



**Draft Interim Housing Strategy
2022 - 2025**

**Delivering Homes and Sustainable
Communities for Kingston Residents**

Contents

Forward from Cllr Davey, Portfolio Holder for Housing	3
Introduction	4
Strategic context	5
Implementing a Property Asset Strategy for RBK	5
Creating our new Local Plan	6
Working with government and the Department of Levelling Up, Homes and Communities, (DLUHC)	6
Working with the GLA and helping to deliver The London Housing Strategy	7
The housing market in Kingston	8
Private rented sector in Kingston	10
Social housing	10
Priority 1 Delivering new and affordable homes and improving our council housing	11
Housing delivery	11
Creating new social housing	12
Improving our Council housing and housing services	13
Priority 2 Creating housing and supported accommodation for people with care and support needs	14
Priority 3 Working with landlords in the Private Rental Market	16
Private rented sector in Kingston	16
Priority 4 Providing supportive, sustainable and safe communities	18
The impact of Covid 19 and planning for the future	19
Priority 5 Recognising the needs of our diverse community	20
Delivering the Interim Housing Strategy and monitoring the outcomes	21

Forward from Cllr Davey, Portfolio Holder for Housing

Kingston council is committed to building affordable homes, so people can live and work in the borough. We are thinking differently about town centres and High Streets as places to live, work, and play.

Only by planning for this will we be able to ensure that new homes go in the places where they are needed, meet the needs of local people and preserve those things that are precious to us about our borough.

Our Interim Housing Strategy reflects the issues facing the council and our resident's housing needs across Kingston - greater choice of high-quality new and/or adapted homes so people can build happy, independent and successful lives in thriving, diverse and multi-skilled communities.

The Kingston vision is to meet the growing housing needs and aspirations of residents through having the right mix of good quality housing of all types, sizes, and tenures. This includes focusing on our existing stock and making better use of it for everyone, including our vulnerable households.

We know that achieving our vision will not be easy in these times of economic change and with fewer resources but we must be ambitious and innovative in realising our vision and continue to improve the excellent housing services we have in Kingston.

Please take the time to read the strategy and fill in the attached questionnaire.

We really want your views on this strategy, we want you to help us bring our vision to reality.

Cllr Emily Davey
Lead member for Housing

Introduction

The Interim Housing Strategy 2022-25 has been developed in consultation with residents and local partners, using feedback given during engagement on projects and policies where housing has been a key focus. This included providing new and affordable housing, supported housing provision and working with our private sector landlords. For example, many of the comments we received suggested the council should increase the supply of affordable homes available in Kingston.

We met with community groups, all with very different needs. There was a clear message concerning the need for the council's housing services to be more accessible as some commented on a difficulty in gaining information. We also heard from people with learning difficulties who told us their homes were often shared with other residents and were short term leases, making their tenure uncertain at times. This feedback has been included within the priorities we have created for the strategy.

The Interim Housing Strategy replaces the previous Housing Strategy which expired in 2020, with the impact of Covid 19 delaying the development of a new strategy. We have included within the Interim Strategy feedback given as part of the engagement on housing within the borough undertaken in 2021, including providing new and affordable housing, supported housing provision and working with our private sector landlords.

The Strategy reflects the ambitions of the council's Corporate Plan and has clear links to the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and the Transforming Places to Live Programme. We will ensure the Strategy is delivered in collaboration with colleagues, residents and stakeholders across Kingston, who have contributed to our ambitions and priorities, contained in the Strategy. We have a target to build 964 homes every year for the next 10 years and the Interim Strategy aims to deliver these with our partners and the wider Kingston community supporting this ambition.

The Interim Housing Strategy has five priorities and these are;

1. **Delivering new and affordable homes and improving our council housing.** Outcome – to provide good quality homes for Kingston residents and to meet our agreed housing targets
2. **Creating housing and supported accommodation for people with care and support needs.** Outcome – to deliver a range of quality housing that enables people to live independently, with support and care where necessary
3. **Working with landlords in the Private Rental Market.** Outcome – to support private sector landlords across Kingston to offer good quality homes and to help individuals and families to live safely
4. **Providing supportive, sustainable and safe communities.** Outcome – working with Kingston residents to provide safe and sustainable communities where people can live and work together
5. **Recognising the needs of our diverse community.** Outcome – to ensure we support people within the diverse and inclusive community across Kingston

More detail on the delivery of these priorities and our intended outcomes can be found below.

Strategic context

Our Interim Housing Strategy is developed within a framework of wider national and regional strategies which have a clear influence and link to our aspirations for housing and communities across the borough. We have 176,000 residents living in Kingston, and a student population of nearly 19,000 who visit seasonally and live in a variety of types of accommodation across the borough, increasing demand in an already competitive housing market.

The cost of living crisis which emerged during 2022 is yet to impact across the borough. There will need to be a response to the possibility of an increase in families at risk of losing their homes and additional pressure on the need for temporary and permanent housing across Kingston. This will be compounded by the expected rise in taxation, higher fuel costs and expected inflation rises, impacting on the most vulnerable families and individuals.

We are also experiencing wider issues arising from conflict in Afghanistan and Ukraine, through our commitments to rehouse refugees fleeing conflicts. This will be a significant challenge for the Council and for the existing housing market to be able to respond to the demands which will be placed on it.

The Council has responded to some of these pressures and is prepared to rise to the challenges it may face. This Interim Housing Strategy will, in the medium term, confront the many issues arising for resident's housing needs across Kingston and will offer solutions within the scope of its intended outcomes. There is also a recognition of the need to build more homes across all tenures and for those homes to be affordable whether that is to reduce the pressure on the Council's housing waiting list, deliver good quality private rented homes or to enable people to get on the housing ladder.

