

## **Foreword by Cllr Robert Macey**

Welcome to our Housing Strategy.

The right home in the right Place is an aspiration for the majority of us, but this realisation is harder to achieve for some people. The global pandemic has highlighted the importance of having a decent home with sufficient space together with highlighting the importance of communities.

We recognise that there are a multitude of reasons why this may be the case for some of our residents. Our aim is to address the barriers that prevent these residents from being able to access a suitable home.

Shropshire Council together with its Partners, both Private and Public are in a key position to address these challenges, whether that is through the development of specific policies, providing funding or by pulling human resources together.

We also recognise that there are often competing interests in providing the right home for our residents. The challenge of limiting the impact of new development on the environment is particularly important, especially in the light of Shropshire Council declaring a climate emergency. We understand that communities wish to see their physical environments protected and the challenge this presents in supporting new development. We recognise that to achieve economic growth, we need to facilitate the right homes to support growth and business development and to encourage and retain workers. It is also important to us, that residents who require a special type of home with specific support are helped in equal measure.

We are hugely ambitious and positive about the future and growth of housing in Shropshire and look forward to delivering this Strategy.

## **Why we need this strategy**

The need for a decent home in a location where the household can realise its potential is well documented. The issue is how the requirement is realised for all communities, both urban and rural. The high cost of housing and slower pace of earnings within the County has resulted in the cost of home ownership rising beyond the means of many individuals and families.

It is recognised that not all households will wish or indeed have the means to be home owners. All households should equally be provided for with public and private sector opportunities and that all households should also be able to live in a decent home.

There are those residents both old and young, who will require the assistance of the Council to secure the right home for them, whether that is through supported and assisted living or through residential care. There is a determination that by working together with the public and private sectors there can be creative solutions to the challenges. This strategy provides a focus for those interested and involved in supporting and influencing initiatives that provide the right home for all Shropshire residents.

## **What is this strategy is for?**

This Strategy sets out immediate objectives, opportunities and an action plan with the aim of encouraging partners with resources and expertise to work together. It recognises that different age groups often need different housing solutions and that some will continually need the Council to be creative in identifying a solution.

Housing forms the basis of many work areas within the Council and pulls together the strands of each service provision.

This is within a context of reducing public sector budgets and dealing with higher demands, needing to protect and enhance the environment, deal with climate change and the need to protect finite resources and recognising a wide range of housing requirements.

## **Who is this Strategy for?**

This strategy is for the Council and its partners, both private and public sector as a mechanism to identify what is needed to achieve the vision and how this can be achieved. Working together in partnership is essential, including through the pooling of finances and expertise.

Employers – and employees; for businesses to grow and expand it is important that the workforce is appropriately housed in an accessible location and that housing should not become a barrier to growth.

## **The Housing Vision for Shropshire**

**All homes are well designed decent homes of high quality, which will protect Shropshire's unique urban and rural environments and ensure it is a great place to live.**

**That all Shropshire residents have access to the 'right home in the right place' to support and promote their health and wellbeing throughout their lives;**



## **Delivering the Strategy**

### **Key Objectives: -**

- 1.To meet the overall current and future housing needs of Shropshire's growing population by addressing the housing needs of particular groups within communities
- 2.To ensure people whose housing needs are not met through the local open market housing can access housing that meets their needs
3. Preventing households from becoming homeless and where this is not possible ensuring they have safe, secure and appropriate accommodation until they are able to resettle
- 4.To ensure people can access a mix of housing options within Shropshire's urban and rural landscape, that best meets their needs in terms of tenure, safety, size, type, design and location of housing.
- 5.To minimise the environmental impact of existing housing stock and future housing development in the interest of climate change. Maximise resource efficiencies and to ensure optimum use of sustainable construction techniques.
6. Ensuring that there is enough housing supply to enable businesses to attract and retain the local workforce that they need.



## **Performance and monitoring**

An action plan sits alongside this strategy and will be set out as immediate, short, medium and long term. This action plan, along with the overall targets will be reviewed regularly and updated annually by Shropshire Council for the duration of this Strategy.

## **Shropshire in context**

### **Shropshire: its communities and places**

Shropshire is a fantastic place to live, work and visit. It is admired for its beautiful and attractive natural and historic environment as well as its impressive biodiversity. Covering a sizeable area of 319,730 hectares with 23% of this is designated as the South Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The county has a rich cultural heritage to discover and natural landscapes to explore, for residents and visitors alike. There are for example Roman and Iron Age sites; castles and historic buildings; theatres and museums; rivers and canals; walking and cycling routes including one of the largest Rights of Way networks in the country; geology and wildlife; and natural and industrial archaeology.

Shropshire communities look out for each other and their living environment. The whole County benefits from excellent schools, low crime rates, a growing local economy and many volunteers supporting local communities. The quality of life and wide range of housing options continues to attract a rising number of people wishing to settle in the County. The current population is estimated at 320,300<sup>1</sup> people which is projected to reach 337,800 by 2041<sup>2</sup>.

Around 39% of Shropshire's population lives in villages, hamlets and dwellings dispersed throughout the countryside. The remainder live in one of the 17 market towns and key centres. Only Ludlow and Bridgnorth in the south, Oswestry, Whitchurch and Market Drayton in the north, and Shrewsbury, the central county town have populations in excess of 10,000 people.

The County has a road network with approximately 5,100km<sup>3</sup> of carriageway and is easily accessible by road (including the A5/M54 motorway). Shropshire has a high level of car ownership, with 84.2% of households<sup>4</sup> having access to at least one car or van. Shrewsbury also acts as a rail hub with easy access to Wales, Cheshire, the West Midlands, and London and beyond. There are 16 rail stations and an extensive bus network that aims to provide accessible public transport to residents and visitors.

The 2019 Indices of Deprivation identified seven small urban areas in Shrewsbury, Oswestry and Ludlow with concentrations of population experiencing high levels of deprivation. Less identifiable are the small pockets of rural deprivation across Shropshire. Key to improving the health and wellbeing of Shropshire's more vulnerable residents is to ensure they can live in and access safe and suitable homes in good condition, built to a high quality and in the right location.

### **Shropshire: its businesses and sectors**

Business sectors include agriculture; the care sector; construction; forestry; quality foods via farm shops and food fairs; heritage and countryside related tourism including music and walking festivals; the hospitality sector; advanced manufacturing and engineering; and significant numbers of home-based businesses including the creative sector.

On skills, the University Centre Shrewsbury, which works closely with local businesses, is a joint venture between the Council and the University of Chester, whilst the Council also has close links with

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Harper Adams University and further education colleges, including the Shrewsbury Colleges group and North Shropshire College. Our large geography means that our economy operates and reaches in different directions.

