

CD D7

Affordable Housing Proof of Evidence of Mr James Stacey BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

Land south of Radwinter Road (East of Griffin Place),
Saffron Walden

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Outline application for the erection of up to 233 residential dwellings including affordable housing, with public open space, landscaping, sustainable drainage system (SuDS) and associated works, with vehicular access point from Radwinter Road. All matters reserved except for means of access.

Land south of Radwinter Road (East of Griffin Place), Saffron Walden

Rosconn Strategic Land and the Executors of Mr EC Baker and Mrs J Baker

August 2022

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TETLOW KING PLANNING
UNIT 2, ECLIPSE OFFICE PARK, HIGH STREET, STAPLE HILL, BRISTOL, BS16 5EL
Tel: 0117 9561916 Email: all@tetlow-king.co.uk

www.tetlow-king.co.uk

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Introduction

Section 1

- 1.1 This **Affordable Housing Proof of Evidence** has been prepared by **James Stacey of Tetlow King Planning** on behalf of the Appellants, **Rosconn Strategic Land and the Executors of Mr EC Baker and Mrs J Baker**.
- 1.2 Outline planning permission is sought for the development of up to 223 dwellings, of which 40% (up to 93 dwellings) are to be provided as on-site affordable housing.
- 1.3 This level of provision accords with the requirements of policy H9 of the adopted Uttlesford Local Plan 2005, which seeks 40% provision of affordable housing.
- 1.4 The proposed tenure split is 70% affordable rented housing (up to 65 dwellings); 25% First Homes (up to 23 dwellings) and 5% shared ownership dwellings (up to 5 dwellings).
- 1.5 This Proof of Evidence deals specifically with affordable housing and the weight to be attributed to it in this planning decision¹ in light of evidence of need in the area. It should be read alongside the main Planning evidence of Mr Peter Frampton; the Highways evidence of Mr Chris Elliot; and a number of Written Statements in respect of other site-specific matters.
- 1.6 For administrative purposes, the appeal site lies in Swards End Civil Parish, which is a modest parish of just 183 households². However, the site adjoins the built-up area of Saffron Walden, one of the main towns in Uttlesford. For this reason, my analysis of local affordable housing issues concentrates on those in Saffron Walden, and data for Saffron Walden Civil Parish; Saffron Walden Shire Ward, and the Saffron Walden Town Middle Layer Super Output Area ("MSOA") is presented in this Proof of Evidence.

¹ For the avoidance of doubt, the weightings I apply are as follows: very limited; limited; moderate; significant; very significant; substantial; and very substantial.

² Census 2011

1.7 My credentials as an expert witness are summarised as follows:

- I hold a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) degree in Economics and Geography from the University of Portsmouth (1994) and a post-graduate diploma in Town Planning from the University of the West of England (“UWE”) (1997). I am a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute (“RTPI”).
- I have over 27 years’ professional experience in the field of town planning and housing. I was first employed by two Local Authorities in the South West and have been in private practice since 2001. I have been a Director/Senior Director of Tetlow King Planning Ltd for the past ten years.
- During the course of my career, I have presented evidence in more than 100 Section 78 appeal inquiries and hearings, including a number within Uttlesford. I act for a cross-section of clients and advise upon a diverse range of planning and housing related matters.
- Both Tetlow King generally and I have acted on a wide range of housing issues and projects for landowners, house builders and housing associations throughout the country. Tetlow King Planning has been actively engaged nationally and regionally to comment on emerging development plans, including Local Development Framework Core Strategies and many specific development plan and supplementary planning documents on affordable housing throughout the UK.

1.8 In accordance with the Planning Inspectorate’s Procedural Guidance, I hereby declare that:

“The evidence which I have prepared and provide for this appeal in this Statement is true and has been prepared and is given in accordance with the guidance of the Royal Town Planning Institute. I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions.”

1.9 Providing a significant boost in the delivery of housing, and in particular affordable housing, is a key priority for the Government. This is set out in the most up-to-date version of the National Planning Policy Framework (“NPPF”), the Planning Practice Guidance (“PPG”), the National Housing Strategy and the Government’s Housing White Paper. Having a thriving active housing market that offers choice, flexibility and affordable housing is critical to our economic and social well-being.

1.10 As part of my evidence, I have sought data from the Council through a Freedom of Information (“FOI”) request submitted to Uttlesford District Council on 29 June 2022 to

which a response was received on 27 July 2022. This correspondence can be found at **Appendix JS1**. I place reliance on this evidence.

1.11 This proof of evidence comprises the following 12 sections:

- Section 2 of the report establishes the importance of affordable housing as an important material planning consideration;
- Section 3 considers the national housing crisis;
- Section 4 considers the extent of the national shortfall in housing delivery;
- Section 5 analyses the Development Plan and related policy framework including corporate documents;
- Section 6 considers the identified need for affordable housing in Uttlesford;
- Section 7 analyses the extent to which new affordable homes are being delivered towards meeting identified needs in Uttlesford;
- Section 8 discusses future affordable housing supply across Uttlesford;
- Section 9 considers a range of affordability indicators across Uttlesford and in the Saffron Walden local area;
- Section 10 reviews the Council's assessment of the planning application and their Statement of Case for the appeal; and the Rule 6 Party's Statement of Case;
- Section 11 considers the consequences of not meeting affordable housing needs;
- Section 12 analyses the benefits of providing affordable housing at the appeal site; and;
- Section 13 considers weight to be attached to the proposed affordable housing provision.

Affordable Housing as an Important Material Consideration

Section 2

- 2.1 The provision of affordable housing is a key part of the planning system. A community's need for affordable housing was first enshrined as a material consideration in PPG3 in 1992 and has continued to play an important role in subsequent iterations of national planning policy, including the National Planning Policy Framework ("NPPF").
- 2.2 It has been reflected in a number of court cases including *Mitchell v Secretary of State for the Environment and Another*, Court of Appeal (1994); *ECC Construction Limited v Secretary for the Environment and Carrick District Council*, Queens Bench Division (1994); *R v Tower of Hamlets London District Council, ex parte Barratt Homes Ltd*, Queens Bench Division (2000).

National Planning Policy Framework (20 July 2021) (CD G1)

- 2.3 The revised NPPF was last updated on 20 July 2021 and is, of course, a key material planning consideration. It is important in setting out the role of affordable housing in the planning and decision-making process.
- 2.4 The document sets a strong emphasis on the delivery of sustainable development, an element of which is the social objective to *"support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations"* (paragraph 8).
- 2.5 Chapter 5 / paragraph 60 of the revised NPPF confirms the Government's objective of *"significantly boosting the supply of homes"*.
- 2.6 The revised NPPF is clear that local authorities should deliver a mix of housing sizes, types and tenures for different groups, which include *"those who require affordable housing, families with children, older people, students, people with disabilities, service families, travellers, people who rent their homes and people wishing to commission or build their own homes"* (paragraph 62).
- 2.7 The national guidance places a *"corner-stone"* responsibility on all major developments (involving the provision of housing) to provide an element of affordable housing. In

particular, paragraph 65 establishes that *“Where major development involving the provision of housing is proposed, planning policies and decisions should expect at least 10% of the total number of homes to be available for affordable home ownership”*.

- 2.8 Affordable housing is defined within the revised NPPF’s glossary as affordable housing for rent (in accordance with the Government’s rent policy for Social Rent or Affordable Rent or is at least 20% below local market rents), starter homes, discounted market sales housing (at least 20% below local market value) and other affordable routes to home ownership including shared ownership, relevant equity loans, other low-cost homes for sale (at least 20% below local market value) and rent to buy (which includes a period of intermediate rent).

Planning Practice Guidance (March 2014, Ongoing Updates) (CD G2)

- 2.9 The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) was first published online on 6 March 2014 and is subject to ongoing updates. It replaced the remainder of the planning guidance documents not already covered by the NPPF and provides further guidance on that document’s application. **Appendix JS2** sets out the paragraphs of the PPG of particular relevance to affordable housing.

Summary

- 2.10 This section clearly demonstrates that, within national policy, providing affordable housing has long been established as, and remains, a key national priority; it is a fundamental element in the drive to address and resolve the national housing crisis.

The National Housing Crisis

Section 3

- 3.1 There is incontrovertible evidence that there is a national housing crisis in the UK affecting many millions of people, who are unable to access suitable accommodation to meet their housing needs. This section highlights some of this evidence and the Government's response to grappling with this issue.

Laying the Foundations – A Housing Strategy for England (November 2011) (CD 18)

- 3.2 Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England was published on 21 November 2011. The foreword by the former Prime Minister and former Deputy Prime Minister set out the former Coalition Government's intention to unblock the housing market and tackle the social and economic consequences of the failure to develop sufficient high-quality homes over recent decades.
- 3.3 The Executive Summary signed off by both the then Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and the then Minister for Housing and Local Government included the following:
- A thriving active but stable housing market that offers choice, flexibility and affordable housing is stated as being critical to our economic and social wellbeing;
 - *'The problems we face are stark'* and have been compounded by the impact of the credit crunch;
 - *'Urgent action to build new homes'* is necessary as children will grow up without the opportunities to live near their family and older people will not have the choice and support, they need;
 - *'Housing is crucial for our social mobility, health and wellbeing';*
 - *'Housing is inextricably linked to the wider health of the economy';* and
 - Fundamental to the whole approach of the strategy is communities (including prospective owners and tenants), landlords and developers working together.

House of Commons Debate (October 2013) (Appendix JS3)

- 3.4 A debate took place in the House of Commons on 24 October 2013 concerning the issue of planning and housing supply; despite the debate taking place over eight years ago the issues remain, and the commentary is sadly still highly pertinent to the issues surrounding affordable housing in Uttlesford. The former Planning Minister, Nick Boles, provided a comprehensive and robust response to the diverse concerns raised, emphasising the pressing need for more housing, and in particular affordable housing across the country. He opened by stating:

“I need not start by underlining the scale of the housing crisis faced by this country, the extent of the need for housing or the grief and hardship that the crisis is visiting on millions of our fellow citizens.”

- 3.5 When asked to clarify the word “crisis” by the Member for Tewkesbury, Nick Boles commented that in the past year the percentage of first time buyers in England who were able to buy a home without their parents’ help had fallen to the lowest level ever, under one third. He also commented that the first-time buyer age had crept up and up and was now nudging 40 in many parts of the country. He stated that the crisis “*is intense within the south-east and the south, but there are also pockets in parts of Yorkshire*”.

- 3.6 In response to questions, Nick Boles reaffirmed that:

“Housing need is intense. I accept that my hon. Friend the Member for Tewkesbury (Mr Robertson) does not share my view, but many hon. Members do, and there are a lot of statistics to prove it”.

- 3.7 He went on to say:

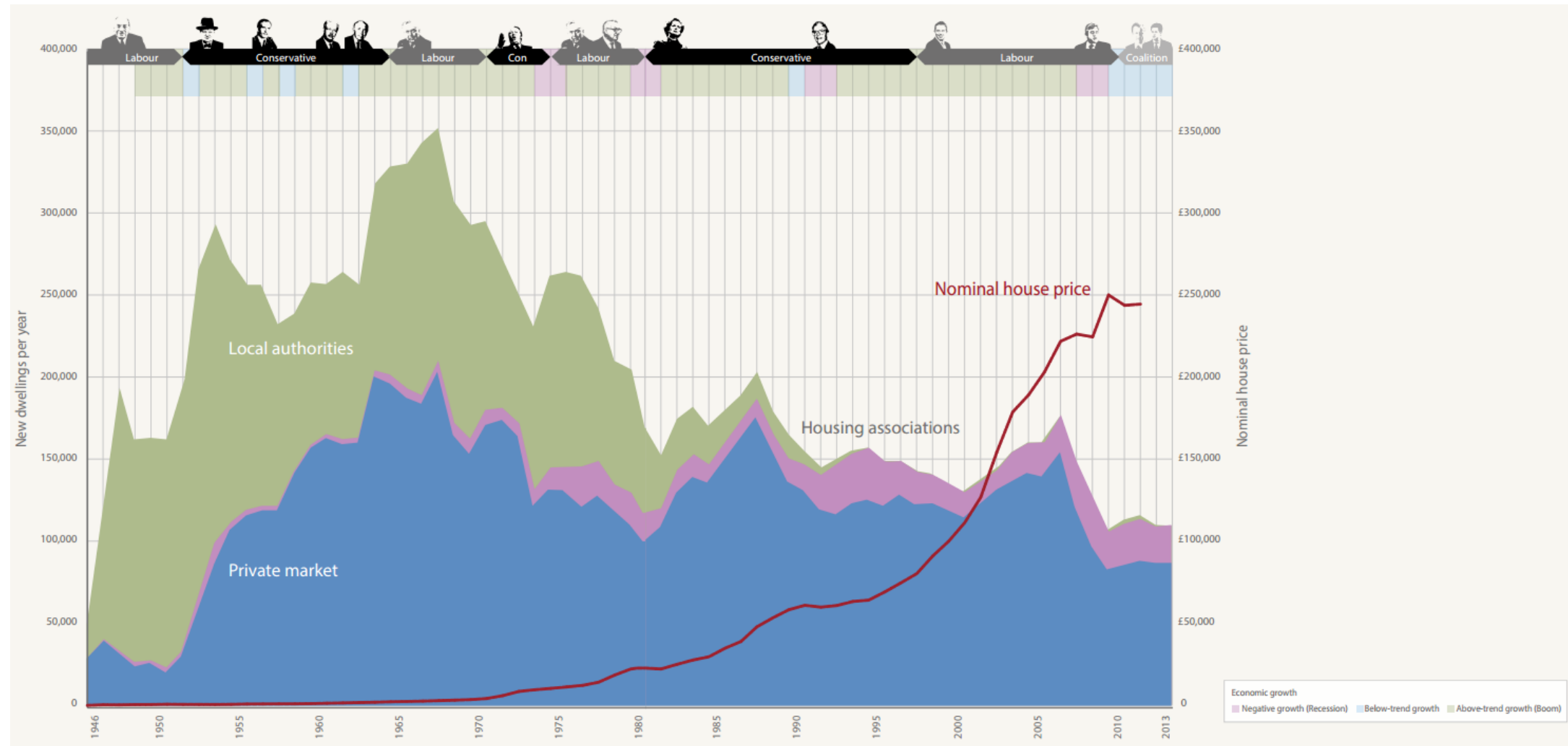
“It is not unreasonable, however, for the Government to tell an authority, which is representing the people and has a duty to serve them, “Work out what’s needed, and make plans to provide it”. That is what we do with schools. We do not tell local authorities, “You can provide as many school places as you feel like”; we say, “Provide as many school places as are needed”. We do not tell the NHS, “Provide as many GPs as you feel you can afford right now”; we say, “Work out how many GPs are needed.” The same is true of housing sites: we tell local authorities, “Work out how many houses will be needed in your area over the next 15 years, and then make plans to provide them.”

- 3.8 Mr Boles' full response highlighted the Government's recognition of the depth of the housing crisis and continued commitment to addressing, in particular, affordable, housing needs. The final quote above also emphasised the importance of properly assessing and understanding the needs; and planning to provide for them.

Building the Homes We Need (April 2014)

- 3.9 This report was the result of a year-long project by KPMG and Shelter to understand the housing shortage and was intended to provide advice to the incoming 2015 Government.
- 3.10 The report started by setting out that *"everyone now accepts that we have a desperate housing shortage in England."* It further explained that *"each year we build 100,000 fewer homes than we need, adding to a shortage that has been growing for decades. What's more, our current house building system seems incapable of delivering growth on the scale required. Growing demand means that without a step change in supply we will be locked into a spiral of increasing house prices and rents – making the current housing crisis worse"*.
- 3.11 The report highlighted that if we do not take firm action to build more homes there will be very worrying consequences for our economy and society; including rising homelessness, stalled social mobility, declining pension saving and an ever-rising benefit bill.
- 3.12 The report set out the graph illustrated in figure 3.1 showing the levels of house building in England since 1946.

Figure 3.1: House building since 1946



Source: *Building the Homes We Need, Shelter and KPMG (2014)*

3.13 Figure 3.1 graph shows four interrelated trends:

- An overall decline in house building since 1946, including a steep decline from 1980 and a marked further decline since 2007;
- Relatively high levels of social housing provision by local authorities up until the mid-1970s;
- The growing relative contribution to affordable housing provision by housing associations since the late 1980s; they are providing most of the new affordable housing stock but not matching anything like the previous local authority contribution; and
- The gradual increase in the nominal house price through until about 1985 then grows exponential over the subsequent 30 years. There appears to be a correlation with the decline in new housing provision, although there are clearly other interrelated factors.

Fixing our Broken Housing Market (February 2017)

3.14 The Housing White Paper: Fixing our Broken Housing Market, was published in February 2017. The foreword by the then Prime Minister, Theresa May, was very clear that the housing crisis is one of the biggest barriers to progress facing the country.

3.15 The then Prime Minister's foreword stated that:

"Our broken housing market is one of the greatest barriers to progress in Britain today. Whether buying or renting, the fact is that housing is increasingly unaffordable – particularly for ordinary working-class people who are struggling to get by.

Today the average house costs almost eight times average earnings – an all-time record. As a result, it is difficult to get on to the housing ladder, and the proportion of people living in the private rented sector has doubled since 2000.

These high housing costs hurt ordinary working people the most. In total more than 2.2 million working households with below-average incomes spend a third or more of their disposable income on housing.

This means they have less money to spend on other things every month, and are unable to put anything aside to get together the sums needed for a deposit...

...I want to fix this broken market so that housing is more affordable, and people have the security they need to plan for the future.

The starting point is to build more homes. This will slow the rise in housing costs so that more ordinary working families can afford to buy a home and it will also bring the costs of renting down...

...By building the homes Britain needs and giving those renting a fairer deal, we will give those growing up in society today more chance of enjoying the same opportunities as their parents and grandparents. It will ensure that the housing market is as fair for those who don't own their own homes as it is for those that do. This is a vital part of our Plan for Britain and a critical step along the way towards fulfilling the mission I have set out to make Britain a country that works for everyone."

- 3.16 The former Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Sajid Javid, also provided commentary on the housing crisis in his foreword to the White Paper where he stated that:

"This country doesn't have enough homes. That's not a personal opinion or a political calculation. It's a simple statement of fact.

For decades, the pace of house building has been sluggish at best. As a result, the number of new homes has not kept pace with our growing population. And that, in turn, has created a market that fails to work for far too many people.

Soaring prices and rising rents caused by a shortage of the right homes in the right places has slammed the door of the housing market in the face of a whole generation...

...The housing market has taken decades to reach the state it's now in. Turning it around won't be quick or easy. But it can be done. It must be done".

- 3.17 The introduction to the White Paper was clear:

"The housing market in this country is broken, and the cause is very simple: for too long, we haven't built enough homes".

- 3.18 It goes onto explain that since the 1970s, there have been on average, 160,000 new homes each year in England and that the consensus is that we need from 225,000 to 275,000 or more homes per year to keep up with population growth and start to tackle years of under-supply. The laws of supply and demand mean the result is simple. Since

1998, the ratio of average house prices to average earnings has more than doubled. That means the most basic of human needs – a safe, secure home to call your own – isn't just a distant dream for millions of people. It's a dream that's moving further and further away.