The Interim Housing Strategy will cover a period of three years. This is so the Council can develop and implement the new Local Plan, due to be published in 2023. Our Interim Housing Strategy will then be reviewed and renewed to reflect the priorities within the Local Plan. The absence of the Local Plan will not deter our ambitions to ensure we meet the needs of Kingston residents in providing the homes and communities they deserve.

Implementing a Property Asset Strategy for RBK

The Council is a significant owner of property within the borough. Our portfolio, valued in excess of £1bn excluding council housing assets, comprises a range of uses including schools, libraries and parks, offices, shops and industrial units. Council housing assets are covered by a separate Asset Management Strategy and funded through the ring fenced Housing Revenue Account.

Our portfolio plays many roles; it supports the delivery of outstanding services to our residents, helps local businesses to grow thrive, provides opportunities for new investment in the form of homes, commercial spaces and local services, and generates income in the form of revenue and capital receipts which are increasingly important in supporting the costs of wider Council service delivery.

The Property Asset Strategy¹, which was approved in July 2022, will provide a high level strategic framework to help us decide the most appropriate use of the Council's corporate and commercial property assets. It draws together major themes, key programmes, commitments and establishes individual service strategies to optimise the Council's estate. There is a potential opportunity for the Property Asset Strategy to identify either buildings and/or land for much needed housing delivery across Kingston and to support the priorities and outcomes of the Interim Housing Strategy.

The Property Asset Strategy sets out a framework to deliver a compliant, fit for purpose estate which will enable the delivery of outstanding Council services for local residents and communities. It is designed to ensure that the Council's portfolio can support efforts to meet future service demands arising from a growing population with more complex needs. Furthermore, it will enable the Council's property assets to contribute fully to achieving the organisation's commitment to reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2030.

It will be followed by a Property Asset Plan which will draw on the themes which have emerged to establish individual plans for each building which will drive the Council's future actions in respect of consolidation, reinvestment or potential disposal.

Creating our new Local Plan

The Council is preparing a new Local Plan which will set out a vision for the future of the borough and guide what development goes where, from homes to schools, GP surgeries to parks and how we should plan for the next 20 years. The new Local Plan will seek to respond to various challenges, including how we recover and respond to the impacts of Covid-19, the new housing target for the borough set out in the London Plan and how we respond to climate change.

The new Local Plan will replace the Core Strategy (adopted in 2012) and will include policies which will shape all development proposals in the borough and will provide the basis against which planning applications will be assessed to determine whether they are acceptable or not..

Working with government and the Department of Levelling Up, Homes and Communities, (DLUHC)

The government and DLUHC have been working with councils across the UK to deliver their Strategy for housing. It has announced over £12 billion nationally of investment in affordable housing over the next five years, including the new Affordable Homes Programme announced in the Spending Review in November 2020. The new programme will be used to support councils and housing associations in delivering affordable homes. The programme will unlock a further £38 billion in public and private investment in affordable housing.

1

<https://moderngov.kingston.gov.uk/documents/g9561/Public%20reports%20pack%20Tuesday%2005-Jul-2022%2019.30%20Corporate%20and%20Resources%20Committee.pdf?T=10>

DLUHC will work with the Greater London Authority (GLA) to offer a strengthened role in London for Homes England, the government's housing accelerator. This will enable Homes England to work more closely with the GLA, boroughs and development corporations to help deliver sites in London and the preparation of bids for the new National Homebuilding Fund. This will help close the gap between what London is delivering now and what it needs to to meet demand.

In addition, the government has published a white paper for housing; Social Housing White Paper, 2020. This sets out proposed new standards for social landlords and the actions the government will take to ensure that residents in social housing are safe, are listened to, live in good quality homes and have access to redress when things go wrong. The Council will respond to the outcomes of the published Charter for Social Housing, working inclusively with our tenants and residents to ensure we meet our legislative requirements.

The People at the Heart of Care, Adult Social Care Reform White Paper was published in December 2021². The government is looking to strengthen how care and support is delivered and provide the tools to ensure delivery of the Care Act. The White Paper proposes to set out a range of policies that the sector will implement for those who draw on care and support over the next three years. The impact of the White Paper will see greater integration of social care and housing, with at least £300 million to integrate housing into local health and care strategies, with a focus on increasing the range of new supported housing options available. This aims to provide a choice of alternative housing and support options. The White Paper explicitly states, 'every decision about care is a decision about housing'. This strategy will therefore ensure the outcomes of any forthcoming legislation is reflected in our outcomes and the action plan.

During the pandemic, the government has also made changes to legislation to make it easier for councils, businesses and communities to enable the delivery of stronger, more prosperous and more resilient places for people to live in. We will embrace any opportunities to deliver a strong and prosperous Kingston and this Interim Strategy will support this objective.

The council will work collaboratively with DLUHC, building on the working relationship we have with the ministry and seeking support for this strategy, our plans and aspirations for the benefit of the wider Kingston community.

Working with the GLA and helping to deliver The London Housing Strategy

The London Housing Strategy sets out the Mayor's priorities, policies and proposals for tackling London's housing crisis. It provides a framework over several years, including over £4.82 billion of affordable housing investment through to 2022, as well as a host of other programmes and services provided by the Mayor and partners to achieve longer-term ambitions for the future. The Mayor has secured an additional £4bn from government to deliver affordable homes in London under the Homes for Londoners: Affordable Homes Programme 2021-2026.

² People at the Heart of Care: Adult Social Care Reform White Paper, December 2021, Dept of Health and Social Care

This funding is expected to support starts on site between 2021 and 2026, with completions expected by 2028 for most projects with some strategic sites completing in 2029. The Mayor will use this programme to maximise the number of new affordable homes in London.

