

# Housing Asset Management Strategy

2022-2027

Thurrock Council

DRAFT

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## Introduction

Thurrock Council's Housing Asset Management Strategy 2022-2027 sets out the strategic principles to be applied for all future housing asset investment decisions. It provides a framework to be applied when considering future options for investment in the housing assets, ensuring that they continue to offer quality and affordable homes for current and future residents, optimising generated income to achieve the best value for residents.

The strategy demonstrates how the council's housing portfolio will meet its priorities and sets the strategic direction for those involved in the day-to-day management of the stock and future housing asset investment decisions. The housing service manages circa 10,000 council homes, including approximately 900 leasehold properties. The council has made a significant investment in its stock through the Transforming Homes programme and is committed to efficiently managing, maintaining, and investing in these homes.

This strategy aligns with the council's corporate values, the Housing Strategy 2022-2027 and the national policy context. It works alongside the HRA business plan in identifying the levels and timing of investment required to ensure the asset is maintained appropriately.

This strategy provides guiding principles that allow the council to maintain and enhance its housing stock in both the short-term and the future. It ensures the council works transparently, keeping residents engaged throughout the processes and fosters a sense of joint ownership.

Effective maintenance is essential to ensure council properties continue to meet housing needs and remain sustainable. A reactive maintenance policy supports this strategy, alongside a fit to let standard, health and safety procedures, a fire safety policy, and a suite of investment and development programmes. These ensure that the council manages its housing assets to meet the needs of residents and meets all regulatory requirements.

This strategy also recognises that further investment may not represent the best value for some assets or meet the community's future needs. Buildings in this category would undergo an asset review process that fully considers resident views. This full appraisal of the different options will inform the most appropriate decision for the future of the asset.

The council's strategic ambition is to ensure the delivery of good homes in well-connected neighbourhoods. The council seeks to invest in its assets and the local environment, creating places that support and promote the health, happiness and wellbeing of residents in the borough.

This strategy presents approaches to improve the council's housing stock by working with residents to invest in areas that will deliver the best outcomes and build pride in well maintained and improved homes.

The resident's voice is a crucial factor when delivering improvements. Communication and engagement will ensure the council works together with residents and delivery partners to refine the home improvement approach via retrofit. Through continued engagement and listening to feedback, the council aims to achieve high resident satisfaction with their home.

New and emerging legislation around building safety, decent home standards and the net-zero carbon agenda, in conjunction with an ageing stock, place significant financial pressures on the Housing Revenue Account. It is acknowledged that the council will need to explore external funding and continue to lobby central government for additional financial support to enable it to deliver this strategy.

## Corporate Context

Thurrock Council's vision and corporate priorities, adopted in January 2018, underpin this Housing Asset Management Strategy. The council's vision is for Thurrock to be **an ambitious and collaborative community which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future.**

Sitting alongside the vision are the three corporate priorities of People, Place and Prosperity.

**People** – a borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay.

This means:

- high quality, consistent and accessible public services which are right first time
- build on our partnerships with statutory, community, voluntary and faith groups to work together to improve health and wellbeing
- communities are empowered to make choices and be safer and stronger together

Delivering high-quality housing across all tenures is central to ensuring positive health and wellbeing outcomes for residents. The council will ensure that services represent value for money, going over and above statutory duties, with high levels of customer satisfaction.

**Place** – a heritage-rich borough which is ambitious for its future.

This means:

- roads, houses and public spaces that connect people and places
- clean environments that everyone has reason to take pride in
- fewer public buildings with better services

This strategy supports the corporate aims by ensuring the council's properties provide well-maintained quality homes suitable for residents' needs and in which they are proud to live.

In October 2019, the council passed a motion to declare a climate emergency and take urgent action to reduce its carbon emissions to net-zero by 2030. This strategy supports the decarbonisation agenda while improving the overall energy efficiency of the assets, ensuring the homes provide affordable thermal comfort.

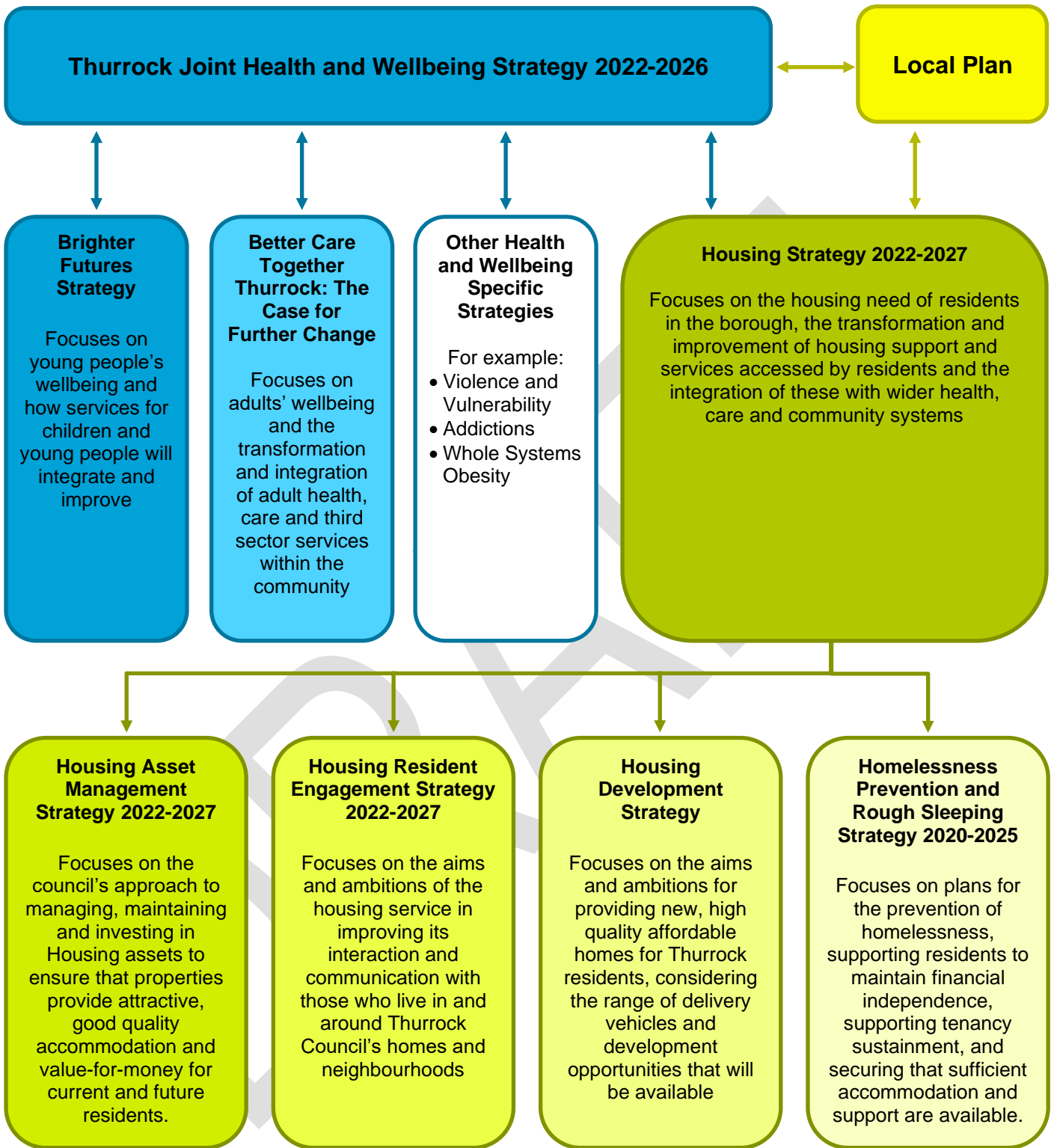
**Prosperity** – a borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations.

This means:

- attractive opportunities for businesses and investors to enhance the local economy
- vocational and academic education, skills and job opportunities for all
- commercial, entrepreneurial and connected public services

The strategy supports the local economy with employment and training opportunities and the additional community benefits secured through contracting partnerships as social value.

# Strategic Context



## **Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2026**

The Thurrock Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2026 is the highest-level strategic document that describes our collective plans to improve the health and wellbeing of residents. The theme of the strategy is *Levelling the Playing Field*, and the strategy sets out high level actions to address health inequalities across six domains.