Shropshire is primarily a small business economy, with more than nine out of ten enterprises having less than 10 employees. The value of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) to the Shropshire economy is hugely important and significant, alongside a number of larger employers who have more than 250 employees including international companies working across a range of sectors.

### **How has the Strategy been informed?**

This Strategy is informed by a wealth of information and intelligence from a variety of organisations and sources including; Planning Policy and Information, Intelligence and Insight web pages; recently revised place plans and Homepoint monitoring reports; which provides an analysis of the housing waiting list. Notwithstanding statistics that are produced and prepared by the Office of National Statistics (ONS), Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government and the Land Registry. In addition, stakeholder intelligence has been used to influence the objectives and opportunities identified in this Strategy.

## **‘Planning for the right homes in the right Place’**

### **National Planning Policy Context**

In February 2017, the Government published a Housing White Paper entitled “Fixing our Broken Housing Market”<sup>5</sup>. This set out the government’s plans to reform the housing market and boost the supply of new homes. This included the Government’s 2015 *“commitment to build a million new homes by 2020 and supply a further half a million by 2022.”*

This identified three challenges;

- Councils lacking an up-to-date adopted Local Plan that reflected future population growth.
- The slow pace of new development.
- The structure of the current housing market making it harder to increase supply.

The White Paper outlined measures to ensure people’s housing needs and aspirations are met in the short and long-term:

- planning for the right homes in the right places,
- build homes faster,
- diversify the housing market, and
- helping people now.

These measures also address *“supporting people to buy or rent their own home, preventing homelessness, improving options for older people and protecting the most vulnerable.”*

The White Paper expresses the Government’s desire that local authorities should be ‘as ambitious and innovative as possible to get homes built in their area.’

A key measure from the Government’s White Paper has been to completely refresh and simplify the Planning Policy system.

In September 2017, the Government published a consultation document entitled “Planning for the right homes in the right places”<sup>6</sup> with a view to reforming the planning system to speed up the delivery of new homes. The new National Planning Policy Framework<sup>7</sup> was issued in July 2018 and subsequently updated in July 2019. This has prompted new National Planning Policy Guidance<sup>8</sup> for local authorities.

The Government has pledged to renew the Affordable Housing Programme, but the focus will be on new initiatives aimed at home ownership. The ‘First Homes’ initiative has launched its consultation on design and delivery of first homes in February 2020. It references the Government’s commitment to making home ownership a reality for everyone and recognising that it is out of reach for many. The consultation references that progress has been made, but further action was needed. It notes that the biggest barrier to home ownership is affordability given low interest rates and high rents have limited the ability for people to save.

Homes England’s Strategic Plan – (2018/19 – 2022/23) pledges that “over the next five years we’ll help more people in England to access better homes in the right places by: Providing expert support to priority locations, addressing the barriers facing smaller builders, supporting modern methods of construction (MMC), Delivering home ownership products, such as Help to Buy, Unlocking and

enabling land, providing investment products, including for major infrastructure and supporting the affordable market'

## **Local Planning Policy Context**

Shropshire has an adopted Local Plan covering the Plan Period 2006-2026. (Core Strategy adopted 2011 and SAMDev Adopted in December 2015.) The Council is currently at an advanced stage of reviewing the Local Plan which extends the Plan period to 2016-2038. This will provide clarity to all stakeholders within the Shropshire housing market area and enable the Council to respond flexibly to changing circumstances in line with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The Council's Local Housing Need Assessment published in August 2020 identifies that Shropshire has an annual housing need of 1,177 dwellings per annum and an overall housing need of 25,894 dwellings during 2016-2038. This adopts the standard methodology for calculating housing need defined in the NPPG.

At the end of 2017, the Council sought views on "the preferred scale and distribution of development" in Shropshire for the period 2016-2038. The key housing proposal was 'High' housing growth of 28,750 dwellings, equivalent to an average of 1,430 dwellings per year for the whole of Shropshire.

## **Place Plan**

There are 18 Place Plan areas in Shropshire, usually (although not always) focussed on a market town and its surrounding rural communities. Each Place Plan looks at infrastructure needs with that specific Place Plan area. This Strategy uses Place Plan geography for its analysis.

## **Delivering the vision**

Shropshire Council is committed to growing and nurturing a healthy, functioning local housing market that provides high quality decent homes to support thriving Shropshire communities. The Council is working closely with developers, private landlords, communities and other participants in the sector to achieve the vision outlined in this Strategy.

Shropshire Council recognises geographic variations within the County and consequently, will not adopt a one size fits all approach to delivering the Strategy.

Where people cannot afford to access homes through the open housing market, Shropshire Council is ambitious to work collaboratively with partners to find innovative solutions to removing affordability barriers and to growing the stock of affordable homes.

Shropshire Council is dedicated to ensuring people on low incomes, encompassing some of the most vulnerable members of Shropshire society, live or have access to safe, secure, high quality housing in places where the need is. This means working effectively with social landlords and other service providers.

The Council recognises the vital role the housing sector plays in supporting local economic growth. The Council is committed to ensuring the growing labour force has access to high quality homes in the right places to fully meet their health and wellbeing needs.

The Council is committed to ensuring future housing growth and improvements to existing housing stock are delivered in a manner sensitive to Shropshire's environment and local communities.

Shropshire Council is working collaboratively to ensure that reducing the impact of climate change and ensuring homes meet 'decent home' standards are at the forefront of achieving this vision.

Shropshire Council is equipped with valuable tools, powers and innovative housing/planning professionals including;

- Planning policy and Planning Development Management,
- Economic Growth,
- Adult and Children's Services,
- Housing Options tackling homelessness, adaptations, revitalising housing stock.
- Estates and land ownership
- HomePoint and the arms-length management organisation STAR Housing
- Public / environmental protection.
- The Council's Housing company 'Cornovii'

This places the Council in a pivotal position to positively influence and collaborate with others to achieve Shropshire's housing vision. Shropshire Council is also in the unique position of being democratically accountable to Shropshire residents who want the Council to continue to make Shropshire a wonderful place to live and work.

Achieving this vision will help public, community and voluntary service providers make more effective use of resources and services to support the health and wellbeing of Shropshire's population.

The importance of collaboration and partnership working in achieving this vision cannot be emphasised enough. The Council will engage with individuals, local communities, and private developers, private and social rented landlords, other public and voluntary sector organisations, Shropshire's business community and other parties active in Shropshire's local housing market.