The council will contribute to these wider goals for London as a willing partner in the delivery of our housing targets and goals for Kingston residents, as referred to below.

Royal Borough of Kingston (RBK) Corporate Plan – delivering our strategic outcomes

The council's Corporate plan directs the priorities for all council services and sets out the vision for the borough as;

Kingston will be a vibrant, diverse and inclusive borough, where residents are active, empowered, engaged and able to remain independent and resilient.

Amongst the strategic outcomes, it includes;

A sustainable approach to new homes, development and infrastructure which benefits our communities, in a well maintained borough

The Interim Housing Strategy is a critical component of the council's efforts, working with partners and stakeholders, to achieve this strategic outcome and deliver on the commitments the council has made to its residents. We aim to meet this outcome by;

- Building new council homes supported by GLA funding
- Providing greater support to Registered Providers and private sector developers in bringing forward more housing on their own sites
- Exploring the use of Council owned land in joint ventures
- Ensuring high standards in private rented sector housing are maintained
- Developing a new Housing Revenue Account Business Plan and Financial Strategy
- Implementing a new Asset Management Strategy which will ensure our existing council owned homes are safely maintained, improved and developed.

The housing market in Kingston

Kingston was a joint-borough contributor to the Strategic Housing Market Assessment³ (SHMA) undertaken in 2016. The assessment highlighted a number of key outcomes for Kingston, including the lack of social and affordable housing across Kingston. A new SHMA is due to be recommissioned in 2023.

Kingston has a housing market comprising 68,550 dwellings, with a mixture of dwelling types of flats, houses and bungalows. Flats and maisonettes make up nearly 40% of the market, nearly 60% are houses and 1.6% are bungalows. There were 2,640 new homes built in the borough between 2015 and 2021.

The projected number of Kingston households from the 2021 census was 65,600. An average of 440 new homes were built per year over the past six years.⁴ There are anticipated to be 3,145 new homes delivered between 2021 and 2026, equivalent to an

³ Strategic Housing Market Assessment, Kingston upon Thames and North East Surrey Authorities (Elmbridge Borough Council, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, Mole Valley District Council), June 2016

⁴ <https://www.kingston.gov.uk/downloads/file/1684/five-year-housing-land-supply-statement>

average of 629 homes per year, but below the borough's Housing Land Supply target of 6,774 by March 2026.

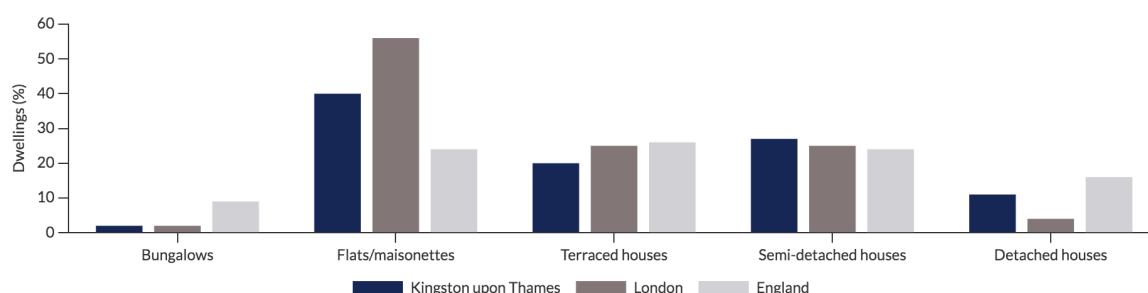
Kingston's housing market is dominated by owner occupation with 64.1% of properties under owner occupation, outstripping the London average of 48.2% and ahead of the English average of 62.8%. Median property prices for Kingston for Q1, 2019 was £490,000, this has since increased to £542,694 (Oct 2020 - Sep 2021). Across the 32 London Boroughs, Kingston is 15th in terms of median price.

Property prices by type for the last 12 months as at July 2022 illustrates the market against London and the rest of England are shown below.

Median house sale prices to year ending Dec 2021⁵

Housing Type	Kingston upon Thames	London	England
All	£535,000	£512,000	£280,000
Detached Houses	£1,018,750	£850,000	£400,000
Semi-Detached Houses	£690,000	£580,000	£252,000
Terraced Houses	£525,000	£550,000	£227,500
Flats/Maisonettes	£375,000	£430,000	£235,000

Housing numbers by property type



Date: 2021 Source: Valuation Office Agency

The below chart shows Kingston and England's median income⁶ relative to median house sale prices over time⁷, where the dark red line of Kingston's house prices increases at a greater rate than the relatively flatter increase in income. This is a trend that isn't demonstrated across England as a whole (the lower two trend lines):