- Healthier for Longer including mental health
- Building Strong and Cohesive Communities
- Person Led Health and Care
- Opportunity For All
- Housing and the Environment
- Community Safety

As housing and the environment features as a domain of health inequality in the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, there is a strong link with the aims and objectives of this Housing Strategy. Both documents will drive forward positive improvements for the health and wellbeing of Thurrock residents.

The local plan sets a vision and framework for the future development of Thurrock, drawn up by the local planning authority with wider engagement and consultation with the community.

### **Better Care Together Thurrock: The Case for Further Change**

The *Case for Further Change* strategy sets out a collective plan to transform, improve and integrate health, care and third sector services aimed at the borough's adults and older people to improve their wellbeing. It looks at specialist housing specifically designed for older adults, promoting independence by improving housing choices and provision for older people today.

### **Local Plan**

The local plan addresses many issues affecting local people. There are policies that cover development issues in relation to education, health, community safety and sustainable development. It also contains policies on more traditional, but important, planning activity such as housing, employment, leisure and sport, natural and historic environment, and community facilities.

The local plan supports the practicalities of providing new homes, through the identification for sites and areas where development is permitted and the creation of planning policy that meets priorities in the borough. The Housing Asset Management Strategy will feed into the development of the new local plan, ensuring alignment.

# Housing Vision and Principles

## Housing Vision

**Every Thurrock resident will have access to a safe, secure, suitable, and affordable home that meets their needs and aspirations, serving as a foundation to support their health and wellbeing.**

**Residents will be supported at home and in their local area through connected services, neighbourhoods, localities, and communities to achieve their vision of a 'good life'.**

Housing and health are intrinsically linked. Access to a safe, secure, stable, warm, and affordable home will provide people with a solid foundation upon which they can better protect their health and support their wellbeing.

A safe home can mean many things, such as being hazard free, or maintained in line with compliancy measures such as gas servicing and electrical testing. A safe home goes beyond physical maintenance and bricks and mortar; it can also relate to a resident's perception of safety in their home and in the neighbourhood or estate in which it is located.

A secure home can refer to the security of tenure, giving residents peace of mind and stability by having that solid foundation to build their vision of a good life, or it can again be considered in line with the perception of safety within the home from any outside harms.

The factors that determine a suitable home are wide ranging and tailored to the housing needs of each household.

The definition for an affordable home is also aligned with the specific needs and commitments of every household. Affordability of home is linked with many wider consequences, such as fuel poverty and impacts on physical and mental wellbeing.

The vision for the Housing Strategy 2022-2027 is aligned with the aims of Domain 5 – Housing and the Environment within the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2026, outlined below:

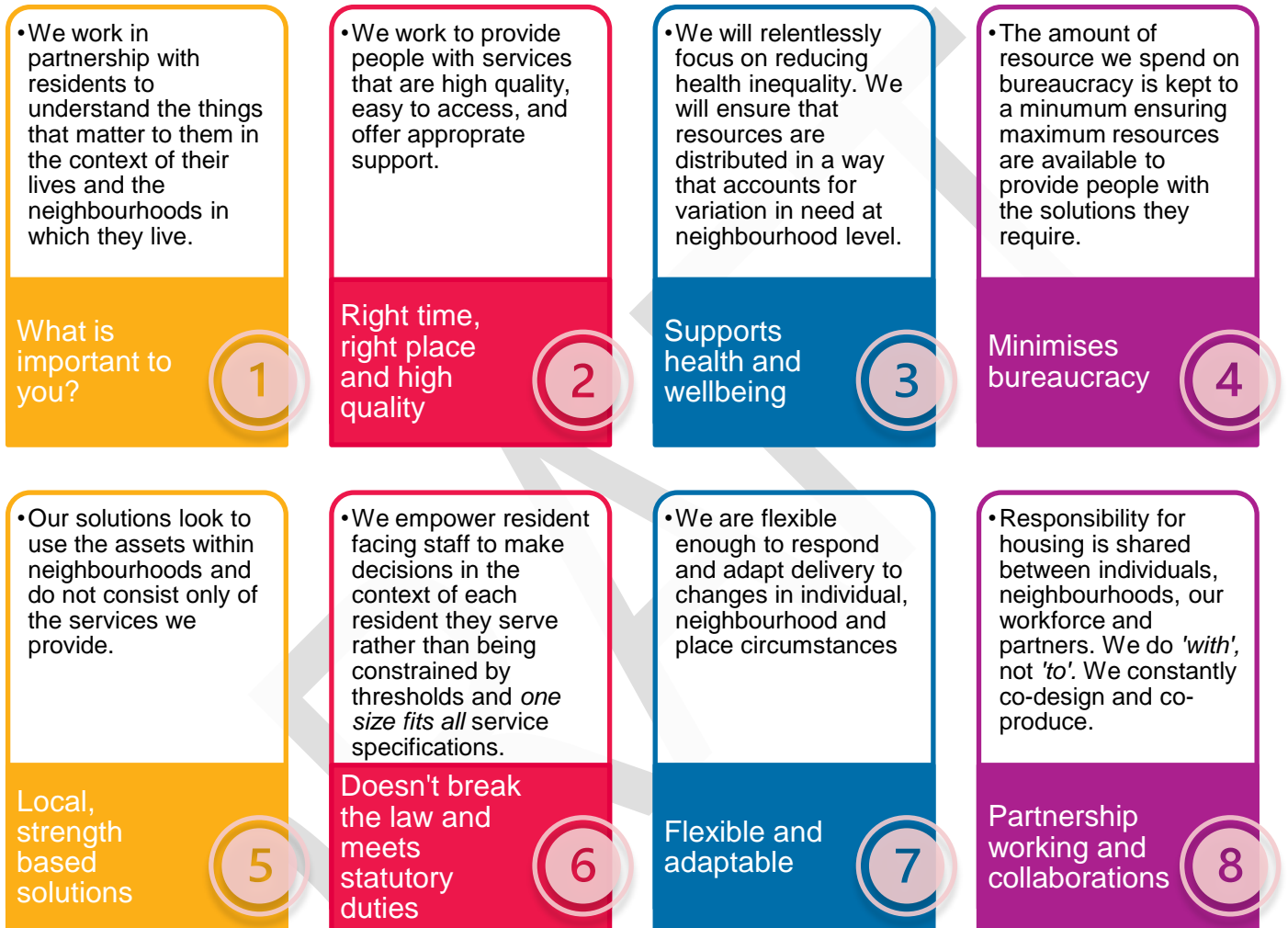
**Fewer people will be at risk of homelessness, and everyone will have access to high quality affordable homes that meet the needs of Thurrock residents.**

**Homes and places in Thurrock will provide environments where everyone feels safe, healthy, connected, and proud.**

## Housing Core Principles

The Housing Asset Management Strategy 2022-2027 sets out the strategic principles to be applied for all future housing asset investment decisions.

It works in support of the Housing Strategy 2022-2027 that set the basis for a new way of working for housing support and services in Thurrock. These strategies and the new way of working follow the below eight principles:





## Legislation and Regulation

The Housing sector continues to see significant changes to the regulatory framework that sets the standard for resident and building safety. The tragic event at the Grenfell Tower shook public trust and placed a spotlight on how the housing sector and construction industry operates; the investigations that followed revealed significant failings across the industries.

This led to the fundamental changes introduced through the social housing white paper, *A Charter for Social Housing Residents*.<sup>1</sup> These documents aim to place residents back at the heart of building safety and deliver changes to ensure that every social housing resident is safe in their home.

The publication of the draft Building Safety Bill<sup>2</sup> in July 2020 has set the parameters of what owning and managing residential buildings will look like in the future.

The underlying aim of the new legislation is to create a new era of accountability within the industry and to set clear roles and responsibilities for managing building safety in relation to fire and structural safety.

The government has produced a Fire Safety Bill, which became the Fire Safety Act 2021 and passed into law on 29 April 2021. The act supports the government's implementation of the specific recommendations arising from the Grenfell Enquiry Phase 1.

These documents supplement the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, and the council must maintain policies and procedures to ensure compliance with these. A key underlying principle in this area is competence. Therefore, the council must ensure that through the delivery of all works, its staff and external delivery partners have the necessary skill, knowledge and experience to undertake the work they are involved in.

