



Homes for Our Future

Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy 2024-2029

Annex 1: Housing for Specific Groups

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Annex outlines the Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Council's requirements around meeting the needs of specific groups within our communities.
- 1.2. It identifies the different types of housing likely to be required to meet a diverse range of needs and to create mixed and balanced communities.
- 1.3. Affordable Housing is dealt with separately in the Affordable Housing Requirements Annex, and there is also a separate Build to Rent Annex to this Strategy.
- 1.4. The requirement to provide affordable housing as part of a scheme will be dependent on the type and nature of housing being brought forward to meet the needs of specific groups.
- 1.5. Although this policy cannot override National Planning Policy and associated guidance, or the councils' adopted Local Plans, it will be a material consideration in dealing with planning applications.
- 1.6. Evidence used to support our approach for the provision of housing for specific groups is set out in the Housing Needs Evidence Annex.

2. Place Making

- 2.1. Building new communities which provide places where people want to live and are both inclusive and diverse requires careful planning. It is important that, alongside appropriate provision of services and infrastructure, we have the right mix of homes in terms of sizes, types and tenures that will meet the housing needs of differing household typologies, such as younger people, families and older people. Having a mix of differing types of homes will provide a wider choice and options for both those looking for housing in the private sector as well as those needing affordable housing. As well as meeting the wider needs of the general population, consideration also needs to be given as to how we meet the housing needs of other groups such as Gypsy and Travellers or those requiring supported accommodation.



3. Wheelchair accessible and wheelchair adaptable housing

- 3.1. The councils' requirements around wheelchair accessible and wheelchair adaptable affordable housing are dealt with through the Local Plans, and in the Affordable Housing Requirements Annex to this Strategy.
- 3.2. The councils will consider whether any future requirements around providing market homes which are wheelchair accessible should apply, through work on the Greater Cambridge Local Plan.
- 3.3. New self or custom-build housing may also provide opportunities to meet wheelchair user needs.

4. Housing for older people

Suitable mainstream housing

- 4.1. It is important that older people are able to remain living independently for as long as possible, in a home that suits their needs.
- 4.2. The councils' requirements around provision of accessible and adaptable homes which are suitable for down-sizing, and wheelchair user homes for those who need them, are dealt with through the councils' Local Plans and the Affordable Housing Requirements Annex to this Strategy.
- 4.3. A range of services is available to help support independent living, and we may also include, within Local Lettings Plans, some priority for older people wanting to move to smaller social or affordable rent homes.

Specialist accommodation

- 4.4. Not everyone can remain living within their own home, and with an ageing population and increasing numbers of people who can no longer be supported in mainstream housing, there is a need for some form of specialist accommodation.
- 4.5. Therefore, both councils are interested in exploring more specialist housing options, including dementia-friendly developments. Examples may include extra care, retirement homes, residential and/or nursing care, or care suites. (See paragraphs 4.11 – 4.13 below on care suites).



- 4.6. From the research provided through the [Cambridgeshire and West Suffolk Housing Needs of Specific Groups Study \(GL Hearn, 2021\)](#), and Cambridgeshire County Council's [District Demand Profiles Forecast for Older People's Accommodation](#), the councils will be seeking an element of specialist accommodation for older people, where the size of development makes this practicable.
- 4.7. The GL Hearn report suggests that 6-7% of housing need identified should be specialist older people's accommodation, although they note that this is the maximum estimate. Taking this into account, and the County Council's direction of travel towards greater provision of domiciliary care, the councils will seek at least 5% of housing on the strategic sites to be specialist older people's accommodation.
- 4.8. The expectation is that any such scheme will be provided as part of the master-planning on strategic sites, or within the city/village framework where it can be demonstrated that the existing facilities and health services would not be adversely impacted. Specialist accommodation of this nature may be provided as market housing or as part of the affordable housing requirements where this is supported by the County Council. Where retirement living accommodation is proposed as a standalone scheme and does not provide high levels of care provision, a financial contribution will be sought in lieu of any affordable housing contribution.
- 4.9. To help prevent loneliness and isolation, homes specifically aimed at older people need to be located close to services and facilities, and well-integrated into the wider community.
- 4.10. In considering proposals for specialist accommodation the councils will work with Cambridgeshire County Council and other partners, based on up-to-date needs evidence and taking into account any potential social care or other implications which may affect the public purse.