⁵ Source: ONS

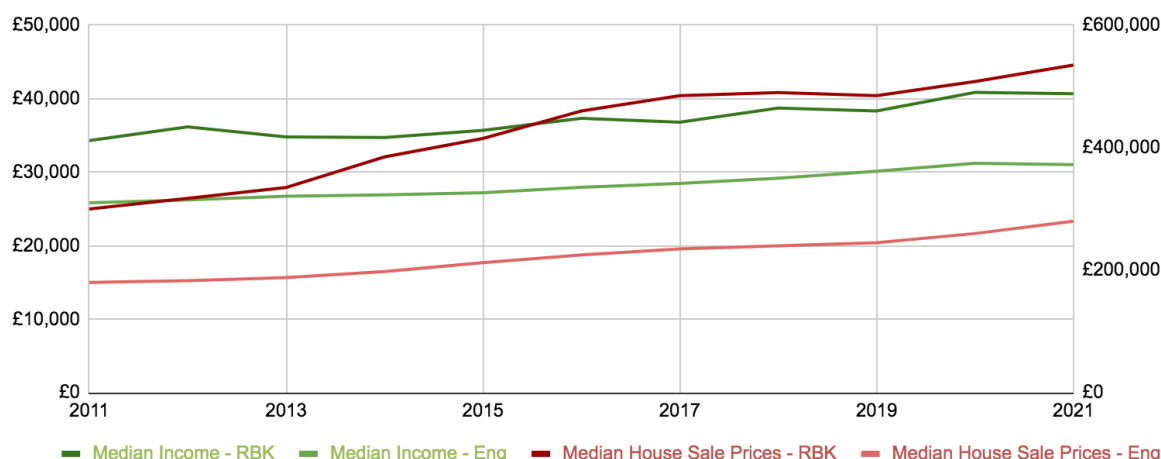
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/datasets/medianhousepriceforationalandsubnationalgeographiesquarterlyrollingyearhpssadataset09>

⁶ Source: Data.Kingston <https://data.kingston.gov.uk/economy-and-employment/>

⁷ Source: ONS

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/datasets/medianhousepriceforationalandsubnationalgeographiesquarterlyrollingyearhpssadataset09>

Trend in House Prices relative to Income, Kingston and England



Private rented sector in Kingston

The private rented sector across Kingston forms 22.4% of the total housing market, compared with the London average of 25%. 21% of Kingston private sector properties are let through landlords or their agents. This section of the market provides the majority of temporary accommodation supply of properties for Kingston's homeless families.

The cost of renting private rented sector properties in Kingston varies greatly across the borough, depending on the size, type and location of the property. Rent can be determined by the landlord and the market will dictate if the cost of renting the property is acceptable. Rents are governed by the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate which caps housing benefit that may be claimed. Any rent increases above LHA rates where benefits are claimed would have to be found by the tenant.

The housing market for private rented properties across Kingston is also very competitive. This is supported by a strong economically active population of 81.2%, the eighth highest in London, and above average wages in Kingston compared to the rest of London..

Social housing

There is a lack of supply of social housing in Kingston. Office of National Statistics (ONS) sources state that there are 7502 social rented properties in the Borough - equivalent to 11.8% of all housing, of which just over 5200 are council owned. This is far below the London average of 24.1%. Realistically, applicants on the housing register may wait many years for an offer of permanent accommodation.

Lettings into social housing, including Registered Provider nominations in 2019/20 was 221, 37 below an anticipated number of 258. Of those 221 lettings, 82 were lettings to homeless families. At the end of March 2020, there were 869 families in temporary housing in Kingston, illustrating perhaps the likely length of wait for permanent accommodation through the council's waiting list. This number increased to 928 during the 12 months up to March 2021.

Priority 1 Delivering new and affordable homes and improving our council housing

Outcome – to provide good quality homes for Kingston residents and to meet our agreed housing targets

Housing delivery

The Council wants to provide good quality homes for Kingston residents, as supported by the Corporate Plan. On future delivery of homes, the Plan states that the council will;

- Seek to ensure that all development schemes are well designed in their context and the character of the area, creating a sense of pride and place.
- Seek to ensure all new buildings have the highest level of energy efficiency with carbon offsetting during construction.
- Develop design codes prepared alongside the Local Plan

The Interim Housing Strategy will also reflect the outcomes of the Council's Climate Action Plan⁸, published in March 2022 to ensure we are on track to meet the borough's net zero targets. The Climate Action Plan will be a key document which will help to shape new housing delivery and will consider the actions arising from Theme 1: Efficient Homes and Buildings.

Following the publication of the Mayor of London's new London Plan in March 2021, Kingston's annual monitoring target for new homes has increased from 643 homes a year to 964 homes a year. For context, in 2019/20, RBK delivered 624 net additional homes and has only met its housing target once in the past 12 years.

The 10-year target for Kingston is to deliver 9,640 homes between 2019 and 2029. Included within this target is a separate small sites (sites less than 0.25 hectares in size) target of 2,250 homes. To meet the London Plan's housing target, the emerging Local Plan will look to allocate an appropriate range of development sites. The Council will also look to work with relevant partners and developers to optimise the capacity of sites and to deliver homes that meet the needs of the population.

Feedback throughout our early engagement with residents and colleagues suggested there should be a focus on building new affordable housing across Kingston, including the provision of specialist and supported accommodation for vulnerable groups and elderly residents.

Within the Council's ownership are land holdings and existing buildings which could be developed for housing, plus its own social housing stock which could additionally facilitate capital development and new homes. In recognition of the impacts of rising interest rates and build cost inflation, the Council will need to be prudent in reviewing the opportunities provided by its asset base and consider a range of options to facilitate the development of new homes. Any activity resulting from this strategy that impacts either General Fund or HRA Housing will be funded through existing capital and revenue budgets, or appropriate

⁸ <https://www.kingston.gov.uk/downloads/file/1694/kingston-s-climate-action-plan>

funding requests will be made where required from either internally or from external sources where possible. As an underlying principle of this strategy, there will be a clear focus on financing any new developments and improvement programmes to housing stock and will be monitored through the supporting action plan to this strategy.

The emerging new Local Plan will require developments for 10 or more residential units to provide at least 35% of its homes as affordable housing and up to 50% on public sector land. The council wants to work alongside our Registered Provider (RP) partners, who have signalled their willingness to support the outcomes of the Interim Strategy. We will also consider our wider approach to delivery working with For Profit RPs⁹ as part of the Interim Housing Strategy. The safe, long term revenue income stream created by affordable housing means that the number of For Profit RPs, and their area of operation, will continue to grow and may offer solutions to the Council's priorities for delivering affordable housing.

