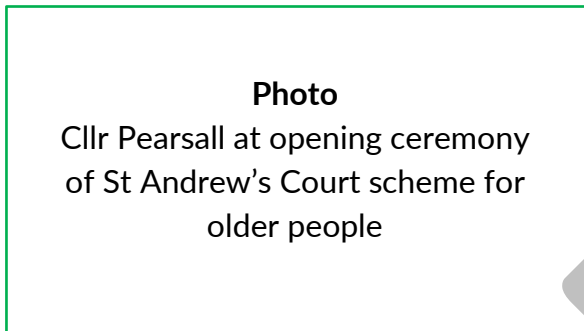
The Council will maintain contact with Government as the Local Housing Allowance supported housing review progresses to ensure that local issues are fully considered as a part of that process.

Older people

In the next few years, the District will see a significant increase in the number of over 65s and particularly the over 75s. It is essential that the Council further develops housing and health strategy to assist older people to live fully independent lives for as long as possible, therefore. The Council will work to achieve this by enabling the right mix of housing and communities such as dementia-friendly towns and villages and through the increasing use of a wide-range of digital and non-digital assistive technologies. For example, simple devices which act as reminders to detect falls or inactivity and fires can be significantly contribute to independent living.

There is also clear evidence of need for more housing which can be adapted as people's needs change, including Lifetime Homes and wheelchair-accessible homes. In doing so, people can remain in housing as they age and become less mobile. Building more purpose-built older people's accommodation to 'Age Friendly' neighbourhood principles will also help to combat loneliness and prevent slips, trips and falls, especially if homes are step-free and in accessible locations close to existing

communities. The use of temporary modular housing units could also be a quick and ready-made solution by allowing older relatives to be situated adjacent to relatives' houses, for instance, and be cared for by their families. The Council will not be able to meet older people's housing needs solely by focussing on the District's four towns, however, and older people's accommodation or retirement villages could work well in rural locations if providing their own amenities and integrated with health and care services to support positive ageing.



Housing and Dementia

With a growing older population and predicted rise in diagnosis rates of dementia, the Council needs to continue developing positive interventions to support those affected. The Council considers cognitive impairment in both its existing housing schemes and new developments. Emily Court, for instance, which is the Council's first purpose-built extra care facility, was designed to cater for those with memory issues and to aid navigation. When designing new housing developments, the Council must create housing that encourages public interaction and in easy-to-navigate physical environments that feel safe. With improving digital technologies, the Council will increasingly explore additional support systems to enable people living with dementia to remain safe at home.

The Council provides a housing officer once a month at each of its five dementia cafes to provide a wide-range of housing advice and support. Swanley is also working towards being a 'Dementia Friendly Community' and two of the District's villages, Eynsford and West Kingsdown, are doing similar in partnership with Age UK. The next step in this work is to develop a toolkit which can be rolled out across the District. The Council is also a member of the Sevenoaks Area Dementia Friendly Community Forum and works closely with partners including Age UK and The Good Care Group to support those living with dementia. The Council was awarded the 'Most Dementia-Friendly' organisation in Kent in 2016 and is now a Dementia Champion mentoring other councils to become dementia-friendly.

Photo

1970s reminiscence room at Emily Court extra care housing scheme

Photo

Opening of new dementia café at Knole House, Sevenoaks

Strategic priorities

The Council will cross-reference related data in the Local Housing Needs Study and feed related evidence into the Local Plan review to ensure the right housing is built for older people.

The Council will work with providers to identify a suitable site for a Help to Buy project specifically for those aged 55 and over.

In partnership with town and parish councils, the Council will develop housing elements of a toolkit to work towards Dementia-Friendly Communities.

The Council will work with the Kent Joint Policy and Planning Board's Dementia Action Allowance Housing Sub-Group to develop good practice in related housing strategy.

