

Private Sector Housing Strategy

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1. Introduction

- 1.1** This Private Sector Housing Strategy is the first such strategy that we have published and supports our over-arching Housing Strategy by setting out our detailed plans for both home ownership and private rented housing.

Owner occupied and privately rented properties make up over 83.3% of homes in Bolsover District. This strategy sets out our plans for achieving good quality housing across the existing private sector stock—we believe that all residents should have the opportunity to live in a decent home.

- 1.2** Private sector housing performs a vital role in supporting our economic viability and meeting housing need in the District. Homes to buy have become increasingly unaffordable, and median property prices are now 9.3x median income levels, which has contributed to a major expansion in private renting. Consequently, rents in the private rented sector have also risen substantially, and households on lower income are spending up to 44% of their income on rents. For median income households, this figure is 51.8%. The private rented sector now provides homes for an increasingly diverse range of households and those reliant on Local Housing Allowance are being squeezed out of the market. In 2022, only 1.7% of homes to rent on Zoopla were within Local Housing Allowance and this strategy considers interventions that will encourage more landlords to provide homes for rent within Local Housing Allowance levels. The private rented sector now houses 198% more households than it did in 2001 and accounts for 17.4% of all homes across the District, but whilst many private renters in Bolsover District are satisfied with their homes, this sector can be a very unfair playing field for lower income households. Whilst most private landlords take their responsibilities very seriously, there are unfortunately some private tenants who are subjected to a badly regulated sector which allows poor conditions, mistreatment from landlords, unstable tenancies, and extortionate rents. Too many residents are trapped in overpriced, and in many cases, poor quality rented accommodation.



- 1.3** Whilst the private rented sector has grown, the owner-occupied sector has reduced in size from 69% of all households to 65.9% between 2001 and 2021. The stock condition survey confirmed in some markets over 21.7% of owner-occupied homes fail the Decent Homes Standard. The case for well-insulated and energy efficient homes has never been greater. Climate change is already disrupting weather patterns and creating extremes that most homes in the UK are ill-equipped to cope with. In response to the root cause of climate change, we are committed to creating a net zero District by 2050 and this strategy therefore responds to the challenges of supporting homeowners and landlords to make their homes more energy efficient. We also know that many homeowners are living in homes that need major repairs and are in poor condition but do not have the income levels to afford this work. Our strategy considers the different solutions, we may be able to offer to support these vulnerable households.
- 1.4** Many homes in the private sector in Bolsover District are in poor condition. 45.8% do not meet EPC C, and 16.3% of owner-occupied homes and 18.6% of private rented homes fail the Decent Homes Standard for having a category 1 hazard, which poses a serious and immediate risk to a person's health and as part of this strategy we commit to increasing the awareness of landlords of the Decent Homes Standard as well as more information on potential funding.

Our ambition for Bolsover District residents living in the private sector is that homes are safe, warm, and sustainable, and people feel invested in and connected to their home and local community.

This strategy reflects our strong commitment to realising this vision.

1.5 Housing is one of the key determinants of health. The quality of people's homes is strongly related to economic prosperity and minimising the adverse effects of poor housing remains a major challenge for us. Living in a home which is in good condition, that the household can afford to heat, and is in an area in which they feel safe and well supported by the local community underpins the wellbeing of individuals and families. The impact of poor housing in childhood can affect an individual for a lifetime and can affect physical, social, and psychological development. Damp, mould, cold, and overcrowded conditions can lead directly to physical illness and there is also increasing evidence that poor housing conditions can seriously affect people's mental health and sense of wellbeing.

1.6 The outcomes of an improved private sector are far more beneficial than improving housing conditions or the way homes are managed. A safe, warm, and secure home underpins people's ability to build a better quality of life and enables people to maintain independence. Living where you can afford and having security in knowing you won't be 'kicked out' at a moment's notice helps people to put down roots and have a stable base, a sense of community, and belonging. We want to make sure that homes in the private sector, whether owned or privately rented, are safe, well-managed, and well maintained and this private sector strategy sets out how we, along with our partners, will achieve this over the next three years (2024-27).

