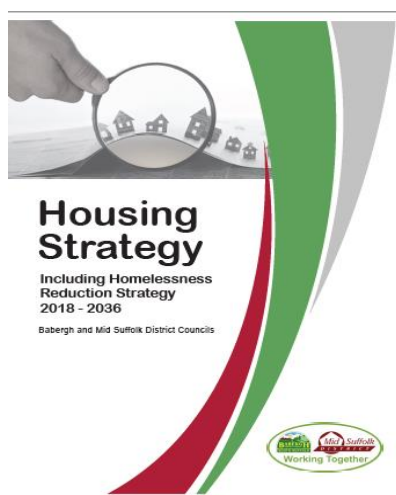


# BMSDC Housing Strategy 2018 -2036



The full BMSDC Housing Strategy will run from 2018 – 2036 in line with the Joint Local Plan.

Phase one 2018 – 2023 will focus on addressing the following housing market challenges and opportunities:

- Increasing new homes delivery – more of the right type of homes, of the right tenure in the right place
- Increasing housing options for older households and those requiring accessible homes
- Ensuring current housing stock is fit for 21<sup>st</sup> century living
- Supporting the most vulnerable households find and sustain a home.

## Context

Both Councils have a strong ambition to create jobs-led economic growth and housing is essential to support this fully. If planned investment and regeneration is considered in isolation to housing the anticipated outcomes are unlikely to be achieved and maximised. We know that ensuring new homes of the right type, the right tenure and in the right places are vital to offering residents more choice and quality in the housing market so that they can take best advantage of area wide economic upturns. Where the market does is not meeting housing need we will explore interventions to bring this forward.

A second key priority of the Housing Strategy is to ensure Babergh and Mid Suffolk residents have a place to live which supports their health and well-being and contributes to the quality of life. Well designed, high quality and affordable housing in which residents feel safe and secure is essential to meeting this priority and we know this is generally what matters most to our residents.

This evidence-based housing strategy, consistent with national policy, details how we will our policy and decision making to ensure we take the right actions to re-balance the local housing market as far as possible in line with the identified housing needs of our residents.

The emerging BMSDC Housing Strategy contributes to a wider portfolio of strategies which will work together to support the jobs-led economic growth agenda. These strategies include amongst others;

- *BMSDC Open for Business Strategy* (complete 2018)
- *BMSDC Infrastructure Strategy* (indicative adoption 2018 / 19)
- *BMSDC Communities Strategy* (indicative adoption Winter 2018/19)
- *BMSDC Asset Strategy* (indicative adoption Summer 2018).

The BMSDC housing vision is for all residents to be able to access affordable, appropriate, and decent accommodation. Therefore, work will be undertaken to improve the quality, choice, and supply of homes for current and future households. With a total estimated population increase of 21,000 over the next 20 years, many of whom will be over 65 years

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old, housing of the right type and in the right place is an important part of supporting sustainable growth.

### **Key principles:**

- Developing the Housing Strategy with relevant stakeholders and communities - partnership
- Effecting changes to the housing market is a long-term commitment
- Short, medium, and long-term objectives could be subject to change at short notice
- Will require visible leadership, a learning culture, and flexible workforce
- The ability to turn challenges in to opportunities
- Safe, warm, and affordable homes support better health outcomes for all residents
- An appetite to innovate and attract new funding streams.

The following summaries show the types of on-going discussions already underway to formulate our strategic plans. A first draft BMSDC Housing Strategy document and action plans will be available in September.

### **Priority 1. Increasing new homes delivery – more of the right type of homes, of the right tenure in the right place.**

Meeting the housing requirement to be set in the Joint Local Plan. Supply of new homes over recent years has been below the identified requirement.

We asked key partners:

- Who can contribute to increasing the supply of new homes, by numbers, by place, by tenure?
- Who is involved in building most new homes currently?
- Are there sufficient sites available to meet house building targets?
- Who is involved in increasing the supply of social affordable homes?
- Are there any tenure type delivery matters we can resolve immediately, in the longer term?
- How do we encourage small and medium enterprises back in to the housebuilding market?