The council has always aimed to ensure safe environments for its residents and will work to achieve full compliance with the Building Safety Bill

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<sup>1</sup> The social housing white paper, *A Charter for Social Housing Residents*, can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-charter-for-social-housing-residents-social-housing-white-paper/the-charter-for-social-housing-residents-social-housing-white-paper>

<sup>2</sup> A copy of this document can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/draft-building-safety-bill>.

## Local Context

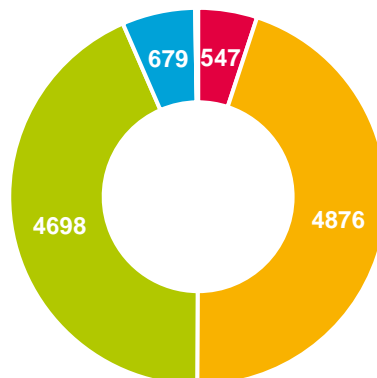
### Current stock

The council owns around 10,000 homes, which includes over 1,000 sheltered housing properties across the borough. Half of the council's general needs properties are three-bedroom homes, and the remaining majority comprise one and two-bedroom flats. The tables below show a more detailed breakdown of stock by archetype.

### Housing stock by archetype

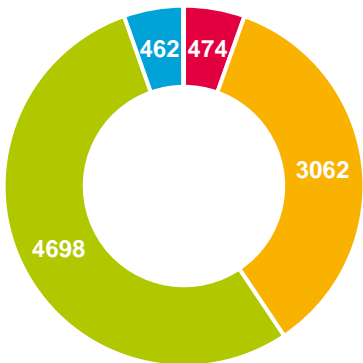
Property Type	0 bed	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	5 bed	6 bed	Total
<b>Bungalow</b>	56	446	22	22	1	0	0	547
<b>Flat</b>	439	2615	1567	255	0	0	0	4876
<b>House</b>	0	22	818	3608	237	10	3	4698
<b>Maisonette</b>	107	0	89	478	5	0	0	679
<b>HMO Rooms</b>	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	8
<b>Total</b>	602	3091	2496	4363	238	10	3	10808
<b>Leasehold</b>	344	226	175	147	0	0	0	892
<b>Travellers site pitches</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	64

Main Housing Stock by Archetype



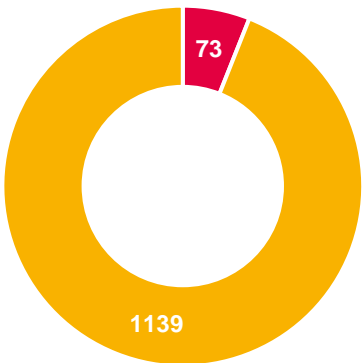
■ Bungalow ■ Flat ■ House ■ Maisonette

### General Needs Housing



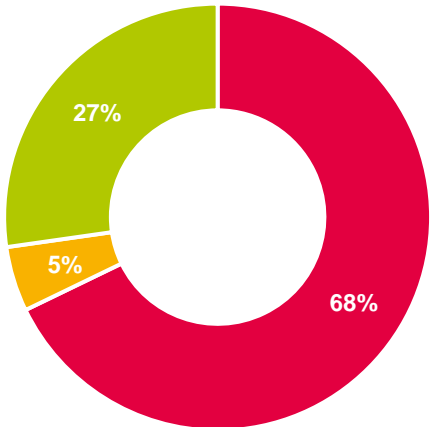
■ Bungalow ■ Flat (inc 55+) ■ House ■ Maisonette