1.7 It is therefore essential that we work with our partners to improve both property conditions and provide access to well-managed private sector housing to help meet the housing needs of our residents.



2. Private sector market

2.1 The information below summarises some of the key areas of work we are involved in.



- 16.2% of households are living in fuel poverty.
- 16.3% of homes in the owner-occupied sector have category one hazards. This increases to 18.6% in the private rented sector.
- 45.8% of private sector homes have an EPC rating of D or below. This rises to 65.7% for properties in the private rented sector.



- Derbyshire has similar levels of fuel poverty to the England average with the estimated percentage of households that experienced fuel poverty in 2018 of 10.6%.



- The main reason for homelessness in 2022/23 was the loss of a private rented tenancy.
- The level of statutory homelessness across Derbyshire has decreased and in 2017-18 was one per 1,000 households, significantly lower than the national average, but local data from district and borough councils indicates that over 3,000 homelessness assessments were made in 2020-21.



- 1.9% of people living in the private sector in Bolsover District live in overcrowded homes.
- Household overcrowding Census 2021 figures show 3.1% of households were overcrowded, with the highest proportion of affected households in Shirebrook and Langwith.



- There are 29,383 households living in the private sector. This represents 83.3% of all stock.
- The size of the private rented sector has almost doubled since 2001 from 9.38% to 17.4% in 2021.
- In 2022, the median rent level was £648pcm, an increase of 32.2% since 2018.
- In 2022, only 1.7% of properties in the private rented sector advertised through Zoopla were within the Local Housing Allowance rate.

- Lower quartile property prices are seven times as much as lower quartile income levels.
- People living in the private rented sector on lower quartile incomes spend 44% of their income on a lower quartile rent.



- Derbyshire has a higher-than-average proportion of older people (21.9% aged over 65, compared to 18.5% in England). This is predicted to increase, according to ONS population projections, with the Derbyshire 65 and over population accounting for approximately 27.3% of the population in 2043. Older people have increased housing, accommodation, and support needs, in order to enable them to live independently for longer. Joining up planning, housing and health systems is needed to achieve this.
- Premature mortality is a good high-level indicator of the overall health of a population. Bolsover District has the highest level across Derbyshire for under 75-year-olds at 496.6 per 100,000.





3. Strategic priorities and achievements

Improving the private sector has been a priority for us for many years and is reflected within our policy and strategy framework. Over the past five years we have:

- Continued to deliver adaptations through the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) process and in the year 2022/23 delivered 64 mandatory DFGs. This work is essential in allowing people to remain in their own homes in safety and with dignity. In addition to this we have delivered a pilot stairlift recycling project in partnership with Derbyshire County Council. The project enables stairlifts to be installed much sooner and as they are on loan to the customer, they are removed when no longer needed and then installed in whole or in part to other customers in need, hence the recycling element.
- Continued to participate in the Derbyshire Healthy Homes Project, which enables those suffering from cold related ill health to receive assistance in the repair/installation of heating systems and accessing insulation measures.

Again, this is allowing people to remain in their own homes in safety and in comfort, addressing the impact of poor housing on health.

- Brought long-term empty properties back in to use. Significant achievements in the last five years have included the renovation of large empty properties such as the Station Hotel in Creswell (creating 15 apartments), the Miners Welfare in Creswell (creating 11 apartments), and the disused Coop building in Whitwell (creating five apartments).
- Held events to inform landlords of new regulations and what help is available for themselves and their tenants.
- Delivered the well-established community outreach service that provides help and support in financial matters, maximising income, and helping to improve overall health and wellbeing. The service has experienced increased demand because of the cost-of-living crisis and continues to help people remain in their own home and to access housing which is affordable and meets



their needs. Over the past three financial years the service has handled an increasing number of service requests, evidencing the increased demand for additional support provided to our residents. In 2020/21 there were 438 requests for service but in 2022/23 there were 777.