- 3.19 Furthermore, as recently as the 1990s, a first-time buyer couple on a low-to-middle income saving 5% of their wages each month would have enough for an average sized deposit after just three years. Today it would take them 24 years. It's no surprise that home ownership among 25 to 34-year olds has fallen from 59% just over a decade ago to just 37% today.
- 3.20 The White Paper also reported that Britain's broken housing market hurts all of us. Sky high property prices stop people moving to where the jobs are. That's bad news for people who can't find work, and bad news for successful companies that can't attract the skilled workforce they need to grow which is bad news for the whole economy.
- 3.21 Section four of the White Paper identified at paragraph 4.1 that England has some of the highest house price inflation and worst affordability in the OECD. An average home now costs almost eight times average earnings, and nearly 30% of local authorities have house prices over 10 times average earnings.
- 3.22 Paragraph 4.3 revealed that rising prices are particularly tough on younger people trying to get onto the housing ladder or wanting to move into their first family home. Some young people have no choice but to continue to live with their parents, friends or strangers to make ends meet. Renters are seeing their rents rise; some are only just managing to cover their costs. For the average couple in the private rented sector, rent now takes up roughly half of their gross income.
- 3.23 At paragraph 4.4 the White Paper reported that in areas where the housing shortage is most acute, high demand and low supply is creating opportunities for exploitation and abuse: unreasonable letting agent's fees, unfair terms in leases, landlords letting out dangerous, overcrowded properties. In short, it's becoming harder to rent a safe, secure property. And more and more people can't find a place to rent at all, added to which the loss of a private rented sector tenancy is now the most common cause of homelessness.

**Former Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government
Speech to Local Government Association Conference (July 2017)**

- 3.24 At the beginning of July 2017 the then Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Sajid Javid, addressed the conference reflecting on "*what has*

gone wrong in local government” and outlining what the national and local governments need to do to address the nationwide housing crisis.

3.25 On housing, Mr Javid stated that *“there’s a serious shortage of decent, affordable housing in this country”*. He added *“since the 1970s – under Wilson, Callaghan, Thatcher, Major, Blair, Brown, Cameron and now May – we’ve supplied an average of 160,000 new homes each year. That’s far below what’s needed, and that failure of supply to keep up with demand has led to predictable results”*.

3.26 Mr Javid summarised the issue, by outlining that *“the simple fact is that to put this right we need to build more homes that people want to live in, in places people want to live”*.

Former Prime Minister’s Speech (15 November 2017)

3.27 In November 2017, former Prime Minister Theresa May delivered a speech in which she made it her ‘mission’ to speed up the delivery of more homes.

3.28 Mrs May announced that *“for decades we simply have not been building enough homes, nor have we been building them quickly enough, and we have seen prices rise”*. Whilst *“the number of new homes being delivered each year has been increasing since 2010”* and acknowledged that *“there is more we can do”*.

3.29 She stated that *“we must get back into the business of building the good quality new homes for people who need them most”* and *“that is why I have made it my mission to build the homes the country needs and take personal charge of the Government’s response”*.

3.30 The former Prime Minister added that *“today I am seeing the work now underway to put this right and, in coming weeks and months, my Government will be going further to ensure that we build more homes, more quickly”*.

3.31 In concluding, Theresa May stated that *“this will be a long journey and it will take time for us to fix the broken housing market - but I am determined to build a Britain fit for the future”*.

Former Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government Speech on the Housing Market (16 November 2017) (Appendix JS4)

3.32 The day after the former Prime Minister pledged her commitment to providing more homes, former Communities Secretary Sajid Javid delivered a speech setting out his blueprint for boosting housing provision.

- 3.33 Mr Javid announced that following the publication of official figures, there was an additional 217,000 new homes (net) which were delivered during the 2016/17 financial year. He added that this was the *“first time in almost a decade that the 200,000 milestone had been reached”*.
- 3.34 However, Mr Javid acknowledged that *“it is painfully obvious that there remains much, much more to be done”*, and that *“fixing the broken housing market will require a much larger effort”*.
- 3.35 He set out that *“even today, I still hear from those who say that there isn’t a problem with housing in this country. That we don’t need to build more. That affordability is only a problem for Millennials that spend too much on nights out and smashed avocados. It’s nonsense... where once it would have taken an average couple 3 years to save for a deposit – it will now take a quarter of a century. Assuming of course they could save at all”*.
- 3.36 Mr Javid compared the position of a first-time buyer in London saying a deposit of more than £90,000 was needed and lamented *“that’s a lot of avocados.”*
- 3.37 The former Communities Secretary stated that *“without affordable, secure, safe housing we risk creating a rootless generation, drifting from one short-term tenancy to the next, never staying long enough to play a real role in their community”*.

Bleak Houses: Tackling the Crisis of Family Homelessness in England (August 2019) (CD L8)

- 3.38 The report was produced by the Children’s Commissioner to investigate the impact of homelessness and in particular the effect of this upon children.
- 3.39 It identifies that family homelessness in England today is primarily a result of structural factors, including the lack of affordable housing and recent welfare reforms. It states that the social housing sector has been in decline for many years and that between the early 1980s and early 2010s, the proportion of Britons living in social housing halved, as a result of losses to stock through the Right to Buy and a drop in the amount of social housing being built.
- 3.40 The research found that the decline in social housing has forced many households, including families, into the private rented sector. High rents are a major problem: between 2011 and 2017 rents in England grew 60% quicker than wages. It states that *“Simply put, many families cannot afford their rent. It is telling that over half of homeless families in England are in work”*.

- 3.41 The report particularly focused on the effect on children. In particular the report reveals that many families face the problem of poor temporary accommodation and no choice but to move out of their local area, which can have a *“deeply disruptive impact on family life”*. This can include lack of support (from grandparents for example) and travel costs.
- 3.42 It finds that a child’s education can suffer, even if they stay in the same school, because poor quality accommodation makes it difficult to do homework and that younger children’s educational development can also be delayed.
- 3.43 Temporary accommodation also prevents serious risks to children’s health, wellbeing and safety, particularly families in B&Bs where they are often forced to share facilities with adults engaged in crime, anti-social behaviour or those with substance abuse issues.
- 3.44 Other effects include lack of space to play (particularly in cramped B&Bs where one family shares a room) and a lack of security and stability. The report found (page 12) that denying children their right to adequate housing has a *“significant impact on many aspects of their lives”*.

Conservative Party Manifesto (December 2019)

- 3.45 The Conservative Party Manifesto for the December 2019 election reports at page 29 that *“the biggest problem that young people face in getting on the housing ladder is the deposit.”* It commits to ensure that the Government will *“offer more homes to local families”*
- 3.46 At page 30 of the Manifesto it states that *“home ownership is one of the most fundamental Conservative values. People are happier, more secure and more rooted in their communities when they own their own home – and know that they can pass it on to future generations”*. It goes on to set out that *“young people need the security of knowing that home ownership is within their reach – that they too can have a tangible stake in society, can be rooted in their communities and have a place to raise a family”*.
- 3.47 The Manifesto (page 30) details that *“while we want to encourage as many people as possible into home ownership, we recognise that not everyone can afford their own home – and that those in social housing deserve the same dignity, respect and fair treatment as private renters”*. It commits to bring forward a Social Housing White Paper to *“support the continued supply of social housing”* and commits to *“end the blight of rough sleeping by the end of the next parliament”*.

- 3.48 Under the heading of ‘places we want to live in’ at page 31, the Manifesto explains that despite increased housebuilding since 2010 *“it still isn’t enough. That is why we will continue our progress towards our target of 300,000 homes a year by the mid-2020s. This will see us build at least a million more homes, of all tenures over the next Parliament”*.

BBC Housing Briefing (February 2020)

- 3.49 The BBC Housing Briefing summarises a range of secondary data and case studies relating to the scale of housing need, quality, availability, and tenure. Sections 1 to 4 cover the broad context and issues; sections 5 to 7 consider the role of the public and private sectors in housing provision; and sections 8 to 10 cover policy mechanisms to address housing issues. The Briefing is prepared at the national level and sets out the overall ‘picture’ in respect of housing matters.
- 3.50 The Briefing was the topic of several news stories on the BBC Website and was widely promoted on the day of its publication, including through radio phone-ins, television news items, and the Bitesize revision service for teenagers.
- 3.51 The BBC states that the Housing Briefing was prepared in order to address public demand for *“more transparency and better explanation of the facts behind the headlines”*. The acknowledgements include Dame Kate Barker who undertook a review of the housing market in 2004, and Toby Lloyd, the former policy director of Shelter.
- 3.52 Section 8 of the Briefing refers to the scale of the housing shortfall that has amassed in recent years. It highlights at page 134 the work undertaken by Dame Kate Barker in 2004, the KPMG/Shelter study of 2014; the joint study between Heriott Watt University, Crisis and the National Housing Federation in 2018/9; all of which are referenced at Section 4 of this Proof of Evidence.
- 3.53 The Briefing contains case studies throughout which highlight the impact of the housing crisis on real people and households. These include the numerous case studies at pages 33, 40, 66, 69, 84, and 125 which include those in desperate need, facing homelessness or temporary accommodation, and those trapped in rented housing unable to afford to purchase.
- 3.54 The Briefing also refers to the serious impact of family homelessness upon children at page 34 and the work undertaken by the Children’s Commissioner, which I have reviewed at paragraphs 3.49 to 3.55 of this section.

‘Planning for the Future’ Policy Paper (March 2020)

- 3.55 On 12 March 2020, and as trailed in the Budget the previous day, the Government published a policy paper titled ‘Planning for the Future’. It provides a summary of the reforms the Government expects to explore in more detail in the forthcoming Planning White Paper.
- 3.56 The introductory paragraphs emphasise the Government’s intention to boost homeownership, noting at paragraph 2 *that “for many who are still trapped paying high rents and struggling to save for a deposit, home ownership seems like a dream which is increasingly out of reach”*.
- 3.57 The paper also clearly recognises the importance of providing for those who are not homeowners. Paragraph 4 states *that “We must ensure security for those who do not own their homes”* and that *“We also need to prevent people from falling into homelessness by building more affordable homes and ensure that those living in social housing are treated with the dignity and respect they deserve”*.
- 3.58 Relevant measures proposed in the policy paper include those to help first time buyers onto the property ladder (paragraph 14), through the proposed First Homes scheme, work to deliver long-term fixed rate mortgages, and a new Shared Ownership model.
- 3.59 Paragraph 17 goes further in respect of affordable housing, noting that *“We [the Government] are committed to improving access to safe and high-quality housing, improving affordability...”* and proposed measures include a renewed financial commitment to affordable housing and a package of measures to protect social and private sector renters.
- 3.60 Paragraphs 18 to 20 explain that, in order to inform the Planning White Paper the Government will review the housing market and planning system and will consider, amongst other related matters, *“how to ensure affordable, quality, safe housing”*.

Affordable Housing Commission Report (March 2020)

- 3.61 The Affordable Housing Commission (“AHC”) is an independent, non-partisan group comprising fifteen experts drawn from the public, private and voluntary sectors. Its extensive full report was released in late March 2020 and examines a wide range of issues relating to the housing affordability crisis, with data from a wide range of sources. The AHC report examines the approach taken to affordable housing through the planning system; the definition of an ‘affordable’ rent; the challenges facing

households in housing stress; and other measures including the approach taken to public investment and taxation.

- 3.62 The AHC report paints a bleak picture of housing affordability at present. It makes the simple proposition that *“Something has gone fundamentally wrong with the housing system and what it offers local people”*. The effects of this are serious and wide-ranging. The AHC notes that:

“Housing stress is impoverishing families and young and old struggling renters, creating debts and arrears, harming health and well-being, and limiting life chances and aspiration. There are wider negative effects too – on the economy and productivity, on wealth inequality and poverty – resulting in more public expenditure subsidising rents and healthcare and tackling homelessness”.

- 3.63 The AHC concludes that the root cause of the current affordability crisis is a clear shift in the structure of the housing market over the last 20 years. The AHC note that social rented sector has contracted, with low rates of new supply and extensive losses through the Right to Buy. By contrast, the AHC notes that the private rented sector has expanded significantly, even though it is ill-equipped to provide for those groups in greatest housing need.

- 3.64 The AHC is clear that the housing crisis is of such a scale that it will take many years to resolve. Its first recommendation is that that the Government commits to ensure all households have access to affordable housing by 2045 so that the next generation does not face the same kind of hardships as the current.

- 3.65 Its package of 53 recommendations seek to substantially boost the role of the social rented sector, whilst also helping a sizeable cohort of households termed ‘frustrated first time buyers’ into homeownership. Key recommendations for planning include recommendation 5 to address the supply of affordable housing, namely that *“the government seeks a step change in affordable housing supply in line with the latest assessments of housing need. On current best evidence, this would equate to an increase to about 90,000 social rented homes a year (forming part of the government’s overall housing target of 300,000 homes a year)”*. Recommendation 43 notes the important role that Local Planning Authorities must play in this, and states that:

“The Commission recommends that the preparation of local plans be made an enforceable statutory duty to ensure that all councils are delivering on their housing plans and targets. Local and city-region plans must be based on accurate housing

needs assessment – including numbers of concealed households – which should be updated regularly”.

- 3.66 Recommendation 16 addresses the impact of Right to Buy and proposes reforms to the system. It states that:

“The Commission recognises that the Right to Buy remains a popular scheme. However, it is undermining efforts to address affordability, reducing numbers of relets at lower rents and moving properties from social renting to the PRS. Accordingly, the Commission recommends that the RTB is radically overhauled, including giving councils and housing associations discretion over the level of discount they offer, complete control over receipts and the opportunity to restrict any letting by a purchaser (e.g. requiring consent for letting the property)”.

White Paper: Planning for the Future (August 2020)

- 3.67 On 6 August 2020, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government opened a 12-week public consultation on the long anticipated Planning for the Future White Paper. The Planning for the future consultation proposes reforms of the English planning system to streamline and modernise the planning process, bring a new focus to design and sustainability, improve the system of developer contributions to infrastructure, and ensure more land is available for development where it is needed.
- 3.68 In his foreword on page seven of the White Paper, the outgoing Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, highlights the importance of housing delivery, stating the following:

‘And, above all, that gives the people of this country the homes we need in the places we want to live at prices we can afford, so that all of us are free to live where we can connect our talents with opportunity.

Getting homes built is always a controversial business. Any planning application, however modest, almost inevitably attracts objections and I am sure there will be those who say this paper represents too much change too fast, too much of a break from what has gone before.

But what we have now simply does not work.

So let’s do better. Let’s make the system work for all of us. Any let’s take big, bold steps so that we in this country can finally build homes we all need and the future we all want to see.’

- 3.69 On page eight, in his foreword, the former Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Robert Jenrick, declares:

“These proposals will help us to build the homes our country needs, bridge the present generational divide and recreate an ownership society in which more people have the security and dignity of a home of their own.”

NHF – People in Housing Need (September 2020)

- 3.70 In September 2020, the National Housing Federation (“NHF”) published an analysis of the scale and shape of housing need in England today.
- 3.71 On page 4, the report shows that ‘*nearly 8 million people in England have some form of housing need*’. Nearly 1.9 million households are hosting a ‘concealed’ household while 3.4 million people found to be living in overcrowded accommodation.
- 3.72 It finds (page 2) that ‘*Long-term investment in social housing is needed to tackle this problem and provide people with suitable homes they can afford*’.
- 3.73 The report describes how the number of people in need of social housing in England has now hit 3.8 million people. This equates to 1.6 million households – 500,000 more than the 1.16 million households recorded on official waiting lists.
- 3.74 The report provides a clear measurement of housing need, necessary because local housing registers (or waiting lists) have become inadequate following the introduction of the Localism Act in 2011.
- 3.75 It states (page 3) that ‘*There is now no consistent set of criteria for allowing households to join a register*’ and the data on these registers is not necessarily reviewed for accuracy on a regular basis. While local registers serve an important function, ‘*they do not give the full picture of how many people are in need of a home*’, hence the reason for the NHF analysis.
- 3.76 The report identifies how ‘*the housing crisis is not one crisis, but a series of interrelated and overlapping crises*’ (page 3). These include affordability, the suitability, size and condition of homes, and the ability of people to find accommodation in the first place. Some people will experience one of these problems – others will experience many at once. The complicated picture of interrelated housing crises means there is a need for new, accurate and comprehensive research on housing need, the report finds.
- 3.77 It reveals that the number of people for whom social rent is the most appropriate tenure has increased since the previous iteration of the analysis. It states that ‘*This suggests*

an intensifying of need at the 'sharp end' – things are getting worse for the worst off (page 5). This is reflected both in the growth in the numbers of people affected by affordability issues and in the growth in overcrowding.

- 3.78 The report continues that more than 3.4 million people were found to be living in overcrowded households, a 5% increase on the previous figures, and 2.7 million were found to have an affordability issue – up nearly 10%.
- 3.79 As might be expected, a significant proportion of these people are to be found within the social sector already. Overcrowding is a known issue in this sector, the report establishes. A shortage of larger homes can make finding a suitably sized home more difficult for families as a result of the sale of council housing and a decrease in government funding for building new social homes since 2010.
- 3.80 This is because larger, family homes are more expensive to build and therefore more difficult to build with less government funding. The 'spare bedroom subsidy' has also acted as an incentive for developers to build smaller homes. Given the freeze on working-age benefits (introduced in 2016 following the 2015 Budget), benefits sometimes *'no longer cover even the cheapest forms of social housing rent'*, the report finds (page 6).
- 3.81 Meanwhile the analysis finds that nearly 1.9 million households are hosting a 'concealed' household, and that concealed households make up the third largest group of people affected, including nearly 1.8 million single people concealed within a total of nearly 1.5 million host households.
- 3.82 Across different tenures, when examining the proportions relative to the size of each tenure, the report finds that problems are more prevalent in the rented sectors, particularly the private rented sector, *'where more than a quarter of households have some form of housing need'* (page 6).
- 3.83 In addition, when the report looks at those households with needs for whom social rent is the most appropriate tenure, 18.8% of private renting households are in this position compared to 11.6% of social renters and just 1.3% of homeowner households.
- 3.84 Within the private rented sector, affordability, unsuitability and overcrowding are the most frequent issues. In particular, the wider measure of affordability (using an additional higher threshold) shows up highly, as does the measure of unsuitability for the age and health of the occupant.

Coming Home – Tackling the housing crisis together (February 2021)

- 3.85 The report by the independent Commission on Housing, Church and Community lays out a positive vision for housing. The vision is centred on five core values, which are rooted in the Christian story but resonate with us all: good housing should be sustainable, safe, stable, sociable and satisfying.
- 3.86 At the heart of the report is the idea that simply building more houses, whilst important, is not sufficient to address the prolonged housing issues this country continues to face. The report suggests that we need more truly affordable homes and stronger communities that people can be proud of and where they can feel safe and welcome, put down roots and flourish.
- 3.87 Chapter 8 focuses on what Government can do, it recommends six actions for the Government to consider, these include, that the Government should develop a coherent, long-term housing strategy, focusing particularly on those in the greatest need. It recommends a full review of the social security system to ensure it provide adequate housing support for low- income households and that all public land should maximise its long term social, environmental and economic value, not simply be sold for the highest achievable price.
- 3.88 It is this Commission’s contention that we all need to start to think differently, and act differently, if the next 20 years are not simply to be a re-run of the last 20. It states that:
- “The housing problems in our society, which have been consistently documented for many years, must not continue to be borne solely by those living in unaffordable or inadequate housing, while nearly everyone else – the Church included – continues to act largely in their own interests, and effectively perpetuates this injustice”.*

Former Secretary of State for Communities, Housing and Local Government’s speech to the National Housing Federation (25 March 2021)

- 3.89 The former Secretary of State for Communities, Housing and Local Government, Robert Jenrick, addressed the National Housing Federation on the subject of *‘building back better – fairer, and safer and with opportunity for all’*.
- 3.90 Jenrick identified the need to strengthen the safety net that social housing has always provided, while also extending the ladder of opportunity that has always been there. He stated that this means “*we must ensure that more affordable and social housing gets built*” (my emphasis).

