

## APPENDIX 2 Feedback received in response to the Housing Strategy (2019-2024) consultation

Housing Strategy chapter	Respondent	Feedback received and <i>Council response</i>
<b>Maximising the supply of affordable housing</b>	Registered provider	"Generally supportive of the objective and approach. Sales experience not necessarily aligned with the commentary about shared ownership being beyond reach of local people, particularly as there are varied markets within the authority area. Where rural staircasing restriction applies, this has the effect of limiting the mortgage lender pool and terms, which constrains market value. Consequently in applying such restrictions through s106, there is an available mechanism to aide affordability." <i>Council response: we recognise that affordability varies between product and location, however we have certainly become more aware in recent years that some intermediate affordable housing products have become less affordable for local people. This is one of the reasons why the Housing Strategy proposes further research into the issue.</i>
	Registered provider	"The viability testing at the planning stage is a favourable proposal as is the intention of researching what genuine affordability within the district means with the average house prices in North Herts being higher than the national average." <i>Council response: noted.</i>
	Citizens Advice	"This is absolutely necessary as private rents are out of reach for many local residents. In addition, working with private landlords to encourage them to rent to tenants on benefits would be helpful. If new homes are to be built then investment in infrastructure (provision of school places, parking spaces, doctor surgeries, local shops, road capacity, public transport) is also necessary." <i>Council response: The Council has recently employed an officer with dedicated responsibility for working with private landlords to improve access to the private rented sector. The new Local Plan requires the provision of new infrastructure alongside new development and / or contributions towards this.</i>
	Local resident	"To build more homes." <i>Council response: our proposed Local Plan, currently undergoing examination, seeks to enable this.</i>
	Local resident	"I applaud the objective of supplying affordable housing. However which income group are you supplying for? There is whole group that have no hope of being able to rent/buy because of low income. I am sure you are aware of that." <i>Council response: the Strategy recognises the need to provide genuinely affordable homes in the district and sets out a number of measures to address this, including further research into affordability locally.</i>
	Local resident	"It is a laudable objective. However, are the affordable prices affordable for the average teacher, nurse, firefighter? Affordable should mean a price people on a reasonable wage can affords, which is around £200k." <i>Council response: see response to above comment.</i>

Housing Strategy chapter	Respondent	Feedback received and <i>Council response</i>
<b>Maximising the supply of affordable housing cont/d</b>	Local resident	<p>“By relying on the private market, options such as shared ownership initially appear affordable but in actual fact with the combination of mortgage and rent are let at current market value, which is as your homelessness report states, for many young working people, far too expensive. Severe parking restrictions and draconian signs are also in place to further add to the cost and misery of living in these blocks. Visiting friends can be clamped and fined for parking in these areas without a costly parking permit. No infrastructure is provided in these modern ghettos. No shops, no leisure facilities. They are money making developments - profit for the few - with no social considerations. I believe there is a case for council-owned and let property which is not intended for financial gain but as a social responsibility. If you follow the private market route I really believe the council should introduce rent caps. Housing should be a basic human right, not an investment for the sole benefit of developers. I know of one young couple who split up over their high rent in one of the new schemes surrounding the station. Both local, both working but not able to afford a one bedroom flat, they are both back living separately with their parents at nearly 30 years of age. It also seems almost perverse to me that Hitchin has many blocks of retirement homes right in the centre of town. Would it not be better to house the elderly in more pleasant suburban or rural surroundings and allow young people to live right in the centre of town? Again I feel planning permission is granted for the benefit of developers and not residents.”</p> <p><i>Council response: the lack of affordable housing in the district is a pressing issue and one which the Housing Strategy recognises as a priority. With regards planning applications, these are judged against national and local policies and other relevant considerations before being granted permission.</i></p>
<b>Improving standards of housing</b>	Registered provider	<p>“Not very clear on Council's approach (individually or jointly) to smaller or urgent adjustments that may not fall under a DFG application. E.g. small items that may assist someone returning from hospital earlier and so reduce cost to the public purse in the round”</p> <p><i>Council response: we will improve the information that is available on the NHDC website to outline options for obtaining assistance towards smaller or urgent adjustments to enable people to remain in their home.</i></p>
	Registered provider	<p>“Important to consider particularly around the safety of homes and that could potentially be legislated.”</p> <p><i>Council response: noted.</i></p>
	Local resident	<p>“Dining room in an old 3 bedroomed property, should not be counted as bedroom, as usually kitchen is really small space, so that dining room is some space needed for families.”</p> <p><i>Council response: affordable housing is in high demand in the district and properties with more than 3 bedrooms are in scarce supply. In order to reduce times that larger households have to wait for affordable housing, self-contained dining rooms may be counted as an additional bedroom. This is made clear when properties are advertised and households are free to choose if they wish to bid for such properties.</i></p>
	Local resident	<p>“Improvement of housing standards is imperative. It immediately says we are living in a "good" area which in turn causes less graffiti fly tipping and petty theft.”</p> <p><i>Council response: noted.</i></p>
	Local resident	<p>“Of course this should be ongoing.”</p> <p><i>Council response: noted.</i></p>