2020/21

438

2022/23

777

requests for service

- Enforcement action taken against landlords whose properties do not comply with legislative standards. In one case, enforcement was pursued to such an extent that it resulted in a landlord being sentenced to 10 months in prison. This demonstrates the zero-tolerance approach giving a strong message to landlords. Set up the Supported Accommodation Review Team (SART) to ensure the standard of support, quality of accommodation and value for money of supported accommodation in the District, primary in the private sector.
- Undertaken project based proactive housing inspections to address poor housing conditions, fire risks, waste, and community safety in identified hotspots area. Whilst private sector housing work is reactive, we have been able to manage resources so that we can undertake some successful, proactive area-based work.
- Undertaken a project to promote the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) (using Government funding) contacting all landlords with non-compliant EPCs. Half of all those landlords contacted achieved a higher EPC rating following our intervention.
- Continued to benefit from the resource of a Home Improvement Coordinator. This role enables us to provide support and assistance including energy efficiency and energy debt as well as general advice and assistance around housing repairs and access funding such as ECO or ECO flex.



3.1 Whilst we are proud of our achievements, we know there is plenty more to be done, and in preparing this strategy, we commissioned the most comprehensive review of the private sector that we have ever undertaken, alongside detailed discussions with partners and a tenant and landlord survey.

3.2 The outcomes of this work underpin the objectives within this strategy and align closely to our Vision statement. This strategy will meet our Ambition Statement 2024-2028 vision and aims through the delivery of four objectives:

- Objective 1: Improve property and management standards
- Objective 2: Maintain and improve the supply of good quality, well-managed homes in the private rented sector
- Objective 3: Ensuring that housing standards and living conditions in Bolsover District contribute towards better health outcomes for all
- Objective: 4: Ensuring all areas, neighbourhoods, and streets in Bolsover District, irrespective of housing tenure or type, are places where people want to live and are proud to live.

3.3 The strategy is accompanied by an action plan which sets out what we hope to achieve and by when. The action plan will be agreed with partners and will be used to monitor progress over the period of the strategy.

The outcomes that will be achieved through this strategy are:

- Improved property condition across the private sector.
- Improved management standards across the private rented sector.
- Improved energy efficiency of homes in the private sector.
- Reduced number of properties with a category 1 hazard.
- Reduced levels of anti-social behaviour across our neighbourhoods.
- Reduced number of people presenting as homeless from the private rented sector.
- Increased access to the private rented sector to offer accommodation to homeless households.
- Increased supply of high-quality affordable housing for the private rented market.
- Residents living independently for longer.
- Improved targeting of resources to maximise our impact in the private sector.
- Reduced numbers of empty homes across the District.



4. Improve property and management standards

- 4.1** Improving property condition and management standards across the private sector is a primary objective of this strategy. Improving the housing stock is an essential part of protecting the health and wellbeing of our residents. If homeowner's homes are in good condition, well insulated and safe, people will live healthier happier lives and a good supply of well-managed, well-maintained private rented homes can play a valuable role in helping to make more properties available to lower income households unable to access social housing, help vulnerable households to find suitable accommodation, and reduce homelessness. We believe everyone should have a good quality home no matter what tenure they live in.
- 4.2** All private housing should meet at least the minimum standards that comply with the legislative standards ensuring that the property does not cause a physical hazard or nuisance to residents and the



local neighbourhood. We want to work with landlords to increase security, certainty, affordability, and stability for tenants but where landlords do not meet the required standards, we will do everything in our power to ensure that residents are safe in their homes. For vulnerable homeowners, we want to provide as much support as we can through advice, grants and loans.

Enforcement

- 4.3** The majority of landlords act with fairness and decency towards their tenants and those in the neighbourhoods of the homes they own. They maintain high standards of accommodation and



manage their properties well, complying with the requirements of the law. Many landlords work with us and accept more challenging tenants, offering safe, suitable accommodation to those who may otherwise be homeless.

4.4 However, a small number of landlords completely disregard their duties and responsibilities towards their tenants and carry out unlawful actions. Their interest in properties is often limited to generating a rental income with little or no investment in the property, tenants, or wider residents and communities. The private sector is also becoming increasingly responsible for providing supported accommodation, often to those with the most challenging and complex needs. We have a role to play in ensuring such accommodation is well-managed and does not negatively impact other tenants and residents living in the area.