- 3.91 The former Secretary of State made clear that the Government is “*determined to do all we can to support you – social landlords who make an important contribution to housing delivery – to keep up the momentum on supply” to ensure that homes are completed and that new properties are started*” (my emphasis).
- 3.92 Jenrick went on to say (referring to the Coronavirus pandemic) that what has happened over the past year has made this an “*even more urgent, even more important mission for the country*”.
- 3.93 The Secretary of State identified the opportunity for housing associations to build the homes we need, whether for rent, whether for shared ownership or indeed for outright ownership as well – and not just in urban areas.
- 3.94 Jenrick identified that from 2015 to 2019, just over 10% of new affordable homes have been built in villages accommodating around 3,000 people. He made clear that “*I’d like to go much further than that in the years ahead*”.
- 3.95 Jenrick concluded that the Government’s mission to build back better and to level up all parts of the country “*will, in no small part, be powered by the provision of more affordable housing*” (my emphasis).

Denied The Right to a Safe Home – Exposing the Housing Emergency, Shelter (May 2021) (CD L6)

- 3.96 This report by Shelter identifies what it describes as the Housing Emergency, with 1 in 3 adults (17.5 million people) being denied the right to safe home. These people are trapped by the Housing Emergency.
- 3.97 Page 4 of the Report explains that Shelter commissioned research with 13,000 people to bring to light the extent of the Housing Emergency. This found that one in seven had to cut down on essentials like food to pay the rent or mortgage and 6% lived in a home that harms their family’s physical health.
- 3.98 It goes on to identify on page 5 that the high cost of housing is the main cause of homelessness. Housing benefit was designed to ‘take the strain’ of unaffordable rents but restrictions mean it is well below what’s needed, which it describes as a “*recipe for rising poverty and homelessness*” where “*too many are forced to choose between rent and feeding their families*”.
- 3.99 It found that 14% of people saying that they regularly have to cut spending on household essentials like food or heating to pay their rent or mortgage payments.

- 3.100 The Report (on page 10) calls for the Government to commit to building at least 90,000 new social homes in England a year, making very clear that: *“Something needs to change. We need to end the housing emergency. We need social housing. For the thousands stuck in bad homes. For the renters terrified of losing their home. For everyone facing discrimination. For everyone denied the right to a safe home. We will only end the housing emergency by building affordable, good quality social homes”*.
- 3.101 In respect of the private rented sector, Shelter identified (page 13) that as people are priced out of the housing market, the number of households renting privately more than doubled between 2000 and 2019 from 2 million to 4.4 million – or 1 in 5 of us.
- 3.102 It found that Private renters spend the most of their income on housing, with the average household paying 38% of their income on rent, compared to social renters (31%) and owner-occupiers (19%). Furthermore, private rented homes are more likely to fail the Decent Homes Standard.
- 3.103 Shelter highlight the problems of discrimination, with landlords and letting agents frequently advertise properties as ‘No DSS’, meaning they won’t let to anyone claiming benefits. This practice disproportionately hurts women, Black and Bangladeshi families, and disabled people.
- 3.104 Shelter also identifies (page 26) the benefits of social housing compared with alternative forms such as private renting. Of those privately renting, 43% of families worry about their landlord ending their contract early, and this is a constant possibility.
- 3.105 Social housing is more stable and people in social homes have longer and more secure tenancies. Families can plan for the future without fear of losing their home. Social housing is also quality controlled, being more likely to meet the standard for ‘decent’ housing. It states that a new generation of quality social homes could set the gold standard for liveable housing.
- 3.106 Shelter state that for generations, this country has failed to build enough social homes. There are over one million people in England on the waiting list, and the lack of social housing has pushed people into expensive and insecure private renting.
- 3.107 On Page 32 the Report highlights that a safe home for everyone is what Shelter fights for, but 17.5 million people are denied that right. Whether because of the cost of rent, being forced to live in unsafe conditions, or because they’ve been discriminated against because of their class, disability, gender, sexuality or race.

- 3.108 The Report concludes (page 33) that for change to happen, “*we must demand better conditions, fight racism and discrimination, end unfair evictions, and reform housing benefit. But when it comes down to it, there’s only one way to end the housing emergency. **Build more social housing***” (emphasis in original).

The Centre for Social Justice: Exposing the Hidden Housing Crisis (November 2021)

- 3.109 The report found that the “*collapse in the supply of decent, affordable homes*” for people living on modest to low incomes has not just made homeownership less attainable. It has made it harder to start and maintain healthy families, to thrive in work, and to provide an educational foundation for children. The thinktank identified that ‘tonight’, over 90,000 families and more than 120,000 children will go to sleep in ‘temporary accommodation’, and that an estimated 150,000 properties see parents sharing a bedroom with their children.
- 3.110 Section 1.3 of the report discusses how high housing costs have critically undermined the impact of positive government initiatives to raise incomes among lower earners, constituting a key driver of ‘in-work poverty’. A quarter of the English population said they found it either fairly or very difficult to pay their housing costs, this rising to 43% of private renters; a group of individuals where 60% have less than £100 in savings.
- 3.111 Chapter four of the report reviews the attitudes to housing affordability among the public. The report survey found that:
- 60% of those surveyed think the housing crisis has worsened ‘significantly’ due to the pandemic;
 - 63% believe the Government needs to supply low-cost homes to rent to end the housing crisis;
 - 55% said building social housing should be a priority of the Government;
 - 58% said building more low-cost homes to rent would ‘level up’ the country;
 - 55% of people said ‘affordability’ should be the primary aim of housing policy, while 11% said ‘eventual ownership’; and
 - The public most highly associates social housing with being ‘affordable’ (44%) and providing ‘community’ (28%). Other popular positive answers included ‘safe’ (18%) and ‘comfortable’ (16%).

- 3.112 On page 7 the report identifies that expenditure on housing benefits is forecast to be £30.3 billion by 2021–22. This is more than double the total government grant allocated (£11.5 billion) for new affordable housing until 2026, in just one year. The research further alluded that It warned that the annual housing benefit bill could reach £50bn by 2050.
- 3.113 Prefacing the report, former Prime Minister Theresa May stated in her Foreword that her party’s focus on homeownership had become a distraction and that rediscovering affordable housebuilding for the 2020s is what is needed if we are to address the social, economic and fiscal costs of the hidden housing crisis.
- 3.114 The report recommends that the government initiates a process of rapid evidence-gathering to reshape social housing policy for the 2020s with the forthcoming Levelling Up White Paper.

House of Lords: Built Environment Committee (1st Report of Session 2021-2022): Meeting housing demand (10 January 2022)

- 3.115 The report by the House of Lords Built Environment Committee considers extensive evidence in respect of the delivery and affordability of housing and the functioning of the wider housing market. The report found that *“The challenges facing the housing market have been well documented: too many people are living in expensive, unsuitable, poor quality homes. To address these complex challenges in the long term, it is necessary to increase housing supply now.”* (summary – page 4).
- 3.116 Chapter two (Housing demand and demographic trends) concludes that the Government’s target to deliver 300,000 new homes per year and one million homes by 2025 is welcomed. However, *“even with increased development through SMEs, ‘build to rent’, self-commissioned homes and local authorities, building will likely still fall short of the target.”*
- 3.117 Chapter three (Housing types and tenures) sets out that over the past 40 years the private rented sector has doubled in the UK, with social rented dwellings halving over the same period (paragraph 39). Paragraph 41 explains that homeownership is becoming increasingly unaffordable as growth in house prices has outstripped growth in wages.
- 3.118 The report identifies that those living in the private rented sector are more likely to live in poor quality, overcrowded conditions than owner-occupiers (Paragraph 61). The report highlights a serious shortage of social housing, which is reflected in long waiting lists for social homes and a large number of families housed in temporary

accommodation (paragraph 76). Chapter three goes on to state *that “Right to Buy has left some councils unable to replace their social housing stock. Right to Buy must be reformed to help councils replenish their social housing stock: councils should keep more of the receipts from Right to Buy sales, have a longer period to spend the receipts, and there should be tighter restrictions on the conditions under which social homes can be bought.”*

3.119 Chapter five (planning) concludes that uncertainty about the future of the planning system and delays to planning reforms have led to a ‘chilling effect’ on housebuilding and created uncertainty for planners and housebuilders (paragraph 118). It goes on to state that *“Only 40% of local plans are less than five years old or have been updated or reviewed in the past five years. The lack of local plan-making means the system is not ‘plan led’ and creates an uncertain environment for housebuilders.”* (paragraph 122).

3.120 Paragraph 41 outlines the overall conclusions of the report and states that *“Evidence to our inquiry has shown how vital it is that that new homes are built to help meet housing demand. Building more homes will not address affordability pressures in the short term but is an essential first step to ensure that demand can be met in the long term.”* Paragraph 42 goes on to explain that *“To meet that challenge, the sector needs certainty and a clear direction from the Government about reforms to the planning system and more resources to address chronic delays.”*

Conclusions on the National Housing Crisis

3.121 There is an ever-increasing wealth of evidence including from figures at the highest levels of Government that unaffordability and inability to get on the housing ladder is a significant problem.

3.122 What is also clear is that the messages from previous Governments have failed to ensure enough new homes, especially affordable homes, are being built.

3.123 The evidence is clear and, in my opinion, demonstrates the pressing requirement to build more homes to meet the significant level of unmet need, particularly for homes that are affordable.

3.124 Evidence suggests that failure to do so will present a risk to the future economic and social stability of the United Kingdom.

The Extent of the National Housing Shortfall

Section 4

- 4.1 In a speech to the House of Commons on 24 October 2013 the-then Planning Minister, Nick Boles, made reference to *“the scale of the housing crisis faced by this country”* and *“the extent of the need for housing”*.
- 4.2 The extent of the need for housing and the scale of the crisis as a result of the persistent under delivery of both market and affordable housing in the UK is explored further in this section of my evidence, starting over 18 years ago with Dame Kate Barker’s Review of Housing Supply in March 2004.

The Barker Review of Housing Supply (17 March 2004)

- 4.3 In her 2004 review into issues underlying the lack of supply and responsiveness of the housing in the UK, Barker reported that housing is a basic human need, fundamental to our economic and social well-being. She found that:
- A weak supply of housing contributes to macroeconomic instability and hinders labour market flexibility;
 - Housing has become increasingly unaffordable over time, noting that the aspiration for home ownership is as strong as ever, yet the reality is that for many this aspiration will remain unfulfilled unless the trend in real house prices is reduced;
 - This brings potential for an ever widening social and economic divide between those able to access market housing and those kept out; and
 - Homes are more than shelter. They provide access to a range of services and to communities. Housing also plays a major role as an asset in household’s balance sheets and in household planning for their financial futures.
- 4.4 Barker considered that continuing at the current rate of housebuilding was not a realistic option:

“Unless we are prepared to accept increasing problems of homelessness, affordability and social division, decline in standards of public service delivery and increasing costs of doing business in the UK – hampering our economic success”.

- 4.5 She found that whilst demand for housing is increasing over time, driven by demographic trends and rising incomes, in 2001 the construction of new houses in the UK fell to its lowest level since the Second World War.
- 4.6 A weak response of housing supply to demand changes has been one of the factors underlying the instability of the UK housing market with Barker reporting that *“there is growing evidence of a persistent inadequate supply”* noting that in the UK the trend rate of real house price growth over the past 30 years had been 2.4% compared to the European average of 1.1%
- 4.7 She found that affordability has worsened and that in 2002 only 37% of new households could afford to buy a property compared to 46% in the late 1980s. The overall objective of the Barker Review included:
- To achieve improvements in housing affordability in the market sector;
 - A more stable housing market; and
 - An adequate supply of publicly funded housing for those who need it.
- 4.8 Taking the baseline level of private sector housing built in 2002/03 of 140,000 gross starts and 125,000 gross completions, Barker estimated that:
- Reducing the trend in real house prices to 1.8% would require an additional 70,000 private sector homes per annum; and
 - More ambitiously, to reduce the trend in real house prices to 1.1% an additional 120,000 private sector homes per annum would be required.
- 4.9 Even in the case of the less ambitious price trend, Barker found that this would include pricing an additional 5,000 new households into the market each year and improving the access for the backlog of those currently priced out.
- 4.10 She found that an increase in supply of 17,000 affordable homes per annum would be required to meet the needs among the flow of new households, noting that there is also a case for the provision of up to 9,000 affordable homes per annum above this rate in order to make inroads into the backlog of need, a total of 26,000 per annum
- 4.11 Barker presented three scenarios for real house price trends ranging from slowing the rate at which households were being priced out to a long-term reduction of house price inflation:

- 2.4% per annum – which represented the Government’s target aimed at slowing the rate at which households were being priced out of the market, would have required an increase in housebuilding to 160,000 per annum;
- 1.8% per annum – to reduce the long-term trend would have required an increase in housebuilding to 200,000 per annum; and
- 1.1% per annum – which represented the EU average at the time, and which was considered would ‘improve the housing market’ would have required an increase in housebuilding to 260,000 per annum.

4.12 Meeting Barker’s most optimistic objective of improving the housing market and pricing many more households back into the marketplace would have required an estimated 260,000 homes per annum.

The Barker Review: A Decade On (24 March 2014)

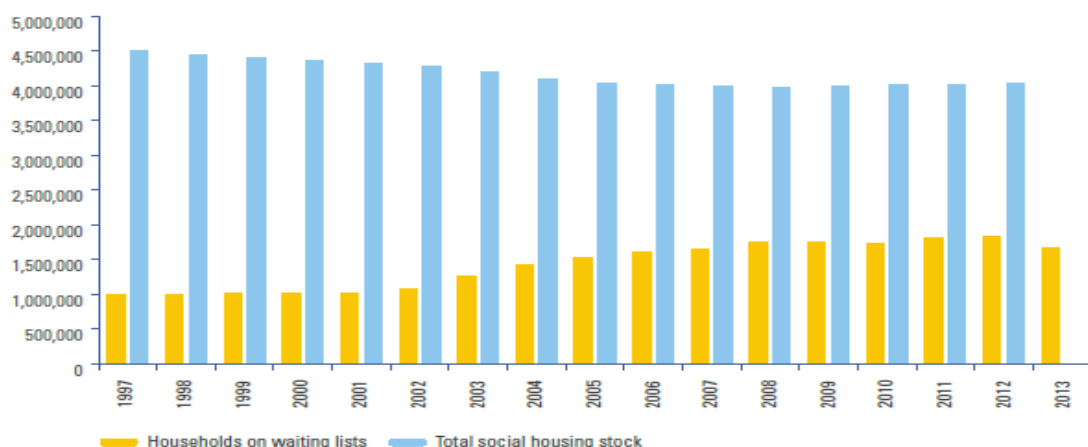
- 4.13 In March 2014, the Home Builders Federation (“HBF”) undertook a review of housing delivery against the findings of the Barker Review and the impacts of this upon the market and affordability. They found that by 2004 the housing crisis was already building and in the 10 years since then, even against the most modest of the housing targets identified by Barker (which was met only once in 2005/06), the average annual shortfall has been 45,000 homes.
- 4.14 Measured against the objective of improving the housing market, housebuilding had been an average of 145,000 per annum down on the target of 260,000 per annum over the period between 2004 and 2014.
- 4.15 The HBF found that when measured against the middle of Barker’s three price inflation targets for 200,000 per annum, the shortfall of homes over the decade stood at 953,000 homes in 2014. This was on top of a backlog that had already been identified as being large (estimated at between 93,000 and 146,000) and growing in 2004.
- 4.16 They reported that in 2014 even if housebuilding rose to 210,000 per annum overnight, assessed against the middle objective of reducing the long-term rate of inflation, the country would be four and a half years behind where it was in 2004.
- 4.17 In 2014, the HBF found that a decade on from the Barker Review, the UK was 1.45 million homes short of where Kate Barker projected would have brought about an improved housing market.

- 4.18 The HBF reported that a basic estimate would suggest that in order to achieve the very modest objective of slowing the increase in the affordability gap so that fewer new households are priced out of the market, in 2014 some 200,000 private household starts would be required, a figure last achieved in 1972/73.
- 4.19 It goes further to detail that the objective of improving the housing market would, in 2014, have required 320,000 private housing starts per annum, a figure achieved in England only four times since World War II.

Building the Homes We Need (April 2014)

- 4.20 The KPMG and Shelter research was intended to provide a package of new housing policies to inform the new 2015 Government.
- 4.21 It reported that each year an average of 100,000 fewer homes are built that are needed which adds to a shortfall which has been growing for decades, noting that growing demand means that without a step-change in supply we will be locked into a spiral of increasing house prices and rents, making the housing crisis worse.
- 4.22 Because of private housing becoming less affordable, the number of people in need of affordable housing has grown and with the failure of successive governments to deliver new social housing whilst existing stock continues to be depleted through the Right to Buy, waiting lists have grown whilst social housing stock has shrunk as illustrated by figure 4.1³.

Figure 4.1: Social Housing Waiting Lists and Stock



Source: *Building the Homes We Need* (2014)

³ Reduction in total numbers on housing waiting lists in 2013 as a result of local authorities utilising the freedoms afforded to set their own housing allocation criteria through the Localism Act.

- 4.23 KPMG and Shelter found that changing demographics meant that we need to build a minimum of 250,000 new homes per annum in England to meet rising demand. In 2013 (the most recent monitoring period available at the time of publication of the report) just 109,660 new homes were built, the lowest annual level since 1946, the year of recovery after the Second World War.
- 4.24 In addition to which the report found that estimates suggest that the backlog of housing need may be as large as two million households and that to clear this England would need to build well over 250,000 homes each year, which would require doubling current output at the time of publication of the report.

The House of Lords Select Committee on Economic Affairs: Building More Homes (15 July 2016)

- 4.25 The Select Committee found that a growing population, rising immigration and rising incomes have increased demand for housing in England in recent decades but that too few homes have been built over this period. As a result, house prices and rents have risen sharply and there has been a decline in home ownership over the past decade.
- 4.26 They considered that we must build enough homes to make housing more affordable for everyone, noting that aspirant home owners who are unable to afford a deposit pay substantial proportions of their income on rent, families on waiting lists of social housing contend with insecure tenancies and rogue landlords, and at the same time housing benefit spending has doubled in the past two decades.
- 4.27 The Lords reported that as former Housing and Planning Minister Brandon Lewis had explained to them, the Government aimed to address the problems by building one million homes by the end of Parliament. However, it was noted that since the Brexit vote the Minister had effectively abandoned this target and prior to the vote had warned that it would be difficult to achieve if the UK voted to leave the European Union.
- 4.28 In addition to this the Committee found that whilst the Government's ambition was welcomed, it must be matched by appropriate action on a much larger scale than currently envisaged and across all tenure. They considered that the Government was focused on building for home ownership and therefore neglecting housing for affordable and social rent.
- 4.29 It was reported that it had been 10 years since 200,000 homes (the implied annual rate from the Government's target) were added to the housing stock in a single year, but

the evidence suggested that this will not be enough to meet future demand and the backlog from previous years of undersupply.

- 4.30 The Select Committee found that in order to meet demand and have a moderating effect on house prices, at least 300,000 homes a year need to be built for the foreseeable future otherwise the age of a first-time buyer will continue to rise. The main conclusions of the Select Committee included that:

“The Government’s target of one million new homes by 2020 is not based on a robust analysis. To address the housing crisis at least 300,000 new homes are needed annually for the foreseeable future. One million homes by 2020 will not be enough”.

