

Hart District Council

Housing Strategy

2026 - 2031

March 2026



Housing Strategy 2026 – 31

Foreword:

Hart continues to be recognised as one of the best places to live in the UK and is one of the least deprived areas in the country, yet we know that for many residents, accessing suitable and affordable housing remains a challenge. The recognition that Hart is among the least deprived areas brings its own challenges, as we have pockets of deprivation—and for those experiencing deprivation, living in an otherwise affluent area can often feel more isolating. Rising costs, changes in welfare, and pressure on public services mean that demand for affordable homes is as strong as ever. Our outgoing Housing Strategy set out a clear commitment to improving housing standards, energy efficiency, and accessibility—and we are proud of the progress made.

Over the past five years, we have delivered significant achievements. We introduced a Social Rent approach in our planning policies to ensure new homes remain affordable in perpetuity, secured 40% affordable housing on most Section 106 sites, and implemented an Empty Property Strategy to bring unused homes back into use. We worked closely with Parish Councils to deliver Rural Exception Sites and strengthened support for vulnerable residents through partnerships such as You Trust and the Blue Lamp Trust, providing safe accommodation for those fleeing domestic abuse. We also improved our housing register system, enabling better analysis of housing need, and actively sought feedback from residents to shape future developments.

These successes reflect our commitment to creating communities that are inclusive, sustainable, and resilient. However, we recognise that challenges remain, and the need for affordable, high-quality housing continues to grow. This strategy builds on strong partnerships and innovative approaches, ensuring that housing delivery remains at the heart of creating thriving communities. Our new Housing Strategy sets out three key objectives for the next five years:

Our Objectives for 2026–2031

1. Optimising the supply of high-quality new affordable housing to meet local needs

We will work tirelessly to ensure that everyone in Hart has access to a home they can afford. This means not only increasing the number of affordable homes but also ensuring they are well-designed, energy-efficient, and built to last. By prioritising quality and sustainability, we aim to create homes that enhance lives and strengthen communities for generations to come.

2. Making the best use of the private rented sector, and new and existing affordable housing

Housing is more than bricks and mortar—it's about security, stability, and opportunity. We will maximise the potential of the private rented sector and existing housing stock to prevent homelessness, support independent living, and provide flexible solutions for those in need. Through innovation and collaboration, we will make every home count.

3. Working in partnerships to create sustainable, energy-efficient affordable housing and healthier communities

We believe that housing should be at the heart of thriving, healthy communities. By working closely with partners, developers, and local organisations, we will embed sustainability into every stage of housing delivery. Our ambition is to create neighbourhoods that are not only environmentally responsible but also places where people feel connected, supported, and proud to call home.

We will continue to work collaboratively with our partners, Parish Councils, and local communities to enable the delivery of homes that meet specific needs and support vibrant neighbourhoods. By embedding sustainability and promoting innovation, we aim to ensure that Hart remains a place where everyone can access a safe, secure, and affordable home—and where communities can thrive now and for generations to come.

Councillor Peter Wildsmith, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities, Hart District Council

Introduction:

Hart district is well known for its characterful combination of busy urban areas, and many charming villages.

It is well situated close to London and has major transport routes, whilst offering wonderful countryside and parks, five of which proudly hold Green Flag awards. It is therefore not surprising that Hart frequently features as one of the best places to live in the country for quality of life

However, this popularity brings challenges. House prices are high, and the housing market is competitive, making it hard for people on lower incomes to buy or rent a home.

For many residents, the only choices are moving to more affordable areas, living in expensive private rents, considering low-cost home ownership options, or joining the housing register and waiting for years for a lower rent affordable home.

Hart District Council does not own or develop affordable housing itself. Instead, it works in partnership with housing providers to deliver affordable housing. These partnerships are essential to supporting our residents and ensuring that Hart remains a place where everyone can enjoy living.