4.5 Enforcement is a core function of the environmental health team who conduct private sector housing work. Under the Housing Acts and related environmental health and building legislation, local

councils have both legal powers and duties to deal with unsatisfactory housing conditions in the private sector. Targeting and focusing intervention and enforcement on the very worst properties, landlords, and agents has been a key area of focus for us over many years.

4.6 We have a crucial role in driving up housing standards in the private sector, and as such, we will focus our resources on those areas with the most insufficient housing stock and the least adequate property management. We will continue to use the powers provided to us and using the whole range of statutory provisions to facilitate the most appropriate solutions, sanctions and deterrents.

4.7 Over the lifetime of this strategy, we will design a housing enforcement policy, that reflects the range of enforcement provisions to support both resident and tenants living in the private sector.

Damp and Mould

4.8 We are fully aware of the impact damp and mould has on people's lives and health. We are committed to having a clear and effective approach to this issue We are working



across all tenures and with all partners to reduce the risks of damp and mould in our homes and all homes in the District and make sure that cases are being investigated fully. We have always investigated such service requests by offering site visits and do not solely offer advice leaflets as some authorities do. However, there are further improvements that can be made.

4.9 During the lifetime of this strategy, we will:

- Increase our engagement with private landlords and residents in the District to tackle the issue of damp and mould. We are already taking enforcement action against landlords with damp and mouldy properties and are committed to holding private landlords to account on the condition of their properties.
- Promote advice to all residents about good practice to deal with damp and mould. For example, checking for leaks, ensure proper ventilation in areas like bathrooms, kitchens, and laundry rooms, using extractor fans or open windows when cooking, showering, or doing laundry to allow moisture to escape and ensuring that walls, roofs, and floors are well insulated.
- Improve our data recording to enable easy access to future data to be able to demonstrate our activities and better understand the extent of the issue in our district.



Promoting rights and responsibilities in the private rented sector

4.10 We want to increase awareness of the rights and responsibilities of tenants so that they are able to make more informed decisions about moving into a new home or discussing issues with landlords.

4.11 We are planning to deliver a campaign that ensures that people understand what an inexperienced landlord 'looks like' and how these are different to rogue landlords. Rogue landlords are not landlords who just 'get it wrong'. A rogue landlord has little regard for Fair Housing Laws, adhering to building codes, or respecting a tenant's rights to privacy in their rental home.



Instead, these landlords target vulnerable tenants and place them in overcrowded or poorly maintained accommodation. They may take part in discriminatory or harassing behaviour, increase rents at a moment's notice, and evict tenants who may make a complaint, without legal grounds to do so.

4.12 This is not acceptable and tackling rogue landlords is a priority for us. A media campaign to 'shop a rogue landlord' will be established and promoted through our website and media channels. This will enable those people who do not know how to report rogue landlords to do so.

As part of our campaign to promote tenants' rights, we will be designing a tenant's checklist that equips tenants to ask the 'right' questions when viewing property and ensure all appropriate safety certificates are in place. Our check list will be co-produced with tenants and focus on areas such as Basic Information:

- The length of the lease
- Deposit and Fees
- How maintenance and repairs are handled
- References from previous tenants
- Emergency procedures in case of emergencies (e.g., fire, flooding)

Promoting DASH

4.13 To help improve the private rented sector, we have worked in partnership with DASH (Decent and Safe Homes) Services since 2005. DASH is a nationwide scheme that encourages and rewards good property standards and management practice in the private rented sector.

4.14 The service provides a landlord accreditation scheme and 'Call B4 You Serve' to encourage support for landlords to limit evictions. We are now leading on a project to provide earlier intervention for the Call B4 You Serve service. We have an excellent working relation with DASH, and will be exploring how we may extend our partnership working, promoting the service more widely to landlords, increasing the number of properties that DASH inspects on our behalf, and exploring how the partnership can be strengthened to better share resources.

4.15 The loss of private sector tenancy is a significant reason for homelessness in Bolsover District. We will coordinate our homelessness prevention approach to private rented sector tenants, working with Call Before You Serve, Derbyshire Law Centre and other partners to better understand the practical and financial support package that we can offer both landlords and tenants.



We will develop a private rented sector specific homeless prevention offer that will offer good quality advice and assistance to landlords and tenants in the District.