National Housing Federation Press Release: ‘England Short of Four Million Homes’ (18 May 2018)

- 4.31 The NHF press release⁴ reported that new figures reveal the true scale of the housing crisis in England and that the research (conducted by Heriot-Watt University) shows that England’s total housing backlog has reached four million homes.
- 4.32 They report that in order to both meet this backlog and provide for future demand, the country needs to build 340,000 homes per year until 2031, noting that this is significantly higher than current estimates which have never before taken into account the true scale of housing need created by both homelessness and high house prices.
- 4.33 However, the NHF is clear that these need to be the right type of houses with a need for 145,000 of these new homes per year to be affordable homes, compared to previous estimates of annual affordable housing need of around 78,000 homes. It reports that this means around two fifths (or 40%) of all new homes built every year must be affordable homes, yet in 2016/17 only around 23% of the total built were affordable homes.
- 4.34 The research breaks down exactly what type of affordable homes are needed:
- 90,000 per annum should be for social rent;
 - 30,000 per annum should be for intermediate affordable rent; and
 - 25,000 per annum should be for shared ownership.

⁴ <https://www.housing.org.uk/press/press-releases/england-short-of-four-million-homes/>

- 4.35 Reference was drawn to the September 2017 announcement by a former Prime Minister Theresa May that £2 billion will be invested in affordable housing and indicating that this could deliver around 25,000 new homes for social rent over three years, however the NHF report that even when this funding is made available, the research shows that it would deliver less than 10% of the social rented homes needed each year.
- 4.36 Government funding for social housing has been steadily declining for decades. In 1975/76 investment in social housing stood at more than £18 billion a year but had declined to just £1.1 billion in 2015/16. Over the same period, the housing benefit bill grew from £4 billion to £24.2 billion each year.
- 4.37 The NHF set out that homeownership rates have plummeted among young people, rough sleeping has risen by 169% since 2010 and that unless the Government takes steps to deliver more private, intermediate and social housing, the number of households in temporary accommodation is on track to reach 100,000 by 2020.
- 4.38 A series of quotes accompany the NHF press release from senior industry professionals, summaries of which are detailed below:
- David Orr, Chief Executive of the NHF – *“This ground-breaking new research shows the epic scale of the housing crisis in England”.*
 - Jon Sparkes, Chief Executive of Crisis – *“Today’s findings are stark and shocking, but they also represent a huge opportunity for us as a country to get to grips with our housing and homelessness crisis – and to end it once and for all”.*
 - Terrie Alafat CBE, Chief Executive of the Chartered Institute of Housing – *“This new report once again highlights the chronic housing shortage we face in the UK and it is clear that only a bold and ambitious plan to solve the housing crisis will prevent a decent, genuinely affordable home being out of reach for our children and their children.”*
 - Campbell Robb, Chief Executive of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation – *“It is unacceptable that currently in our society millions of people are locked out of being able to afford a decent and secure home. For years our failure to deliver enough affordable housing in England has led to rising levels of poverty and homelessness across our country.”*
 - Polly Neate, Chief Executive of Shelter – *“We are in the midst of a housing emergency where an entire generation faces a daily struggle for a decent*

home...Government can turn things around but only by building many more of the high quality, genuinely affordable homes this country is crying out for”.

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government Single Departmental Plan (27 June 2019)

4.39 The Ministry⁵ Single Departmental Plan outlines its objectives which include to “*deliver the homes the country needs*” and to “*make the vision of a place you call home a reality.*”

4.40 Under the objective of delivering the homes the country needs, the Plan states that the Ministry will:

“Support the delivery of a million homes by the end of 2020 and half a million more by the end of 2022 and put us on track to deliver 300,000 net additional homes a year on average by the mid-2020s, to help increase affordability.”

4.41 The Departmental Plan clearly outlines the Government’s aim to deliver 300,000 new homes per annum in order to address the housing crisis in England.

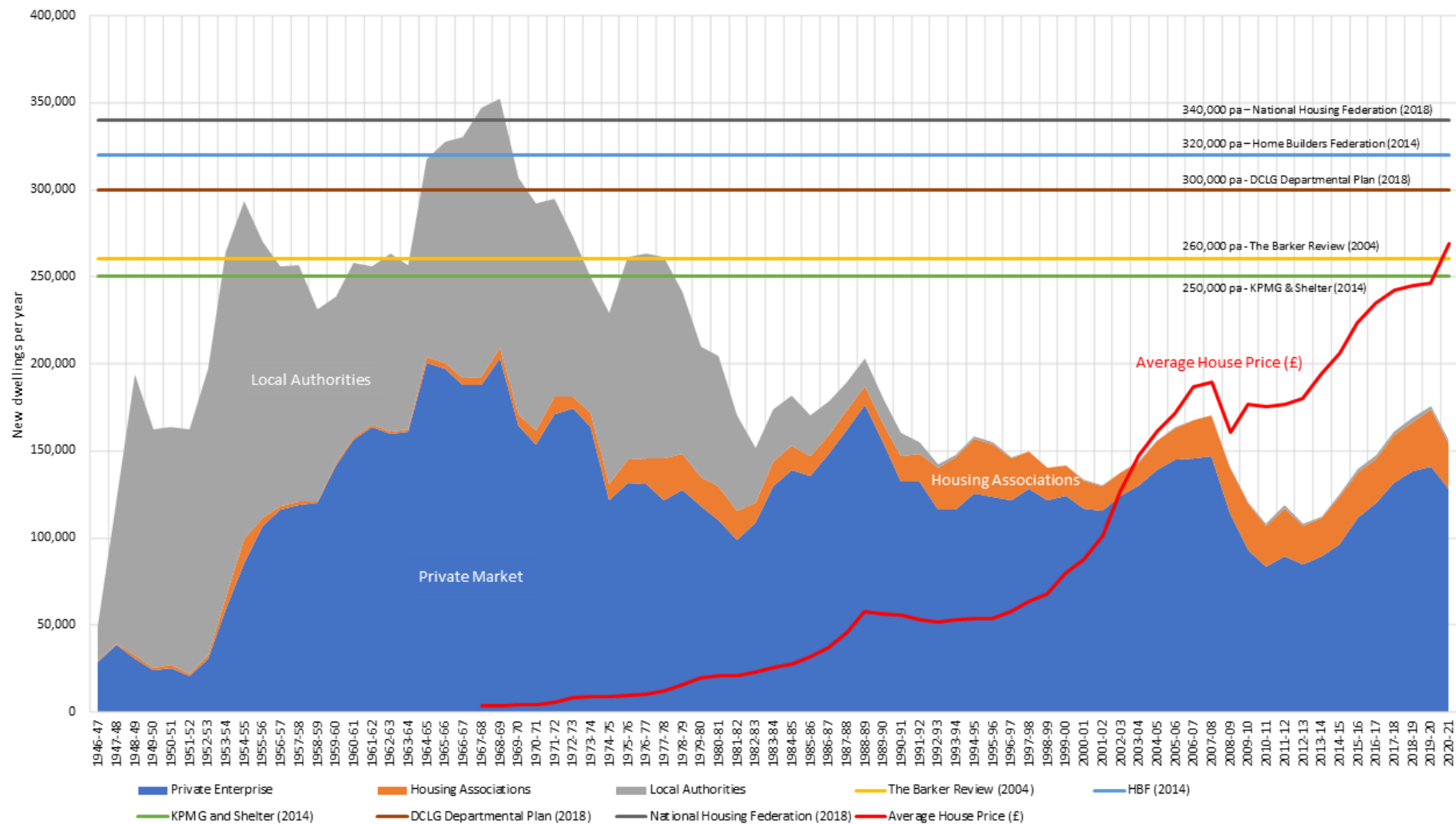
The National Housing Shortfall

4.42 Over the course of the past 18 years a series of industry leading professionals and figures at the highest level of Government have identified that there is a need for between 200,000 to 340,000 homes per annum to address the housing crisis that has engulfed the country.

4.43 Figure 4.2 below illustrates the level of house building in England between 1946 and 2020 and compares delivery over this period with the range of annual housing needs identified between 2004 and 2020, the most recent of which of course being the Government’s own Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (“DLUHC”) target for 300,000 new homes per annum.

⁵ The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government was renamed Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (“DLUHC”) in September 2021.

Figure 4.2: House Building in England 1946 to 2021



Source: DLUHC Live Table 209; DLUHC Live Table 253; HM Land Registry (2021); The Barker Review (2004); HBF (2014); Building the Homes We Need, KPMG & Shelter (2014); MHCLG Single Departmental Plan (2019); NHF (18 May 2018).

- 4.44 Figure 4.2 shows that the Government's current target of 300,000 new homes per annum is a figure that the country has not seen achieved since the mid to late 1960s. Whilst housing completions have generally been increasing since around 2011, they are still a long way short of meeting the level of housing delivery that is desperately needed to address the housing crisis in this country. Furthermore, completions dropped in the 2020-21 monitoring year, coincident with the Covid-19 pandemic; the first recorded fall since 2012-13.
- 4.45 At Figure 4.3 net additional dwellings in England since 2004 sourced from DLUHC Live Table 122 are compared with the annual need figures identified in the Barker Review (2004), the KPMG & Shelter research (2014), the HBF research (2014), the NHF research (2018), and the MHCLG Single Departmental Plan (2019).
- 4.46 The results are stark. The lowest of the annual need figures since 2004, that of the KPMG/Shelter report of 250,000 homes per annum, results in a shortfall of -1,061,038 homes in the past 17 years. To put this into context, this is equivalent to:
- 89% of the total number of households on local authority Housing Registers in the whole of England⁶; and
 - Over three-and-a-half times the total number of homes across the entire County of Oxfordshire⁷.
- 4.47 At the other end of the scale, the need for 340,000 homes per annum most recently identified in the NHF research results in a shortfall figure of -2,591,038 homes. This is equivalent to more than twice the total number of homes in the entire West Midlands metropolitan area⁸.
- 4.48 When the Government's most recently published target of 300,000 home per annum taken from the MHCLG 2018 Single Departmental Plan is used for comparison, there has been a shortfall of -1,911,038 homes since 2004. To put this into context, this is equivalent to:
- More than 1.6 times the number of households on local authority Housing Registers in the whole of England (see footnote 4); and
 - More than one-and-a-half times the total number of homes in Greater Manchester⁹.

⁶ Source: DLUHC Live Table 600 – 1,187,641 households on Housing Registers in England at 1 April 2021

⁷ Source: DLUHC Live Table 100 – 300,806 homes in Oxfordshire at 1 April 2020

⁸ Source: DLUHC Live Table 100 – 1,184,150 homes in West Midlands at 1 April 2020

⁹ Source: DLUHC Live Table 100 – 1,237,582 homes in Greater Manchester Metropolitan County at 1 April 2020

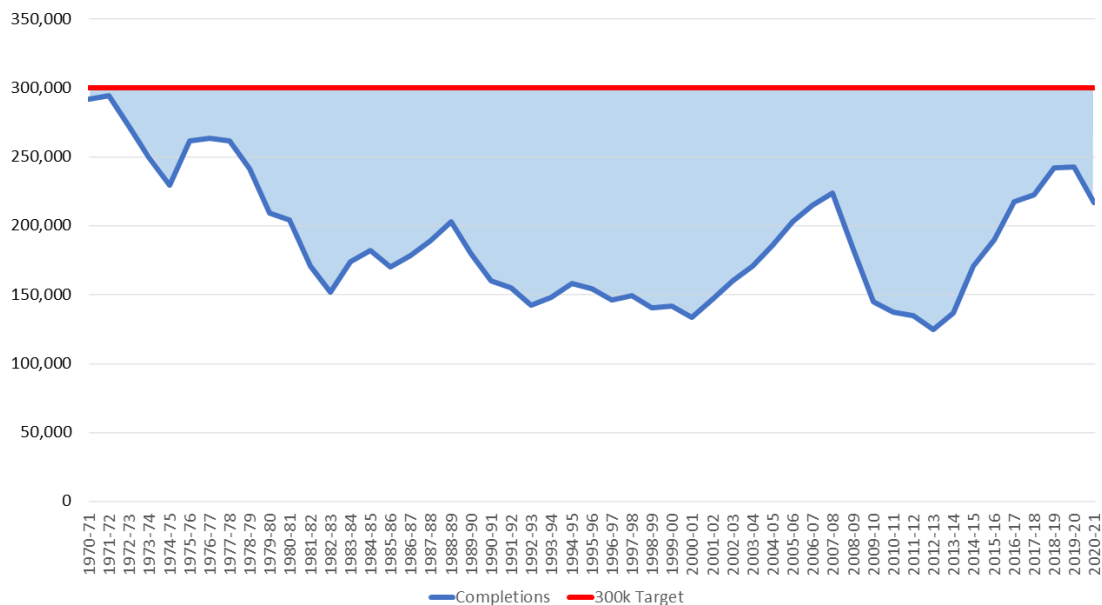
Figure 4.3: National Housing Shortfall Comparison

Year	Net Additions	KPMG/Shelter (2014) 250,000 pa		Barker Review (2004) 260,000 pa		MHCLG Departmental Plan (2019) 300,000 pa		The HBF (2014) 320,000 pa		NHF Research (2018) 340,000 pa	
		Annual	Cumulative	Annual	Cumulative	Annual	Cumulative	Annual	Cumulative	Annual	Cumulative
04/05	185,553	-64,447	-64,447	-74,447	-74,447	-114,447	-114,447	-134,447	-134,447	-154,447	-154,447
05/06	202,653	-47,347	-111,794	-57,347	-131,794	-97,347	-211,794	-117,347	-251,794	-137,347	-291,794
06/07	214,936	-35,064	-146,858	-45,064	-176,858	-85,064	-296,858	-105,064	-356,858	-125,064	-416,858
07/08	223,534	-26,466	-173,324	-36,466	-213,324	-76,466	-373,324	-96,466	-453,324	-116,466	-533,324
08/09	182,767	-67,233	-240,557	-77,233	-290,557	-117,233	-490,557	-137,233	-590,557	-157,233	-690,557
09/10	144,870	-105,130	-345,687	-115,130	-405,687	-155,130	-645,687	-175,130	-765,687	-195,130	-885,687
10/11	137,394	-112,606	-458,293	-122,606	-528,293	-162,606	-808,293	-182,606	-948,293	-202,606	-1,088,293
11/12	134,896	-115,104	-573,397	-125,104	-653,397	-165,104	-973,397	-185,104	-1,133,397	-205,104	-1,293,397
12/13	124,722	-125,278	-698,675	-135,278	-788,675	-175,278	-1,148,675	-195,278	-1,328,675	-215,278	-1,508,675
13/14	136,605	-113,395	-812,070	-123,395	-912,070	-163,395	-1,312,070	-183,395	-1,512,070	-203,395	-1,712,070
14/15	170,693	-79,307	-891,377	-89,307	-1,001,377	-129,307	-1,441,377	-149,307	-1,661,377	-169,307	-1,881,377
15/16	189,645	-60,355	-951,732	-70,355	-1,071,732	-110,355	-1,551,732	-130,355	-1,791,732	-150,355	-2,031,732
16/17	217,345	-32,655	-984,387	-42,655	-1,114,387	-82,655	-1,634,387	-102,655	-1,894,387	-122,655	-2,154,387
17/18	222,281	-27,719	-1,012,106	-37,719	-1,152,106	-77,719	-1,712,106	-97,719	-1,992,106	-117,719	-2,272,106
18/19	241,877	-8,123	-1,020,229	-18,123	-1,170,229	-58,123	-1,770,229	-78,123	-2,070,229	-98,123	-2,370,229
19/20	242,702	-7,298	-1,027,527	-17,298	-1,187,527	-57,298	-1,827,527	-77,298	-2,147,527	-97,298	-2,467,527
20/21	216,489	-33,511	-1,061,038	-43,511	-1,231,038	-83,511	-1,911,038	-103,511	-2,251,038	-123,511	-2,591,038
Total Shortfalls Since 2004 compared to:		KPMG/Shelter Research		The Barker Review		MHCLG Departmental Plan		The HBF		NHF Research	
		-1,061,038		-1,231,038		-1,911,038		-2,251,038		-2,591,038	

Source: DLUHC Live Table 122; HM Land Registry; The Barker Review (2004); HBF (2014); Building the Homes We Need, KPMG & Shelter (2014); NHF (18 May 2018); MHCLG Single Departmental Plan (2019)

- 4.49 It is widely accepted that 300,000 new homes are needed per annum and have been for quite some considerable time as set out above. The last time the country built more than 300,000 homes was in 1969. Since that time there has arisen an accumulated shortfall of 5,626,760. This 50-year duration accumulated shortfall is set out in Figure 4.4 below.

Figure 4.4 National Housing Shortfall since 1970/71



Source: DLUHC Live Tables 122

Conclusion on the Extent of the National Housing Shortfall

- 4.50 The evidence before the Inspector shows that in every scenario, against every annual need figure, the extent of the shortfall in housing delivery in England is staggering and merely serves to further compound the acute affordability problems that the country is facing.
- 4.51 It is my view that what is clear is that a significant boost in the delivery of housing, and in particular affordable housing, in England is absolutely essential to arrest the housing crisis and prevent further worsening of the situation.

The Development Plan and Related Policies

Section 5

- 5.1 In accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the application should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.2 The Development Plan for Uttlesford District comprises the saved policies of the Uttlesford Local Plan (2005). This document sets out the strategy for development during a plan period from 2000 to 2011.
- 5.3 Following the withdrawal of two previous Local Plans in 2015 and 2020 after both were found unsound by Inspectors, the Council has commenced work on a new Local Plan to cover the period 2020 to 2040. An 'Issues and Options' consultation was undertaken in late 2020 and early 2021.
- 5.4 At a meeting on 12 May 2022 the Council's Local Plan Leadership Group considered a number of draft chapters for the emerging Local Plan.
- 5.5 The Council's latest Local Development Scheme, dated July 2022 (**CD H13**) shows that a Preferred Options consultation on draft policies is due to be undertaken in November to December 2022; that a Pre-Submission consultation will be undertaken in November to December 2023; that submission and examination will take place in 2024; and that the Plan will be adopted in March 2025.

Uttlesford Local Plan (2005) (CD G3)

- 5.6 The Uttlesford Local Plan sets out the policies for the delivery of development within the District up to 2011. It was prepared to meet development needs as set out in the Essex and Southend-on-Sea Structure Plan to 2011 and is now time-expired by over a decade.
- 5.7 The Plan does not provide for or contemplate growth or housing need beyond 2011 and the weight to be accorded to the Plan and its policies must be considered in this context. In light of changes in national policy many of the policies within the Local Plan are now inconsistent with the NPPF.

- 5.8 Nevertheless, the Local Plan vision (paragraph 1.15) recognises that the Council will support the provision of affordable housing and makes clear that the Council “*will seek to ensure that good, affordable housing is available to all residents, especially young people and low paid workers from the District*”. In light of the evidence I present in subsequent chapters this vision remains necessary in 2022.
- 5.9 Chapter 6 of the Local Plan deals with housing. At paragraph 6.1 it makes clear that one of the objectives of the policy is “*To meet the need for affordable housing and retain mixed and balanced communities*”.
- 5.10 **Policy H9 ‘Affordable Housing’** is the principal policy for affordable housing in Uttlesford, and sets an expectation that **40% affordable housing** will be achieved. The policy states that: “*The Council will seek to negotiate on a site to site basis an element of affordable housing of 40% of the total provision of housing on appropriate allocated and windfall sites, having regard to the up to date Housing Needs Survey, market and site considerations*”.
- 5.11 Appendix 2 of the Local Plan sets out performance indicators and targets to be met by the Local Plan. Under the objective of meeting the need for affordable housing, the indicator of performance is the amount of affordable new homes provided and the proportion of the total dwelling completions each year that are affordable. The relevant target of 980 affordable homes between 2000 and 2011 is no longer in force.