Additional actions to be considered in the Local Plan review:

To permit modular housing units on garden land on a non-permanent basis to allow households to care for older relatives.

Younger people

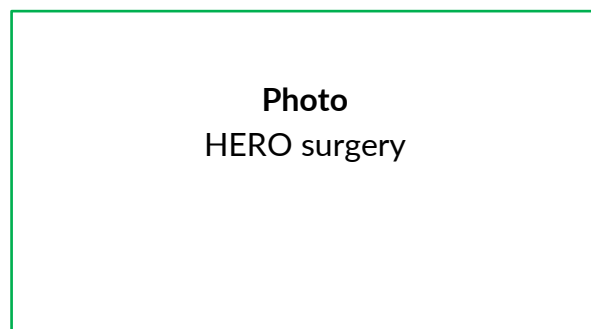
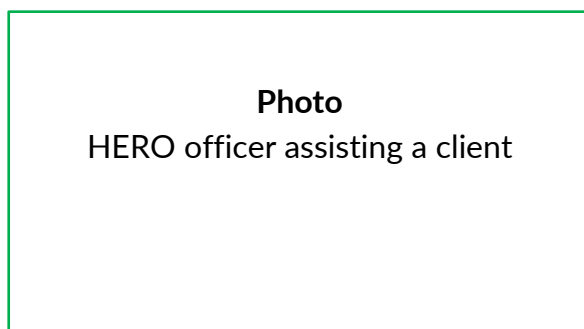
National research has found that 37% of those aged 25–34 are mortgagees against 59% just a decade ago. The Council of Mortgage Lenders has also predicted that just 25% of those aged 30 will own their own home by 2020.¹⁵ Due to acute local affordability issues, it is likely that this figure is even lower in the District. The District's younger people are increasingly finding housing options limited or, for those on low-incomes, almost non-existent. This has been further exacerbated by the

¹⁵ Sellhousefast.uk

introduction of single-room rates for those aged 35 and under and single claimants aged 18 – 21 completely excluded from housing benefit, save for certain exemptions. With a limited supply of bedsit and multi-occupancy housing in most areas of the District, younger people are finding it increasingly difficult to find any form of affordable housing. This can often result in younger people having to stay in the family home, sofa-surf or, as has been found in recent studies, out-migrate to other areas in search of cheaper housing elsewhere.

This can all prevent younger people from typical life progression and, in many cases, contribute to health conditions such as anxiety and depression. In order to assist the District's younger people, the Council must develop housing solutions which can support younger people into suitable housing. For example, this could be through micro-homes designated as 'Starter Homes' products or professionally operated lodgings schemes. A more recent example is that of co-housing whereby occupiers have independent studios which typically include an en-suite room and a kitchen. Residents will then have access to shared communal kitchens and communal spaces which include work areas, libraries and games rooms. These schemes are proving to be popular with millennials and such a model could potentially be replicated as an affordable solution in the District. An additional option, and one which has been identified as a priority in the Kent Supporting People Strategy, is to develop a supported housing scheme for vulnerable younger people in one of the District's key towns.

Through the Behaviour Insights Project, the Council is exploring a project to assist under-35s to rent a room in shared houses and this is potentially a future solution for the District's younger people. Government is looking to redesign its rent-a-room relief with a view to increasing affordable long-term lodgings for younger people and this could create new opportunities for the Council in an enabling role. The Council must continue to work with the County Council to help deliver the Adult Social Care Transformation Programme in relation to vulnerable 16-25 year olds by redesigning and aligning accommodation and support pathways as part of the development of integrated strategies.



Strategic priorities

The Council will cross-reference relevant data from the Local Housing Needs Study and develop an action plan to respond to younger people's housing accommodation and related support needs.

The Council will monitor the effects of changes to Housing Benefit and seek to develop supporting housing strategy to tackle any negative effects.

The Council will cross-reference relevant data from the Local Housing Needs Study and review its criteria for a suitable site for the development of a new town centre supported housing scheme for vulnerable younger people.