## Key Objectives

### 1.To meet the overall current and future housing needs of Shropshire's growing population by addressing the housing needs of particular groups within communities

National Planning Policy requires local authorities to assess overall housing need during the Local Plan period. In addition, NPPG also states that “*plan-making authorities*’ need ‘*to assess the need for housing of different groups and reflect this in planning policies*’ particularly ‘*having regard to deliverability*.”<sup>9</sup> This work forms part of the evidence base that supports the current review of Shropshire’s Local Plan.

The following section in brief outlines the pressing current and future needs of these groups. Within these groups there can be further challenges and opportunities presented by geographic variations. We recognise that housing needs cannot be viewed in isolation to wider place-shaping policies and the provision of infrastructure.

It lists some of the key opportunities Shropshire Council together with partners are pursuing to address housing need in Shropshire. Some of these are ground breaking and innovative and being driven by caring and enthusiastic professionals.

## Young People and Students

There is a need to ensure that all young people who wish to live in Shropshire; whether attending higher education or living in Shropshire for work have access to a range of affordable housing solutions.

Students attending higher education establishments in Shropshire should have access to satisfactory student accommodation, whether it be communal halls of residence or self-contained dwellings. Provision is vital first to attract new students and then to support their welfare as the educational establishments nurture their knowledge and talents.

Many young adults leave Shropshire to further their education and pursue employment elsewhere in their late teens and early twenties. The development of the University Centre Shrewsbury will provide young people with an opportunity to further their education in Shropshire. These young people may be currently resident in the County or from elsewhere. If Shropshire can retain its young people once they have completed their education, they will further strengthen the quality and diversity of Shropshire’s labour force. This aspiration is reflected as one of the 10 goals of the ‘Shrewsbury Big Town Plan’ to ‘retain more of our best young talent in the town and attract new talent from outside’. Attractive and accessible housing solutions are required to encourage retention of students and all young people in Shropshire.

## Rural Housing

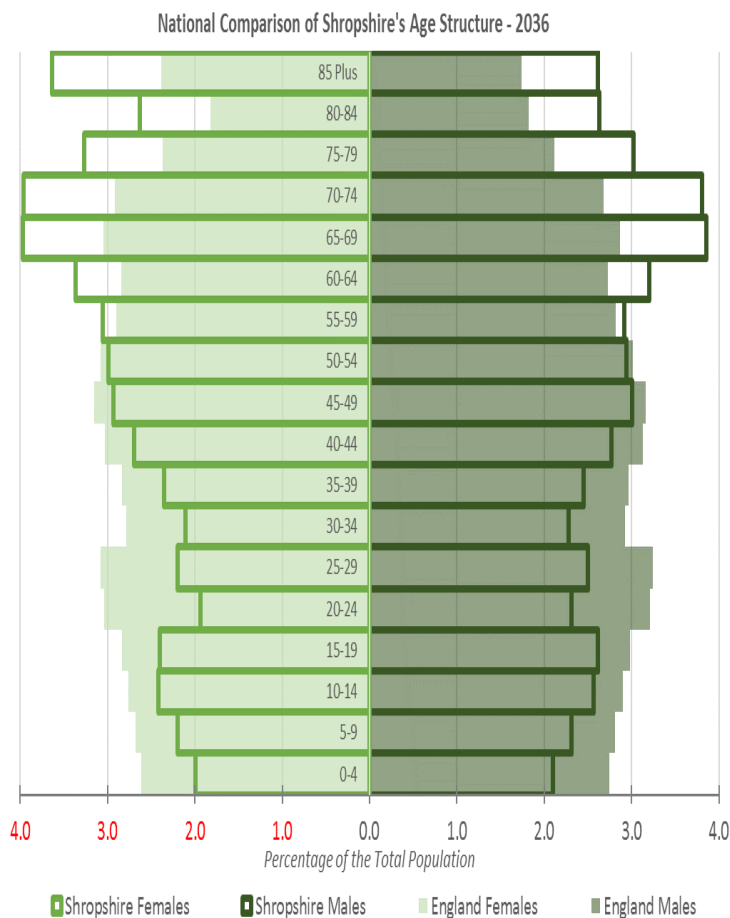
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The challenges facing rural communities in respect to housing is nationally well documented, the challenges in Shropshire are no different and primarily relate to affordability. Approximately 39% of Shropshire's population live in the countryside and rural settlements. The rural population comprises a high number of older people for example, 58% of 80 years of age and over within the County live in rural areas and 61% of the 65 – 79 age group. This will be in part attributed to the attractiveness of Shropshire as a place to retire.

There is a strong correlation between Shropshire's aging communities and housing affordability ratios, for example Ludlow, Church Stretton and Bishops Castle in the South of the County have high ratios of 7, 8.2 and 7.4 respectively. These figures represent the multiplier used against the household income to determine affordability. For example, median gross household income in Church Stretton would have to be multiplied by 8.2 to acquire an open market median house value home. As the mortgage multiplier is generally accepted as being four times the household income, the amount people can afford results in an imbalance of housing opportunities for those who have grown up, work or need to provide family support in those areas. With an aging rural population there are challenges regarding enabling older people to be able to live healthy, happy and supported lives into old age.

The largest challenge for essential rural workers, younger people and families is the affordability of both social and market housing. The lack of appropriate housing can impact on service delivery and the ability of rural businesses to grow and flourish, as well as ensuring balanced and mixed communities.

### **Older People including those approaching retirement**



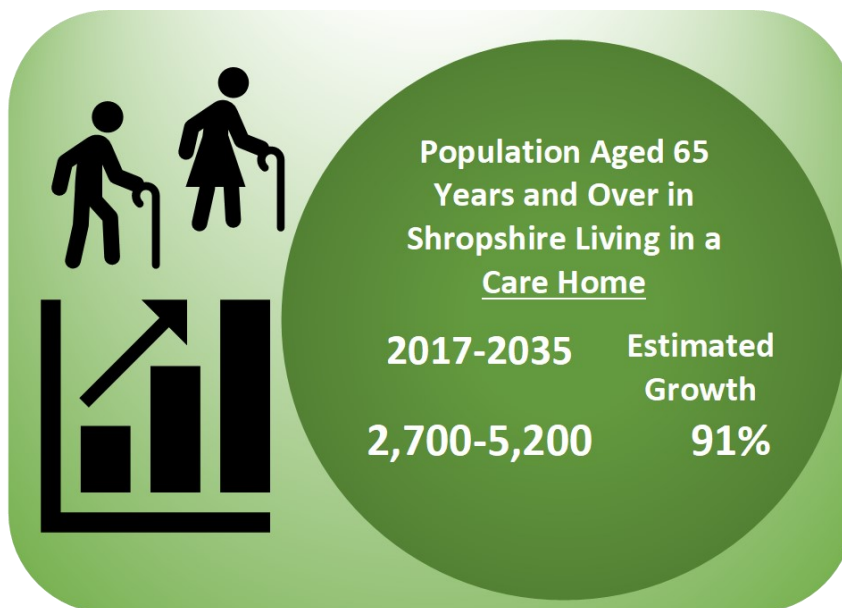
Migration and longer life expectancy are leading to a growing older population in Shropshire. At present it is estimated 77,800 older people live in Shropshire, projected to rise by 48% to 114,600 by 2041. By 2041, over a third of the population will be aged over 65 years compared to just below a quarter nationally. The above illustration clearly shows the projected aging profile of Shropshire.