Other material considerations

Emerging Local Plan: Draft Housing Chapter (CD H14)

- 5.12 As referred to above, at a meeting on 12 May 2022 the Council’s Local Plan Leadership Group considered a number of draft chapters for the emerging Local Plan, which I consider are highly relevant to the issue of affordable housing. I recognise the chapters are in draft and may be subject to change or updating prior to the Preferred Options consultation which is anticipated in November and December 2022.
- 5.13 The second paragraph of the draft Housing Chapter recognises the importance of housing in economic and wellbeing terms, and specifically notes that the high cost of housing prevents people from living in the District:

“Housing in Uttlesford has an important part to play in supporting both the local and national economy, as well as being critical in promoting well-being and achieving positive health outcomes. Uttlesford is a rural district with historic market towns and beautiful villages. Overall, the quality of life of residents is high, although demand

for housing is also high, with high rents and house prices, preventing many people from living in the district.”

- 5.14 The paragraph also highlights the need to deliver affordable housing, as informed by the Council’s existing evidence of affordable housing needs. It also notes that new evidence on housing need will be prepared (although at the time of writing, I am not aware that any new evidence is in the public domain yet):

“It is important to increase the supply of all types of housing, including affordable housing, and maintain a mix of different sizes, types and tenures of housing to meet a wide range of housing needs. The previous Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) for the Uttlesford assessed the housing needs and helps to inform the scale and mix of housing and the range of tenures that are required to meet the need. The Council is producing a Local Housing Needs Assessment (LHNA) to update the information in the SHMA.”

- 5.15 Within the papers presented to the Local Plan Leadership Group was draft policy H6 ‘Affordable Housing’. This is set out at page 8 of the draft chapter, and continues the existing policy approach of seeking **40% affordable housing** on qualifying sites. The supporting text, at pages 6 and 7 of the chapter, explains that the 2017 SHMA found that affordable housing need accounts for 19.5% of the total housing need and that the Council considers it appropriate to seek 40% affordable housing on qualifying sites to ensure the need is met.
- 5.16 The supporting text also highlights that *“There are, and will continue to be, many households in Uttlesford lacking their own housing or living in housing that is inadequate or unsuitable, who are unlikely to be able to meet their needs in the housing market without some assistance”*. (my emphasis).

Uttlesford First Homes Planning Advice Notice 2022 (CD H7)

- 5.17 The Planning Advice Notice explains how Uttlesford District Council intends to apply the Written Ministerial Statement of May 2021, which introduced the new First Homes tenure into national planning policy. Paragraph 1.2 confirms that First Homes are a form of discount market sale housing discounted by at least 30% at a price no higher than £250,000 outside London (after discount); available to eligible first time buyers (in accordance with the criteria set out at paragraph 1.4).
- 5.18 Paragraph 3.5 confirms that of the affordable housing contributions on development sites, the Council will seek 70% affordable housing for rent; 25% First Homes and 5% Shared Ownership.

- 5.19 Paragraph 3.6 explains that in accordance with national policy, the 30% discount and the £250,000 price cap will be applied in Uttlesford. Section 4 applies local connection criteria for first sales and resales for the first three months of marketing, which include a household with an adult who lives, works (or is due to commence working) or has a close family connection in Uttlesford.

Uttlesford Housing Strategy 2021 to 2026 (CD L1)

- 5.20 The Housing Strategy details the main housing issues in Uttlesford, and how the Council intends to deal with these at the corporate level.
- 5.21 The Foreword, at page 3, is written by the Portfolio Holder for Housing and sets out the broad challenges of affordability in the District including an inaccessible housing market for many households. It also sets out the Council's commitment to providing affordable housing:

"Everyone should have the opportunity for a decent home, which they can afford, in a community where they want to live."

Uttlesford is regularly named as one of the best places in England to live. It is a wonderful place to live work and play.

We do however face the challenge of providing affordable housing for those who already live in the district and those coming here for work. With housing costs continuing to rise home ownership and access to the private rental market is out of reach for many young people and families. This is why we will continue to support the delivery of affordable and social rented housing to provide the homes for those on our Housing Register for whom these tenures are their only housing option. The Council will also continue with its ambitious programme for the building and refurbishment of our own council homes" (my emphasis).

- 5.22 The section 'Key Issues and Our Response' provides in-depth discussion of a range of housing and demographic issues in Uttlesford. Sub-section 2 'Affordability & Housing Choice' reviews a range of data sources¹⁰, including:
- Affordability ratios at figure 4 at page 18; in Uttlesford the ratio exceeds 12 times earnings and is higher than the average for Essex, the East and for England.

¹⁰ Further detail on the latest data can be found at Section 9 of this Proof of Evidence

- Lower quartile house prices at figure 5 at page 19; in Uttlesford these exceed £300,000 and are the second highest out of the authorities in North Essex and East Herts;
- Average house prices in 2021 by ward at figure 6 at page 20; these range from around £400,000 in Saffron Walden Shire; to almost £750,000 in Broad Oak & The Hallingburys.

5.23 The case studies of individual households at pages 21 and 22 illustrate the impact of high prices and poor affordability for a range of residents including those working in 'key worker' sectors such as in care, education and logistics; those in receipt of housing benefit; those aspiring to home ownership.

5.24 The Housing Register is discussed at page 23; the Housing Strategy notes that there are around 1,300 applicants seeking affordable housing, who have met the Council's eligibility criteria (which include a requirement to have lived or worked in the District for at least three years).

5.25 Pages 23 and 24 discuss the implications of affordability in Uttlesford, with the final paragraph at page 23 explaining that this is forcing households – particularly younger households and families – to leave the district:

*"In summary, house prices and affordability ratios are very high. Local residents and workers are mostly unable to afford local prices and rents for a suitable home, this results in younger workers and families very often having to look to move away to cheaper districts. This suggests **there is strong continuing need for affordable rented housing and for 'intermediate' and sub-market solutions to meet current and future demand**, if we are to keep younger workers and families with young children within the district."* (my emphasis).

5.26 Page 24 highlights the challenge of accessing homeownership, which again forces households to leave Uttlesford to purchase their first home:

*"In the home ownership market the evidence shows that mortgages are unaffordable for a large percentage of the population, and this again means many young people, families and those providing key services **are moving out of the district to be able to buy their first home**."* (my emphasis).

5.27 Page 24 also notes that some key workers have particular difficulties even accessing the housing market in Uttlesford at all, with care sector staff facing particular challenges.

Uttlesford Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020 to 2025 (CD L2)

- 5.28 The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy sets out how the Council intends to prevent homelessness in the District.
- 5.29 The Foreword on page 3, by the Portfolio Holder sets out the importance of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, noting that *“There are few things more important in life than having a roof over your head”*.
- 5.30 Page 7 discusses the shortfalls between Local Housing Allowance and private sector rents in Uttlesford.
- 5.31 Figure 3 at page 9 sets out the main causes of homelessness in Uttlesford. The main reason is eviction by friends or family; this is described as being *“indicative of these households struggling to obtain or sustain their own affordable housing in either the private rented or owner occupied sector”*.
- 5.32 The ending of Assured Shorthold Tenancies is the third main reason for homelessness; the Strategy explains that *“with the local levels of LHA being substantially lower than actual private rents in the district, it is hard for people losing one private rented property to source another at a rent they can afford”*. It goes on to explain that *“This is why it is also difficult for the council to prevent homelessness by using the private sector. For many of the clients seen by the Housing Options service, an affordable rented property from either the council or partner RSL is their only realistic affordable housing option”*.

Uttlesford Corporate Plan 2022 to 2026 (CD L3)

- 5.33 The Corporate Plan sets out the Council's priorities and principles over the five years between 2022 and 2026 in accordance with the overall vision of *“making Uttlesford the best place to live, work and play”*. The Corporate Plan then sets out a series of brief objectives and actions in respect of these priorities.
- 5.34 The Corporate Plan sets out that the Council will be an *“active place-maker for our towns and villages”*. It explains the importance of housing for residents' wellbeing, noting that *“Taking an active role in providing homes and services for in need will safeguard the health and welfare of all our residents”*.
- 5.35 Point 7 of the Corporate Plan directly addresses affordable housing; it seeks to *“Deliver more affordable homes and protect those in need in our district”*. The five actions the Council will take include those to increase the supply of affordable housing and to improve the existing public and private sector housing stock:

- “a. Increase the number of affordable homes delivered and different tenure options including social renting*
- b. Refurbish our existing council homes to sustainable standards when required*
- c. Reduce the number of empty homes*
- d. Ensure that landlords maintain high quality private sector housing conditions*
- e. Ensure that services to protect vulnerable women and men who live in our district are accessible and appropriate” (my emphasis).*

Conclusions on the Development Plan and Related Policies

- 5.36 It is my opinion that the evidence set out within this section clearly highlights that within adopted policy and a wide range of other plans and strategies, providing affordable housing has long been established as, and remains, a key priority for Uttlesford District Council. The Council has a suite of up-to-date corporate documents which underline the importance of affordable housing and the consequences of poor affordability upon residents in Uttlesford.
- 5.37 Given the recognised need for affordable housing across Uttlesford, the appeal proposals provide a significant contribution (up to 93 homes), which would make a sizeable contribution to the needs of many households in Uttlesford, who need assistance with their housing solutions. .

Affordable Housing Needs

Section 6

The Development Plan

- 6.1 Appendix 2 of the Local Plan (**CD G3**) sets out performance indicators and targets to be met by the Local Plan 2005. Under the objective of meeting the need for affordable housing, the indicator of performance is the amount of affordable new homes provided and the proportion of the total dwelling completions each year that are affordable.
- 6.2 Whilst the target of 980 affordable homes applied between 2000 and 2011, it is no longer relevant, as the period has now elapsed. It is unclear why such a low figure (equating to just 89 dwellings per annum) was chosen as the affordable housing delivery target for the Council and the Local Plan does not explain how the target was identified.
- 6.3 Nevertheless, in the absence of an up-to-date defined affordable housing target in adopted and emerging policy, it is important to consider the objectively assessed need for affordable housing within the most up-to-date Strategic Housing Market Assessment ("SHMA"). In Uttlesford, the SHMA was first prepared in 2015 and was followed by an update in 2017.
- 6.4 I note that further evidence is being produced in the form of a Local Housing Needs Assessment ("LHNA"). At the time of writing, the LHNA is not in the public domain and it is not available for public scrutiny or peer review. It is envisaged that the LHNA will need to include an up-to-date assessment of affordable housing need in the context of the broader definition of affordable housing introduced in the NPPF in 2018 at Annex 2.
- 6.5 In light of the 2017 SHMA update pre-dating the latest National Planning Policy Framework in 2018, the need identified should be considered as a minimum requirement.

West Essex and East Hertfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2015 (CD L4)

- 6.6 The assessment was jointly commissioned by the local authorities of West Essex (Epping Forest, Harlow and Uttlesford) and East Hertfordshire to undertake a Strategic

Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) to identify the functional Housing Market Area and establish the Objectively Assessed Need for housing.

- 6.7 The SHMA identifies a “*substantial need*” for additional affordable housing with a total of 13,600 dwellings across the West Essex and East Hertfordshire HMA over the 22-year period 2011-33, which includes 5,218 households in need of affordable housing in 2011.
- 6.8 The analysis also identifies that a number of households unable to afford their housing costs are likely to move away from the area, and some might prefer to stay in the area if housing costs were less expensive or if more affordable housing was available.
- 6.9 Given the overall level of affordable housing need identified, the SHMA makes clear (paragraph 6.6) that it will be important to “*maximise the amount of affordable housing that can be delivered through market housing led developments*” throughout the 22-year period.
- 6.10 It states that key to this is the economic viability of such developments, as this will inevitably determine (and limit) the amount of affordable housing that individual schemes are able to deliver.
- 6.11 The housing mix analysis identified a need to provide additional affordable housing for 13,291 households over the 22-year period 2011-33 (an average of 604 per year) throughout across the HMA. This would provide for the current unmet needs for affordable housing in addition to the projected future growth in affordable housing need but this assumes that the level of housing benefit support provided to households living in the private rented sector remains constant.
- 6.12 Paragraph 4.99 notes that “*Any losses from the current stock (such as demolition or clearance, or sales through Right to Buy) would increase the number of affordable dwellings needed by an equivalent amount*”.
- 6.13 Paragraph 4.110 goes on to highlight that “*if no households were to receive housing benefit support in the private rented sector, more than half (52%) of the growth in household numbers would need affordable housing. This would need a total of 19,700 affordable homes to be provided over the 22-year period 2011-33.*”
- 6.14 Figure 62 of the SHMA sets out the current unmet need for affordable housing and projected future affordable housing need for the 22-year period 2011-33 for each of the four local authority areas. For Uttlesford the need is 2,724 dwellings over this period, or **124 dwellings per annum**.

6.15 Is it important to note that the 2015 SHMA focuses on households with the most acute housing needs but does not however take into account households currently residing in the private rented sector (PRS).

6.16 This is because 2015 SHMA was prepared on the basis that households in receipt of housing benefit within the PRS are not in need of affordable housing. Paragraph 4.108 at page 80 of the SHMA sets out that:

“The model adopts a neutral position in relation to this housing benefit support, insofar as it assumes that the number of claimants in receipt of housing benefit in the private rented sector will remain constant. The model does not count any dwellings in the private rented sector as affordable housing supply; however it does assume that housing benefit will continue to help some households to afford their housing costs, and as a consequence these households will not need affordable housing”.

6.17 As set out in Section 5 above, the Council’s own Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy recognises the serious shortcomings in quality and security of tenure in the PRS. Indeed, as page 9 of the Strategy notes, *“For many of the clients seen by the Housing Options service, an affordable rented property from either the council or partner RSL is their only realistic affordable housing option”*. The SHMA’s reliance upon the PRS is plainly at odds with the Council’s wider understanding and position in respect of the acceptability of the PRS in meeting housing needs.

6.18 The 124 per annum figure should therefore be considered a **minimum figure** at best.

6.19 It is commonly accepted that the PRS should not be regarded as a form of affordable housing. Indeed, the PRS is not within the definition of affordable housing set out in the 2019 NPPF and this has been emphasised through numerous examples such as the Eastleigh Local Plan examination, in which the Inspector’s report states at Paragraph 34:

“There is no justification in the Framework or Guidance for reducing the identified need for affordable housing by the assumed continued role of the PRS with LHA. This category of housing does not come within the definition of affordable housing in the Framework. There is not the same security of tenure as with affordable housing and at the lower-prices end of the PRS the standard of accommodation may well be poor”.

6.20 The 2015 SHMA appears to acknowledge this lack of security in the PRS at paragraph 4.107 by stating:

'It is important to note that private rented housing (with or without housing benefit) does not meet the definitions of affordable housing. However, many tenants that rent from a private landlord can only afford their housing costs as they receive housing benefit. These households aren't counted towards the need for affordable housing (as housing benefit enables them to afford their housing costs), but if housing benefit support was no longer provided (or if there wasn't sufficient private rented housing available at a price they could afford) then this would increase the need for affordable housing.'

- 6.21 In light of this, I suggest that the 2015 SHMA underestimates the extent to which affordable housing is required within the district.
- 6.22 By way of illustration, figure 64 at page 81 of the SHMA undertakes a 'sensitivity test' on various scenarios in relation to housing benefit support. This includes a 100% reduction, which shows the effect on the overall need figure if housing benefit support is discounted from the calculation of affordable housing need. This shows that 52% of projected household growth across West Essex and East Hertfordshire between 2011 and 2033 would require affordable housing (up from 35% of projected household growth if no change is assumed).

West Essex and East Hertfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment – Affordable Housing Update (July 2017) (CD L5)

- 6.23 This SHMA updates the affordable housing analysis undertaken from the original Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) published in September 2015.
- 6.24 This update finds that there will be a need to provide additional affordable housing for a further 11,801 households over the remaining Plan period 2016-33 (35.3% of the projected household growth). Data from DCLG¹¹ Live tables identifies a vacancy rate of 1.4% for affordable housing in West Essex and East Hertfordshire, therefore the 11,801 households identified represent an overall affordable housing need for around 11,969 dwellings over the period 2016-2033, an average of 704 dwellings per year.
- 6.25 It also makes clear that any losses from the current stock (such as demolition or clearance, or sales through Right to Buy¹²) would increase the number of affordable dwellings needed by an equivalent amount.

¹¹ DCLG has since been renamed and is now the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities ("DLUHC")

¹² See Figure 7.2 for evidence on losses to affordable housing stock

- 6.26 Figure 21 of the SHMA sets out the current unmet need for affordable housing and projected future affordable housing need for the remaining 17-year period 2016-33. For Uttlesford this amounts to a need for 2,167 affordable dwellings or **127 per annum**. This represents an increase in need since the previous SHMA.
- 6.27 At paragraph 3.65 the 2017 SHMA Update considers that the role of the private rented sector is important and that private rented housing (with or without housing benefit) does not meet the definitions of affordable housing.
- 6.28 Paragraph 3.66 continues that the 2017 SHMA updates model does not count any dwellings in the private rented sector as affordable housing supply, but it does assume that housing benefit will continue to help some households to afford their housing costs, and as a consequence these households will not need affordable housing.
- 6.29 As highlighted above, there is good reason for not including private rented accommodation in the supply of affordable housing with rents in the private sector being almost double than those for affordable housing.
- 6.30 The 2017 SHMA also assumes that housing benefit will continue to help some households to afford their housing costs, and as a consequence these households will not need affordable housing.
- 6.31 As with the 2015 SHMA, the 127 per annum figure should therefore be considered a **minimum figure** at best.
- 6.32 By way of illustration, figure 24 at page 35 of the 2017 SHMA undertakes a 'sensitivity test' on various scenarios in relation to housing benefit support. As with the 2015 SHMA, this includes a 100% reduction, which shows the effect on the overall need figure if housing benefit support is discounted from the calculation of affordable housing need. This shows that 52% of projected household growth across West Essex and East Hertfordshire between 2011 and 2033 would require affordable housing (up from 35% of projected household growth if no change is assumed). In numerical terms, this equates to an additional 5,500 dwellings across the authorities, rising from 12,000 dwellings to 17,500 dwellings, an increase of 46%.
- 6.33 In light of this, I suggest that the 2017 SHMA Update also underestimates the extent to which affordable housing is required within the district.

Conclusions on Affordable Housing Needs in Uttlesford

- 6.34 It is my view that the evidence demonstrates that there is a clear affordable housing need within Uttlesford. However, the calculation set out in the SHMA 2015 and 2017 excludes the needs of households who are accommodated in the PRS supported by housing benefit. There are strong reasons to disagree with this approach and I consider the SHMAs underplay the true extent of affordable housing need in Uttlesford.

Affordable Housing Delivery

Section 7

- 7.1 The Council's adopted affordable housing policy currently set out in Policy H9 of the Uttlesford Local Plan (2005), seeks to achieve a rate of 40% affordable housing provision on qualifying sites in Uttlesford District.
- 7.2 Since the Local Plan became time-expired in 2011, this section presents a review of affordable housing delivery from 2011/12 onwards to align with the time period of the SHMA 2015, which considers need over the period 2011/12 to 2032/33.
- 7.3 Figure 7.1 below illustrates the delivery across Uttlesford since 2011/12.