### Sheltered Housing Stock



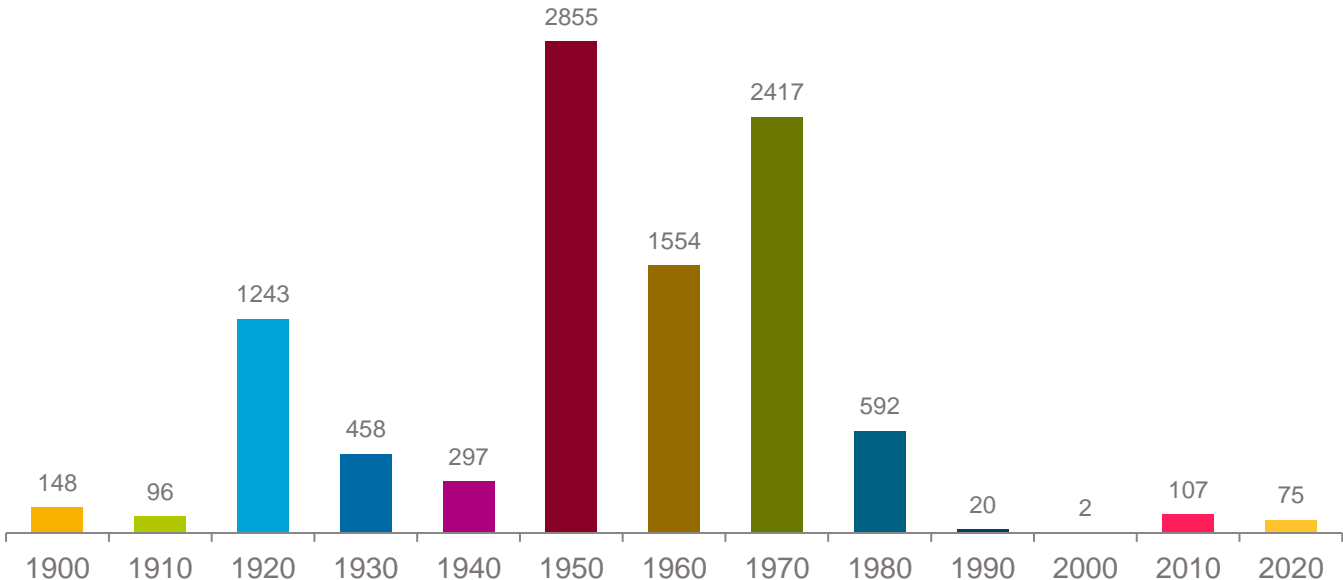
■ Bungalow ■ Flat

### General Needs Flatted Accommodation

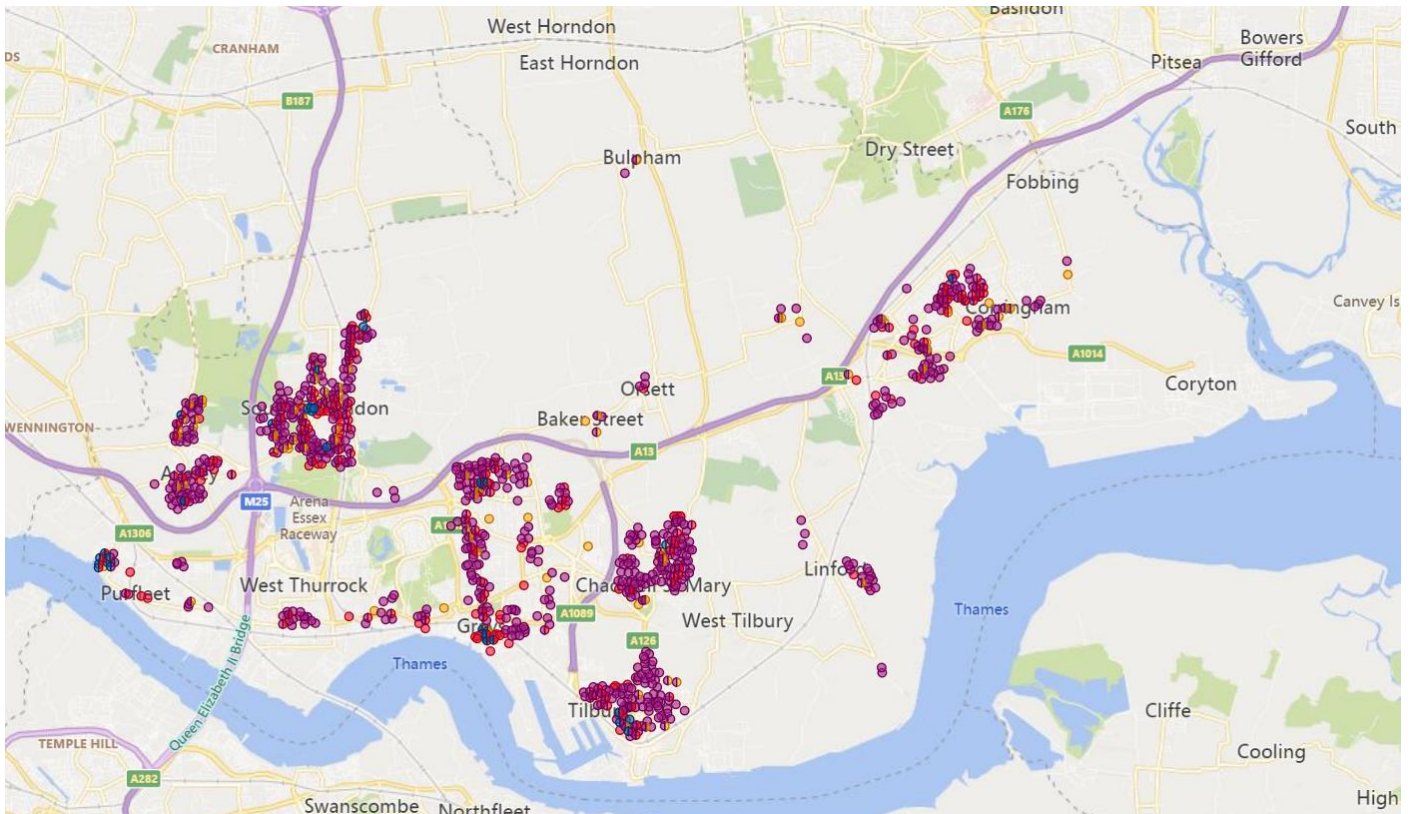


■ low rise: 1 - 3 storeys ■ medium rise: 4 - 5 storeys ■ high rise: 6 storeys and above

### Property Age Bands



## Location of housing stock in Thurrock



## Stock Condition

One of the most critical aspects of active asset management is maintaining accurate records of the stock's condition, attributes and performance. To ensure the integrity of the stock data, the council aims to undertake condition surveys of a percentage of the stock every 3 to 5 years.

The council maintains this critical information on an asset management database that records all property attributes, anticipated lifespan and energy performance. This information will be recorded using new software in 2022 that will support ongoing compliance monitoring with a central record of all servicing and certification.

The majority of the current asset data has been informed by a condition survey undertaken in 2017, when the council undertook 3223 surveys.

These surveys covered internal and external elements of the buildings, communal areas, parking areas, garages, outbuildings and recreational areas on housing owned land and provided an overall energy assessment of the properties.

Overall, the condition survey demonstrated that the stock was in a generally fair to good condition, this being the case with 70% of the properties. Specific themes emerged, noting that the elements that required prioritisation primarily concerned property exteriors.

The 2017 survey identified an optimum level of financial investment in the stock over a 30-year period which exceeded the amount of capital expenditure factored into the HRA Business Plan, with significant investment required in non-residential assets such as garages.

Since 2017 capital works totalling over £46m have been made in the residential stock to address the priorities identified. The Transforming Homes programme, completed internal improvement

targets in 2019 and moved on to prioritising the external refurbishment, including the replacement of any remaining single glazing. Between 2019/20 to 2020/21, 732 properties have benefitted from external refurbishment and double-glazed window replacement, including street properties and 90 blocks of flats.

A further stock condition survey targeting 30% of the stock started the winter months of 2021/22. The aim being to update overall stock condition data rather than diagnose specific repairs and defects, which the council would be made aware of through day-to-day reporting processes. The survey has targeted the winter months to accurately picture any properties suffering from seasonal damp or mould problems. This survey will further inform the investment programmes over the next 5-30 years.

### Non-traditional build properties

Within the Thurrock housing stock, the council have 418 non-traditionally constructed properties, all of which are tenanted family-sized homes.

The term non-traditional generally refers to prefabricated building systems, frames and construction methods known as Prefabricated Reinforced Concrete (PRC) properties. These properties are designated defective within the meaning of the Housing Defects Act 1984,<sup>3</sup> now part of the Housing Act 1985.<sup>4</sup> They have the potential for corrosion of embedded steel reinforcements and are generally considered by lending institutions not suitable for mortgage.

These properties require significant investment to bring them up to today's standards and continue to provide suitable homes for residents. In 2019/2020, the council reviewed all the housing owned PRC properties. Some properties and locations presented options for improved housing through redevelopment. However, this approach is not possible in the majority of sites. A prioritised investment programme is in place to refurbish properties where redevelopment is not an option.

In addition, the council owns properties on the Flowers estate in South Ockendon of a construction type known as 'Lecaplan'. These properties were constructed in the late 1960s and replaced the earlier PRC properties built initially. Although these properties are still of non-traditional construction, they are not designated defective and, as such, are considered mortgageable by most lenders. Many of the original council homes on this estate have been purchased by former tenants under the Right to Buy. The council, however, still owns over 180 of these properties.

Property Type	Total
<b>PRC Design designated defective</b>	234
<b>Lecaplan</b>	184
<b>Total non-traditional council owned properties</b>	418

<sup>3</sup> <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/acts/housing-defects-act-1984>

<sup>4</sup> <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/acts/housing-act-1985>

## **Housing Development**

The strategic need for units by size, type and tenure (such as shared ownership) is driven by the Housing Strategy with regard to the levels of the existing supply of unit types and demand from those eligible under the council's housing allocations scheme.

The council have established a target to construct up to 500 new council homes between 2019 and 2029. Ninety-three have been completed, with a further 35 new homes under construction and an established pipeline of new sites.

These new homes will arise from a range of opportunities. They could be delivered directly by the council or in partnership with other developers across the housing sector. The produced asset must meet high design and construction standards consistent with the council's need to maintain stock condition, be affordable to build and live in, meet modern standards, and achieve residents' aspirations.

The following objectives guide the development programme:

- To develop good quality, well-designed and sustainable homes that contribute to placemaking
- Build homes that meet borough-wide needs and are affordable to live in
- Take a planned approach to development opportunities that provide value for money whilst maximising supply within targets.
- Use procurement practices that support local business, provide good value and encourage social value outcomes.
- Adopt a range of delivery routes that encompass direct delivery alongside working with the private sector.

## **Sheltered Housing**

Thurrock Council has 1212 sheltered housing properties, which are a mix of low-rise flats and bungalows. These properties all have adapted bathrooms for improved accessibility. A recent programme has also improved the accessibility to the communal entrances of the blocks.

Some complexes and properties are more difficult to adapt to meet the modern standards of accessibility. Where this is the case, these properties will be subject to a full review and are considered for possible decommissioning from sheltered status. This review considers the viability of improvements to bring the stock up to the necessary standards and the availability of alternative suitable sheltered properties in the area. If a decision is taken to decommission, all existing residents are offered more suitable alternative accommodation.

## **Garages and Garage Sites**

Thurrock Council holds a stock of 2275 garages and 290 garage plots located across the borough. The garages are brick or concrete purpose-built structures located in many settings varying from standalone blocks in large sites to small, isolated buildings on small sections of land to garages located under townhouses and blocks of flats.

The overall garage portfolio is in a "fair" condition. It would require a significant level of investment if the council is to maintain and improve all of these assets in the coming years.

The council has been reviewing long term regeneration and development opportunities across the garage stock and plans to undertake a refreshed stock condition survey of the garage portfolio. This survey will include a structural appraisal and allow the council to ensure that the garage portfolio is being maintained appropriately to ensure that these assets are safe and secure. Additionally, it will inform a longer-term investment and management strategy to identify the appropriate level of long-term investment and potentially identify garage sites that can be considered for other uses that would better serve the community and the wider borough.

The aim is to identify under-utilised or uneconomical garage and plot sites which have the potential to be converted into new housing developments.

### **Connectivity**

A number of the council's housing assets have mobile / satellite infrastructure on the rooftops that are owned, maintained and operated by various national and international mobile network providers. A number of individual wayleave agreements cover this infrastructure, and the council must continue to manage these agreements and consider them when managing and maintaining the portfolio.

This strategy supports the council's digital connectivity agenda. The housing service will continue to work with external organisations to build the connectivity network around Thurrock for the betterment of all residents in Thurrock in relation to digital networks.

The housing department also supports the potential development and delivery of an IoT wireless network around the Thurrock borough. A network of this type would facilitate and support smart infrastructure in residents' homes and Council assets that can improve safety and living conditions.

## Resident Engagement

The council's Housing Resident Engagement Strategy 2022 – 2027 sets out the council's plans over three years, focusing on the council's customers and committing to developing greater opportunities for resident involvement and feedback

This strategy enforces the council's commitment to a partnership with tenants, leaseholders and the local communities, especially within the Housing sector. It sets out how the council will work with tenants and leaseholders to comply with the regulatory framework and effectively prioritise council services. The strategy applies to current and future tenants and leaseholders and the people in the local communities to whom the council provides a service.