The need to supply enough and the right homes in the right places to meet the needs and aspirations of Shropshire's growing older population is vital. Older people, from those approaching retirement to those more elderly and less mobile, require a range of housing solutions that can promote their health and well-being, enable them to live where they wish to live and enable them to remain independent for longer (avoiding the need for costly residential care.) National planning policy requires local authorities to consider the need for a range of housing solutions including; -

- Age restricted general market housing for people aged 55 and over and the active elderly with shared amenities
- Retirement living or sheltered housing – purpose-built homes with limited communal facilities but with a degree of support in the form of a warden or house manager
- Extra care housing with medium to high level of care available if required – in dependant living with varying degree of care as time progresses
- Residential care homes and nursing homes – high level of care, meeting all activities of daily living.

This list is clearly not exhaustive in terms of housing solutions for older people, other opportunities include co-housing and downsizing opportunities, which can continue to promote independence

with the assistance of adaptations. The Council will where possible embrace a broad range of housing solutions for its aging residents.



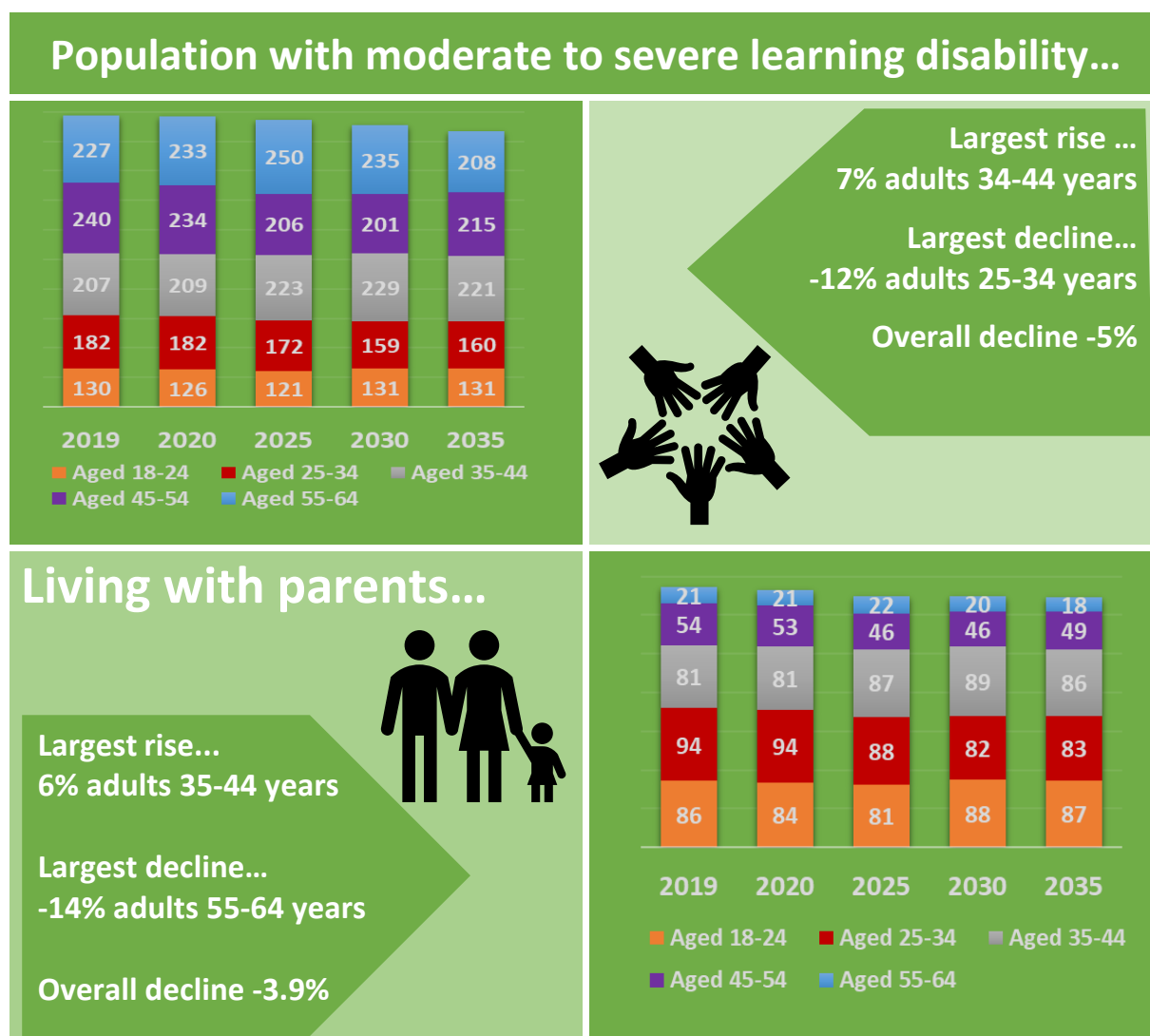
## Gypsy's and Travellers

Shropshire Council is committed to *“the Government’s overarching aim to ensure fair and equal treatment for Travellers, in a way that facilitates the traditional and nomadic way of life of Travellers while respecting the interests of the settled community.”* The Council also recognises the importance of taking into account the accommodation needs of all Travellers, including those that are settled.

Shropshire Council undertook a Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showperson Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) <sup>[1]</sup> in 2017 which has been updated by a GTAA published in February 2020. The studies consider supply of plots and pitches and identify the likely accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople to 2038. This evidence is being used to inform the now advanced review of Shropshire’s Local Plan and its approach to Traveller site delivery.

It is recognised that new gypsy and traveller sites will be more sustainable if they are in appropriate locations, well managed and have good facilities. On this basis Shropshire Council has undertaken improvements at a number of its sites. However, whilst Shropshire Council owns and manages four sites, a significant proportion of the pitch provision in Shropshire is on private sites of various sizes and Government policy encourages more private provision. Therefore, Shropshire’s Local Plan will set out criteria to guide the delivery of suitable sustainable new Traveller sites regardless of the provider.