Figure 7.1: Uttlesford Gross Additions to Affordable Housing Stock, 2011/12 to 2020/21

Monitoring Year	Total Housing Completions (net)	Additions to Affordable Housing Stock (Gross)	Gross Affordable Additions as a %age of Total Completions
2011/12	521	122	23%
2012/13	540	134	25%
2013/14	390	76	19%
2014/15	463	80	17%
2015/16	554	115	21%
2016/17	722	149	21%
2017/18	969	157	16%
2018/19	983	305	31%
2019/20	485	99	20%
2020/21	362	51	14%
Total	5,989	1,288	22%
Annual Average	599	129	22%

Source: Freedom of Information Response dated 27 July 2022

- 7.4 Figure 7.1 reveals that the Council has delivered 1,288 gross affordable dwellings over the ten year period 2011/12 to 2020/21; an average of 129 affordable dwellings per annum. This equates to 22% of overall completions. Completions of affordable housing were above average in 2018/19 but fell significantly in the most recent monitoring year 2020/21 to just 51 gross completions – the lowest level in the last ten years.

- 7.5 It is important to note that the gross affordable completions figure does not take into account any losses from the affordable housing stock through demolitions nor through Right to Buy sales.

Accounting for the Right to Buy

- 7.6 Figure 7.2 below shows the total number of Right to Buy losses from the affordable housing stock in Uttlesford, both from local authority stock and that held by Registered Providers.

Figure 7.2: Uttlesford Right to Buy Sales, 2011/12 to 2020/21

Monitoring Year	Local Authority Right to Buy Sales	Registered Provider Right to Buy Sales	Total Right to Buy Sales
2011/12	-4	0	-4
2012/13	-9	-1	-10
2013/14	-8	-4	-12
2014/15	-12	0	-12
2015/16	-7	-1	-8
2016/17	-16	0	-16
2017/18	-9	0	-9
2018/19	-7	0	-7
2019/20	-11	0	-11
2020/21	-8	0	-8
Total	-91	-6	-97
Annual Average	-9	-1	-10

Sources: DLUHC; Regulator of Social Housing Statistical Data Returns

- 7.7 Since 2011/12, a total of 97 affordable dwellings have been lost from the overall affordable housing stock, equivalent to 10 dwellings per annum or 8% of gross affordable housing completions. These dwellings are lost permanently from the affordable housing stock and cannot be used to accommodate households in need into the future.
- 7.8 Figure 7.3 below recalculates the overall affordable housing delivery in Uttlesford, taking Right to Buy losses into account to provide a net delivery figure.

Figure 7.3: Uttlesford Net Additions to Affordable Housing Stock, 2011/12 to 2020/21

Monitoring Year	Total Housing Completions (net)	Additions to Affordable Housing Stock (Gross)	Total Right to Buy Sales	Additions to Affordable Housing Stock (Net of Right to Buy Sales)	Net Affordable Additions as a %age of Total Completions
2011/12	521	122	-4	118	23%
2012/13	540	134	-10	124	23%
2013/14	390	76	-12	64	16%
2014/15	463	80	-12	68	15%
2015/16	554	115	-8	107	19%
2016/17	722	149	-16	133	18%
2017/18	969	157	-9	148	15%
2018/19	983	305	-7	298	30%
2019/20	485	99	-11	88	18%
2020/21	362	51	-8	43	12%
Total	5,989	1,288	-97	1,191	20%
Annual Average	599	129	-10	119	20%

Sources: Freedom of Information Response dated 27 July 2022; DLUHC; Regulator of Social Housing Statistical Data Returns

- 7.9 Whilst the overall Right to Buy losses in Uttlesford may be fairly modest, they nonetheless have a persistent impact upon the net rate of affordable housing completions which fall to 20% of net housing completions.

Affordable Housing Delivery Against Identified Needs

SHMA 2015

- 7.10 When comparing net affordable housing delivery with the needs identified in the 2017 SHMA of 124 affordable dwellings per annum between 2011/12 and 2031/32, the Council has delivered a shortfall of -49 affordable dwellings (equivalent to -5 dwellings per annum).

Figure 7.4: Uttlesford Net Additions to Affordable Housing Stock Compared with SHMA 2015 Identified Need, 2011/12 to 2020/21

Monitoring Year	Additions to Affordable Housing Stock (Net of Right to Buy Sales)	SHMA 2015 Need	Surplus / Shortfall
2011/12	118	124	-6
2012/13	124	124	0
2013/14	64	124	-60
2014/15	68	124	-56
2015/16	107	124	-17
2016/17	133	124	9
2017/18	148	124	24
2018/19	298	124	174
2019/20	88	124	-36
2020/21	43	124	-81
Total	1,191	1,240	-49
Annual Average	119	124	-5

Sources: Freedom of Information Response dated 27 July 2022; DLUHC; Regulator of Social Housing Statistical Data Returns; SHMA 2015

SHMA 2017

- 7.11 When comparing net affordable housing delivery with the needs identified in the 2017 SHMA of 127 affordable dwellings per annum between 2016/17 and 2031/32, the Council has delivered a surplus of +75 affordable dwellings (equivalent to +15 dwellings per annum). The strong delivery observed in 2018/19 is noticeable and generated a surplus for that year, although affordable housing delivery fell markedly in 2021/22.

Figure 7.5: Uttlesford Net Additions to Affordable Housing Stock Compared with SHMA 2017 Identified Need, 2016/17 to 2020/21

Monitoring Year	Additions to Affordable Housing Stock (Net of Right to Buy Sales)	SHMA 2017 Need	Surplus / Shortfall
2016/17	133	127	6
2017/18	148	127	21
2018/19	298	127	171
2019/20	88	127	-39
2020/21	43	127	-84
Total	710	635	75
Annual Average	142	127	15

Sources: Freedom of Information Response dated 27 July 2022; DLUHC; Regulator of Social Housing Statistical Data Returns; SHMA 2017

Conclusions in respect of affordable housing delivery

- 7.12 In the ten years since 2011/12, the Council has delivered an average of 119 net affordable dwellings per annum. This is slightly less than the assessed needs of 124 affordable dwellings per annum in the SHMA 2015, and the figure of 127 affordable dwellings per annum in the SHMA 2017.
- 7.13 However, as I set out in Section 6 of this Proof of Evidence, I hold serious concerns as to whether the SHMA is a true reflection of affordable housing need in Uttlesford, since the SHMA methodology disregards the needs of certain households who, in practice, are experiencing housing need.
- 7.14 Therefore, whilst a surplus may have been achieved against the needs identified in the SHMA 2017, I consider this do not ‘tell the full story’ in respect of affordable housing need in Uttlesford. I note with concern the poor affordable housing delivery in 2020/21, which is the lowest rate of delivery recorded in the last ten years. It is therefore important to consider the future delivery of affordable housing in Uttlesford, in the context of meeting the needs of households in Uttlesford, which the council’s corporate documents fully recognise as putting in peril a number of its residents, due to high prices and affordability issues. I consider the future supply in Section 8 of this Proof of Evidence.

The Future Supply of Affordable Housing

Section 8

- 8.1 The future supply of affordable housing in Uttlesford District is highly uncertain. In the absence of an adopted Development Plan, and with the Local Plan 2005 having become time-expired eleven years ago, the Council is reliant upon dwellings coming forward on unallocated sites to meet needs for affordable and open market housing.
- 8.2 Tetlow King Planning has analysed the forward supply of affordable housing over the five year period 2021/22 to 2025/26, based upon the Council's '5-Year Land Supply Statement and Housing Trajectory' dated 1 April 2021 (**CD I2**). Full details of this analysis can be found at **Appendix JS5**
- 8.3 The Council's trajectory shows that the Council has a deliverable supply of 2,592 dwellings in total over the five year period 2021/22 to 2025/26. Of these, 1,939 dwellings are to come forward through existing commitments on major sites; a further 369 dwellings through existing commitments on minor sites; 228 dwellings through windfall; and 56 dwellings (equivalent) at communal establishments.
- 8.4 It is the existing commitments on major sites which are most likely to deliver affordable housing, since small permissions and windfall sites generally fall below the size threshold for affordable housing. Of the 1,939 dwellings expected to come forward from this part of the supply, the assessment shows that around **598 affordable dwellings will come forward over the five year period**. This equates to around **120 affordable dwellings per annum** over the period.
- 8.5 The projected delivery of 120 gross affordable dwellings per annum is a decrease from the average of 129 gross affordable dwellings per annum delivered between 2011/12 and 2020/21. It represents a decrease in delivery of 9 dwellings per annum, or 7%. Put another way, that is another 9 households' needs going unmet each year, when compared with the prevailing rate of affordable housing delivery.
- 8.6 It is noted that Woodlands Park, Great Dunmow, is the largest site in the trajectory and has a complex planning history. A review of this planning history shows that much of the affordable housing attributable to the remaining unbuilt phases (Sectors 2 and 3) has already been constructed, with a balance of only 20 affordable apartments at Sector 3 remaining to be delivered.

- 8.7 In addition, Right to Buy losses will reduce the gross supply of affordable housing. Past data show an average of 10 affordable dwellings have been lost per annum in Uttlesford since 2011/12. Applying this average to the five year forward supply would result in net delivery of just 110 affordable dwellings per annum 2020/21 to 2024/25.
- 8.8 Clearly, this is insufficient to meet the need of 127 affordable dwellings per annum as identified in the SHMA 2017, although that is with the acknowledgement that (as discussed at Section 6 of this Proof) this is very much a minimum figure, since it assumes households in receipt of housing benefit in the private rented sector are not in need of an affordable home, a position that I consider underplays the true extent of affordable housing need in Uttlesford
- 8.9 Overall, the analysis shows that the future supply of affordable housing in Uttlesford will reduce in the next five years. In the context of the challenging housing affordability situation (which I discuss further at Section 9 of this Proof of Evidence), and the Council's recognition at the corporate level of the need to deliver more affordable homes; this is a troubling situation for any household in housing need or struggling to rent or purchase a home in Uttlesford.

Affordability Indicators

Section 9

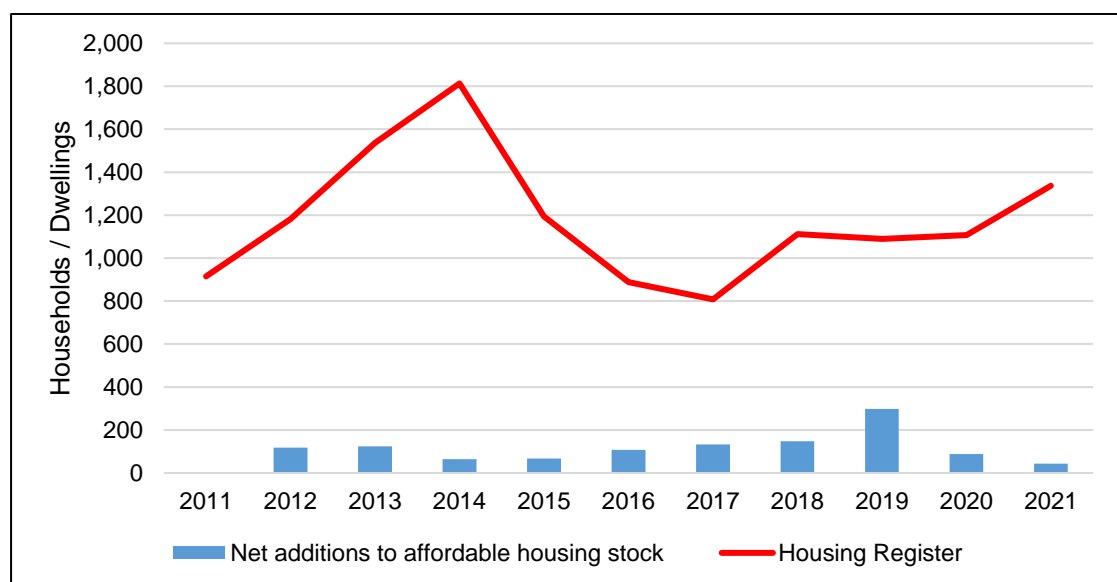
Market Signals

- 9.1 The PPG recognises the importance of giving due consideration to market signals as part of understanding affordability. I acknowledge that this is in the context of plan making.

Housing Register

- 9.2 Data published by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities shows that at the most recent count on 31 March 2021, there were 1,337 households on the Housing Register in Uttlesford. The DLUHC data is presented in figure 9.1 below alongside net affordable housing completions between 2011 and 2021 and show that despite ongoing affordable housing completions the Register has continued to increase (particularly since 2017).

Figure 9.1: Uttlesford Housing Register, 2011 to 2021



Source: Freedom of Information Response dated 27 July 2022; DLUHC; Statistical Data Returns. Net additions are for the monitoring year rather than calendar year (e.g. data for 2011/12 is presented at 2012 in the chart)

- 9.3 In addition, the Council's Fol response indicates that as of 31 March 2022, the Council had **1,268 households on the housing register**, a slight drop from the 2021 figure but still the second highest in the last eight years.

- 9.4 There are strict eligibility criteria that applicants must meet if they wish to join the Housing Register in Uttlesford; these are detailed in the Council's Housing Allocations Scheme (included in **Appendix JS6**). These include a requirement to have lived or worked in the district for a period of three years, or to be giving or receiving 'substantial ongoing support' to family members who have lived in Uttlesford for five years¹³ (section 5.2; page 5). In addition, any person with sufficient income, savings or assets that enables them to rent or purchase on the open market will be ineligible to join the Housing Register (section 5.3; page 6).
- 9.5 In Uttlesford, it is understood that the Housing Allocations Scheme was implemented on 1 January 2015¹⁴. The sharp drop in the Housing Register observed between 2014 and 2015 therefore coincides with the introduction of these strict eligibility criteria.
- 9.6 The imposition of stringent local connection criteria in Uttlesford means that many households who have left Uttlesford in search of cheaper housing will not be eligible to join the Register. This is despite the Council's own corporate documents recognising that households are being priced out of living in Uttlesford and forced to move elsewhere. This issue is highlighted at page 23 of the Housing Strategy (**CD L1**), which states that "*Local residents and workers are mostly unable to afford local prices and rents for a suitable home, this results in younger workers and families very often having to look to move away to cheaper districts*".
- 9.7 It is relevant to note Footnote 4 of DLUHC Live Table 600, which highlights that:
- "The Localism Act 2011, which came into force in 2012, gave local authorities the power to set their own qualification criteria determining who may or may not go onto the housing waiting list. Previously, local authorities were only able to exclude from their waiting list people deemed guilty of serious unacceptable behaviour. The Localism Act changes have contributed to the decrease in the number of households on waiting lists since 2012" (my emphasis).*
- 9.8 Evidently the result of the Localism Act is that many local authorities, including Uttlesford District Council, have excluded applicants already on Housing Register waiting lists who no longer meet the new narrower criteria but who are still in need of affordable housing.

¹³ Some limited exemptions apply to this requirement

¹⁴ Although the current Housing Allocations Scheme is dated 2021, information on the Council's website explains that the eligibility criteria were introduced in 2015: (<https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/article/5319/Uttlesford-District-Council-s-Housing-Allocations-Scheme>)

- 9.9 Whilst restricting the entry and eligibility of applicants on to the Housing Register may temporarily reduce the number of households on the waiting list, this does not reduce the level of need, it merely displaces it. In this context, it is important to reiterate that the number of households on the Housing Register in Uttlesford has increased by 14% in just one year between 2020 and 2021, indicating a sharp increase in the number of households who are seeking assistance with their housing from the Council.
- 9.10 On 11 March 2016 Inside Housing reported that 159 English Councils have struck 237,793 people off their waiting lists and barred a further 42,994 new applicants since the Localism Act came into effect in June 2012. The Head of Policy at the Chartered Institute of Housing commented the requirements “*generally aren’t good practice*” as they can be “*discriminatory depending on how long they’re applied*”.
- 9.11 The research suggests a surge in people removed or barred from waiting lists, which is much higher than the 113,000 found by Inside Housing in April 2014. The article acknowledges however that there have been 775 occasions since 2012 where a decision to remove an applicant from the waiting list or refuse access has been reversed after it was contested. A copy of the March 2016 article is included as **Appendix JS7**.
- 9.12 The ability of Local Authorities to set their own qualification criteria in relation to Housing Registers was recognised by the Planning Inspector presiding over an appeal at Oving Road, Chichester (**CD J3**) in August 2017. In assessing the need for affordable housing in the district, and in determining the weight to be attached to the provision of affordable housing for the scheme which sought to provide 100 dwellings; the Inspector acknowledged at paragraph 63 of their report that:
- “The provision of 30% policy compliant affordable houses carries weight where the Council acknowledges that affordable housing delivery has fallen short of meeting the total assessed affordable housing need, notwithstanding a recent increase in delivery. With some 1,910 households on the Housing Register in need of affordable housing, in spite of stricter eligibility criteria being introduced in 2013 there is a considerable degree of unmet need for affordable housing in the District. Consequently, I attach substantial weight to this element of the proposal” (my emphasis).*
- 9.13 Furthermore, in the appeal decision at Oxford Brookes University Campus at Wheatley, (**CD J4**) Inspector DM Young asserted at paragraph 13.101 of their report that in the context of a lengthy housing register of 2,421 households:

“It is sometimes easy to reduce arguments of housing need to a mathematical exercise, but each one of those households represents a real person or family in urgent need who have been let down by a persistent failure to deliver enough affordable houses” (my emphasis).

Housing Register – Local Preferences and Lettings

- 9.14 At the local level, the Council has confirmed that of the 1,268 households on the Housing Register on 31 March 2022, **461 households have expressed a locational preference for Saffron Walden Civil Parish** equivalent to 36% of the Register, or more than one-in-three applicants.
- 9.15 94 applicants also expressed a locational preference for Swards End Civil Parish, equivalent to 7% of the Register. It should be noted that the figure of 94 is very similar to the proposed amount of affordable housing from the application (up to 93 dwellings).
- 9.16 For comparison, 36 lettings took place in Saffron Walden Parish in 2021/22, so it would take over 12 years for every household with a local preference to be allocated a property at this rate.

Waiting Times

- 9.17 The wait to be housed in an affordable home within the Uttlesford area ranges from 7 months for a 2-bed affordable home through to 13 months for a 3-bed affordable home. The waiting times for all affordable property sizes is set out at Figure 9.2 below and presents further stark evidence of a deteriorating affordable housing crisis afflicting Uttlesford District. Waiting times have worsened between 2021 and 2022.

Figure 9.2: Housing Register Average Waiting Times

Size of Affordable Property	Average Waiting Time to be Housed at 31 March 2022	Average Waiting Time to be Housed at 31 March 2022	Difference
1-bedroom home	7 months	9 months	+2 months
2-bedroom home	7 months	7 months	No change
3-bedroom home	5.5 months	13 months	+7.5 months
4-bedroom home	10 months	12 months	+ 2 months

Source: Freedom of Information response (27 July 2022)

Help to Buy Register

- 9.18 Further evidence in respect of the need across Uttlesford for affordable housing is provided in information from Help to Buy South.

- 9.19 Help to Buy South is one of three agents appointed by the Government to administer Help to Buy schemes across England. They cover authorities across the East of England, South East and South West regions. Households who are seeking shared ownership homes are required to register with Help to Buy South so that they may apply for properties.
- 9.20 The Help to Buy register is an important part of the evidence base but only captures those households who have already taken the time and effort to register. It is therefore not exhaustive. In my experience, more households will register their interest when either a planning permission is granted and/or they see actual bricks and mortar on the ground.
- 9.21 The Help to Buy Register provides details of those seeking shared-ownership accommodation in the south of England. This demonstrates that as of 22 July 2022, there are **407 households** who are seeking a shared ownership home in Uttlesford. This is clearly a significant proportion of those seeking assistance with their housing.
- 9.22 Of these 407 households seeking a shared ownership home in Uttlesford, 59 households have expressed a locational preference for Saffron Walden. This is equivalent to 14% of the total Help to Buy register in the District.