The asset management strategy supports this commitment and seeks to foster a sense of joint ownership through the continuous engagement of residents in the ongoing management of their homes. The methods of engagement are continually evolving and adapting to the needs of local communities. Current examples of engagement in asset management are:

- a panel of trained residents assist in the procurement of all asset management works and services contracts
- residents are engaged in the monitoring of major contracts
- a team of trained residents monitor the 'fit to let' standard of properties through void inspections
- all leaseholders are engaged ahead of any major investment works for their properties
- resident engagement sessions are held ahead of any major improvement projects
- colour and finish choices for major products such as kitchens, worktops, flooring or wall finishes are chosen by the Excellence Panel

Engaging residents in the requirements of their Tenancy Conditions is also an important priority to ensure resources address lifecycle replacement appropriately and are not diverted to tackle avoidable property damage or rectify unauthorised alterations.

During the consultation on this Asset Management Strategy, several themes emerged from residents, and these have been taken into consideration in forming this overall strategy. The key points raised were:

- Improved insulation and energy efficiency measures of council homes
- Consideration of electrical charging for vehicles
- Provision of homes that can accommodate modern living needs
- Homes that can be adapted for changing needs
- Improved outside communal areas

### Engagement with Leaseholders

The housing portfolio includes over 900 leasehold properties. There are statutory requirements concerning the engagement of leaseholders and local aims to actively engage leaseholders in the ongoing management of the buildings in which they own properties. The council must charge leaseholders for the relevant portion of costs for capital works to their buildings, as set out in the terms of their lease.



Considering the impact of these costs, the council has put in place a number of payment options for leaseholders, with enhanced options for resident leaseholders.

In line with the Leasehold Reform Act 2002, the council will ensure the following:

- provide leaseholders with up-to-date information on investment plans before they purchase a property
- ensure Section 20 notices are issued on time and accompanied by frequently asked questions
- offer all leaseholders who are affected by major works costs the opportunity for individual appointments to discuss the planned works and individual payment options
- monitor the satisfaction of leaseholders with the works undertaken

### Resident Satisfaction

Satisfaction surveys undertaken on behalf of the Housing service are conducted following HouseMark STAR methodology where possible, which is the leading satisfaction framework for the UK Housing sector.

The data used to measure satisfaction is collected on the council's behalf over the telephone with residents by a third-party independent research contractor that specialises in conducting satisfaction surveys for the Housing sector.

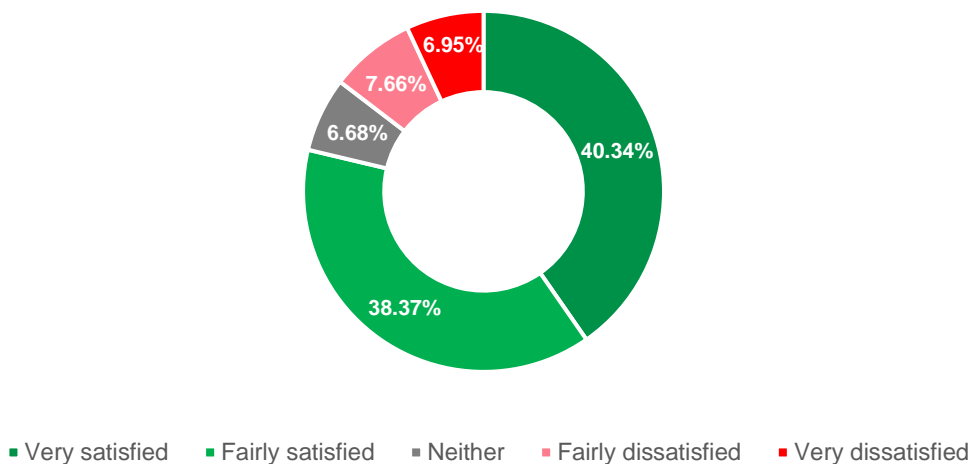
Both quantitative data in the form of ratings and qualitative data in free-text feedback are collected.

Satisfaction rates are calculated using the combined numbers of “very satisfied” or “excellent” and “fairly satisfied” or “good” ratings only.

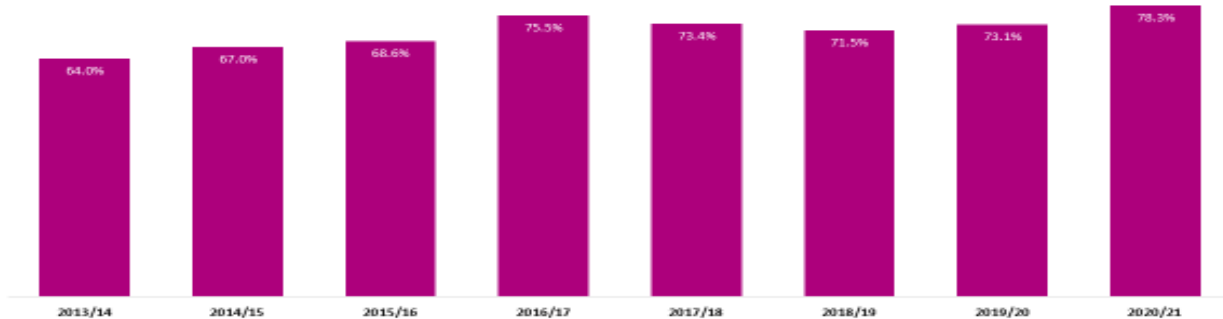
### Tenant Satisfaction with Quality of Home

The data produced in 2020/2021 shows that over 78% of current Housing tenants are satisfied with the quality of their homes. Compared to previous years in the second chart, this shows an improvement in overall satisfaction.

Satisfaction With Quality Of Home



**Tenant Satisfaction**  
**Quality of their Home**  
 Comparison With Previous Years



For the year 2020/21, satisfaction was above 75% on all measures relating to the management of the building services. Themes from this feedback have been fully considered in forming this strategy alongside the feedback received from consultation with the Tenant Excellence Panel and the wider Housing Strategy consultation exercise.

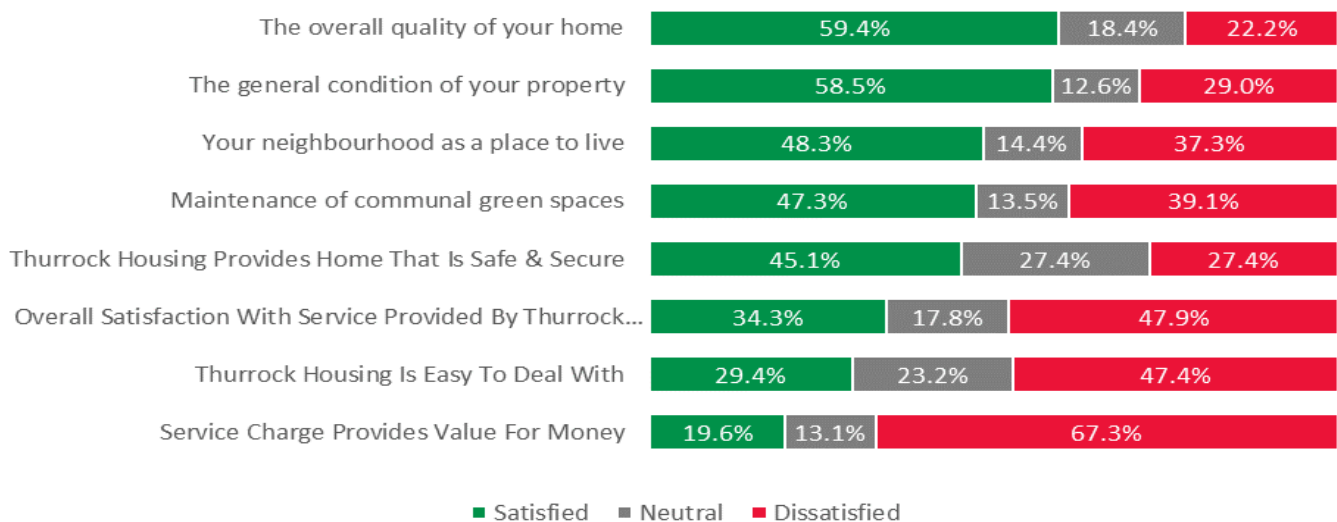
**Leaseholder Satisfaction**

Leaseholders are responsible for all repairs and maintenance within their properties, but the council are responsible for the management and maintenance of the external and communal aspects of the buildings.