Promoting good practice and raising awareness

4.16 We recognise the need for collaborative efforts to raise awareness of tenant and landlord responsibilities and to expand good practice across the sector. We are committed to providing more advice and support to victims of unscrupulous landlords, taking enforcement action against landlords who rent substandard accommodation and exploit vulnerable tenants and those from marginalised groups.

4.17 This will involve increasing the use of our media platforms for our standards, commitments, enforcement action, advice and support to both landlords and tenants, and continuing to work with lettings and management agents, developing formal partnership arrangements.

4.18 We facilitate regular landlord forums to share ideas about how we can work together to improve services for tenants and inform landlords of legislative requirements and changes. The focus is to:

- Provide partnership working opportunities.
- Co-operate with local landlord associations.
- Launch initiatives with landlords such as energy efficiency or greener homes.
- Improve access to training and learning.
- Provide forums for discussion and networking.

4.19 We will positively encourage landlords to join the Landlord Accreditation Scheme that is managed by DASH and to attend the local landlord forum events to educate landlords to provide better support and services for their tenants. We will be extending these invitations to letting agents too. We will be considering more practical benefits to secure membership and attendance at these events such as:

- Explore the option to provide loans to undertake improvement work, secured

against future rent. This consideration would also apply to owners.

- Consider support packages to landlords to extend their portfolios if those properties are made available to us.

4.20 We recognise that not all landlords will be able to attend and so we will also trial promotion of information through online platforms.

Getting ahead of the game

4.21 Landlords must ensure that their rental property meets Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES). This means by law properties must have an energy performance certificate (EPC) rating of "E" or above. Improving EPC ratings are better for the environment and better for all residents, in terms of the cost of heating and warmer homes.

4.22 We know that 65.7% of private rented homes and 53% of owner-occupied homes do not currently meet EPC C and we are planning to undertake research to better understand the plans of landlords and owners to improve the EPC rating of their properties and the support that may be required. We will then develop an Intervention Strategy on the support we can provide.



5. Maintain and improve the supply of good quality, well-managed homes in the private rented sector

5.1 A key priority for us is to maximise the number of high-quality and genuinely affordable homes in the District for all our residents, catering for people from a wide range of backgrounds and on different incomes. This includes the private rented sector. A number of new pieces of legislation have been introduced relating to private sector housing and there are concerns that a number of landlords may choose to leave the market, selling their homes. Whilst these properties may remain in the sector, others may not; reducing supply.

Increasing access to the private rented sector

5.2 There are clear opportunities to increase

access to the private rented sector through the development of an attractive and comprehensive Bolsover District landlord offer. Alongside this, we will explore the feasibility of developing a countywide private sector leasing scheme.

Our Homelessness Strategy recognises the important role that the private rented sector plays in meeting the housing needs of those who are experiencing homelessness or threatened with homelessness.

5.3 Increasing access to the number of private sector homes which can be used to support move-on accommodation for people who are homeless is critical if we are to reduce our



reliance on temporary accommodation and provide stable and secure homes for people. This is challenging; with the significant demand for private rented homes and increasing rent levels, landlords can 'pick and choose' tenants, taking advantage of higher rent levels than are payable by tenants who are reliant on Local Housing Allowance (LHA).

5.4 We have recruited a dedicated team that will work to engage with private sector landlords and agents and explore new ways of securing access to the private rented sector. By developing close working relationships with landlords and letting agents, this team will co-produce a tool kit of options that will enable us to increase access to more homes in the private rented sector and we will consider every potential option. Over the lifespan of this strategy, we will:

- Review our Bond Guarantee schemes, a fund set up to help those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, to help finance a new rental property. We want to ensure this is working for both tenants and landlords.
- Intervene where landlords are choosing to leave the sector to ensure that these homes remain in the private rented sector and are sold to accredited landlords.
- We will be consulting with landlords to identify those that want to extend their portfolios and consider how the council may be able to provide support.
- Explore working with brokers to find properties and provide short-term move-on support to homeless families.