We want to accelerate and co-ordinate a new pipeline of homes and sites, through the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account. We will work across all services, steered by the Place Directorate to bring forward a comprehensive approach to delivering new homes and this Interim Strategy will support the Council's ambition for growth. We will consider all opportunities at our disposal which can ultimately mean statutory service delivery can be sustained for our communities.

Overall, we will;

- Provide a programme of directly delivered capital projects which are self financing, providing directly delivered new homes and facilities for our communities
- Diversify the Council's property portfolio and reduce spends on vacant premises, creating capital receipts to the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account and support investment in new development including in new homes
- Create opportunities for community infrastructure, such as health and social care needs to be met from a planning and commercial perspective for the Council

Creating new social housing

Kingston's housing market is expensive, both in terms of buying or renting property. It may be difficult for individuals and families to buy or rent properties, particularly if they are on low incomes. There is a shortage of council and housing association properties in Kingston, which are usually more affordable. We want to provide more affordable homes for Kingston residents and a key outcome of the Strategy will be to deliver our affordable housing programme and to meet our Climate Action Plan targets for energy efficient homes.

We also want to explore the issue of affordability to access the housing market in Kingston. The lack of suitable affordable housing and the need for more social rented housing presents an opportunity to consider developing a Kingston Living Rent model¹⁰. Living rents link the local housing and labour markets to rents within the local area and track the ability of people on low incomes to be able to afford them.

⁹ For-profit registered providers have to follow broadly the same regulatory standards as traditional registered providers (RPs) and can access government grants. They are allowed to distribute dividends to shareholders and can attract equity investment from a wider range of investors.

¹⁰ Living Rents – a new development framework for Affordable Housing, Savills June 2015

A key priority for the Council was the delivery of the Cambridge Road Estate regeneration. Between 24th February and 18th March 2020, residents voted on whether the estate should be regenerated to deliver new high-quality, 'greener' homes that will take them into the future.

Residents of the estate overwhelmingly voted in favour of the Council's plans for their neighbourhood, giving the green light to regenerate the Cambridge Road Estate to provide approximately 2,170 new homes. These will be a mix of modern flats, maisonettes and houses of various sizes, with the number of bedrooms matched to the needs of the household. The new neighbourhood will provide at least 114 additional council homes over and above the existing 653 already on the estate.

The Council has progressed with these plans with Phase 1 construction expected to begin in 2022.

There are additional housing priorities which the Council is developing, and are supported within the Interim Housing Strategy;

- Exploration of opportunities across the council's HRA and GF asset base for the delivery of new housing
- The sheltered housing review and subsequent new housing delivery pipeline
- A number of infill sites which are developed to RIBA Stage 1 and could deliver new homes in an initial tranche
- Opportunities for certain sites to be ringfenced for Kingston residents' self build projects

The Allocation Scheme is due to be reviewed and this will be a priority during 2022.

Alongside the proposed delivery of the small sites programme and wider housing delivery, it will be essential to understand demand for properties from residents across Kingston, based on family size and composition. This should also include any special requirements from families on the housing register, such as medical conditions which will require specific types of accommodation, offering greater accessibility to people with mobility issues.

Improving our Council housing and housing services

The council's stock is a valuable asset, providing homes for over 5,000 Kingston residents. We own 770 sheltered housing units for elderly people, all of which were subject to a sheltered stock review in 2021.

We carried out a programme of transformation for Landlord Services during 2021, and over the coming months we will be working with customers and engaging with them on how we can improve housing services to residents. Increasing customer satisfaction and reviewing value for money across our housing services, with more opportunities for residents to get involved are key priorities. We have implemented a new grounds maintenance contract and service in October 2021 and a new tree contract service which was implemented in 2021. We will continue to work with residents and share our ambition for the housing service of the future. A key priority for the council housing stock supports the Council's decarbonisation agenda, where the HRA has set aside £3m over the next 3 years for retrofitting existing housing stock.

Included in the transformation programme are;

- a review of the telecare monitoring service offered to older people

- investing in a new digital IT system to accelerate a better online customer experience by 2022

In 2020 we carried out a Stock Condition survey of all the Council owned properties, excluding Cambridge Road Estate properties, which was completed in December 2020. Our contract with Axis Europe was reviewed and we have extended the current contract for the delivery of repairs and planned projects to our housing properties for a further period of two to three years, starting from April 2021.

We will;

- Develop our Asset Strategy using the stock condition and other information, to include responsive, compliance, cyclical, component replacement and other works
- Implement our Asset Improvement Delivery Programme from 2022 onwards, based upon the new Asset Strategy, to compile a prioritised and budgeted works programme
- Develop a Procurement Strategy to support and complement the new Asset Strategy and Delivery Programme for the delivery of all works from 2023/2024
- Carry out an in-house resources review to deliver the revised programmes of works and ensure compliance with legislation.

Priority 2 Creating housing and supported accommodation for people with care and support needs

Outcome – to deliver a range of quality housing that enables people to live independently, with support and care where necessary

Good quality supported and specialist housing is essential for creating places where all Kingston residents can live well. We want to ensure the best quality of life for older and vulnerable residents, both now and in the future. To achieve this, we will need to deliver a range of housing that enables people to live independently, with support and care where necessary.

There was extensive engagement across many communities in Kingston which has helped to shape the strategy. Amongst the feedback we received, there was a consistent message about the council helping to provide good quality accommodation for some of our most disadvantaged residents. We heard from residents with learning disabilities who highlighted issues they were experiencing with their tenancies and many who lived in shared accommodation, often on short term leases. We spoke to groups representing our diverse communities who told us that accessing housing services was sometimes difficult. There was also a strong sentiment that the council should look to provide more specialist accommodation for our elderly residents.