Between July and October 2020, the housing service commissioned its satisfaction survey provider to facilitate a complete postal leaseholder satisfaction survey.

The survey indicated that leaseholders are less satisfied than tenants with the current service. All feedback from surveys, complaints and councillor enquiries is carefully analysed to identify learning and improvements in the delivery of these services with the aim of continuous improvement.

Satisfaction With Housing and Services



## Housing Asset Management Strategy Aims and Objectives

This Strategy sets out the strategic principles to be applied for all future housing asset investment decisions.

It provides a framework to be applied when considering future options for investment in the housing assets, ensuring that they continue to offer quality and affordable homes for current and future residents.

The strategy demonstrates how the council's housing portfolio will meet its priorities and sets the strategic direction for those involved in the day-to-day management of the stock and future housing asset investment decisions.

It responds to both the national and corporate priorities, and the feedback from our residents as set out above. Three core aims will ensure the properties continue to offer good quality homes for current and future residents at an affordable cost.



## **Deliver High-Quality Homes**

We want our homes and estates to be places where residents enjoy living and working, where they take pride in their homes and can enjoy being part of a thriving community. We aim to provide high-quality accommodation that demonstrates the benefits of our repairs and capital investment programmes and positively influences the health and wellbeing of our tenants and residents.

### **Procurement and Social Value**

Ensuring value for money is fundamental to delivering an Asset Management service and the procurement of asset management third party contracts, ensuring that there is always a consistent quality service. We will always consider a range of options to identify the most appropriate procurement and partnership arrangements considering cost certainty, quality and added value to the community, such as local employment, apprenticeships, training opportunities, and community grants and sponsorship.

We will adopt an outcome-based approach focused on the whole life value, performance, and cost to promote a shared focus on outcomes rather than scope, enabling innovation and driving continuous improvement.

We will develop long term plans for key asset programmes to drive greater value and, where applicable, pursue longer-term contract arrangements that make it economically viable for contractors to invest in new technologies and deliver improved products and efficiency savings and managed risk.

Social value maximises the benefits of public procurement by encouraging positive outcomes for the local communities. Every tender brief will include a clearly defined specification of social value expectations and required outcomes for local community commitments. These commitments will become part of the key contractual performance measures monitored through contract governance. All contractual Key Performance Indicators will be proportionate to the size and complexity of the project or programme.

### **Use of Smart Technology**

The council will explore the use of smart environmental sensors to remotely monitor the temperature and humidity conditions of properties. This would enable the proactive identification of the need for remedial repairs. This will be considered where it can demonstrate efficiencies and improved service to residents.

### **Day to Day Repairs and Maintenance**

The council will ensure the provision of effective and responsive day to day repairs and maintenance services that keep our properties in good repair while achieving high levels of resident satisfaction. The council's day to day housing repairs service is delivered through third-party contracts that deliver a responsive repairs service to all housing tenants in line with government and locally set standards and timeframes as set out in the Housing Repairs Policy.<sup>5</sup>

### **Resident Safety**

The council will maintain a compliance regime that guarantees residents that their homes are well managed and meet all the required safety standards. This is provided through periodic risk

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/sites/default/files/assets/documents/housing-repairs-policy-v01.pdf>.

assessments and inspection and maintenance programmes. These work programmes are delivered through specialist third party contracts and apply to domestic and commercial gas supplies, passenger lifts, asbestos management, water hygiene, electrical supplies, fire safety systems, portable appliances and all other specialist plant and equipment.

We will ensure full compliance with the Building Safety Bill and the implementation of recommendations made from the Grenfell enquiry. This is in line with the Charter for Social Housing Residents, as set out in the Housing White Paper.

The council are committed to achieving 100% compliance with all applicable safety standards.

### **Fire Safety**

The housing department maintains a fire safety policy that reflects the required approach to ensure that the council provide safe and secure housing. As noted previously within this document, the building and fire safety landscape has seen the biggest change in the last decade. The council must adapt appropriately to meet the requirements of the most recent and forthcoming regulations.

The Fire Safety Act 2021, the RRFSA 2005 and the Building Safety Bill place a specific legal duty on building owners. In 2021 the housing department created Building Safety Manager roles in readiness for these pending changes. This has allowed the council to compile building safety cases for "in scope" buildings with the housing portfolio. This new regulatory framework will also give power to the national regulators to judge the competence of an accountable officer such as the Building Safety Manager. The council is proactively taking forward the relevant training to ensure that appointed officers meet the proposed competency framework that will be part of the new legislation.

Governance in this area is strengthened further through regular business assurance reporting and the creation of the Tenant Scrutiny Board.

At the time of implementing this asset management strategy, the fire safety policy for the council's housing department 2021 is being reviewed and updated to ensure that it reflects all the required and emerging legislative documents and information.

### **Capital Investment**

To ensure the integrity of the asset is maintained and that the council fulfils its duty to provide residents with affordable warmth in homes with future-proofed facilities, there is an ongoing need for capital investment.

The Housing Capital Programme, known as the Transforming Homes Programme, invests in the long-term integrity of the council's assets and brings significant improvements to the health and wellbeing of residents through improvements to their living conditions and reducing fuel poverty through improved energy efficiency.

Through this programme, the council will ensure a 'whole asset' approach is taken to ensure investment programmes offer value for money and deliver the best outcomes. To improve the sustainability and efficiency of the stock, it will integrate retrofit principles into asset investment planning to ensure a fabric first approach is taken.

## **Adapting Homes for Specific Needs**

The council aims to meet the changing needs of current and potential residents by adapting existing properties and providing new accessible properties recognising that our older residents will increasingly want to:

- stay in control
- prepare in good time to step up to the next stage in their lives
- have a choice of homes that support their health and well-being

Within our existing properties, the council carry out adaptations to meet the needs of people with physical disabilities to enhance their lifestyle and, where appropriate, enable them to remain in their current home.

It is sometimes the case that the original beneficiary no longer requires adaptations. This equipment may be of use to another of the council's tenants. Adaptations are often expensive, so a register of adapted properties is maintained, enabling re-letting to a household with similar needs.

## **Product Specification and Standards**

The focus for specifying products for use in the housing assets is quality over cost. The aim is to use products of sufficient quality to withstand day to day wear and tear with a minimum of ongoing maintenance. This reduces disruption to residents in their homes and contributes to the council's broader sustainability objectives providing value for money in the longer term.

## **Prevention of Damp and Mould**

Damp and mould in social housing is an issue across the UK. It is widely recognised as one of the most challenging aspects for landlords and residents to prevent and manage. For this reason, the Housing Ombudsman undertook a thematic review and recently published a report on this subject.

The council is committed to the management and investment required to tackle and minimise cases of damp and mould within our residents' homes. It will work in line with the recommendations set out in the Housing Ombudsman report *Spotlight on damp and mould - It's not lifestyle*. It is recognised that it is not possible to fully eradicate the presence of damp and mould due to the multitude of factors that cause this. The Council will ensure a fully coordinated approach to the ongoing prevention and management of this problem.

## **New Development**

All new development plans will follow a specific process to ensure they achieve the Housing Strategy Objectives:

This will include ensuring the Employers Requirements suite of documents sets the quality and operational standards, reflects current legislative and good practice requirements, and ensures ease of maintenance and repair in use.

- We will develop plans in close consultation with the council's planning and urban design services to ensure residential development proposals are appropriate in scale, use and density for the locality. We will ensure that they meet high standards of design quality, contribute to safer communities and placemaking, support priorities for sustainable transport and are reviewed early to identify impacts of local infrastructure.

## Chapter 5 – Housing Asset Management Strategy Aims and Objectives

- Ensuring new homes meet required environmental and sustainability criteria, consider the cost of using durable and sustainable construction methods and components.
- Ensure new residential homes meet the needs of people with a range of physical disabilities through close collaboration with occupational therapy services
- Review the opportunity at a scheme-by-scheme level to take advantage of modern methods of construction, including modular construction methods
- Ensuring tenders for construction work evaluate and take account of contractor’s proposals for social value outcomes.
- Plans will follow a comprehensive member, resident and stakeholder engagement strategy to ensure residents are fully informed of development proposals and members have early sight of proposals that affect their constituents.
- Satisfaction surveys with new tenants will be undertaken 6 and 12 months after completion to identify areas of high satisfaction with new homes completed or areas for review and improvement.