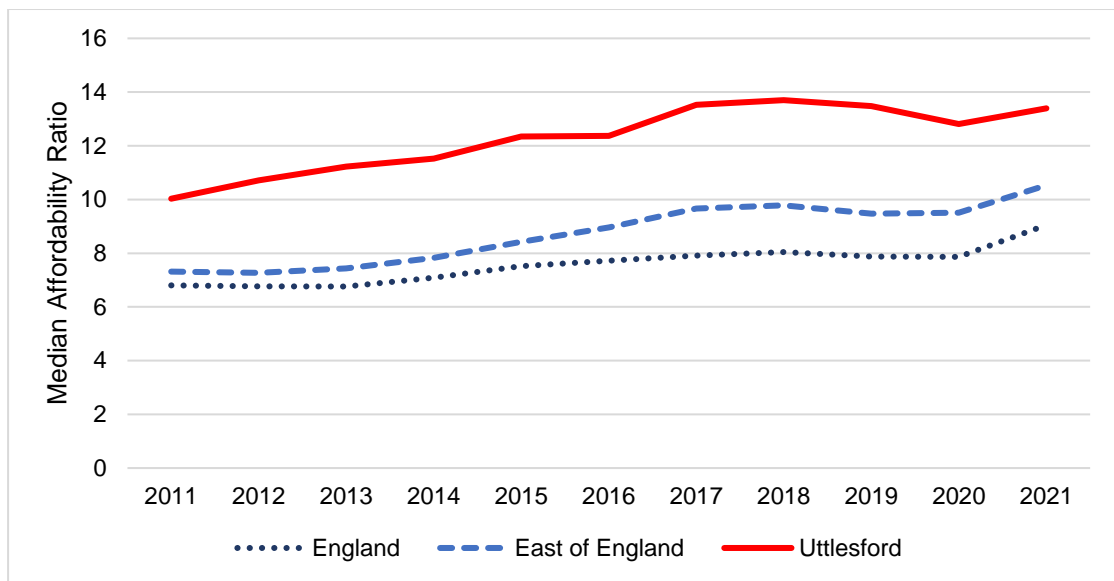
Affordability Ratios

- 9.23 Affordability ratios illustrate the relationship between average house prices and average workplace-based earnings, i.e. how much does a house cost in relation to the earnings of somebody working in Uttlesford? For context, mortgage lending is typically offered on up to 4.5 times earnings (and may be lower subject to individual circumstances).

Median affordability ratio

- 9.24 Median affordability ratios are illustrated in figure 9.3 below. In Uttlesford in 2021, the median house cost 13.40 times median earnings; well in excess of both the East of England ratio of 10.53 and the national ratio of 9.05. The ratio in Uttlesford has worsened by +34% since 2011 when it stood at 10.03 times earnings. This rate of increase is consistent with that of England as a whole (+33%), albeit slower than that of the East of England (+44%).

Figure 9.3: Median Affordability Ratio, Uttlesford, 2011 to 2021

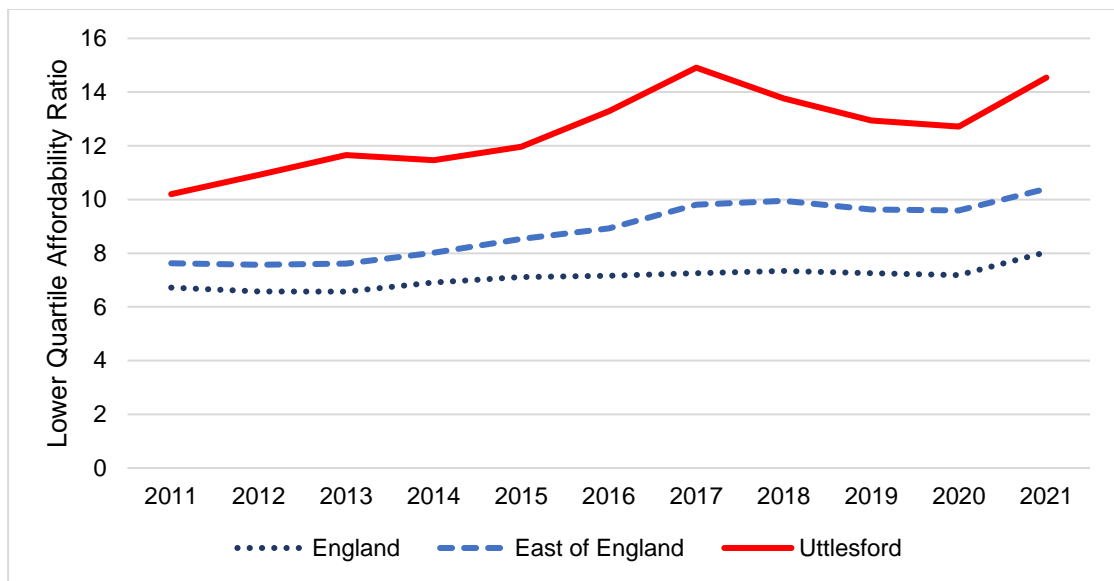


Source: Office for National Statistics

Lower quartile affordability ratio

- 9.25 For those seeking a lower-quartile priced property (typically considered to be the 'more affordable' segment of the housing market), the ratio of lower quartile house price to incomes in Uttlesford stands at 14.54 in 2021, exceeding both the East of England ratio of 10.40 and the national ratio of 8.04 illustrated in figure 9.4 below. The ratio has increased by 43% over the course of the Local Plan period since 2011; a rate of increase which is faster than that of both the East region (+36%), and across England (+20%).
- 9.26 The increase in the lower quartile affordability ratio is also faster than that of the median ratio, which indicates that affordability pressures are worsening even faster at the entry level of the housing market in Uttlesford.

Figure 9.4: Lower Quartile Affordability Ratio, Uttlesford, 2011 to 2021



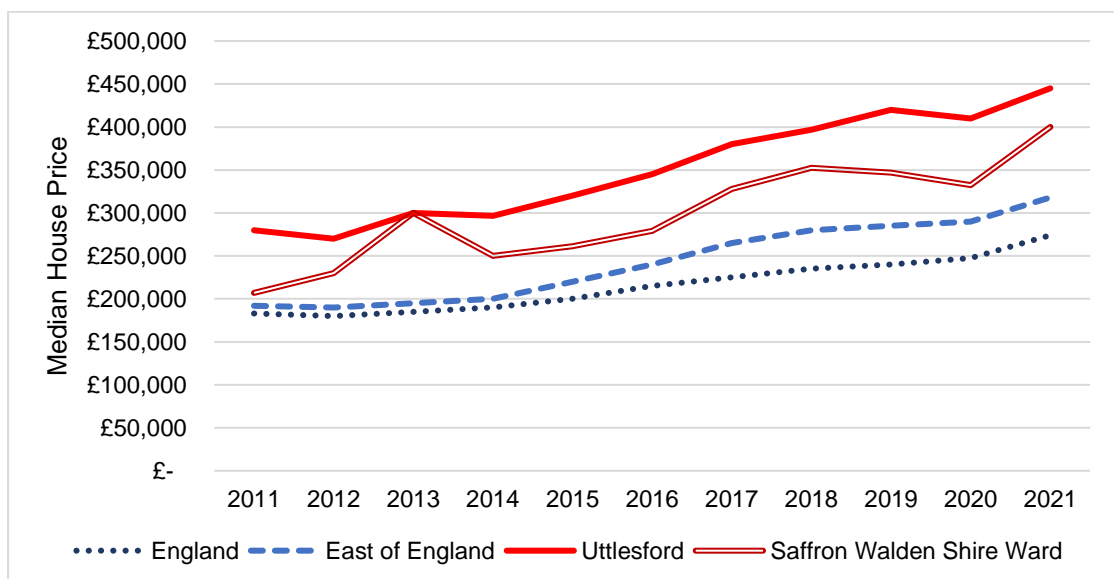
Source: Office for National Statistics

Average House Prices

Median House Prices

- 9.27 In 2021, the median house price in Uttlesford was £445,000, which is £171,000 (+62%) more than the national average of £274,000; it is also £127,000 (+40%) more than the East of England regional average of £318,000.

Figure 9.5: Median House Prices, Uttlesford & Saffron Walden Shire Ward, 2011 to 2021



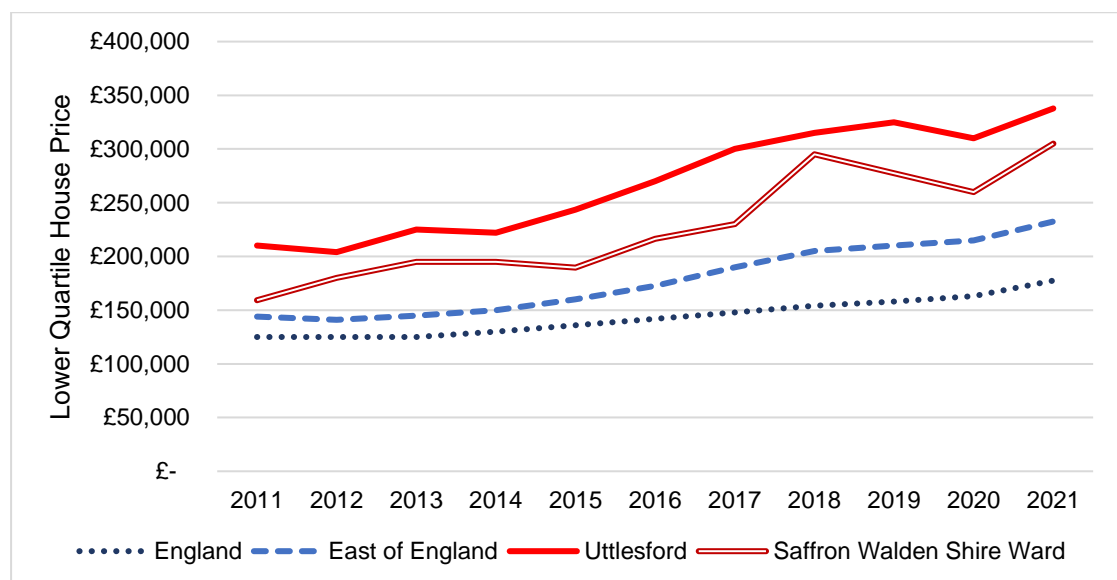
Source: House Price Statistics for Small Areas, published by Office for National Statistics

- 9.28 Median house prices in Uttlesford have increased by 59% since 2011, which is slightly slower than the rate of increase across the East of England (+66%) but faster than that of England as a whole (+50%).
- 9.29 Looking at the local area, the median prices in Saffron Walden Shire ward stood at £400,000 in 2021. This is £45,000 (-10%) below the median figure for Uttlesford and as the Housing Strategy notes, Saffron Walden Shire ward is currently the cheapest of all council wards in Uttlesford (figure 6, page 20). Even still, the median house price in Saffron Walden Shire ward is £126,000 (+46%) more than the national average and £82,000 (+26%) more than the East of England regional average. Furthermore, prices increased by 93% between 2011 and 2021 – a much faster rate of increase than seen across Uttlesford, the East of England, and England as a whole.

Lower Quartile House Prices

- 9.30 In 2021, the lower quartile house price in Uttlesford was £337,750, which is £160,250 (+90%) more than the national lower quartile of £177,500 (i.e. almost double); it is also £105,250 (+45%) more than the East of England regional lower quartile of £232,500.

Figure 9.6: Lower Quartile House Prices, Uttlesford & Saffron Walden Shire Ward, 2011 to 2021



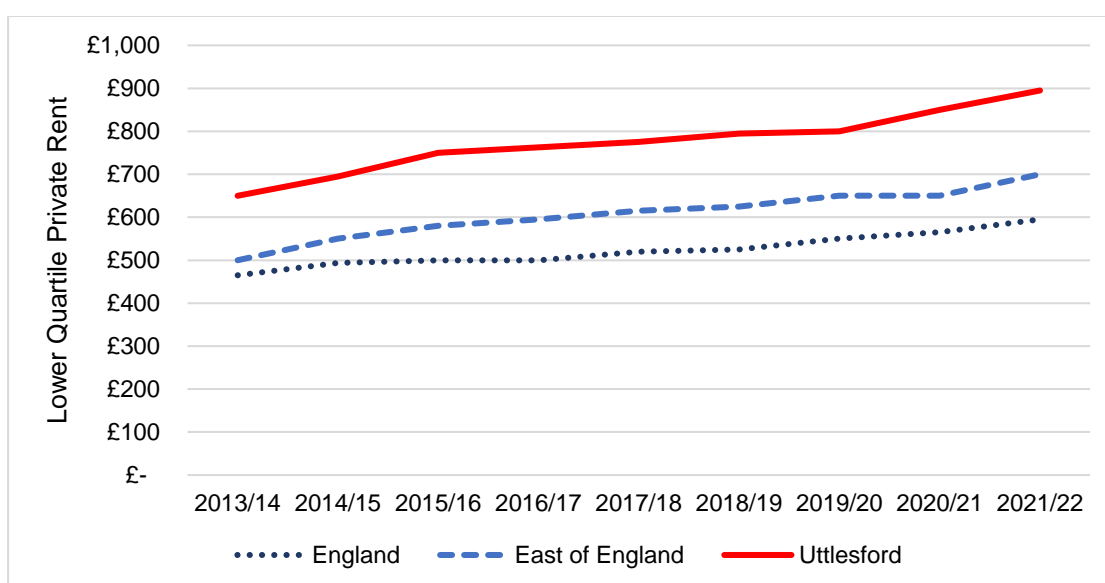
Source: House Price Statistics for Small Areas, published by Office for National Statistics

- 9.31 Lower quartile house prices in Uttlesford have increased by 61% since 2011, which matches the rate of increase across the East of England (+61%) and is faster than that of England as a whole (+42%). Lower quartile prices in Uttlesford have also risen faster than median prices, pointing to increased pressure at the entry level of the housing market.
- 9.32 Looking at the local area, the lower quartile prices in Saffron Walden Shire ward stood at £305,000 in 2021. This is £32,750 (-9%) below the lower quartile figure for Uttlesford. Even still, the lower quartile house price in Saffron Walden Shire ward is £127,500 (+72%) more than the national lower quartile and £72,500 (+31%) more than the East of England regional average. Furthermore, lower quartile prices increased by 92% between 2011 and 2021 – like the median figures, this is a much faster rate of increase than seen across Uttlesford, the East of England, and England as a whole.

Lower Quartile Private Sector Rents

- 9.33 Lower quartile private sector rents are representative of the more affordable, or ‘entry level’ of the private rented sector.
- 9.34 In Uttlesford in 2021/22, the lower quartile private sector rent stood at £895 per calendar month; this is £195 (or +28%) more than the East of England lower quartile figure of £700, and £300 (or +50%) more than the England lower quartile figure of £595pcm.
- 9.35 Put another way, this means that households seeking lower quartile properties in Uttlesford are typically paying £195 more each month than their counterparts elsewhere in the East of England, and £300 more than across England.
- 9.36 This has an obvious impact upon household budgets and the ability to access and afford private rented housing – a concern recognised in Uttlesford District Council’s own housing strategy which explains at its foreword at page 3 that “*With housing costs continuing to rise home ownership and access to the private rental market is out of reach for many young people and families*”.

Figure 9.7: Lower Quartile Private Sector Rents, Uttlesford, 2013/14 to 2021/22



Source: Office for National Statistics and Valuation Office Agency. Data not available prior to 2013/14

- 9.37 Lower quartile private sector rents in Uttlesford have consistently exceeded both the national and regional average since current records began in 2013/14. Over this nine-year period, lower quartile rents in Uttlesford increased by £245 or +38%; this rate of increase is consistent with that in the East of England (+40%) and considerably faster than for England as a whole (+28%).
- 9.38 Lower quartile rents in Uttlesford have risen especially sharply in the two most recent years, rising by £95 from £800 in 2019/20 to £895 in 2021/22, an increase of +12% in just two years. These increases place yet further pressure on household budgets.
- 9.39 The high cost of private sector rents in Uttlesford is identified in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy as a key challenge in addressing homelessness in the District; page 9 noting that *“with the local levels of LHA being substantially lower than actual private rents in the district, it is hard for people losing one private rented property to source another at a rent they can afford”*.

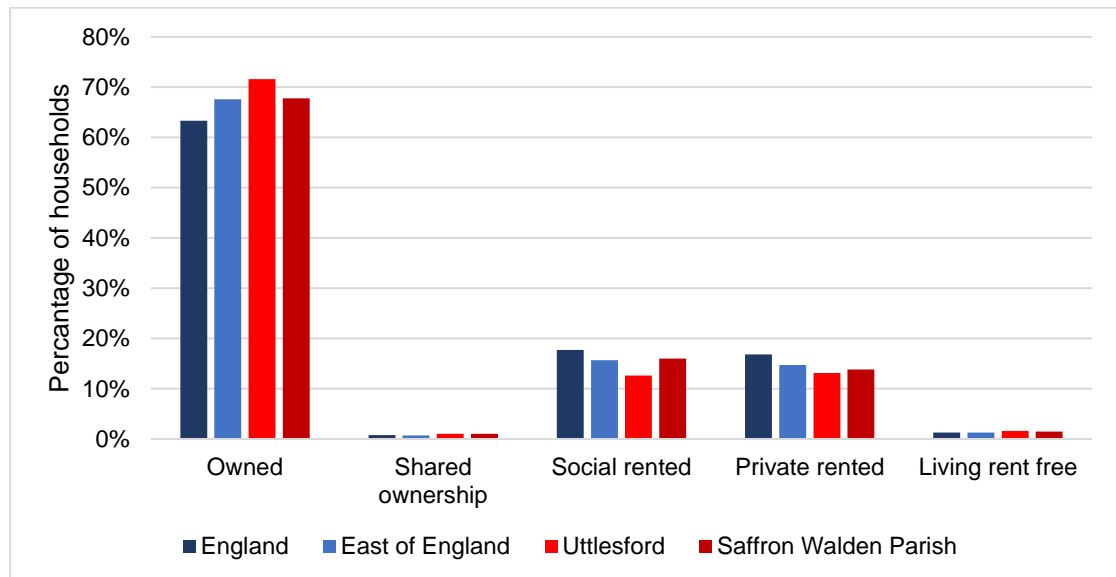
Homelessness

- 9.40 As set out in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, increasing numbers of households in Uttlesford are presenting to the Council as homeless. The most recent data available is from the Statutory homelessness: Detailed local authority-level tables, produced by central Government. Although described as experimental statistics, they record that in Uttlesford during 2020/21 there were **148 households assessed and owed a main duty**.

Tenure

- 9.41 Figure 9.8 below illustrates the breakdown of tenures in England, the East of England, Uttlesford and in Saffron Walden Civil Parish, using data from the 2011 Census.