5.5 Exploring the types of incentives we can offer landlords to help secure landlords' engagement with us. We will research best practice elsewhere and consider new ideas of our own in conjunction with landlords and letting agents. Without pre-empting the outcomes of these discussions, we could explore:

- Options that support landlords to undertake improvement work, secured against future rent.
- Rent guarantees over and above Local Housing Allowance levels through considered and effective use of



Discretionary Housing Payments and Homeless Prevention Grant.

- We act as property guarantor.
- Up front rent payments.
- Additional support for tenants as tenancies start.

Building more homes

5.6 In 2022 Dragonfly Development Ltd, a Council owned company was set up with an accompanying business case which set out objectives to provide good quality private rented accommodation across the District. In addition, Dragonfly Development Ltd aspires to increase the supply, quality and range of housing to meet the needs of the growing population and support economic growth ensuring more good quality homes are available to buy.

6. Ensuring that housing standards and living conditions contribute towards better health outcomes for all

6.1 Good quality housing is essential for everyone's health and wellbeing; safe and sustainable housing can support good physical and mental health, reduce fuel poverty, decrease carbon emissions, reduce hospital admissions, and help people live independently for longer.

6.2 Poor housing is a driver of poor health and of pervasive and growing health inequalities. Housing also has a huge influence on mental health and wellbeing. Affordability has a major impact on an individual's ability to keep homes warm and how people travel to work and maintain social connections. As well as physical housing conditions, environmental blight and anti-social behaviour can all influence the way people feel about where they live.

We are looking to be much more flexible about how we fund this agenda and will increase access to homes that are affordable. This may include:

- Supporting officers to manage bringing empty homes back into use.
- Investing in long-term empty private sector housing stock to bring it up to the Decent Homes Standard, with the proviso it becomes available to us for nominations.
- Providing support to sustain tenancies.



6.3 The Derbyshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy contains a priority to 'Support our vulnerable populations to live in well-planned and healthy homes' and recognises that older people in Derbyshire have increased housing, accommodation, and support needs. In order to enable older and vulnerable people to live independently for longer, the Health and Wellbeing Board will work to join up planning, housing, and health systems by empowering existing partnerships to work seamlessly together.

Health and safety at home for longer

- 6.4** The most vulnerable residents are those least likely to reach out for support and assistance when things go wrong. This is especially so for owner-occupiers who may not consider that we can support them where they are coping with significant disrepair or squalid living conditions that they are unable to rectify themselves.
- 6.5** Poor quality or unsuitable accommodation can prevent people living independently in their home for longer and force unnecessary displacement, away from familiar surroundings. Many deteriorating situations in private rented housing stem from tenants and landlords not understanding their rights and responsibilities or not having the ability or capacity to exercise those rights.
- 6.6** We believe that suitable, safe, and sustainable accommodation for everyone is a right, and is the foundation against which people can achieve positive life outcomes. Ensuring those with the most challenging and complex needs can sustain stable housing is seen as key to achieving more cohesive neighbourhoods in our district. Improving health and safety in existing homes will have a significant impact on people's ability to remain living at home for longer.
- 6.7** We offer a comprehensive adaptations service, futureproofing existing housing stock with relatively low-cost adaptations such as small ramps, grab or handrails, small steps to entrances, or moving power sockets. These are low-cost solutions to enable older people or people with a disability or complex housing needs to remain living independently. We will review how we maintain independent living. We will



continue to promote the take up of these adaptations.

When we undertake adaptations, we will take a holistic approach and ensure that homes are safe. If additional work is required, we will undertake that so that residents can truly benefit from the adaptations they need.

- 6.8** It is often simpler for owner occupiers to access adaptations. As the owner of the property, they have the choice to have adaptations undertaken. This is not the case for tenants and ensuring that tenants living in the private rented sector are aware of these adaptations and that landlords are supportive of having them installed in their properties is essential. We know from experience that landlords may not understand tenants' longer-term needs and may not wish to adapt property. As well as promoting adaptations to owner occupiers, we will be supporting older people or people with a disability or complex needs in the private rented sector and will explore options that:
- Better inform and advise landlords of the challenges for older people living in unsuitable properties and the potential support landlords can offer.
 - Ensure training is provided to landlords about safeguarding.
 - Provide better information and access to affordable warmth measures and how to secure them into their properties.