What?	How?	Impact?
All investment programmes offer value for money to deliver positive and tangible outcomes	We will take a ‘whole asset’ approach considering the current and future use of assets	Residents will be assured that investment programmes offer value for money and deliver improvements to their living conditions
Provide consistent, reliable and fit-for-purpose repairs and planned maintenance services that meet legislative requirements	We will ensure that repairs and planned maintenance are completed in line with the council’s repairs policy, and service components regularly to extend their lifespan and reduce the need for reactive repairs	Residents will have access to a repairs service that responds promptly and appropriately, supporting a good quality of life in and around their home. We will achieve at least 85% resident satisfaction in the repairs and planned maintenance services
Be proactive in maintaining council-owned homes in order to achieve a good standard and mitigate the need for reactive repairs	<p>Identify properties requiring significant investment over the next five to ten years using detailed stock analysis and findings from the 2021/22 stock condition survey</p> <p>We will use this information to inform plans for planned and cyclical maintenance programmes to ensure properties are safe and comply with legislative requirements</p>	<p>Residents will live in well-maintained homes, benefitting from investment at the right time and reducing the disruption of responsive repairs due to the failure of components.</p> <p>We will achieve at least 85% resident satisfaction for capital investment programmes</p>

## Chapter 5 – Housing Asset Management Strategy Aims and Objectives

What?	How?	Impact?
Develop a holistic approach to damp and mould in council-owned properties in order to significantly reduce occurrences	<p>Work in line with the recommendations set out in the Housing Ombudsman <i>Spotlight on damp and mould</i> report</p> <p>We will analyse the data from a stock condition survey undertaken in the winter months of 2021/22 to accurately picture any properties suffering from seasonal damp or mould problems</p> <p>Ensure a fully coordinated approach with partners to the ongoing prevention and management of damp and mould.</p> <p>Use sensors to remotely monitor the environment in home to proactively identify where preventative interventions are required</p>	<p>Residents will experience fewer instances of damp and mould in their properties</p> <p>Where instances of damp and mould do occur, residents will receive support free of the stigma and judgement traditionally associated with the term 'lifestyle' in the context of this issue</p>
Engage and listen to the views of residents and understand their priorities in order to design, develop and deliver stock improvement programmes that target the things that matter	Proactively engage with residents on their experiences of living in council-owned properties and their priorities for making homes fit for the future	Programmes designed to deliver on residents priorities. Improved resident satisfaction in the quality of their homes
We will refresh the council's housing development programme in order to identify new opportunities to provide more social homes for rent	<p>Deliver new homes as part of the council's housing development programme, championing high design and construction standards on new affordable housing projects</p> <p>Continue to identify and progress new sites for the programme pipeline with consideration of the range of delivery methods</p> <p>Undertake regular assessments of existing and emerging housing delivery options, relating both to construction and provision to ensure that the viability of any such opportunities can be understood and progressed as appropriate</p>	Residents will have greater access to good quality social housing across the borough as a result of increased supply
We will develop and build new properties in line with clear and consistent requirements in order to ensure high-quality homes are made available for local residents	<p>We will learn from all completed developments and changing regulatory and sustainability standards to inform and drive updated employers' requirements</p> <p>Apply and monitor employers' requirements for new build properties to ensure high operational and quality standards of new homes</p>	Residents benefit from the provision of new homes that are both fit for purpose and fit for the future. All new homes provided by the council meet mandated high standards



## Maximise the Value of Assets

Council investments in existing housing stock needs to be continually reviewed to ensure maintenance programmes achieve the best outcomes for residents and maximise the asset's overall value. The aim is to ensure future reinvestment in properties that are well located, meet housing needs and are efficient to manage.

Much of the current housing stock is considered long-term sustainable; however, the council recognises that some property archetypes present challenges in ongoing maintenance and the living environment due to their age or build type.

The age of our stock is another factor. The council will consider carefully whether we can regenerate some of the housing assets or whether replacing them will deliver better long-term quality of homes for our residents.

There is, therefore, a need to undertake stock appraisals of these archetypes to inform recommendations for either further investment or redevelopment of those assets in the future. Complete stock options appraisals consider the need and demand, social, economic and neighbourhood sustainability factors and are designed to determine the potential options and, ultimately, a preferred course for intervention. Any significant decisions arising from appraisals of this nature are subject to Cabinet approval.

Appraisals may identify properties for which an alternative use might be more appropriate. These alternative uses may include using the land or housing assets to build additional homes to increase the number of council-owned/managed properties available of the type and quality needed and in areas where people want to live. Recommended interventions arising from the full appraisal of the performance of the asset can include:

- Re-designation or re-use of properties
- Remodelling of properties
- Infill development or whole site redevelopment
- Development on previously undeveloped or cleared land

What?	How?	Impact?
Implement a new asset management system to maintain accurate stock condition data, inform decisions from strategic planning through to operational delivery, and effectively direct housing investment for maintenance and improvement	<p>We will implement an integrated asset management system and load the 2021/22 stock condition survey results. This will form the foundation for investment modelling and the design of planned maintenance programmes and monitor compliance</p> <p>We will use technology to support the design, construction, operation, and maintenance of council asset. We will explore remote sensor solutions to enable real-time monitoring of stock condition</p>	<p>Residents will benefit from fiscally responsible improvements to living conditions</p> <p>Residents will experience improvements in the ability of the council to respond to and resolve maintenance and repair concerns.</p> <p>Remotely monitored sensors will enable remedial action to be arranged swiftly and proactively</p>

## Chapter 5 – Housing Asset Management Strategy Aims and Objectives

What?	How?	Impact?
<p>Take a targeted approach to asset investment and regeneration in order to protect and maximise the value of housing assets</p>	<p>Undertake full stock appraisals of properties where archetypes continue to present challenges due to age or build type</p> <p>Ensure these appraisals consider need and demand and social, economic and neighbourhood sustainability factors</p> <p>Use this information to recommend future programmes of investment or estate redevelopment</p> <p>Take forward recommendations for asset interventions through the process set in the council's constitution</p>	<p>Residents will be assured that new developments offer value for money, are financially viable and deliver homes fit for the future</p>
<p>Embed resident engagement in investment programmes and estate regeneration in order to deliver projects that meet local needs</p>	<p>Work closely with our residents to understand their priorities, identify required estate improvements, and progress opportunities for new housing to transform and enhance neighbourhoods</p>	<p>Residents will have direct input, influence and opportunity to shape future council-owned developments and ensure that they meet their needs and priorities</p>
<p>Maximise the social value and investment in the local economy that can be derived from investment in both existing and new build housing assets</p>	<p>Ensure firm emphasis on this requirement throughout the tendering, contract management and programme development phases</p>	<p>Residents benefit from improved community assets, training and employment opportunities, and greater value for money from the delivery of substantial investment programmes</p>

## **Plan for a Sustainable Future**

### **Carbon Neutral Commitment**

In October 2019, the council passed a motion to declare a climate emergency and to take urgent action to reduce its carbon emissions to net-zero by 2030. The council has committed to reducing its carbon footprint to zero. The council's initial plans to respond to the climate crisis is by making sure the council's operations are carbon neutral by 2030.

Over 34% of all emissions in the UK are attributed to the provision of heat. Shifting away from the use of fossil fuels and installing new renewable technologies for heating and hot water needs is a key part of the government's strategy for achieving net-zero carbon by 2050. Ground-source or air source heat pumps provide a solution to fully decarbonise heating in social housing assets coupled with clean energy. The installation of the low carbon heating systems is expected to provide a 70%+ reduction in carbon emissions.

The council is committed to continually investing in improving the overall thermal efficiency of homes whilst effectively supporting the borough's most vulnerable residents out of fuel poverty. This strategy supports the decarbonisation agenda while improving the overall energy efficiency of the assets, ensuring the homes provide affordable thermal comfort.

To achieve this, the council will review the performance of the existing housing assets and identify a range of appropriate interventions for the various property archetypes within the borough. The council will ensure all investment schemes follow the PAS 2035 approach. We will integrate retrofit works into all asset investment plans taking a fabric first approach to ensure they achieve the best outcomes value.