Care suites

- 4.11. Care suites are a new specialist accommodation model being explored by the County Council as an alternative to traditional residential care. We recognise that some residents may benefit from this type of accommodation, which enables some independence but still provides a high level of care.
- 4.12. However, unlike in residential or nursing care, some residents may be eligible for Housing Benefit. The councils are not willing to support provision of care suites provided by landlords other than Registered Providers, as there is no guarantee that

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the councils could reclaim the full cost of Housing Benefit payments from the government. We will continue to work with the County Council to try and resolve this issue.

- 4.13. This type of accommodation will be included as part of any affordable housing requirement.

5. Specialist supported accommodation for other groups

- 5.1. Other specialist accommodation may include, for example, residential care settings, smaller group homes, or clusters of homes for people who are unable to live independently, either temporarily or permanently, in mainstream housing.
- 5.2. In 2024, Cambridgeshire County Council published a set of [District Demand Profiles](#) which forecast the need for Specialist Supported Accommodation for adults aged 18-64 who have additional care needs. The assessment relates to those with a learning disability, autism, mental health issues, or physical disability. In summary, it identifies:
- In Cambridge City the primary growth will be seen in Supported Living with approximately 5 new units required per annum from 2022 until 2041, with the potential of 1 extra nursing unit required per annum over the same period.
 - In South Cambridgeshire, the primary growth will be seen in Supported Living with approximately 7 new units required each year from 2022 until 2041, with an additional unit of residential and nursing accommodation required per annum over the same period.
- 5.3. Some of this provision may be met within mainstream housing, with additional care and support being provided, either through existing or new homes. Both councils will continue to work with the County Council, developers and other partners to help secure appropriate accommodation on new developments where a need is identified.
- 5.4. This type of accommodation will be included as part of any affordable housing requirement.
- 5.5. Where schemes are provided on new developments, it is important to ensure that the infrastructure, facilities and support networks are in place prior to bringing a scheme forward.

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- 5.6. Similar Housing Benefit concerns exist here as with care suites for older people, and again, financial implications for Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Councils mean that we are unlikely to support new schemes where the landlord is not a Registered Provider.

6. Young Single Person's Housing

- 6.1. The high cost of housing within Greater Cambridge makes it especially difficult for young people who would not necessarily qualify for social/affordable rented housing to access accommodation. Whilst some affordable housing tenures will help to meet this need, such as through shared ownership, rent to buy and discounted market housing, the councils recognise the need for different housing models in the private sector that can also help meet this need.
- 6.2. On new developments there should be a proportion of one-bedroom properties available on the open market to help meet the needs of young single people and couples. Whilst this will increase the availability of homes more suitable for young single people and couples, it is acknowledged that access to a deposit is often a barrier to getting a foot on the ladder. In 2023 the average age of a first-time buyer in the UK was 32 years old ([Statista Research Feb 2024](#)). Other types of housing should also be considered that could help to meet this need beyond the more traditional house-build, such as in the form of Build to Rent schemes, smaller units with some shared community facilities or good quality bespoke HMOs (Houses in Multiple Occupation). Any such housing needs to be balanced against the wider housing needs for the area.

7. Affordable housing for local workers

- 7.1. Whilst the high-tech sectors are of critical importance to the economic success of Greater Cambridge, it is important to recognise that they are supported by a wide-ranging economy and people working in a diverse range of jobs. The councils' general approach is therefore to promote housing options which meet the needs of people working locally, rather than solutions targeted at specific groups of workers. The definition of 'local workers' will be agreed on a scheme-by-scheme basis, generally prioritising those working within a certain radius from the development.
- 7.2. Any housing provided by employers for local workers would need to be managed and maintained as such in perpetuity, with occupancy secured through a section 106 agreement.