This Interim Strategy supports the need for a more diverse supply of specialist housing, which is currently lacking across Kingston. There is a willingness to work across services, to identify need and to develop interventions to increase the availability of accommodation for

people with care and support needs. Work has already begun to achieve this and will be delivered through;

- Making the best use of existing accommodation, both existing supported housing and sheltered housing
- Ensuring existing mainstream housing is suited to the requirements of older and disabled people, for example through the further use of adaptations and the Disabled Facilities Grant
- Developing a range of new build supported and specialist housing over the next 10 years that reflects identified needs
- Ensuring that support and care services, both within supported housing and for people living in mainstream housing, are effective in promoting people's wellbeing and independence

A housing and supported accommodation need assessment, a high level housing and supported accommodation development plan for Kingston, was undertaken by Housing LIN with a recent update completed in May 2022¹¹. The outcomes from this assessment have formed the plan for supported accommodation. The supported accommodation development plan can be used to influence and support the best use of Council owned sites. It supports how the Council can access external funding bids, influencing and working with housing partners and providers, including their business plans and investment decisions. The plan will also link to other cross-Council policies, supporting wider service delivery.

It will provide the basis for a housing and supported accommodation transformation programme that is aligned to the Council's other business transformation work and supports the Interim Housing Strategy outcomes. This Interim Strategy will align the outcomes of this programme, 'Transforming Places to Live', to ensure there is synergy between the respective delivery plans.

The implementation of the programme will offer a wide range of supported housing that enables adults and young people to live independently in their communities. It proposes a range of accommodation for vulnerable young people and will form a key part of providing support for care leavers up to the age of 25.

The plan also identifies the need to increase housing suited to older residents, including access to support and assistance to remain living in their own homes and access to a wider range of high quality specialist housing that is suited to ageing well in later life.

Another much needed area of housing provision focuses on the development of supported housing and additional accessible and adapted housing for adults and children with physical disabilities and long term health conditions. This should also take account of the needs of new homes to be built to be wheelchair accessible, with wide doorways and step free access. This would support people to stay in their homes as they get older and who may require walking aids or use of wheelchairs.

The plan recognises the opportunity to incorporate the use of Technology Enabled Care to help older and vulnerable members of our communities to live safely and well, supporting and maximising their independence in living at home. The strategy will also monitor the legislative requirements of the People at the Heart of Care, Adult Social Care Reform White Paper, working alongside Adult Social Care colleagues and particularly the Transforming

¹¹ All Age Housing Needs Assessment; Housing and supported accommodation needs assessment update 100522 (Housing LIN)

Places to Live Programme Board, so the Council's priorities are aligned to legislative requirements. Most importantly, these priorities will reflect the needs of Kingston residents.

Following the outcomes of the supported housing needs assessment, the Council will produce a market shaping/investment prospectus to inform supported and specialist housing providers of the requirements across the borough to meet unmet need.

Finally, reducing rough sleeping by providing high quality supported housing and mainstream 'move on' housing opportunities is a key priority for the council. There is a lack of supported housing for homeless families, single people and rough sleepers across Kingston, although the funding from DLUHC and GLA for rough sleepers through the Next Steps Accommodation Programme has kick started some provision. Over the period of this Interim Strategy, this will be addressed with more supported provision, such as Housing First, and will link with RBK's priorities within the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

Priority 3 Working with landlords in the Private Rental Market

Outcome – to support private sector landlords across Kingston to offer good quality homes and to help individuals and families to live safely

Private rented sector in Kingston

The private rented sector across Kingston forms 22.4% of the total housing market, compared with the London average of 25%. 21% of Kingston private sector properties are let through landlords or their agents. This section of the market provides the majority of temporary accommodation supply of properties for homeless families.

Rents for private rented sector properties in Kingston vary greatly across the borough, depending on the size, type and location of the property. The rent can be determined by the landlord and the market will dictate if the cost of renting the property is acceptable. For tenants on benefits or who are in Council provided, private sector temporary accommodation, rents are governed by the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates for properties against which housing benefit may be claimed. This effectively caps rent at that level for claimants but will obviously limit the options in respect of properties to those where a landlord is willing to accept rents at these levels. Any increases above LHA rates where benefits are claimed would have to be found by the tenant.

Typical RBK LHA rates from April 1st, 2020

OSWL*	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed
Per week	£226	£285	£343	£437
Per calendar month	£983	£1,240	£1,489	£1,898

**Outer South West London*

The housing market for private rented properties across Kingston is very competitive. This is supported by a strong economically active population of 81.2%, the eighth highest in London and with above average wages in Kingston compared to the rest of London, competition for property is high.

Typical rental prices across a range of private rented properties in Kingston, let by letting agents, provide context of the high cost of this market, and can be shown in the table overleaf¹².

¹² <https://www.rightmove.co.uk/property-to-rent/Kingston-Upon-Thames.html>

Current asking rents in Kingston upon Thames

Average: **£2,220 pcm**

Property type	1 bed	2 beds	3 beds	4 beds	5 beds
Houses	£628 pcm (1)	£1,777 pcm (9)	£2,518 pcm (11)	£3,652 pcm (24)	£6,267 pcm (17)
Flats	£1,169 pcm (67)	£1,710 pcm (105)	£2,035 pcm (38)	£1,949 pcm (14)	£2,600 pcm (2)
All	£1,161 pcm (68)	£1,715 pcm (114)	£2,144 pcm (49)	£3,025 pcm (38)	£5,881 pcm (19)

As a simple illustration, it is apparent that competing in the Kingston market would potentially be costly for low income families or those on benefits, wishing to rent. It is also out of reach for many single people under the age of 35, who are not able to access housing benefits. The strategy will explore options for under 35s across Kingston to access accommodation through sharing properties by access to the shared accommodation rate, (SAR) under Universal Credit payments.