## People with disabilities



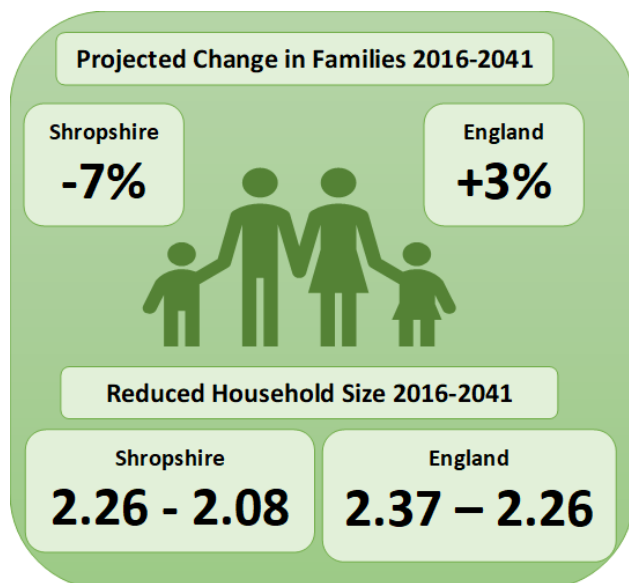
Ensuring that all people with disabilities are afforded the same choice in terms of securing the right home and support and that both private and public sector have a part to play in its provision.

Shropshire Council has a strong focus on providing opportunities for people with disabilities to live independently and the commissioning of supported living accommodation aims to reduce the number of placements into residential care.

Individuals may have been at risk of going into residential care; they may be in temporary placement, they could be in a position of risk in the community or they could be coming out of educational residential placements or hospital. Whatever the situation the Supported Living Team aims to build support around everyone's needs and strengths.

Shropshire Council continues to develop supported living opportunities for individuals regardless of their disability. Most of our supported living arrangements are for individuals with a learning disability, with a few schemes commissioned for individuals with mental health needs.

## Families with children



Shropshire is projected to experience a decline in households in terms of numbers of dependent children (0 to 15 years), which is consistent with national trends in household formation. The most significant projected decline is likely to be households containing 3 or more children which is expected to see a decline of -9.8%. Nationally, this group is the only group that is expected to decline.

Market Drayton, Oswestry, Whitchurch, Shrewsbury and Shifnal have the highest proportion of younger age population (25–49 years). These areas in central and northern Shropshire have a slightly younger age structure, suggesting the presence of more families and slightly more affordable housing. These areas include the County Town and three urban areas with more than 10,000 population, all serving as large employment centres in Shropshire.

Changing trends in household sizes in a context of high house prices and low average household incomes needs to be reflected in emerging development opportunities.

## Opportunities

- Promote and explore housing solutions that encourage students, young people and essential workers to remain or relocate to Shropshire
- Ensure adequate and satisfactory student accommodation in Shropshire is available
- Recognise that a range of housing solutions are required to meet the housing needs of rural and urban communities
- Continue and enhance community capacity building initiatives such as Community Led Schemes
- Continue working collaboratively with housing providers and developers to bring forward more homes for vulnerable people that offer a range of housing options.
- Ensure there is a broad spectrum of housing solutions for Shropshire's aging population which minimise the need for costly residential and nursing care
- Maximise opportunities to adapt homes occupied by vulnerable older people, to enable them to lead independent and fulfilled lives.

- Support infrastructure which enables the development and use of new technology that enables people to live in their own home for longer.
- Provide Supported living to support those with physical and mental health problems
- Embrace opportunities presented by Cornovii Developments Ltd (Local Housing Company) in the development of unique and community responsive housing solutions
- Increasing the housing choice in town centres and improving affordability by introducing a range of housing models and tenures.
- Provide quality children's homes and work in a collaborative way to provide suitable accommodation for Care Leavers
- Develop housing solutions for all individuals and families within the Council's area
- Secure housing to meet the needs of vulnerable people when new developments are identified
- Ensure there is a co-ordinated approach to supported housing
- Invest in the development of bespoke accommodation for individuals with complex needs to enable to them to continue to live in Shropshire and be near their families
- Ensure all authorised Gypsy and Traveller caravan sites are well run by promoting good management and appropriate facilities
- Promote the development of further specialised housing with care schemes including housing with care suitable for adults with dementia and/ or mental health difficulties to widen housing and care options
- Embrace opportunities presented by Cornovii Developments Ltd (Local Housing Company) and STAR Housing in the development of unique and community responsive housing solutions
- Intervene in the Shropshire housing market to provide housing to groups where other solutions may not be available.

## 2.To ensure people whose housing needs are not met through the local open market housing can access housing that meets their needs

### Understanding the level of need

The NPPF explains that *“the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies including, but not limited to, those who require affordable housing.”*<sup>10</sup>

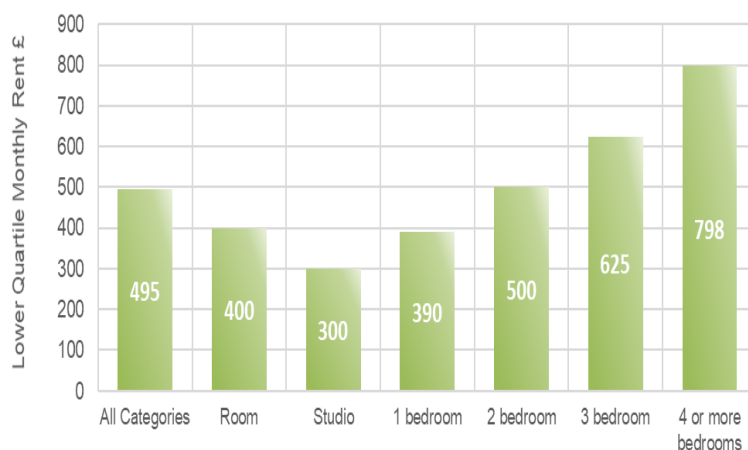
To calculate affordable housing need NPPG states that *“Strategic policy-making authorities will need to estimate the current number of households and projected number of households who lack their own housing or who cannot afford to meet their housing needs in the market.”*

*The unmet (gross) need for affordable housing by assessing past trends and current estimates of:*

- *the number of homeless households;*
- *the number of those in priority need who are currently housed in temporary accommodation;*
- *the number of households in over-crowded housing;*
- *the number of concealed households;*
- *the number of existing affordable housing tenants in need (i.e., householders currently housed in unsuitable dwellings); and*
- *the number of households from other tenures in need and those that cannot afford their own homes, either to rent, or to own, where that is their aspiration.”*

We acknowledge the substantial number of residents in current housing need within Shropshire, as they seek advice and support in terms of accessing affordable housing. At the time of writing there are more than 5000 households on the housing register requiring affordable housing. Affordable housing being defined by the NPPF as ‘housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market, including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or for essential local workers’. The number of new affordable homes over the last 5 years has averaged at 343 per year. This is significantly below the number of homes required. Households in the greatest need are housed in advance of those with a lower need in accordance with Shropshire Council’s Allocation Policy.