The Council will develop a housing information pack for younger people seeking housing.

The Council will consider an enhanced enabling role following the national rent-a-room review.

The Council work with Government's Behavioural Insights Team to take forward a potential shared-lodgings project for under-35s.

The Council will work with partners to deliver the Adult Social Care Transformation Programme in relation to vulnerable 16-25 year olds.

The Council will explore a co-housing project for younger people.

The benefit cap

With a growing tension between housing and welfare policy, it is becoming increasingly difficult for low-income households to find and keep a home in the District. The benefit cap has been further reduced to £20,000 per annum and, as a consequence, a wider demographic has been affected. With slowing wage growth and a predicted 10% in the cost of living by 2020, all of which will be made worse with cuts to tax credits, this is a growing concern and one which must be tackled in the early stages to minimise future household crises.

In order to support and prepare households, the Council's HERO service has made direct contact with those likely to be affected and offered a wide-range of advice on housing, budgeting and employment. In doing so, it is hoped that the Council will be able to better support people into employment and either remove the need for

welfare benefits altogether or, where a top-up is still required, enable an exemption to the cap through active employment status.

Housing associations are also increasingly tightening up their affordability criteria in order to ensure that those seeking affordable housing can afford the property whilst helping to safeguard housing associations against arrears at a time when revenue is already significantly reduced as part of the rent freeze. With a potential relaxation of social sector rent setting rules on the horizon, the Council will need to ensure that adequate controls are in place to minimise any potential negative knock-on effects of such a change.

Strategic priorities

Through the HERO service, the Council will work to identify those likely to be affected by future welfare reform and offer proactive advice and support.

The Council will extend its shared-ownership housing surgeries to include wider housing advice for those affected by the benefit cap and wider welfare reform or seeking more general housing, budgeting and employment advice.

Domestic abuse

Back in 2012, and as a result of a need identified in the Kent Supporting People Strategy, the Council worked with a partner housing association to create a new domestic abuse refuge for females fleeing domestic abuse. If deemed safe to do so, the Council can also offer security works in existing properties through various security measures and in partnership with agencies, including Kent Police and Kent Fire and Rescue. Key to future domestic abuse provision, however, is supporting victims back into conventional housing when the time is right. On occasions, victims can remain in refuge accommodation for two or years or more. In doing so, this can make it more difficult for those households to return to normal life whilst also blocking up much needed space for others fleeing domestic abuse. As a result, the Council will seek to work with specialists across agencies to identify better ways to improve this area of its work and for the benefit of domestic abuse victims and their families.

Strategic priorities

The Council will work with Kent Adult Social Services and Kent Supporting People to develop a process to better support refuge occupiers back into general needs housing and to free-up limited local refuge places in the process.

Through the Community Safety Partnership, the Council will work across departments and with external partners to identify additional measures to better support transitions back into general needs housing.

The Council will cross-reference evidence from the Local Housing Needs Study and feed this into the Kent Accommodation Strategy and Kent Supporting People Strategy as part of the cross-agency assessment processes.

Ex-service personnel

Ex-service personnel can often find themselves in a housing crisis when returning to civilian life. In order to better understand the nature and scale of the problem in the District, the Council included specific provision for this group within its Local Housing Needs Study. This has shown a total of 252 current or ex-service personnel with a connection to the District, which is a greater number than anticipated.

The Council's HERO service now offers in-house expertise for both current and ex-service personnel and has already supported several ex-service personnel to access housing, financial, employment, training and health services. A housing information pack is currently being developed and this will be added to as and when additional housing products are made available. The information pack will be launched by Council's Chairman and Member Champion for the Armed Forces to help raise awareness of the wide-range of housing options for current and ex-service personnel as part of a focus on the military in the coming year. The Council is also proud to be a signatory of an Armed Forces Covenant which aims to redress disadvantages that the armed forces community may face in comparison to other citizens and to recognise sacrifices made.