Map of the Hart area



Key facts:

Housing and Population in Hart

Hart's population has grown significantly over the past decade. According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the district's population increased by 5.6% between 2019 and 2024 and as of 2024 stands at 103,162 people. This growth is above the national average of 3.7% for the same period.



In 2024, 18.6% of the population of Hart is aged 0 to 15 years old, 60.8% are between 16-64 and 20.6% aged 65 and over. A mixture of housing is required to meet the needs of these different cohorts.

House Prices and Rental Costs



Housing in Hart is among the most expensive in the region. The ONS reports that from October 2025, the average house price was £472,000 with first-time buyers typically paying around £354,000. For comparison:

- Average House Price in Southeast: £384,000
- Average House Price in UK: £270,000

Private rents are also high. The median monthly rent in Hart for November 2025 was £1,379, compared to £1,399 in the Southeast and £1,366 across the UK. These costs make saving for a deposit to buy a home or rent another home challenging and leave many households reliant on the Council's housing register for affordable options.

Demand for Affordable Low-Cost Home Ownership



Demand for affordable homes to buy remains high and shared ownership schemes often provide the first step into homeownership for many residents.

When the Government Help to Buy agent closed in March 2023, 633 applicants were registered for shared ownership across all affordable housing providers in Hart.

As of January 2026, 642 households were registered with the district's largest affordable housing provider, and 589 on the Share to Buy database for the Hart area.

Income and Affordability

The Social and Affordable Rent Affordability Assessment AECOM report (October 2024) highlights the affordability issues:

- Average income of applicants on the housing register: £1,768 per month (£21,216 annually)
- Median income in Hart £39,342
- Southeast median: £40,508
- England median: £39,039



Hart residents have low levels of unemployment, with only 1.5% of people aged 16 to 64 claiming unemployment related benefits in 2024, but high housing costs means that many working people are still unable to afford to privately rent or buy in Hart.

Housing Register and Supply

As of December 2025, 1,473 households are on Hart's Housing Register:



- 729 need 1-bedroom homes
- 384 need 2-bedroom homes
- 276 need 3-bedroom homes
- 84 need 4/5-bedroom homes

Although there is a steady delivery of new affordable homes, demand far exceeds supply. Many households face long waits of many years on the housing waiting list and often live in overcrowded or costly private rentals in the meantime. These can be financially unsustainable over long periods of time. This is particularly acute for people waiting for 4/5-bedroom homes due to there being a limited supply of larger affordable homes and low turnover of this type of affordable housing.

Keyworker Housing

Hart District Council owns 41 flats which are managed by its Housing Company Butterwood Homes. These are rented to key workers through an estate agent at a below market rent. This is an innovative project which helps key workers find affordable housing in the district which they might not otherwise be able to afford to live in.

Empty Homes

Hart has 247 long-term empty properties (October 2025) and has successfully brought 2 back into use to date. The Empty Homes Strategy 2025-30 sets out how the Council aims to bring long-term empty homes back into use.

Homelessness

In 2024/25, the Housing Solutions Team supported 743 households at risk of homelessness, focusing on early intervention to prevent crisis situations.

Rough sleeping is monitored annually through a government snapshot count. Typically, only one rough sleeper is recorded, but this does not reflect the true number seen throughout the year. Hart operates a very proactive in-house outreach service, so any rough sleepers identified are brought in for assistance within hours of any report.