The need for affordable housing in Shropshire is growing, as fewer households can afford rising house prices or rising private monthly rents.





There is a growing disparity between house prices and household income which reinforces the need for a broader range of house types and tenures that can address this unmet housing need.

The 'unmet' housing need is further evidenced by affordability ratios. The ability or inability of households to afford and access suitable housing in a suitable location is a key market signal to indicate higher levels of affordable housing need. Affordability ratios (ARs) are widely used as a measure of affordability of private market housing, as they compare housing costs against the ability of a household to pay. A high ratio indicates housing that is less affordable and that households on lower incomes are more likely to struggle to afford even the lowest priced accommodation.

Affordable Housing is defined as an umbrella term that covers a wide range of housing options for people who are unable to meet their housing needs on the open market. It can include both rented and low-cost home ownership options. The NPPF defines affordable tenures as follows: -

- a) Affordable housing for rent (Social or Affordable Rent) or is at least 20% below local market rents
- b) Starter homes as specified in the Housing and Planning Act 2016
- c) Discounted market sales housing whereby a home is sold at least 20% below local market value
- d) Other affordable routes to home ownership which includes shared ownership, low cost homes for sale and rent to buy

The NPPF advises that "planning policies and decisions should be responsive to local circumstances and support housing developments that reflect local needs". Shropshire Council together with its Registered Provider partners continues to have an excellent track record of delivering exception site developments. The 'exception' being evidenced local housing need. Standard exception site delivery has been further enhanced by 'Community Led Housing', of which there are currently 15 schemes, delivered with direct support and input from the community.

The Right Home Right Place initiative canvasses responses from the whole community and not just those seeking an affordable home, but also households needing to downsize and those households with a hidden need.

The NPPF could be viewed as providing a number of 'tools' for Local Authorities to use in addressing the provision of affordable housing. It references that consideration may be given to allowing some open market on site to facilitate the delivery of affordable homes.

### **Opportunities**

- Explore through the Local Plan Review opportunities to introduce a wider range of housing solutions that satisfy a broader range of community needs and aspirations.
- Review housing opportunities presented as a policy requirement on land allocated for housing development
- Continue to encourage self-build development opportunities on land allocated for housing

- Acknowledge that home ownership is not an aspiration or a realistic option for many households and to work with public and private sector partners to provide affordable housing options
- Acknowledge that Shropshire Council together with its Public and Private Sector partners are in a pivotal position to drive and support a range of housing solutions
- Continue to seek quality housing solutions

### 3. Preventing households from becoming homeless and where this is not possible ensuring they have safe, secure and appropriate accommodation until they are able to resettlement

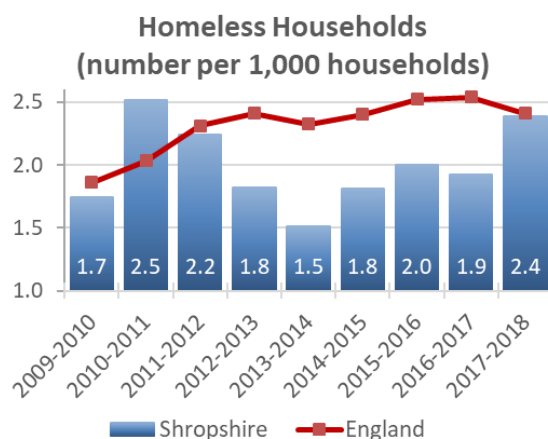
Ensuring there are household solutions for all residents of Shropshire including those that find themselves homeless or require supported housing opportunities within Shropshire.

The charity 'Crisis' defines homelessness in its broadest sense as “a problem faced by people who lack a place to live that is supportive, affordable, decent and secure”<sup>11</sup>. Rough sleepers are the most visible homeless people, but a high proportion of homeless people/households are accommodated in hostels, squats, bed and breakfasts (B&Bs) or temporarily with friends and family.

#### Policy and Legislation

The primary homelessness legislation is in Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 and provides the statutory underpinning for action to prevent homelessness and provide assistance to people threatened with or actually homeless. This was amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002. These extended the statutory duty that local authorities must provide accommodation to households accepted as being homeless and in priority need. Their duty also extends to supporting homelessness prevention and relief.

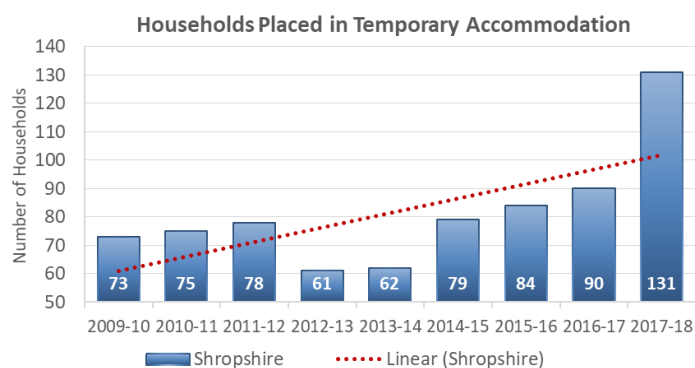
In 2017 new legislation entitled the “Homelessness Reduction Act” was adopted together with an updated version of the Homelessness Code of Guidance. This places a duty on local authorities to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness in their areas. It also requires housing authorities to provide homelessness services to all those affected, not just those who have ‘priority need’. This new legislation came into force on April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2018.



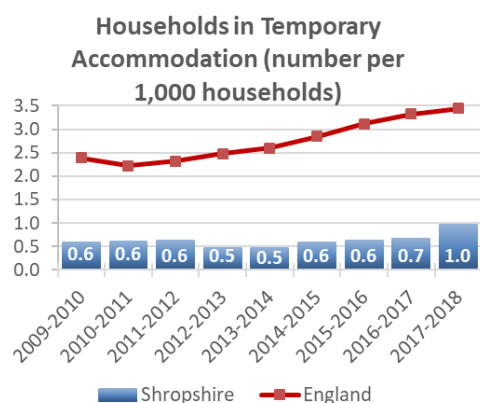
Unfortunately, since 2013-14 rates of homelessness have generally continued to increase in Shropshire, with a significant increase of 24.5% in the last two years. Rates remain below the level for 2010-11. This rise in the number of homeless households, parallels with rising house prices in Shropshire. With the exception of 2010-11, Shropshire rates have consistently remained below national levels.