Photo

HERO officer with ex-service personnel client

Photo

Launch of housing information pack

Strategic priorities

The Council will work with its Member Champion for the Armed Forces to develop and formally launch a housing information pack for current and ex-service personnel.

The Council will explore the possibility of a pilot project with the MoD whereby those leaving the Armed Forces are automatically referred to local authorities for housing advice.

The Council will work to deliver suitable housing for older ex-service personnel by providing a number of dedicated places in any future extra care housing schemes.

Filthy and verminous premises

In recent years, the District has seen a growing trend of filthy and verminous properties. This can typically include accumulations of waste and hoarding, infestations of rats and mice, and unsightly properties which may also be in a poor state of repair. The reasons behind such situations are wide and varied, but can typically include older people suffering with Diogenes Syndrome or other mental health conditions. As a consequence, the Council adopts a multi-agency approach to all filthy and verminous cases and with key partners across health, social and fire services. With a growing older population, the Council will need to step up its response to this concerning trend.

Photo 1
Example F&V property



Photo 2
Example F&V property

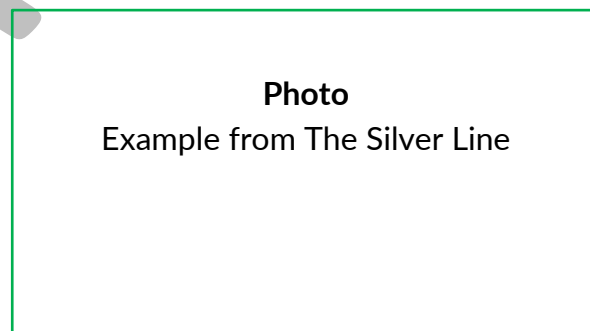
Strategic priorities

The Council will monitor trends in this area by client group, and particularly the growing older population, in order to identify any early potential interventions.

Pet policies

For those living alone, and particularly older people, a pet can provide good company and significantly contribute to the owner's physical and mental health and wellbeing. With loneliness and social exclusion being a growing phenomenon, or at least more apparent, the Council must work with providers to develop policies which could allow pets in supported housing schemes. Homeless people can also find themselves having to give up a pet in order to take up emergency or short-term accommodation. With a pet often being a significant part of a vulnerable person's life and consequent well-being, this can prevent many from doing so. Again, this needs to be considered in the future to try to ensure, where possible and practical, that homeless people may not have to give up their pet in order to secure a roof over their head. That said, the Council does accept that this can be impractical at times and potentially have a negative effect on other residents or the management of the scheme in question. As a result, the Council will seek to develop a pet policy supporting and seeking a balanced approach to the allowance of pets in housing schemes.

With dog fouling being a key issue in the District and this likely to have a bearing on whether certain housing schemes allow pets, this is another area where Council intervention could potentially bring about positive benefits – not only in addressing a public health issue but also by encouraging providers to allow pets if the situation were better controlled. As recently trialled by a local authority in London, the introduction of a dog DNA scheme could help to identify offending pet owners that do not clear up after their dogs and, in the process, encourage more responsible pet ownership. In doing so, this could also encourage housing providers to permit pets.



Strategic priorities

The Council will develop a database of housing providers' pet policies in order to be able to offer advice to older and vulnerable clients looking for pet-friendly housing.

The Council will develop a pet-friendly policy with its recommendations for affordable and supported housing providers.

Where pets are not permitted, the Council will signpost to services such as the pet fostering scheme.

The Council will promote the Cinnamon Trust and its pet walking services for older people and those suffering from ill health.

The Council will explore a dog DNA scheme to encourage pet-friendly housing policies.

Within any new housing that the Council develops through its company, it will aim to achieve the RSPCA's Gold Standard pet policy.