Links to other Council documents:

This strategy does not seek to repeat the priorities and actions contained within other key Council documents. Instead, it will link in with them to ensure that a comprehensive and thorough approach is applied. To read more please follow the relevant links for each document:



- Hart District Council Corporate Plan (2026 – 2031)
- The Hart Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-30
- Community Safety Partnership Plan 2025-6 ([Infographic and accessible version of the Safer North Hampshire Partnership Priorities 2025-26](#))
- The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy ([Hart District Council Homelessness and Rough Sleeping](#))
- The Empty Homes Strategy ([Tackling empty homes 2025-2030 | Hart District Council](#))
- The Local Plan ([Hart Local Plan \(Strategy and Sites\) 2032](#))
- Affordable Homes in New Developments Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (adopted 6 March 2025) [Affordable Homes in New Developments SPD](#)
- Viability Appraisals for new development Supplementary Planning Documents (adopted 2 November 2023) [Viability Appraisals for New Development SPD](#)
- Outcomes of the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge 2025 [LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Final Report](#)
- Hart Allocations Policy – ([Housing Allocations Policy May 2025](#))
- Tenancy Strategy [Harts Local Tenancy Strategy 2023 - 2028](#)
- Hart Climate Action Plan 2025 – 29 [How's the Council tackling climate change? | Hart District Council](#)

Local Government Re-organisation (LGR)

At the time of researching and writing this Strategy, all Councils in Hampshire are part of a government proposal to reorganise the structure of local government to streamline and reshape local authorities into unitary structures.

The details of this will not be known by the time this document is published but, as they are delivered, all the objectives and actions contained within this document may be influenced and shaped by the outcome of the LGR process.

LGR will offer new opportunities for Hart to collaborate with several different Councils and the County Council to improve and focus services that are spread across several Councils at present.

Devolution

Alongside LGR, the Government is seeking to create Mayoral Strategic Authorities. The devolution process and creation of a Hampshire mayor and strategic authority will also help to identify and steer important strategic aims such as improving transport and infrastructure across the County.

Strategy Objectives:

The Housing Strategy has 3 key objectives which are priorities for the Council. They are:

Objective 1: Optimising the supply of high-quality new affordable housing to meet local needs.

This means not only increasing the number of affordable homes but also ensuring they are of the right type, size and tenure, well-designed, energy-efficient, and built to last.

Objective 2: Making the best use of the private rented sector, and new and existing affordable housing.

This is to ensure that homes are of a good standard whether they are rented affordable homes or private rented. Homes should be adaptable to enable people to continue living in them as their needs change, and people living in social housing should be supported to live in homes that best suit their household's needs.

Objective 3: Working in partnerships to create sustainable, energy efficient affordable housing and healthier communities

This seeks to promote well-designed homes that cost less to run and are part of well-designed neighbourhoods that support health and well-being.

Hart District Council Corporate Plan 2026-31:

The Housing Strategy and other key strategic documents link directly into the Council's current and incoming Corporate Plan 2026-31 which has three priorities – People, Planet, Place. These reflect the Council's ambition to balance environmental responsibility, community well-being, and economic vitality.

People – Health, Skill and Opportunity: We will promote health, well-being and inclusion, ensuring that all residents have access to the skills, support and opportunities they need to thrive.

Planet – Climate Emergency & Protecting Our Environment: We will lead on looking after nature, cut carbon emissions, and take action on climate change to keep Hart green and healthy for the future.

Place – Infrastructure-Led Growth & the Local Plan: We will bring forward a new Local Plan that will seek to deliver the new homes required by the government, and shape vibrant, sustainable communities through investment in affordable housing, infrastructure, and local economic development, to create places where people want to live, work and visit.

Preparing for the new Northern Hampshire Authority: Make services transfer-ready; protect residents' and businesses' experience; and make sure we leave a lasting legacy to ensure there is strong continuity and benefits that endure well beyond the new Authority's vesting day on 1 April 2028.

This Housing Strategy will be a key part of helping the Council deliver its plan.

Objective 1: Optimising the supply of high-quality new affordable housing to meet local needs

Hart aims to support the provision of a range of affordable homes to meet different needs. This includes options like shared ownership to help people take their first step onto the property ladder, as well as rented affordable housing, especially lower cost, social rented homes, and homes for older people. Our planning policies and guidance are designed to support this, and it is a key priority for the Council. The Council will work with its partners to show how good quality, well designed and well managed affordable housing benefits many different groups in Hart.