<sup>11</sup>Crisis, (2005), What is Homelessness

On average 81 (2009-2018) households a year occupy temporary accommodation in Shropshire. Since 2014-15, the number of households placed in temporary accommodation has risen year on year, increasing most significantly in the last two years by 46%. This suggests finding suitable settled housing for the rising number households accepted as homeless and in priority need in Shropshire has become more challenging.



Nationally the number of households in priority need per 1,000 households has continued to rise year on year since 2010-2011, reaching 3.4 households per 1,000 in 2017-2018. Shropshire has not followed this trend. However, rates have risen slightly year on year since 2013-2014, encompassing significant rise during 2016-17 to 2017-2018 (0.66 to 0.96 households per 1,000 households.) This follows on from a similar rise in homelessness and runs parallel with rising housing costs in Shropshire.



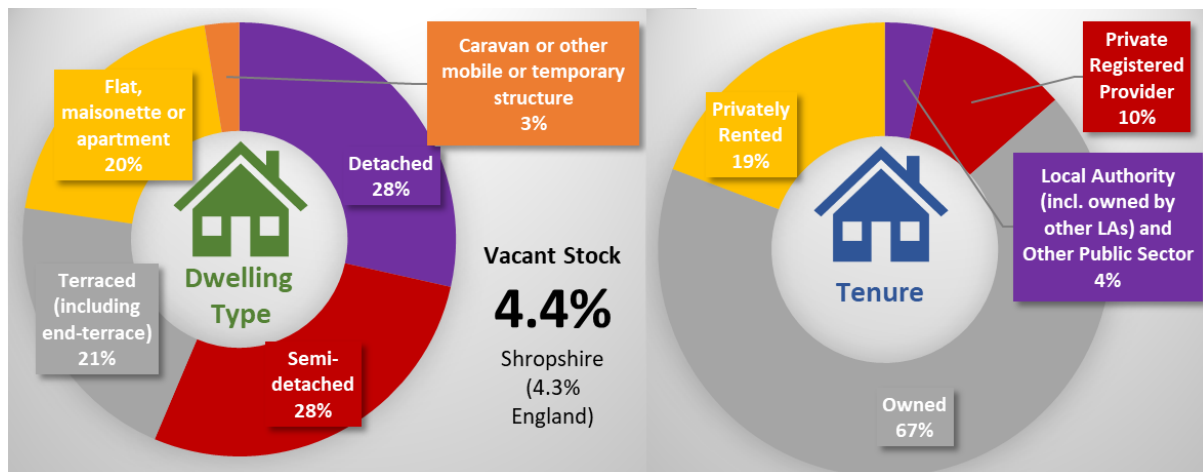
Homelessness can be as a result of a range of issues, which are often complex and the use of temporary accommodation can further escalate these challenges due to social isolation and lack of access to support. The solution to addressing the issue of preventing homelessness rests with both the public and private sector and needs a coordinated and collaborative approach. There are a range of steps incorporated into the action plan that will help in meeting this objective.

## Opportunities

- Work with private, public and voluntary stakeholders to understand the issues that result in homelessness
- Identify housing solutions that focus on those leaving care and initiatives that prevent a young person from becoming homeless

- Educate and dispell the myth of the type of household that is or may become homeless
- Recognise that the current situation of temporary accommodation is not in the interest of the health and wealth being of the household or the Council and identify improved solutions.
- Identify and implement opportunities that improve the 'temporary' experience of the household
- Identify temporary accommodation that seeks to improve on the health and well being of the household
- Identify and implement opportunities that reduce expenditure on temporary accommodation
- Identify opportunities that bridge the gap between temporary accommodation and longer-term housing opportunities
- STAR Housing expansion of opportunities for temporary accommodation for those who have experienced homelessness and rough sleeping

**4.To ensure people can access a mix of housing options within Shropshire’s urban and rural landscape, that best meets their needs in terms of tenure, safety, size, type, design and location of housing.**



Shropshire’s housing stock can be broken down in terms of tenure: -67% owned, privately rent 19%, private registered provider 10%, Local Authority and other public sector 4% and 4.4% of vacant stock as illustrated above. There are obviously variances within these broad headings. The mix of type and size of property is equally applicable across the tenures, for example, adapted properties are required in private rented, affordable and market housing.

### Market Housing

Communities with a mix of housing types, tenures, and sizes will be more able to meet the changing needs and aspirations of its residents, through their changing life stages, household shapes and sizes or changes in income.

Wider housing choice increases the opportunities for households to remain within their communities and promotes social equality and inclusion by easing geographical constraints on the search for appropriate homes.

The Local Plan sets out the requirements for new residential developments by stating that they should maintain provision of and contribute to a mix of housing types, tenure and size to help support the creation of mixed, balanced and inclusive communities. This includes meeting the needs of an ageing population, smaller properties, and opportunities for self-build.

### Private Rented

The private rented sector in Shropshire accounts for 16% of the housing stock and of these 43% are flats.

The private rented sector makes an important contribution to the housing offer and flexibility to directly support our continued job led growth for existing and incoming labour force. Traditionally, this sector has not been the tenure of choice, mainly due to concerns of security of tenure and property conditions. The most common hazards reported to the Council relate to crowding and space, excess cold and damp and mould growth.

Within the private housing sector in Shropshire the lower quartile monthly rent is assumed to be the minimum cost a household would need to afford to access affordable private sector housing.

### **Affordable housing**

Affordable Housing is an umbrella term that covers a wide range of housing options for people who are unable to meet their housing needs on the open market. It can include both rented and low-cost home ownership options

Shropshire Council together with its partners has continued to be successful in attracting Homes England funding, of which Registered Providers have benefitted from £34,902,507 funding in the last 3 years.

STAR Housing was set up in 2013 to run Shropshire Council's housing stock, which comprises around 4200 homes. They work towards maintaining and improving the existing stock and have built 140 new properties.

For those whose housing needs cannot be met through market provision – affordable housing is: social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. The affordable tenures defined by the NPPF are set out under Objective 2. Affordable houses are currently delivered by either a developer as a policy requirement or as an exception site development, which also includes schemes delivered as 'Community Led', the latter directly responding to identified local need.

There are significant variations within each community within Shropshire, given that it covers such a wide geographic area and therefore housing solutions should not be a 'one size fits all approach'. The Council through its planning policies should be able to provide the framework for addressing housing need. This cannot be undertaken in isolation and requires both public and private sector collaboration.