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<b>Improving standards of housing cont/d</b>	Local resident	<p>“As you state, rogue landlords are criminals and should be prosecuted and prevented from holding any future responsibility for the welfare of others. I would prefer housing stock to be controlled by an authority whose primary objective is for the wellbeing of its tenants. I believe council housing provided such a model and believe over the last 40 years since selling off the council housing stock and relying on the private sector, standards have fallen dramatically for the whole rented market while rents continue to escalate.”</p> <p><i>Council response: as stated in the Housing Strategy, the Council is committed to making use of the full range of enforcement tools available to us to tackle criminal landlords.</i></p>
	Other	<p>“More housing in nhdc”</p> <p><i>Council response: our proposed Local Plan, currently undergoing examination, seeks to enable this.</i></p>
<b>Preventing and managing homelessness</b>	Registered provider	<p>“The demographic of people presenting at homeless in North Herts, with 40% being under 35, largely childless and often with some form of vulnerability highlights the need for more supported housing in the area that prevents homelessness in the first place but also offers the opportunity for viable and sustainable housing for the group that most needs it in North Herts.”</p> <p><i>Council response: agree. As part of our Homelessness &amp; Rough Sleeping Strategy, the Council will be working with local partners to improve the accommodation provision for single homeless people, especially those with complex support needs.</i></p>
	Registered provider	<p>“Generally supportive”</p> <p><i>Council response: noted.</i></p>
	Local resident	<p>“To give even a room for homeless, pay rent for some time.”</p> <p><i>Council response: noted.</i></p>
	Local resident	<p>“I believe a roof over one's head should be a basic human right in North Hertfordshire. Every attempt must be made to provide cheap affordable accommodation. If 14000 new homes are to be built, I suggest that the council owns and rents a proportion of these. I think the amount of retirement homes in the centre of Hitchin is excessive. I think planning permission for new homes needs to be more socially aware and responsible for citizens needs, not developer profit. With regard to homelessness we need to reinstate drug and alcohol recovery centres and mental health residential units in order to stabilise and rehabilitate those in difficulties. The council seems aware of the reasons for homelessness. I believe it would be money well spent to rehabilitate people before it becomes too late for them and for your homelessness statistics.</p> <p><i>Council response: Applications for planning permission are judged against national and local policies and other relevant considerations before being granted permission. Our new Local Plan contains policies requiring a full range of housing types to be provided. With regard homelessness support, the Council has identified increasing the provision of support services as a priority and will work with Hertfordshire County Council and other partners to support work in this area.</i></p>
	Local resident	<p>“Please see above refers [comment about housing standards]. Homelessness and rough sleepers proclaim a rough area and there is no lift in the spirit of those who observe as they pass by.”</p> <p><i>Council response: noted.</i></p>