- Provide specific training to enable landlords to support tenants as they age in place and educate landlords to be dementia friendly and aware of how to signpost tenants to support services.
- Develop a directory of support services for landlords to provide to tenants explaining the services available and a named referral point.

6.9 Encourage take up of Disabled Facilities Grants by offering a commitment to support landlords to find tenants requiring adaptations in the future.

Providing practical support for homeowners

6.10 Whilst the majority of home owner want to remain living in their home, others will want to move. One of the barriers for older households to move is trying to negotiate the purchase chain whilst trying to find the right home for their future, and in parallel to sell their current home. These issues can prevent many moves. We will explore the impact this has on vulnerable older people and consider potential solutions which may include bridging loans for owners to move

in a timeframe that works for them and to enable them to find the 'right' property, which may encourage more people to make the move.

6.11 There may also be older people or people with a disability or complex needs that wish to move but are unable to afford a more appropriate home. Without financial support, these households are likely to be trapped in unsuitable housing. We will explore the potential of enabling owners to utilise the equity in their homes and move to a more suitable property by developing shared ownership products.

6.12 In the same way as owner occupiers or social tenants are enabled (social tenants through the downsizing scheme and owners through their equity) to access more suitable housing, households living in the private rented sector may be unable to do this. The cost of moving, facing a potentially higher rent, and finding a more suitable property may all act as barriers. We will research potential options to support low-income households living in the private rented sector to move to more suitable accommodation.



Affordable warmth and fuel poverty

- 6.13** A home should be warm and comfortable and provide a healthy and welcoming environment that promotes well-being. Fuel poverty is influenced by three factors: a person's income, the price of fuel, and the thermal efficiency of their home. Whilst we can signpost residents to increase benefit uptake and advice, we cannot influence a person's income or the price of fuel.
- 6.14** 16.2% of households in Bolsover District are living in fuel poverty. We prioritise reducing the number of households experiencing fuel poverty.
- 6.15** However, we recognise the need to improve thermal comfort and reduce energy costs through a range of initiatives and will assist vulnerable residents to do so. This will also support our commitment to tackling climate change and reducing our carbon emissions.
- 6.16** We will:
- Continue to seek external funding opportunities to provide energy efficiency measures for both privately owned and rented homes.
 - Continue to use our affordable warmth coordinator post, to offer advice support and guidance for people to access financial incentives/grants and help with energy saving.
 - Ensure landlords are aware of the potential funding support that is available and their obligations to provide housing that is sufficiently warm and comfortable, in compliance with minimum standards.



7. Ensuring all areas, neighbourhoods, and streets in Bolsover District, irrespective of housing tenure or type, are places where people want to live and are proud to live

7.1 A good mix of housing types and tenures is vital for creating sustainable communities and meeting the District's housing needs. It is important that all our residential areas feel welcoming and safe and are locations where people are more likely to be invested in their homes and neighbourhoods.

7.2 We are a landlord working in neighbourhoods where private sector landlords operate. The proposed consumer standards by the Regulator of Social Housing recognise that part of a landlord's role is to work with

others to help with the upkeep and safety of the neighbourhoods and communities their homes are part of. The proposed Neighbourhood and Community Standard commits that landlords need to work with other organisations to contribute to the upkeep and safety of shared spaces.

7.3 A significant factor in neighbourhood decline is locations that attract short term renters, where rooms or properties are let out on a short-term basis. Whilst this type of accommodation meets the housing needs of some in our



community, a proliferation of more transient short-term living makes it less likely that people will form connections to their local area and feel any ownership or investment in it.

- 7.4** Empty homes can similarly lead to deterioration and attract blight, criminality, and community tension. Keeping the numbers and clusters of empty homes to a minimum is essential if we are to sustain healthy and thriving streets and estates. It is also the case that those living in deprived areas in the least energy-efficient homes are likely to be those living in fuel poverty. This can contribute to poor health outcomes for residents, the deterioration of general standards, and broader housing instability. Improving domestic energy efficiency will help us meet our zero carbon 2050 commitments, reduce carbon emissions, and protect residents from harmful effects of climate change.