RBK works alongside private sector landlords to improve the quality of homes for their tenants and to drive up standards within this sector. This is a growing market across Kingston as home ownership is beyond the reach of many residents due to the high costs of homes for sale on the market.

Our private sector landlords provide an important supply of rented homes for many residents in Kingston. The council works proactively with landlords and we have nearly 500 families living in our Private Lease Scheme properties, where we provide a service to landlords through a lease, managing properties on their behalf.

We want to support landlords across Kingston to offer good quality homes and also to help individuals and families to live safely. The Interim Strategy will ensure we engage positively with landlords and develop opportunities to improve the private rented sector offer to tenants. We will develop a wider engagement forum in 2021 and work more collaboratively with private sector landlords to ensure the market is accessible to residents, drives up standards and meets legislative expectations. We will ensure standards meet Housing Health and Safety Rating System, and promote the legislation for Fitness for Human Habitation, to encourage private sector landlords to work alongside the council to deliver safe and well maintained homes.

The Council will also target empty homes across Kingston and recognises the need to bring properties back into use while there is such a high demand for homes. Grants of up to £25k are available to bring homes up to a high standard. The Strategy will monitor the number of homes empty and encourage owners to bring homes back in use, with support from the council.

Priority 4 Providing supportive, sustainable and safe communities

Outcome – working with Kingston residents to provide safe and sustainable communities where people can live and work together

The Corporate Plan has a clear priority for providing safe communities across Kingston, and the Interim Housing Strategy aligns closely to this. The Plan states;

‘Kingston’s communities are places where residents feel safe and the fear of crime is low, with a zero-tolerance approach to domestic abuse and hate crime and action against anti-social behaviour’.

There are many different communities across Kingston, with people living and working together and enjoying their neighbourhoods and its amenities. We want to improve our communities so they are safe to live in and there is support from the community for those who may need it, with residents living in communities which are supportive, sustainable and safe.

In 2019, the Council asked residents to share their views on public parks and green spaces across Kingston. Nearly 400 people responded highlighting how important these areas are to everyone and particularly, how much they valued the land and gardens outside their home, with overwhelming support for wildlife friendly adjustments.

During the Covid 19 pandemic, going outside to enjoy open spaces for fresh air, to connect with nature and for exercise has been extremely important to our residents; these trends have continued post-pandemic. Residents and community groups alike shared a keen interest in improving biodiversity and conservation practices in green spaces. Feedback during the consultation for the Housing Strategy showed there was a keen interest from residents in their local areas, with some residents seeking to ensure there was a reduction in anti-social behaviour, offering a safe environment for residents to live in. The concept of neighbourhoods which were supportive of individuals who lived there was a strong sentiment from resident feedback.

In 2021, the council employed a new company to deliver high quality, cost effective grounds maintenance and tree preservation services across the borough. There will be a refreshed Green Spaces Strategy and a new Biodiversity Action Plan planned for launch Nov 2022. The council is also engaging with housing tenants and leaseholders to gather their views on green spaces on their estates and help determine how these spaces are looked after in the coming years.

During 2019 and 2020, the council commissioned a study to engage the wider Kingston community. The project¹³, supported by the Mayor of London, was a holistic assistance programme that targeted hard-to-reach, vulnerable groups to improve individuals' comfort, quality of life and overall health. The programme helped to enhance economic self-sufficiency, social well-being and reduce carbon emissions by tackling key factors contributing to fuel poverty and via energy efficiency measures and education. The

¹³ Warm Home, Better Health Home Visits, Kingston Public Health Project Evaluation 2019-2020
June 2020

outcomes of the study ensured there were significant health, wellbeing and financial outcomes for those who took part and these aspects will be an important focus over the life of this Interim Strategy.

The Interim Housing Strategy, while seeking to provide additional new and improved homes, will also ensure it reflects the needs and aspirations of Kingston residents in providing safe and sustainable communities. It will provide a direct link to the emerging Green Spaces Strategy and the Biodiversity Action Plan. The impact of housing in its various forms across Kingston; owner occupiers, private rented accommodation and social housing will require a joined up approach to how people living in their homes, can also enjoy their communities and the open spaces around them. The Strategy will inform and influence the proposals for our green spaces and for providing safe places for our residents to live and work.

The impact of Covid 19 and planning for the future

The Covid 19 pandemic has placed new challenges on us to ensure we are prepared for such emergencies in the future. There was a complete shift in the way we had to conduct our everyday affairs; working from home, restrictions in travel and movement, managing our daily exercise and socialising with friends and family. The need to remain at home was not easy for everyone and has brought into focus the question of the suitability of our homes to work remotely, offer home schooling for children, provide care to those who need it, prepare food for meals, washing and drying clothes. The list is not exhaustive, but it is essential to consider these everyday tasks and to understand that not everyone is able to live comfortably and operate normally due to the restrictions they faced.

In response, this strategy will develop design standards for future homes to consider the challenges thrown up during Covid 19 and in the new patterns of living and working which have emerged since. We received feedback during our engagement with residents who highlighted issues, such as a lack of working space at home. Our design standards will be developed to include adequate space to work from home. This interim strategy will also allow the council an opportunity to align the priorities for housing with the proposed Local Plan, due for adoption in 2023.