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- 7.3. On such developments within Cambridge City, provision of affordable housing aimed at highly paid executives and employees would not be acceptable. Affordable provision should be aimed at those on low to median incomes
- 7.4. For South Cambridgeshire, proposals will be considered on a scheme-by-scheme basis dependent on the needs of the workforce. This may include both market and affordable homes tied to employment.
- 7.5. We want to get a better understanding of the impact that lack of housing options is having on employers and their workers, and what is needed to help support the local economy and local services. As part of this we will continue to work in partnership with the Integrated Care System to better understand the housing challenges for their workers and the impacts this may have on the health provision for Greater Cambridge and for the Cambridge University Hospitals in terms of recruitment and retention of their staff. We also welcome conversations with other partners.
- 7.6. We will continue, where appropriate, to give some priority for Social and Affordable Rent homes on new developments to people working locally, through Local Lettings Plans, and explore ways of making better use of other existing policies and practices to help support the local economy and service delivery.

8. Gypsy/Roma/Traveller Accommodation

- 8.1 The councils have commissioned an assessment to identify the accommodation needs of Gypsy & Travellers, Travelling Showpeople, and caravan and houseboat dwellers. This assessment is likely to be completed in mid-2024, following which the councils will need to plan how any needs identified will be met.
- 8.2 Gypsies & Travellers also need places to stop temporarily when they are travelling through the area or need to access local services. The councils are working together with Cambridgeshire County Council and other partners to identify how these needs might be met. The accommodation needs assessment should give more information on the views of the communities themselves and other stakeholders.
- 8.3 Affordable housing in the form of Gypsy and Traveller pitches can be provided in lieu of bricks and mortar where required in order to meet identified need. One single pitch would be equivalent to one dwelling. The pitch must be provided on the same terms as an affordable housing unit.



9. Housing for Refugees

- 9.1 Refugees displaced by war from a number of other countries have made Greater Cambridge their home over recent years. This includes refugees from Syria, and more recently from Afghanistan and Ukraine.
- 9.2 South Cambridgeshire in particular had the highest number of Ukrainians offered accommodation by local residents (normally in their own homes), under the national [Homes for Ukraine and Ukraine Family sponsorship schemes](#), compared to all other district councils in the country.
- 9.3 The councils have worked closely with partners to receive refugees from these areas, accessing grant funding and ensuring that support is available to those affected.
- 9.4 With some placements under the Homes for Ukraine scheme coming to an end, the focus has moved to preventing these households from becoming homeless, including securing more permanent accommodation for those who need it; although again, the shortage of social and private rented sector housing is a challenge with other competing priorities. Both councils have been successful in securing additional funding to purchase market homes through the Local Authority Housing Fund.

10. Community led /cooperative housing

- 10.1 The councils are supportive of community led development which enables local groups to provide homes for local people through public support and community ownership.
- 10.2 We will work with any community-led housing groups who wish to bring forward schemes in the area. As the councils' main priority for use of our own housing land is to deliver mainstream affordable housing, we are unlikely to be able to offer free or cheap land. However, we will signpost groups to available support and may, in some cases, be able to provide start-up or other small grants, subject to availability of funding.
- 10.3 Any schemes coming forward will need to accord with the general housing policies within the Local Plans and be aligned to Neighbourhood Plans where relevant. Where development is outside of the village framework within South Cambridgeshire, schemes will be considered under the existing Exception Sites policy.
- 10.4 The National Planning Policy Framework ([NPPF](#)) states that the landlord for affordable housing for rent (other than Build to Rent schemes) should be a

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Registered Provider. Whilst we support this view, we will consider exceptions where community led groups, such as charitable trusts and community land trusts, come forward with affordable housing schemes for local people, and can demonstrate that the homes will be properly managed and maintained.