Supported by Hart's Local Plan, a proportion of the new affordable homes must be designed and built to Building Regulations Part M4(2) standards with features that make them easier to adapt, so if people's needs change over time their homes can change with them. Additionally, the Housing Strategy, supported by Hart's Local Plan will strive to maximise the delivery of homes built to Building Regulations Part M4(3) which meets the needs of applicants requiring wheelchair accessible housing where needs are identified. To help with this, Hart has created a Wheelchair Accessible Guide to make sure new affordable homes meet high standards for wheelchair users.

In addition, Hart has many rural areas and small villages, and it is important to help Parish Councils and residents bring forward affordable housing to sustain village life and ensure that rural communities continue to thrive.

Priorities for action:

1. Work with partners e.g. Registered Providers to deliver new affordable housing of the design, size, type, and tenure to meet identified local needs.
2. Work with Parish, Town and the District Council to explore opportunities to develop new affordable homes on Council and Registered Provider owned land (yet to be identified).
3. Utilise housing capital reserves and funding opportunities to support the provision of affordable housing to meet residents' needs, e.g. larger homes, accessible homes and rural homes.
4. Support the delivery of Hart's Local Plan and the affordable housing policies, including promoting and supporting the delivery of Social Rent in accordance with the Affordable Homes in New Development Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).
5. Enable and support the delivery of Community-led housing and Rural Exception Sites (RES) across the district which take account of the wide range of needs for affordable housing including the rural community.
6. Ensure that affordable homes built to Building Regulations Part M4(2) adaptable and Part M4(3) wheelchair accessible homes are provided in accordance with planning policy on all eligible sites to help meet needs on the housing register and low-cost home ownership.
7. Actively seek to increase the delivery of larger homes for social rent e.g. 4 bed+ to meet needs on the housing register.
8. Utilise up to date housing needs data to support and enable the delivery of a wide range of affordable housing products to meet a range of housing needs identified in the district, including specialist accommodation for older and younger people.
9. Work with partners to research and understand the housing needs and preferences of older people to best meet their affordable housing needs.
10. Investigate opportunities to utilise public sector land to develop affordable housing to meet need.
11. Engage with the new local plan process, to help ensure a robust evidence base on local affordable housing need and to help shape effective up to date

planning policies going forward.

Objective 2: Making the best use of the private rented sector, and new and existing affordable housing

It is of real importance to Hart District Council that homes are safe and well-looked after by landlords, whether that's private landlords or affordable housing providers, and that residents are able to stay in their homes throughout the different stages in their lives, wherever that's reasonable. Homes should be good quality, a suitable size and flexible enough to adapt to changing needs.

We will also support people living in affordable homes for rent to move to a new home, where this would better meet their needs and provide financial and social benefits, and in turn this will help to make best use of limited affordable housing resources.

We will work with our partners to improve areas that need regeneration or enhancement and meet with the Council's aims and objectives to improve the areas for residents. The Council supports well-designed and enhanced areas to keep Hart a place to be proud to live.

Priorities for action:

1. Proactively bring empty properties back into use for local people in accordance with the actions in the Empty Homes Strategy, building on the success of bringing two long term empties back into use.
2. Support people to remain in their homes at all stages of their lives by delivering Disabled Facilities Grants to eligible people across all tenures.
3. Work with Registered Provider's and local communities to identify areas in the district with affordable housing that would benefit from regeneration, including exploring opportunities to remodel existing homes to meet housing needs.
4. Support the provision of services and accommodation to assist people experiencing domestic abuse.
5. Work with Registered Provider's to identify households who are under occupying their current home or who are living in adapted housing which they no longer have a need for, and where appropriate support them to move to more suitable accommodation to make better use of existing housing stock.
6. Ensure that there is a good supply of well-designed and maintained housing register properties to meet the needs of downsizers
7. Undertake a communications campaign to promote and increase public understanding about the range of housing options for older people.
8. Work with Hampshire County Council to support the provision of accommodation for residents with physical and/or learning needs.
9. Support the provision of good quality Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's) in the district by ensuring that all HMO's are inspected and licensed where required.
10. Offer training to Landlords around the Renters Rights Act 2025 and encourage landlords to work with the Council through the Rent Guarantee Scheme.
11. Develop closer links to the MOD and continue to promote housing options to armed forces families, personnel and people who have served in the armed forces.
12. Continue to support the provision of Keyworker Housing to meet identified local needs.
13. Work with Hampshire Fire and Rescue to monitor and improve housing standards.
14. Utilise the Occupational Therapist service to provide new accessible affordable housing and adapt existing homes to meet identified needs on the housing register.