We have a dedicated resource in the Shirebrook area to support migrant households. Regardless of tenure, it provides housing advice and assists with language barriers, referrals to environmental health where required, and referrals to letting agents and private rented properties. It offers support to ensure migrant households settle well into new communities.

- 7.5** It is important that all our neighbourhoods are welcoming and safe and are locations where people are invested in their homes and neighbourhoods. A high turnover of tenancies can lead to a decline in standards, outward migration of more established residents, and a spiral of decline. This can also impact the desirability of properties and locations and tension between more settled and short-term renters.

Sharing intelligence to target resources

- 7.6** Within the private rented sector, the worst criminal landlords operate under the radar, renting out a house per room, often using all space such as kitchens, cellars, and corridors as sleeping accommodation. Tenants in these properties are vulnerable, often undocumented, and extremely unlikely to contact the authorities for assistance.



Likewise, for owner occupiers who are vulnerable and living in poor quality housing, many will not seek support. Our stock condition survey recommended a series of actions that will promote joint working protocols to help to address housing inequalities. This strategy is the platform for delivering those recommendations.

- 7.7** We will work with partners to create a database that will aggregate, monitor, and cross-reference data on properties to enable a better targeting of resources and act as an early warning system to predict challenges. This will be collated with private sector developed indices that predict certain activities and tenures which will provide profiles to assist us identify potential locations to target enforcement action, and as part of this, have a vulnerability index for people and the likelihood that services may be required.

Bringing empty homes back into use

- 7.8** Short-term empty homes are part of the normal housing market. However, long-term empty homes are a wasted resource, have a negative impact on neighbouring properties, and often act as a focus for anti-social behaviour. Keeping the numbers of empty homes to a minimum is essential if we are to sustain healthy and thriving streets and estates. We are planning to introduce the maximum charge on empty property through Council Tax premium and we are

considering different options to enable homes to be brought back into use.

7.9 To reduce the number of empty homes in the District, over the next three years we will explore:

- The potential for a new bespoke product to provide repayable grant assistance to first time buyers to purchase long-term empty homes at the lower end of the market.
- The potential to act as guarantor on a mortgage to support first time buyers to

buy a property and secure repayable grant to undertake improvements.

- The option to lease empty homes and improve them. These properties would be operated on the private rented market to recoup our investment.



8. Monitoring arrangements and delivery plan



Monitoring the Private Sector Housing Strategy

8.1 The action plans supporting this strategy will be monitored on an annual basis, with an annual report to Scrutiny and Executive.

Reviewing of the Private Sector Housing Strategy

8.2 The Private Sector Housing Strategy will be reviewed at least every three years in line with internal strategy/policy development procedures. The strategy may be reviewed more or less frequently than this as a result of changes in legislation, changes in our corporate vision or as a result of monitoring outcomes.

Minor changes which make no significant difference to service provision will be made to the document under delegated authority by the Assistant Director of Housing Management and Enforcement in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing.

8.3 Responsibility for implementation.

Lead Assistant Director of Housing Management and Enforcement

Others with responsibility
Housing Services Manager
Housing Options Manager
Housing Strategy and Development Officer
Service Manager (Environmental Health)
Planning Policy and Housing Strategy Manager



Equalities Statement

Bolsover District Council is committed to equalities as an employer and when delivering the services it provides to all sections of the community.

The Council believes that no person should be treated unfairly and is committed to eliminating all forms of discrimination, advancing equality and fostering good relations between all groups in society.

Access for All statement

You can request this document or information in another format such as large print or language or contact us by:

- **Phone - 01246 242424**
- **Email - enquiries@bolsover.gov.uk**
- **BSL Video Call** – a three way video call with us and a BSL interpreter. It is free to call Bolsover District Council with [Sign Solutions](#), you just need wifi or mobile data to make the video call, or call into one of our Contact Centres.
- Call with [Relay UK](#) via textphone or app on **0800 500 888** - a free phone service provided by BT for anyone who has difficulty hearing or speaking. It's a way to have a real time conversation with us by text.
- **Visiting** one of our [offices](#) at Clowne, Bolsover, Shirebrook and South Normanton.