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<b>Preventing and managing homelessness cont/d</b>	Local resident	<p>“Homelessness is not a huge problem in our district, so methods such as the support workers who track down and house people is very effective. The issue is what happens afterwards to enable people to become stable members of society.”  <i>Council response: the Homelessness &amp; Rough Sleeping Strategy acknowledges the importance of support services in preventing repeat homelessness and will seek to improve information about the range of existing services in the district as well as exploring ways to increase the provision of support.</i></p>
	Citizens Advice	<p>“As well as street homeless there are many people sofa surfing, who do not have secure or permanent homes. There should be more hostel places available in North Herts.”  <i>Council response: as identified in the Homelessness &amp; Rough Sleeping Strategy, the Council will be working with local partners to improve the accommodation provision for single homeless people.</i></p>
	Other	<p>“Build more temporary accommodation for the homeless and rough sleepers until council provides more permanent accommodation.”  <i>Council response: the Council has a sufficient supply of good quality temporary accommodation provided by settle housing (formerly known as North Hertfordshire Homes). See also previous response with regards accommodation for single homeless people. The Council works with local housing providers to secure affordable housing for households on the Common Housing Register.</i></p>
<b>Tenancy Strategy</b>	Registered provider	<p>“Support the affordability items at 6.6 being replicated in s106 agreements, to ensure applied consistently.”  <i>Council response: Our new Local Plan requires that Affordable Housing on new development is genuinely affordable. We are currently preparing further guidance which will detail our approach, including cross-referencing relevant sections of the Housing Strategy.</i></p>
	Local resident	<p>“Families who live in an 2 bedroom home with 3 children is offered 3 bedroom homes, witch size is the same in feets. Just small bedroom given is not really fair.”  <i>Council response: the nature of the housing market - both market and affordable – in this region and the associated cost of housing means that bedroom sizes can be smaller than people would wish. Affordable housing is allocated via choice based lettings which means that households are free to choose whether or not to accept an advertised property.</i></p>
	Local resident	<p>“If as I suggest you move serviced retirement homes to more rural areas, this in turn provides more employment in our smaller towns and villages. With affordable housing to match it becomes a balanced policy. Increasingly towns such as Hitchin are becoming commuter suburbs. The housing market appears to be aimed at them. But people who work locally at much lower wages are being priced out. To avoid under use of properties I suggest the Australian system of 'units' for older people. Single storey developments with small gardens in a block - a community! With facilities. Don't isolate people without shops and without public transport. Look at the success of a residents minibus in Witney Oxon for new inspiration for transport.”  <i>Council response: The new Local Plan sets out our approach to future development in the district. Our policies will require a full range of homes to be delivered to meet the needs of residents.</i></p>

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Any other comments	Registered provider	<p>“It would be helpful if the context section could be supplemented by information that is settlement specific, given there are different markets (&amp; potentially needs) within the authority area.”</p> <p><i>Council response: unfortunately there is very little published data available at below district level. In terms of housing needs, these are generally considered at district level.</i></p>
	Local resident	<p>“Perhaps the council could be more pro-active as regards planning. Developments such as one-bedroom single-storey units with small gardens are not attractive to developers, but very attractive to single, retired people. A scheme in Uppingham, Rutland is providing a block of young peoples accommodation on the edge of town with a shared electric car and charging point. Inspiration is what is needed. Uppingham invited its young people to a meeting to discuss what they would like. Such developments could be put out to tender, preferably via good inspired architects, creative thinkers. I think what I am saying is, I am worried the draft Housing Strategy places responsibility with private developers and because of this some fundamental problems, such as under-occupancy and homelessness, will be not only unresolved, but exacerbated, and the eventual blocks of dismal uninspired and expensive flats will only temporarily serve commuters on their escape route out of London.”</p> <p><i>Council response: The new Local Plan sets out our approach to future development in the district. Our policies will require a full range of homes to be delivered to meet the needs of residents.</i></p>
	Local resident	<p>“The main point about Housing Strategy as I understand it that irks me is the need to be able to bid for a house and often have to do so for years. This leaves the bidder with the idea "no one hears me or cares about my needs"</p> <p><i>Council response: unfortunately demand for affordable housing in the district is high and waits for affordable housing can be lengthy as a result. The choice based lettings system allows households accepted on to the Housing Register to view the range of properties available and to bid for those that they are interested in rather than accommodation simply being allocated to them.</i></p>
	Local resident	<p>“There should be more provision of social housing.”</p> <p><i>Council response: agreed. The Housing Strategy sets out measures to maximise the supply of affordable housing. These support the proposed Local Plan, which seeks to adopt a 40% target for the delivery of affordable housing on sites of 25 dwellings or more in order to meet identified affordable housing need.</i></p>