Members have ambitions to:

- Use all the powers available to Councils – including more assertive use of Compulsory Purchase Orders if required - to deliver the right number of the right type of new homes
- Ensure better links between housing need evidence and delivery, with special reference to increasing older households housing options and those households with more specialised housing needs
- Further commit to bringing the best of innovative building techniques to the area yet remain in keeping with local traditions and materials
- Continue building more and better working relationships with developers, and resolve issues together sooner by early engagement

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- Build the highest quality homes possible, with eco-credentials to alleviate fuel poverty for residents and maintain better health and independence for longer
- Meet the affordable housing needs of many very rural communities through new mechanisms, such as the Community Housing Fund / Community Land Trust route.

### **Priority 2. Increasing housing options for older households and those requiring accessible homes.**

We asked key partners:

- What demands do the predicted demographic changes place on Councils and our service partners, how do we start to plan for these significant changes and how do we keep pace with them in the future?
- What does an integrated health and housing approach look like and how do we ensure we deliver on these promises?
- Are older and vulnerable people in BMSDC able to make informed choices about their future housing needs? What do we need to do?
- How can we future proof housing of all tenures so people can continue to live independently within their own home?
- What can we do differently to address complex housing needs within a challenging funding environment?

Member input:

Of all the identified housing priorities this requires further work with Suffolk County Council as the major partner with responsibility for Adult Community Services and Children's Services. As BMSDC we wish to encourage developers to supply homes to meet identified housing need and homes which are well-designed enough to adapt throughout a lifetime.

### **Priority 3. Ensuring current housing stock is fit for 21<sup>st</sup> century living.**

Current housing stock comprises approx. 80,000 homes with a broad tenure split of approximately: Owner occupiers- 75%, Private rent – 15%, Social tenancy: 12%, (BMSDC is landlord to approx. 7,000 households)

#### **Maintaining quality in current housing stock includes:**

- Importance of customer led approach to quality
- Variability of standards and incentivisation
- Happy people in happy homes – matching needs and property type is central to satisfaction
- What does 'quality' mean over the next 20 years?
- Should we be more experimental in the types of homes to meet future needs?
- The importance of land supply in ensuring quality? How can we achieve this?
- Is the current social housing choice-based lettings system too limiting?
- Capitalise on using space outside the home/community to influence lives and life choices
- How is climate change factored in to the strategy?
- How should we influence tenure choice? Should we promote home ownership?

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### **Priority 4. Supporting the most vulnerable households find and sustain a home.**

BMSDC is required to carry out on-going homelessness reviews and use this evidence to formulate a specific Homelessness Reduction Strategy which addresses:

- Preventing homelessness in the districts (The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 strengthens statutory duties in this regard) which includes, advice and information; early identification of households who may be at increased risk of homelessness; pre-crisis intervention; prevention of recurring homelessness; establishing working and effective partnership with relevant support groups and services
- Securing a sufficient supply of accommodation is available and will continue to be available for people who are, or may become, homeless in the districts
- Reviewing accommodation needs and resources, especially; social and affordable housing, private rented accommodation, supported housing for specific groups of people, low cost home ownership schemes
- Securing more access to the current private rented sector by working with landlords to develop additional provision and, working with landlords to look at opportunities for the provision of grant funding to landlords to provide housing for homeless households

Work on the BMSDC Homelessness Reduction Strategy is at an advanced stage and will be presented to all Committees alongside the BMSDC Housing Strategy.

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#### **Next steps in BMSDC Housing Strategy development:**

- Continue housing related stakeholder engagement during July / August to ensure completion and development of the above four priority action plans which will detail how Housing Strategy and the Homelessness Reduction Strategy will be operationally implemented.
- Present first drafts to both Cabinets in September for comments
- Six-week consultation period 21<sup>st</sup> September – 2<sup>nd</sup> November
- Final Member briefing week of 6<sup>th</sup> November
- Request both Cabinets to adopt finalised strategies and action plans early December 2018.

Although an ambitious timetable, the Housing Strategy and associated work this way is creating the right sort of enduring partnership approach and positive working relationships to fulfil BMSDCs strategic housing vision.

Partnership working increases flexibility in approach, so we can be confident that the Councils will continue to respond to uncertain resourcing and changes to national policies which directly impact the housing market.

The Housing Strategy action plans provide the platform for step changes to the way we currently work so that with partners we can turn housing market challenges into realistic, beneficial opportunities.