- 10.5 The allocation of any community led housing tenancies will need to be agreed on a scheme-by-scheme basis with the relevant local authority.

11. Self and custom-build Housing

- 11.1 The Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 (as amended by the Housing and Planning Act 2016) provides a legal definition of self-build and custom housebuilding as: *“The building or completion by individuals, associations of individuals, or persons working with or for individuals or associations of individuals, of houses to be occupied as homes by those individuals. But it does not include the building of a house on a plot acquired from a person who builds the house wholly or mainly to plans or specifications decided or offered by that person.”*
- 11.2 [National Planning Practice Guidance \(NPPG\) on self-build and custom housebuilding](#) states: *“Self-build and custom housebuilding covers a wide spectrum, from projects where individuals are involved in building or managing the construction of their home from beginning to end, to projects where individuals commission their home, making key design and layout decisions, but the home is built ready for occupation.”*
- 11.3 The councils hold a joint register of people interested and recognise that this type of housing can help to diversify the housing market. We will seek appropriate provision of self and custom-build homes on new developments, in line with national and local planning policy and evidence of need, and where possible will support community-led/co-housing type schemes as part of the self-build provision.
- 11.4 Whilst the legal definition does not distinguish between self-build and custom-build, the councils take the view that: where individuals are involved in building or managing the construction of their home from beginning to end, this is considered as self-build; and that custom-build is where individuals commission their home, making key design and layout decisions.
- 11.5 The NPPG says that “off-plan housing, homes purchased at the plan stage prior to construction and without input into the design and layout from the buyer, are not considered to meet the definition of self-build and custom housing”. The councils therefore take the view that having a choice over kitchen/bathroom fittings does not in itself constitute custom-build, and that individuals must have wider input in terms of the layout and design of the property.



- 11.6 In developments or phases of developments which comprise high density multi-storey flats and apartments, it is expected that any self and custom-build homes which come forward under para 11.3 above will be provided as custom finish units in the form of flats and apartments built to a shell finish where occupiers determine the final layout and internal finish. This could include the location of internal walls, doors and fittings.
- 11.7 Self-build and custom-build housing are generally classified as market housing. They will only be considered as affordable housing where they can also demonstrate that they meet the affordable housing criteria set out in the NPPF and will meet the needs of those priced out of the housing market, and will remain as affordable housing in perpetuity.
- 11.8 Where schemes are brought forward for 100% affordable housing, the councils will not seek any custom/self build homes on that development.

12. Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

- 12.1 Well managed HMOs can provide a relatively affordable housing solution for single households.
- 12.2 Cambridge City Council's approach to the development of Houses in Multiple Occupation is outlined in the Local Plan.
- 12.3 Whilst existing local HMOs are predominantly located in Cambridge, South Cambridgeshire would also support provision of good quality, larger HMOs, in appropriate locations. At the same time, as stated in the Cambridge Local Plan, over-concentration of provision in an area needs to be avoided, and potential adverse impact on neighbouring occupiers would need to be minimised.

13. Student accommodation

- 13.1 Students are generally accommodated in private rented housing, or in halls of residence. Build to Rent housing is another model which could potentially meet the needs of more affluent students.
- 13.2 Requirements around meeting the housing needs of students, including recognising the impact of student housing on the local housing market, are dealt with through the Cambridge Local Plan.



14. Other Specific Groups

- 14.1. Requirements around meeting the housing needs of other specific groups, such as care leavers, those experiencing domestic violence, those leaving prison and rough sleepers are all dealt with through South Cambridgeshire District Council's Homelessness Strategy and Cambridge City Council's Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy.
- 14.2. Generally, the needs of these groups can be met through mainstream housing, either through the affordable housing route or in the private sector. However, some more bespoke provision may be appropriate in some circumstances, such as modular "pod" accommodation being delivered in Cambridge City for single homeless people leaving the streets or ready to move on from hostel accommodation.

15. Other build forms

- 15.1 Appropriate, high-quality provision of other, less traditional build-forms may also be considered to meet the needs of specific groups.

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