### **Opportunities**

- Make Private Rented Sector housing safe for tenants. This includes licensing of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs)
- To ensure empty properties are not detrimental to communities, in terms of risk, nuisance, or wasted resources
- Seek the optimum amount and type of affordable homes on relevant development sites
- Challenge poor quality housing
- Work in partnership with the private sector to ensure that Private Rented Sector housing stock is maintained and managed to a high standard within the legislative framework and work with owners of empty properties, where necessary utilising available enforcement powers.
- Deliver more affordable homes through the STAR Housing new homes build programme
- Work with Registered Providers in Shropshire to provide a range of affordable housing options
- Work with developers to provide a mix of well-designed, decent homes on new developments

- Consider direct intervention in the Private Rented Sector to provide well managed market rent accommodation for those who do not access social housing but are unable to afford home ownership
- Offer incentives to bring forward empty space for housing



## **5.To minimise the environmental impact of existing housing stock and future housing development in the interest of climate change. Maximise resource efficiencies and to ensure optimum use of sustainable construction techniques.**

### **Climate Change**

One of the national Industrial Strategy “grand challenges” is Clean Growth, and this resonates in Shropshire, where we have the following opportunities in smart, flexible and clean energy technologies:

- University Centre Shrewsbury – Centre for Research into Environmental Science and Technology (CREST).
- Supporting development of low carbon innovations by SMEs through supporting the delivery of projects such as Built Environment Climate Change Innovations.
- Supply chain activities including low carbon within housing.

Shropshire Council declared a climate emergency in May 2019 and in December 2019 approved a climate change strategy framework. There are 5 themes to the framework: - demand management, transport and travel, renewable energy generation and storage, sustainable land management, clean and inclusive growth, adaptation and resilience. These themes apply equally to the work of the Council and to areas where the Council can influence and direct change in practices and procedures. Shropshire Council is in a pivotal position to affect appropriate changes.

### **Using Existing resources**

Cold and damp homes threaten good health and reduce quality of life. Improving residential energy efficiency is particularly important in tackling fuel poverty. It is estimated that there are approximately 11% of Shropshire households classed as experiencing fuel poverty.

Households would be in fuel poverty if: -

- Fuel costs are above average, and
- Once spent, the residual income would be below the official poverty line

Empty homes are a recognised as a wasted resource, depriving people of a home and contributing to the need for more housing. It is only when properties stay empty longer than six months without any obvious signs of renovation or rental that they become true empty homes. They are a blight on local communities and may prevent investment in the area.

It is estimated that at the time of writing there are more than 1,700 empty properties in Shropshire and of these, approximately 600 have been empty for at least 2 years

Housing adaptations enable disabled people and people with mobility impairments to continue to live independently in their own homes. Adaptations restore privacy, confidence and dignity to individuals and their families, and significantly improve people’s health and quality of life.

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) are a vital source of housing, traditionally providing housing at more affordable and transient end of the housing market, but in recent years used by a wider cross section of economically active tenants. New guidance on extending the size and type of HMO to be mandatory licenced has resulted in 51 licensed HMOs across Shropshire.

### **Embracing change**

Homes England's Strategic Plan references challenges facing the construction industry, particularly in terms of productivity, workforce, skills and materials. In response, Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) buildings are a potential solution and could address labour and materials shortages. Additional advantages may be improved energy efficiency. The industry is immature with limited production capacity and supply chains.

### **Opportunities**

- Protect and maximise the natural environment
- Explore opportunities and encourage the introduction of Modern Methods of Construction (MMC's) dwellings
- Encourage sustainable and resilient communities
- Encourage sustainable patterns of new housing development
- Maximise the use of existing housing stock by reusing empty properties
- Explore opportunities for a closer physical relationship between home and employment

## 6. Ensuring that there is enough housing supply to enable businesses to attract and retain the local workforce that they need.

The delivery of economic growth is a key priority for Shropshire Council, as laid out in our Corporate Plan. This plan seeks to improve the county as a place to do business and to deliver sustainable places and communities. Aspirations for improved economic prosperity for Shropshire are likewise set out in the Shropshire Economic Growth Strategy which was officially launched in September 2017. This sets out to:

- Enable businesses to start up, grow and succeed
- Deliver infrastructure to support growth

Shropshire's economy is comparatively low value due to the predominance of less productive sectors such as tourism, agriculture and care. Workplace earnings are comparatively low in Shropshire (10% lower than the national average) and per capita GVA generation is a third lower than it is nationally. Naturally, this impacts on housing affordability rates for those who wish to live and work in Shropshire. Shropshire's economic potential is also somewhat constrained by the ageing population and declining population that is of traditional working age (16-64).

### Infographic

*Workplace Earnings Gross per week for Full-time April 2019:*

*Shropshire: £525.90*

*National: £586.50*

*GVA per Head of Population, 2018:*

*Shropshire: £19,334*

*National: £28,729*

Despite these challenges, the Economic Growth Strategy for Shropshire has ambitions for strong economic growth, focused on increasing jobs, boosting GVA and ensuring an adequate supply of housing to support this. Sufficient housing of the right type and in the right place is vital to attract and retain a labour market that can drive economic prosperity, in our urban and rural areas.

Improved connectivity in urban and rural areas promotes community cohesion and underpins opportunities for economic growth.

Some employers struggle to attract the workforce they need because there is insufficient appropriate housing for prospective employees in the local area. Most businesses rely on a workforce from within 5 miles of their business site. *According to the 2019 Shropshire Business Survey, on average, businesses said that 73.1% of their employees live less than 5 miles from their work location. Most of the rest come from 'between 5 – 25 miles away' (23.7%).* Consequently, if there is insufficient housing stock of an appropriate type, tenure and affordability within close proximity to the work base, there is a risk that businesses will not fulfil their growth ambitions or that they may relocate to where it is easier to attract the staff they need.

The need to retain and encourage younger skilled workers is a particular challenge for Shropshire, which is a location where out-migration of young adults has traditionally far out-weighted in-migration. UCS is making significant progress in attracting and retaining young people to pursue Higher Education in the County, but the provision of appropriate housing (along with attractive employment prospects and a strong cultural and entertainment offer) is key to attracting young people to the workplace.

Likewise, the need for appropriate housing provision for key workers needs to be addressed. These workers are intrinsic to the economic and social well-being of the county.

### **Opportunities**

- Reduce housing barriers to businesses in attracting and retaining employees
- Work more closely with key employers to better understand the housing needs of their employees
- Encourage and support the provision of improved digital connectivity
- Promote initiatives for key worker and essential worker housing
- Promote housing opportunities that encourage skilled employees to live and work in Shropshire