Objective 3: Working in partnerships to create sustainable, energy efficient affordable housing and healthier communities

The links between health and housing conditions are well recognised and Hart District Council wants to make sure people have access to well-designed affordable homes and open spaces that help residents' health and wellbeing.

New affordable homes should be practical, ready for future changes in our climate, and built to save energy and money – especially for people on limited incomes.

Priorities for action:

1. Work with Hart's Planning team, Registered Providers and developers to support the design and delivery of new affordable housing schemes which provide quality green spaces, provide a sense of place and support biodiversity.
2. Investigate setting up a biodiversity grant scheme to encourage Registered Providers and residents of new and existing affordable housing sites to enhance the levels of biodiversity and green spaces where they live.
3. Support affordable housing providers to improve the energy efficiency and cost-effectiveness of new and existing affordable housing stock in the district.
4. Work with Hart's Planning team, Registered Providers and developers to support the design and delivery of new affordable housing schemes which provide homes that are future proofed to deal with climate change and support health and wellbeing.
5. Work with Hart's Planning team, Registered Providers and developers to support the design and delivery of new affordable housing schemes which include energy efficiency features to create cost-effective homes for residents.
6. Ensure the provision of good quality private rented and rented affordable accommodation which is energy efficient and free of hazards, especially damp and mould.
7. Work with Hart's Climate Change team and Registered Providers to raise awareness of resident eligibility for energy efficiency schemes.
8. Work with Hart's Planning team, Registered Providers and developers to support the design and delivery of new affordable housing schemes which encourage mixed and balanced communities. Such as designing spaces to support community interaction and health and wellbeing.
9. Work with the Police, Registered Providers and Hart's Community Safety and Planning Teams to support the design and delivery of new affordable housing schemes which include crime prevention features, safe walking routes and foster safe, inclusive and connected neighbourhoods.
10. Monitor resident satisfaction with new affordable housing to help inform future developments.

Resourcing and Delivery:

The actions and objectives stated in this strategy will be delivered across several teams within the Communities Service including Housing Strategy and Development, Private Sector Housing, Community Safety, Housing Solutions, Community Projects and Partnerships and other services at Hart District Council including Planning and Climate Change.

Hart also works very closely with a wide variety of partner organisations including Registered Providers', developers, other Local Authorities, Hampshire County Council, charities and Parish and Town Councils and it is through this joint working and additional resources that we can deliver services and improvements for our residents in an efficient and timely manner.

The actions and objectives may be delivered using a variety of funding sources including, Government grants, bids to other organisations for specific grants and funding, Hampshire County Council funding, utilising capital and revenue funds that the Council has access to as well as utilising existing staff resources.

Consultation:

Hart District Council wants to make sure this strategy reflects the needs and views of residents and stakeholders. To do this, we gathered feedback through online surveys with staff, Councillors and stakeholders, as well as a well-attended and informative workshop event.

From this consultation, the top three actions for each objective were chosen by participants. We have set out to include as many of the ideas as possible – such as downsizing, engaging with communities to promote affordable housing and biodiversity, and providing specialist housing for specific needs. Whilst we could not create a separate action for every suggestion, many of the priorities for action have a broad scope and links that cover the additional points raised.