While many people are able to use various forms of digital engagement, either through mobile phones or other devices, for some it may not be possible due to the ability to access the internet or perhaps the costs of using this media. Offering alternative working spaces or places to communicate remotely will be a challenge for the Council and we will ensure the strategy is engaged with and supports our diverse communities. We will ensure the strategy supports wider community and neighbourhood plans.

We want our homes and communities to reflect the corporate priorities of sustainable new homes, supported by infrastructure which benefits our communities. We will develop design standards for Kingston which will reflect these priorities and direct developers to meet these standards. We want to explore the opportunities for providing working spaces in new developments, so people can have the flexibility to choose to work at home and with connectivity to digital working. Any new homes should also be supported with well designed open space planning and could also consider community hubs to support remote working, offering communities the opportunity to work away from the home.

Priority 5 Recognising the needs of our diverse community

Outcome – to ensure we support people within the diverse and inclusive community across Kingston

Our Corporate Plan proposes that Kingston will be;

A safe borough which celebrates our diverse and vibrant communities, with local priorities shaped through participatory democracy.

Kingston has a population of 176,00 residents which is projected to grow to over 184,000 residents by 2025. There is a huge demand on housing to accommodate this growth, but equally, a need to be able to meet the diversity of the population. We aspire to look after the elderly, young and people with disabilities as a Corporate priority and the housing needs of these groups are identified within our supported housing needs section.

In addition, we will aim to meet issues relating to equality, diversity and inclusion as part of our Interim Housing Strategy. We celebrate a diverse and inclusive community across Kingston and will reflect the needs of the differences within our community groups.

We recognise the impact on individuals and families who are increasingly disadvantaged by the combined impact of high rents, increasing costs of living, low incomes, welfare reform and limited housing options. The cost of living crisis is impacting every family and will hit low income households hardest. There is evidence for links between adverse childhood experiences and long-term homelessness and that becoming homeless at a young age can have a negative impact on future economic, mental health and emotional wellbeing.

Although Kingston is the second least deprived borough in London, it does nevertheless suffer with levels of poverty and deprivation. Three areas; Norbiton, Berrylands and Beverly are known to have issues around poverty and there is also well documented with the use of food banks across the borough. Studies across Kingston¹⁴ have also highlighted instances of fuel poverty, financial difficulties of residents and other factors highlighting disadvantages amongst certain groups across Kingston. The Interim Strategy will ensure the outcomes of these studies are included within our action plan, to deliver outcomes for those most in need.

Black and Minority Ethnic households make up 33% of the Kingston population, a significant number of over 60,000 residents but below the London average.¹⁵ Amongst the BAME community are a range of ethnically diverse groups, the largest being non-British white at 12.8% and Other Asian at 10.8%. Our engagement with our minority communities is well established with some groups, such as the Korean and Tamil communities alongside a range of BAME, refugee and faith communities. Previously we have consulted these communities [via the Refugee and Migrant Needs Assessment which was refreshed in 2019 and the Korean Needs Assessment](#).¹⁶ Both studies highlighted housing issues as a key factor affecting the health and wellbeing of these communities.

¹⁴ Warm Home, Better Health Home Visits, Kingston Public Health Project Evaluation 2019-2020 June 2020

¹⁵ <https://data.kingston.gov.uk/population/report>

¹⁶ Prosperous Lives for All: The Refugee and Migrant Strategy 2016-2019

We recognise some of the groups who have little access to housing services either through choice or because of their circumstances. Offering opportunities for certain groups, such as the Gypsy and Traveller community, will be an ongoing commitment throughout the delivery of the strategy. New groups have also emerged recently due to government priorities, including Afghanistan and Ukrainian refugees, fleeing their countries because of war or oppression.

We also recognise how difficult it can be to communicate our ideas to the wider community and equally, for the Council to hear what people have to say. Engagement during the development of the Interim Strategy was challenging due to Covid 19. This may be even more so if English is not the first language of an individual or family, which is the case for over 16% of Kingston residents.

We want the outcomes from this Interim Strategy to reflect the different voices within the many communities across Kingston. We will continually engage with our minority communities throughout the life of this Interim Strategy to ensure we can reflect their needs and meet our intended outcomes.

Our key objectives are;

- To ensure that housing services are accessible and effective for all our residents and are appropriate for groups in the community who may be excluded
- To ensure there is engagement with residents with disabilities to understand their needs and to support their housing requirements
- To continually engage with our minority communities throughout the life of this Interim Strategy
- To review information and data we collect to identify actions to reduce disadvantage in delivering the Interim Strategy

Delivering the Interim Housing Strategy and monitoring the outcomes

Our Interim Housing Strategy is a key document for the Kingston borough; its residents, communities and people who work and aspire to live in Kingston. It supports our Corporate Plan objectives and aims to deliver much needed new housing across the borough, improve existing housing across Kingston in the council's social rented stock and driving up standards in our private sector housing.

The delivery of the Interim Strategy will also include contributing to the wider corporate objectives of the Council; safe neighbourhoods and environments people can enjoy, engaging with residents, partners and the voluntary sector to ensure we are meeting their needs and offering specialist types of housing to some of our most vulnerable residents.

The Interim Strategy is supported by an action plan. This plan brings together the many priorities of the Interim Strategy and reflects the outcomes. This plan will be delivered in accordance with the agreed target dates and will be overseen by a delivery group, which will report to agreed forums, such as the Housing Board and a newly launched Housing Delivery Forum, which will include partners and stakeholders.

The Interim Housing Strategy will have a review every 12 months of its action plan delivery and outcomes, ensuring it is keeping pace with its pledges and priorities. This will also take into account legislative changes and regional and local priorities which may emerge and have an impact on the Interim Strategy delivery.