DRAFT

Health, sustainability and equality impact assessments

All key objectives have been subject to related impact assessments in the development of this Housing Strategy and, where necessary, adjustments made to address any potentially negative effects. As and when more detailed action plans are developed, and where required, these assessments will be repeated.

Governance and monitoring

In order to ensure that the Housing Strategy is as effective possible, biannual progress reports will be taken to the Housing and Health Advisory Committee. Where adjustments and/or new actions are required and which fall outside of the approved policy framework, reports will be produced setting out any associated recommendations for consideration. A series of performance measures will also be developed as more detailed action plans are drawn up and in order to gauge success of work programmes across the remit of this Housing Strategy.

Consultation arrangements

In the development of this draft Housing Strategy, the Council has consulted partners across sectors and taken into account a wide-range of legislation, policies, strategies and good practice at local, sub-regional, county and national level. Every household in the District was also given the opportunity to provide comments as part of the recently completed Local Housing Needs Study. If you wish to provide any comments and/or suggestions on this draft Housing Strategy, please do so in one of the following ways:

Online questionnaire:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/housingstrategy>

Email:

housing.policy@sevenoaks.gov.uk

By post:

FAO: Gavin Missons (Housing Policy Manager)
Strategic Planning
Sevenoaks District Council
Argyle Road
Sevenoaks
Kent TN13 1HG

Sevenoaks District Housing Strategy Consultation

1) Providing a good mix of decent and affordable housing across tenures.

Do you agree that these are the right approaches to better deliver a good mix of decent and affordable housing across tenures and do you have any suggestions to help us deliver on this objective?

[Empty response box for objective 1]

2) Improving the quality and use of the existing housing stock.

Do you agree that these are the right approaches to improve the quality of and make more effective use of the District's housing stock and do you have any suggestions to help us deliver on this objective?

[Empty response box for objective 2]

3) Meeting the needs of vulnerable and low-income households.

Do you agree that these are the right approaches to better meet the needs of vulnerable and low-income households and do you have any suggestions to help us deliver on this objective?

[Empty response box for objective 3]

Do you have any further comments and/or suggestions in relation to this Draft Housing Strategy?

Thank you for your input.

Please provide contact details for our records.

DRAFT

KEY LINKS	
Authority Monitoring Report	https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/info/20014/planning_policy/257/authority_monitoring_reports
Climate Local Sevenoaks	https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/downloads/download/87/climate_local_sevenoaks
Community Plan	https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/info/20026/your_community/290/community_plan
Empty Homes Action Plan	https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/downloads/file/170/empty_homes_action_plan
Kent Accommodation Strategy	http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/adult-social-care-policies/accommodation-strategy-for-adult-social-care
Kent Environment Strategy	http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/environment-waste-and-planning-policies/environmental-policies/kent-environment-strategy
Local Housing Needs Study	
Local Plan	https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/info/20014/planning_policy/247/new_local_plan_2015-35
Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy	http://cds.sevenoaks.gov.uk/Data/Services%20Select%20Committee/200804151900/Agenda/Report%20-%20Item%2009%20-%20Private%20Sector%20Housing%20Assistance%20Programme%20-%20Appendix.pdf
Sevenoaks District Housing Register Allocation Policy	https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/directory_record/1910/housing_register_allocation_policy/category/30/housing
Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment	http://cds.sevenoaks.gov.uk/documents/s31097/09%20SHELAA%20report.pdf
Strategic Housing Market Assessment	https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/downloads/file/699/strategic_housing_market_assessment_shma_september_2015
Tenancy Strategy	https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/directory_record/138/tenancy_strategy/category/30/housing
Under-Occupation Strategy	https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/downloads/file/760/under-occupation_strategy



Legend

Placemaking Areas

- Upper Darent Corridor
- Darent Valley
- North East
- North West
- Sevenoaks and Surrounds
- South



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Placemaking Area Map

Scale: 1:100,000
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Produced by the GIS Team, Sevenoaks District Council