As Local Government Reorganisation moves forward, new opportunities may arise for Hart to work with other organisations on wider issues that affect housing and communities but are currently outside our direct responsibility – for example, public transport.

Monitoring and Review:

Progress to deliver the actions contained in this strategy will be monitored by the Communities Service Managers on a quarterly basis, with many actions forming part of the Communities Service Plan. As relevant specific Housing Strategy projects and actions come forward, they will be added to the Communities Service Plan to be monitored through the Service Panel process.

An annual summary of progress on the actions will be produced and reviewed by the Strategy and Development Manager in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities.

Contact Us:

If you would like more information about this Housing Strategy and its aims and objectives, please contact:

The Housing Strategy and Development Team:

housing@hart.gov.uk Or telephone: 01252 774420

If you need this information in an alternative format, in large print or braille please contact the Council. Thank you.

Glossary

Affordable Housing - Housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market, including social rent, other affordable housing for rent, discounted market sales housing and other affordable routes to home ownership listed in the NPPF Annex 2.

Affordable Housing Providers –Are organisations that develop and manage affordable housing and are often referred to as Registered providers, Housing Associations or Registered Social Landlords.

Affordable Rent – Is a type of rent charged for a rented affordable home which is set at least 20% below the market rent level for an equivalent property.

Corporate Plan – Describes the Council’s objectives and aims and how it intends to achieve these

CSP – Community Safety Partnership

Devolution – Local Government devolution is the transfer of powers and funding from national to local government.

DFG – Disabled Facilities Grant, a grant to assist with the cost of adapting the home to meet the needs of an occupant with a disability

Empty Homes Strategy – Explores the issue of empty residential properties in the district and plans how to reduce this number.

Hart Health and Wellbeing Plan – Identifies priorities for health and wellbeing and how to bring about improvements

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy – Identifies key issues that bring about homelessness and how to address these

Keyworker housing – Accommodation that is specifically allocated for people who are considered to be key workers (such as those who work in health, police and fire and rescue sectors or other public service roles).

LGA – Local Government Association

LCHO – Low-Cost Home Ownership, including shared ownership and other forms of intermediate housing to buy

Long Term Empty Property - These are generally properties that have been unoccupied for a continuous period of at least one year.

HMO - House in Multiple Occupation – a building which more than one household lives in and shares amenities

LGR – Local Government Reorganisation – The process in which the structure and responsibilities of local authorities are reconfigured

Local Plan – A plan for the future development of a local area, drawn up by the local planning authority in consultation with the community.

M4(2) and M4(3) housing – Building Regulations requirements for accessible or adaptable dwellings

MOD – Ministry of Defence

Occupational Therapist – A role which helps people of all ages overcome challenges in completing everyday tasks or activities through making improvements to the person’s housing.

Registered Providers – An organisation that is registered with the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) and which develops and owns affordable housing. This includes “For Profit” or “Not for Profit” organisations.

Renters’ Rights Act 2025 – Legislation introduced to improve the security and stability for people who rent their home, including increased rights relating to eviction and increasing rents, and removing barriers to accessing a home for those on benefits or who have children or pets.

Rough Sleeper Count – An estimation of the number of people sleeping rough within a local authority area which is reported to the Government.

Rural Exception Site (RES) – Small sites located on the edge of existing rural settlements, developed for people with a local connection to the parish

Service Plan – Describes how each directorate is working towards the delivery of the Council’s goals.

Social Rent – Is a type of rent charged for a rented affordable home which is set in line with the Government’s rent formula and is below the Affordable Rent rate for an equivalent property.

Sofa Surfing – Means someone has nowhere to live and they move between different family or friends.

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) – A document which provides detailed advice or guidance related to policies in the Council’s adopted Local Plan.

Stakeholder – Any people or groups who are positively or negatively impacted by a project, initiative, policy or organization.