Significant investment will be required to meet the carbon reduction targets. A report Decarbonising the Housing Sector published by Savills in October 2021 estimated average costs of £24,250 per flat and £37,060 per 3-bed house would be required to meet the requirements. Therefore, it is clear that this will far exceed the funds available in the HRA business plan. Therefore the council will seek to maximise available funding streams to support the significant investment required. In order to do this, the council will therefore develop an opportunity overview of funding streams and ensure schemes are 'bid ready.'

The council will also work with suppliers to reduce their carbon footprint, considering carbon emissions when procuring contracts.

### **Electric Vehicles - Charging Points**

Electric Vehicle (EV) ownership is growing quickly, and the council is working to ensure that it is as convenient as possible to transition to an EV.

Thurrock Council intends to focus on specific local areas of high pollution by providing an accessible network of electric vehicle charging points that will play a vital role in facilitating the uptake of electric vehicles and is a necessity to meet these Air Quality targets.

Tenants of street properties who require electric charging points are able to request permission for an alteration to their property to ensure any installation meets the council's required standards.

The council's housing service will work to complement the corporate plans for EV charging across the borough. It will consider the needs of specific sheltered sites or housing estates alongside this. Where there is a perceived need, residents will be consulted in order to assess the expected

requirements. The council will seek funding opportunities to support the cost of a programme of this nature.

### Green Spaces

The importance of access to green spaces for exercise and mental wellbeing is vital for those without private gardens.

It is crucial for all communities, including those in social housing, and for all age groups to access a range of open and green spaces for leisure, recreation and play. These spaces should be well defined, easily accessible and safe with high-quality landscaping, including trees where appropriate, to support the physical health and wellbeing of all.

As part of this strategy, the housing development team will ensure that new developments improve access to green spaces for leisure, recreation, and play.

What?	How?	Impact?
<p>Increase the use of sustainable and renewable technology in new and existing stock in order to improve thermal efficiency, reduce carbon emissions and support the council's green agenda</p>	<p>We will support the shift away from the use of fossil fuels by installing new, renewable technologies for heating and hot water needs in new developments</p> <p>We will reduce carbon emissions in the new build developments by installing renewable energy sources, using well-insulated materials in the new homes, fitting LED lights and installing efficient communal heating and hot water systems</p> <p>We will select components and design and build new homes that meet sustainability standards and support the council's carbon reduction aims</p> <p>We will replace the electric storage radiators to 273 properties in three high rise blocks to provide a more efficient heating system linked to a ground source heat pump</p> <p>We will work with the council's suppliers and partners to reduce their carbon footprint, considering carbon emissions and contributions towards achieving net-zero when undertaking procurement activity</p>	<p>Residents will live in new and existing homes that have higher levels of thermal and energy efficiency, leading to reduced household costs relating to energy bills and more effective heating and lighting systems that are fit for the future</p>
<p>We will maximise the use of available funding in order to deliver thermal efficiency and carbon reduction improvements beyond the funding capacity of the Housing Revenue Account</p>	<p>We will develop an opportunity overview of funding streams and ensure schemes are developed that are 'bid ready'</p>	<p>Residents benefit from investment in their homes and neighbourhoods that may otherwise have been undeliverable, with a significantly reduced impact on existing programmed investments through the Housing Revenue Account</p>

Chapter 5 – Housing Asset Management Strategy Aims and Objectives

What?	How?	Impact?
<p>We will support residents out of fuel poverty in order to improve health and wellbeing, and quality of life</p>	<p>We will achieve EPC band C ratings across all housing stock by 2030 through direct investment in council homes from the housing revenue account and maximising the use of available funding streams</p> <p>Officers and partners undertake fuel poverty awareness training and are provided with the tools and knowledge to best support residents</p> <p>We will develop a sustainability profile of housing assets in order to identify and prioritise assets for improvement</p>	<p>Residents will benefit from proactive intervention, significant investment and access support to improve the thermal and energy efficiency of their homes, removing the harm to health and wellbeing of cold homes and fuel poverty</p>

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## Risk Management

Evaluation of risk is an essential part of effective asset management. Major decisions taken about the future use of the asset base in the absence of risk assessment may have a long-term detrimental effect on the sustainability of communities and the financial viability of the business plan.

Developing and maintaining a Housing Asset Management Strategy and carrying out the associated action plans on time demonstrates that the council effectively manages its risk of non-compliance across its property assets. When property decisions are made decisively, eliminating a siloed approach, and taken from a strategic perspective, they create the best outcomes for the council financially, for its staff and most importantly, its residents.

The main strategic risks and constraints are identified below:

- **Achieving Net Zero** – The strategy establishes the long-term vision and responds to the council’s ambitious net-zero targets. It is recognised that this requires significant investment and available expertise. The ability to deliver requires the council to successfully secure external grant funding.
- **Capacity and expertise** – The council will need a specific organisational focus to implement some of the identified themes. Additional technical expertise is required in the Asset management team to support bidding for grant funding and achievement of sustainability. Additional resources will also need to be procured in the capital programme to ensure that the quality of delivery is managed effectively.
- **Financial certainty** – The ability to develop accurate cost projections is fundamental to the effectiveness of the HRA business plan.
- **Organisational resilience** – It is essential that organisational resilience is developed with a suitable skill base to allow for the long-term implementation of the strategy and that training and development programmes are implemented to support staff retention and succession planning.

This strategy recognises that housing assets can also become liabilities, threatening the viability of the HRA and significantly impacting residents' lives, carrying the following risks:

- Failure to manage Health and Safety compliance could put residents, staff and contractors at risk.
- Failure to meet statutory standards can carry significant criminal and financial penalties and damage the organisation's reputation.
- Poor quality stock investment will be a key driver of satisfaction levels.
- Poor value for money in asset management will significantly impact council finances as this represents a considerable proportion of business plan spend.
- Internal and external factors impact expenditure, making it the element of landlord operations most vulnerable to increased costs.

Regular processes to identify and assess risks are in place, and actions are agreed to manage risks to minimise impact

## **Monitoring, Measuring and Review**

We will implement a robust monitoring and review process to measure progress against the strategic priorities presented in this document.

Firstly, an action plan will be developed, aligned with the priorities and themes of this strategy, developed alongside residents and other key stakeholders with reviews undertaken at regular intervals.

It is intended that progress towards the delivery of this action plan will be monitored on an annual basis by an established group of residents and the Housing Strategies Delivery Board.

Throughout the lifespan of this strategy, there is an expectation that new actions will be added to the action plan, reacting to changes in external factors (such as legislation) or proactively if an opportunity to do so arises. These additions will be managed appropriately and will ensure that they continue to reflect the key themes of this strategy.

## Appendix A – HRA Business Plan

Investment in Existing Stock	2022/23 Base Budget	2023/24 Base Budget	2024/25 Base Budget	2025/26 Base Budget	2026/27 Base Budget
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Transforming Homes	10,300	10,300	10,300	10,300	10,300
Disabled Adaptations	100				
Major Adaptations	200	200	200	200	200
Fire Safety Works	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Tower Block Refurbishment	8,137	0	0	0	0
Carbon Reduction Requirements (Tower blocks)	4,700	0	2,250	2,750	5,500
Non-Traditional Refurbishment	3,500	0	0	0	0
HRA Garages	500	500	500	500	500
Heating Replacement Programme	600	600	600	600	600
Lifts Refurbishment	190	190	190	190	190
Door Entry Installation	500	500	500	500	500
Water Mains	160	160	160	160	160
Staffing Costs Capital Programme	160	160	160	160	160
Highways and Lighting	400	400	300	300	300
Carbon Reduction Requirements External	300	2,000	2,000	2,000	1,954
Electrical infrastructure testing - Check Revenue implications	500	250	250		
<b>Total Capital Programme</b>	<b>31,247</b>	<b>16,260</b>	<b>18,410</b>	<b>18,660</b>	<b>21,364</b>
<b><u>Financed By:</u></b>					
RCCO	(10,719)	(11,046)	(11,307)	(11,574)	(11,847)
Carbon funding bid	(3,210)				
Borrowing Requirement	17,318	5,214	7,103	7,086	9,517
<b>Borrowing Cost @ 2.2% interest</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>209</b>
<b><u>Cumulative Interest Cost</u></b>	<b>840</b>	<b>955</b>	<b>1,111</b>	<b>1,267</b>	<b>1,476</b>