Figure 9.8, Tenure, Uttlesford & Saffron Walden Civil Parish, 2011



Source: Census 2011

- 9.42 The tenure mix in Uttlesford leans towards home ownership, which accounts for 72% of all households (compared with 63% across England and 68% in the East of England). There is a correspondingly smaller social rented sector in Uttlesford, which accounts for 13% of all households (compared with 18% across England and 16% in the East of England). Shared ownership accounts for just 1% of households in Uttlesford.
- 9.43 In Saffron Walden Civil Parish, the tenure mix is very similar to that of the East of England region as a whole, with 68% of households in home ownership and 16% of households social renting. This still skews in favour of home ownership and away from social renting when compared with England as a whole.
- 9.44 The importance of the analysis of such data was acknowledged in Inspector Drew's appeal decision concerning Cornerways, Twynning in Tewkesbury (**CD J5**) where in considering affordable housing provision through the appeal scheme, he stated that:

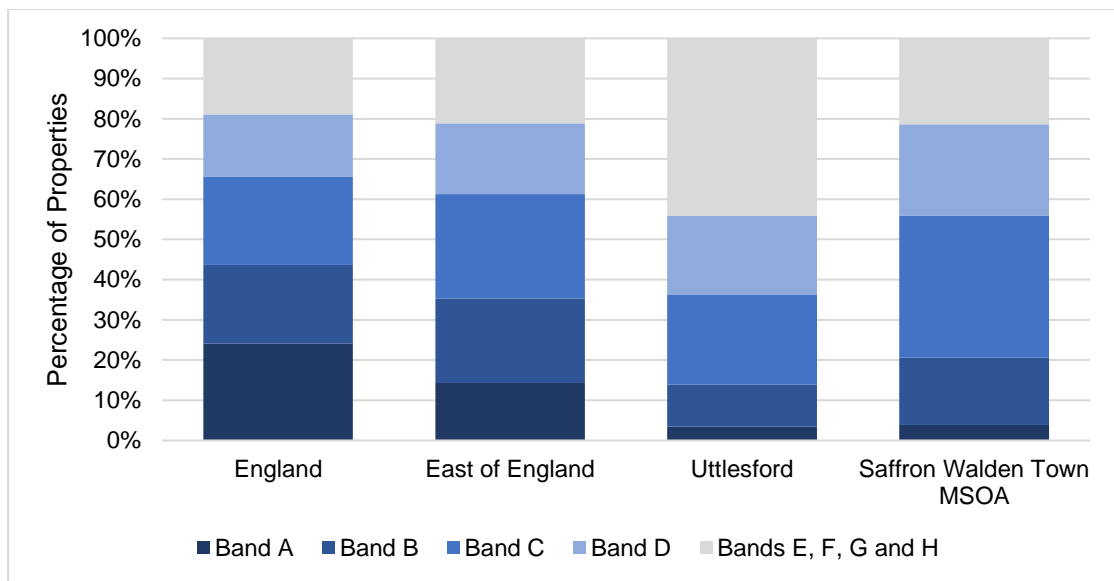
“The significance of this scheme in meeting the needs of different groups in the Borough, as required by paragraph 50 of the Framework, is underlined by the stark figure that this scheme alone would result in a 100% increase in shared ownership properties in the Parish of Twynning, as well as a 27% increase in social rented properties. Those figures are a powerful illustration of the extent to which the proposed development would contribute to creating a more mixed and balanced community, which is a key Government objective” (paragraph 65).

- 9.45 The Census data demonstrates the tenure profile of Uttlesford is clearly skewed towards owner occupation, and that at the time of the Census there was very limited provision of shared ownership properties.
- 9.46 It is considered that this imbalance in local housing tenures is contrary to the revised NPPF’s objective of creating *“mixed and balanced communities”* (paragraph 62). The provision of up to 93 affordable dwellings at the application site would contribute towards meeting this objective by improving the availability of affordable homes, in a settlement and authority where the tenure split is currently dominated by home ownership.

Council Tax

- 9.47 The Valuation Office Agency collates data in respect of the number of properties within each Council Tax Band, broken down by nation, authority and Middle-Layer Super Output Area (“MSOA”). The appeal site lies adjacent to the Saffron Walden Town MSOA (also known as Uttlesford 002).
- 9.48 Council Tax Bands A and B represent the council tax bands for the lowest valued properties in an area and are therefore properties that are those most likely to be affordable to those on low incomes. Council Tax Band D is frequently considered to represent a ‘typical’ family home.

Figure 9.9: Council Tax, Uttlesford & Saffron Walden Town MSOA, 31 March 2021



Source: Valuation Office Agency

- 9.49 The data demonstrates that in Uttlesford at 31 March 2021, the housing stock skews heavily towards the more expensive bands E, F, G and H, which account for some 44% of properties (compared with 19% nationally and 21% in the East of England region). By contrast, the cheapest bands A and B account for just 13% of properties in Uttlesford (compared with 44% nationally and 35% in the East of England region). This shows that the opportunities to access cheaper properties at lower bands in Uttlesford are far more limited than in the nation or region.
- 9.50 In Saffron Walden Town MSOA, the profile of properties is similar to that of the East of England region, although the cheapest bands A and B are still underrepresented, accounting for 21% of properties in the MSOA.

Conclusions on Affordability Indicators in Uttlesford District

- 9.51 The evidence illustrates that by any measure of affordability, this is an authority in the depth of an affordable housing crisis, and one through which urgent action must be taken to deliver more affordable homes.
- 9.52 Analysis of market signals in Uttlesford District clearly demonstrate a trend of decreasing affordability across the local authority area and a worsening housing register. This can be seen through the lengthy Housing Register.
- 9.53 I consider that in light of the market signals, **substantial weight** must be given to the (up to) 93 affordable homes that the appeal proposals would provide.

The Council's Assessment of the Planning Application

Section 10

- 10.1 The application was presented to the Council's Planning Committee on 16 March 2022 with a recommendation of refusal.

Officers' Report into the Application (CD A225)

- 10.2 The Officers' Report to the Planning Committee contains only limited discussion of affordable housing.
- 10.3 Section 6.16 of the Officers' Report relays the comments of the Housing Enabling Officer. The initial comments note that the provision of affordable housing is important to the Council, stating that *"The delivery of affordable housing is one of the Councils' corporate priorities and will be negotiated on all sites for housing"*. The initial comments also note that the scheme will attract a requirement for 40% affordable housing or up to 93 dwellings. The comments go on to discuss recommendations in respect of dwelling mix and size (although these are matters for consideration at the reserved matters stage).
- 10.4 Subsequent comments were made by the Housing Enabling Officer in respect of a revised dwelling mix, confirming that they were content with the proposed mix, stating that *"the mix they [the applicant] are suggesting is fine"*.
- 10.5 Beyond the comments of the Housing Enabling Officer, the Officers' Report offers very little discussion or engagement in respect of the proposed affordable housing. Paragraph 9.9 at page 32 of the Officers' Report notes that affordable housing contributes to the social aspect of sustainable development but merely records that *"affordable housing would be provided as part of this scheme"*.
- 10.6 Paragraph 9.28 at page 35 of the Officers' Report assesses the proposals against policy H9 of the Local Plan, noting that the proposed 40% affordable housing is acceptable and that affordable housing would form part of the Section 106 agreement. It concludes that the scheme complies with policy H9.

- 10.7 Overall, I consider that the Officers' Report, that was in front of members when they resolved to refuse the application, does not offer any meaningful assessment or engagement with the issue of affordable housing need in Uttlesford or the weight the benefit of such housing plays in the planning balance. A consideration that is now before this inspector informed by my evidence in this Proof.
- 10.8 For the reasons I have set out elsewhere in this Proof of Evidence, not only is the delivery of affordable housing an important corporate priority for Uttlesford District Council; it is clear that the district is experiencing nothing short of an affordability crisis, with a lengthening housing register, worsening affordability ratio, rising rents and house prices. The Officers' Report offers no insight into the need for affordable housing, nor the weight to be attributed to the proposed affordable housing in the planning balance.

The Council's Statement of Case (CD B12)

- 10.9 The Council's Statement of Case for the present appeal sets out in broad terms that the Council accepts that the delivery of affordable housing should attract substantial weight in the planning balance, stating that there is a shortage of both open market and affordable housing, in the context of a housing land supply shortfall and the lack of an up-to-date Local Plan. Paragraph 7.1 at page 29 states that:

"[The Council] accepts that the provision of market housing and affordable housing (if secured under a section 106 legal agreement) are considerable benefits and should each be given substantial weight in the determination of this appeal, particularly given the shortage of both market and affordable housing in the district at present, as well as the state of the 5 year housing land supply and lack of an up to date new local plan."

The Rule 6 Party's Statement of Case (CD B26)

- 10.10 The Rule 6 Party's Statement of Case for the appeal (Saffron Walden Town Council and Swards End Parish Council) makes an implicit criticism that the proposed affordable housing is somehow insufficient or inadequate. Paragraph 50 at page 8 of the Statement of Case states that:

"Substantial weight is being attributed by the Appellant to Affordable housing (para 2.5), but the provision is at the basic level and no more than required under policy".

10.11 It is not clear how or why the Rule 6 Party considers that the provision of 40% affordable housing – i.e. four in every ten houses to be provided at the site, and a total of up to 93 affordable homes – is at a “*basic level*”.

10.12 Inspectors have held that the delivery of policy-compliant levels of affordable housing can generate a benefit in the planning balance, rather than being considered as ‘merely’ compliant with policy and carrying neutral weight. In an appeal at Coalpit Heath, South Gloucestershire (**CD J6**), the Inspector set out their clear conclusion at paragraph 61 of the decision:

“The fact that the much needed AH [affordable housing] and CBH [custom build housing] are elements that are no more than that required by policy is irrelevant – they would still comprise significant social benefits that merit substantial weight” (my emphasis).

10.13 To further demonstrate the point, I also note the findings of Inspector PW Clark in determining two conjoined appeals at Norton, Ryedale (**CD J7**), who recognised that affordable housing policy is drafted to generate a benefit. At paragraph 72 of the decision, he states:

“72. On the other hand, in the light of the Council’s track record, the proposals’ full compliance with policy on the supply of affordable housing would be beneficial. Some might say that if all it is doing is complying with policy, it should not be counted as a benefit but the policy is designed to produce a benefit, not ward off a harm and so, in my view, compliance with policy is beneficial and full compliance as here, when others have only achieved partial compliance, would be a considerable benefit” (my emphasis).

10.14 In the context of these decisions, I consider that it is clear that affordable housing at policy-compliant levels generates a considerable benefit, and indeed one that is capable of attracting substantial weight in the planning balance. In my opinion it is inappropriate to seek to ‘water down’ or ‘denigrate’ the important benefit of affordable housing simply because it does not exceed the requirements of the Development Plan – which appears to be the approach of the Rule 6 Party. On the contrary, in my opinion, achieving policy compliant provision is to be welcomed, since there is little doubt in my mind that every one of the (up to) 93 affordable dwellings will be occupied by a household in need.

The Consequences of Failing to Deliver Affordable Housing

Section 11

- 11.1 The National Housing Strategy sets out that a thriving housing market that offers choice, flexibility and affordable housing is critical to our social and economic wellbeing.

Consequences of Failing to Deliver Affordable Housing

- 11.2 This section highlights some of the evidence gathered in recent years demonstrating the significant consequences of failing to deliver affordable housing.
- 11.3 In August 2019 the Children's Commissioner produced a report titled *"Bleak Houses: Tackling the Crisis of Family Homelessness in England"* to investigate the impact of homelessness and in particular the effect of this upon children.
- 11.4 The report identified that family homelessness in England today is primarily a result of structural factors, including the lack of affordable housing and recent welfare reforms.
- 11.5 It states that the social housing sector has been in decline for many years and that between the early 1980s and early 2010s, the proportion of Britons living in social housing halved, as a result of losses to stock through the Right to Buy and a drop in the amount of social housing being built.
- 11.6 The research found that the decline in social housing has forced many households, including families, into the private rented sector. High rents are a major problem: between 2011 and 2017 rents in England grew 60% quicker than wages. It states that *"Simply put, many families cannot afford their rent. It is telling that over half of homeless families in England are in work"*.
- 11.7 The report particularly focused on the effect on children. The report reveals that many families face the problem of poor temporary accommodation and no choice but to move out of their local area, which can have a *"deeply disruptive impact on family life"*. This can include lack of support (from grandparents for example) and travel costs.

- 11.8 It finds that a child's education can suffer, even if they stay in the same school, because poor quality accommodation makes it difficult to do homework and that younger children's educational development can also be delayed.
- 11.9 Temporary accommodation also presents serious risks to children's health, wellbeing and safety, particularly families in B&Bs where they are often forced to share facilities with adults engaged in crime, anti-social behaviour or those with substance abuse issues.
- 11.10 Other effects include lack of space to play (particularly in cramped B&Bs where one family shares a room) and a lack of security and stability. The report found (page 12) that denying children their right to adequate housing has a *"significant impact on many aspects of their lives"*.
- 11.11 More recently in May 2021, Shelter published its report *"Denied the Right to a Safe Home – Exposing the Housing Emergency"* (CD L6) which sets out in stark terms the impacts of the affordable housing crisis. The report affirms that affordability of housing is the main cause of homelessness (page 15) and that *"we will only end the housing emergency by building affordable, good quality social homes"* (page 10).
- 11.12 In surveying 13,000 people, the research found that one in seven had to cut down on essentials like food or heating to pay the rent or mortgage. In addition, over the last 50 years, the average share of income young families spend on housing has trebled. The following statements on the impacts of being denied a suitable home are also made in the report:

"Priced out of owning a home and denied social housing, people are forced to take what they can afford – even if it's damp, cramped, or away from jobs and support networks." (Page 5)

"... people on low incomes have to make unacceptable sacrifices to keep a roof over their head. Their physical and mental health suffers because of the conditions. But because of high costs, discrimination, a lack of support, and fear of eviction if they complain to their landlord, they are left with no other option." (Page 5)

"The high cost of housing means the private-rented sector has doubled in size over the last 20 years. Most private rentals are let on tenancies of 6 to 12 months, and renters can be evicted for no reason because of section 21. This creates a permanent state of stress and instability." (Page 6)

“If you live in an overcrowded home, you’re more likely to get coronavirus. If you live in a home with damp and black mould on the walls, your health will suffer.”
(Page 9)

“14% of people say they’ve had to make unacceptable compromises to find a home they can afford, such as living far away from work or family support or having to put up with poor conditions or overcrowding” (Page 10)

“Spending 30% of your income on housing is usually the maximum amount regarded as affordable. Private renters spend the most, with the average household paying 38% of their income on rent, compared to social renters (31%) and owner-occupiers (19%).” (Page 14)

“19% of people say their experiences of finding and keeping a home makes them worry about the likelihood they will find a suitable home in the future.” (Page 15)

“Families in temporary accommodation can spend years waiting for a settled home, not knowing when it might come, where it might be, or how much it will cost. It’s unsettling, destabilising, and demoralising. It’s common to be moved from one accommodation to another at short notice. Meaning new schools, long commutes, and being removed from support networks. Parents in temporary accommodation report their children are ‘often unhappy or depressed’, anxious and distressed, struggle to sleep, wet the bed, or become clingy and withdrawn.” (Page 25)

“Landlords and letting agents frequently advertise properties as ‘No DSS’, meaning they won’t let to anyone claiming benefits. This practice disproportionately hurts women, Black and Bangladeshi families, and disabled people.” (Page 29)

“A lack of housing means landlords and letting agents can discriminate knowing there is excess demand for their housing.” (Page 30)

- 11.13 Shelter estimate that some 17.5 million people are denied the right to a safe home and face the effects of high housing costs, lack of security of tenure and discrimination in the housing market (Page 33)
- 11.14 The Report concludes (page 33) that for change to happen, *“we must demand better conditions, fight racism and discrimination, end unfair evictions, and reform housing benefit. But when it comes down to it, there’s only one way to end the housing emergency. **Build more social housing**”* (emphasis in original).

11.15 In April 2022 Shelter published a further report titled “*Unlocking Social Housing: How to fix the rules that are holds back building*” (CD L7). The first paragraph of the Executive Summary is clear that:

“Our housing system is broken. Across the country, renters are stuck in damp, crumbling homes that are making them sick. Private renters are forced to spend more than 30% of their income on rent. As a result, nearly half have no savings. Desperate parents fighting to keep a roof over their heads are forced to choose between rent and food.”

11.16 The Executive Summary goes on to state that “**An affordable and secure home is a fundamental human need**” (emphasis in original) noting that one in three of us don’t have a safe place to call home and that finding a good-quality home at a fair price is impossible for so many people.

11.17 At page 6 the report considers the impacts of the Government plans to scrap developer contributions (Section 106) and replace it with a flat tax called the 'infrastructure levy'. It states that:

“This would mean that developers no longer build social housing on site, in return for planning permission, but instead pay a tax to the local council when they sell a home. The unintended consequence could add yet more barriers to social housebuilding and spell the end of mixed developments where social tenants live alongside private owners.”

11.18 In considering the impact of the PRS the report highlights at page 7 that nearly half of private renters are now forced to rely on housing benefit to pay their rent – “*That’s taxpayer money subsidising private landlords providing insecure and often poor-quality homes*”. The paragraph goes on to note that:

“The lack of social housing has not just pushed homeownership out of reach, it’s made it nearly impossible for working families to lead healthy lives and keep stable jobs. Poor housing can threaten the life chances and educational attainment of their kids. If we want to level up the country, we must start with home.”

11.19 With regard to the use of temporary accommodation (“TA”) the report notes on page 10 that number of households living in such accommodation has nearly doubled over the last decade and the cost to the taxpayer has gone through the roof. The page also notes that “*TA cost councils £1.45bn last year (2020/21). 80% of this money went to private letting agents, landlords or companies*”.

- 11.20 Page 11 goes on to highlight that *“Of the nearly 100,000 households living in TA, more than a quarter (26,110) of these households are accommodated outside the local authority area they previously lived in”*. This means that *“Families have been forced to endure successive lockdowns in cramped, unhygienic, and uncertain living conditions, away from jobs, family, and support networks.”*
- 11.21 The page goes on to conclude that *“As a result, the national housing benefit bill has grown. Tenants' incomes and government money is flowing into the hands of private landlords, paying for poorer quality and less security. There are now more private renters claiming housing benefit than ever before.”*
- 11.22 Page 9 is also clear that *“Since 2011, freezes to Local Housing Allowance (housing benefit for private renters) and blunt policies like the benefit cap have been employed to limit the amount of support individuals and families can receive. As a result, many thousands of renters' housing benefit simply doesn't meet the cost of paying the rent.”*
- 11.23 In considering the consequences of this page 12 notes that *“With fast growing rents, mounting food and energy bills, and a dire shortage of genuinely affordable social housing, these policies have failed to curb the rising benefits bill. Instead, they have tipped people into poverty, destitution and homelessness.”*
- 11.24 Finally page 21 is clear that:
- “For the over 1 million households on housing waitlists across England, who in the current system may never live with the security, safety, and stability that a good quality social home can provide, reforms cannot come any faster. Access to good housing affects every aspect of one's life and outcomes like health, education, and social mobility. More to the point, the outcomes and holistic wellbeing of an individual or an entire household is not only meaningful for their trajectory, but also contributes to the threads of society by helping people contribute to their communities.”*
- The evidence is clear, the financial requirements to own one's home are out of reach for many. And many will spend years stuck in a private rented sector that's not fit for purpose. The answer is clear: build many more, good quality social homes for the communities that so desperately need them.”* (My emphasis).
- 11.25 It is also pertinent to highlight that Uttlesford District Council itself recognises the consequences of failing to meet affordable housing needs.

- 11.26 The Housing Strategy (**CD L1**) notes at page 23 that households are sometimes forced to leave Uttlesford in search of more affordable housing. As both Shelter and the Children's Commissioner note, this can leave households detached from their support networks and employment, and can disrupt children's education and wellbeing.
- 11.27 In Uttlesford, this problem is compounded by the Housing Allocations Policy which set stringent local connection criteria including the need to live or work in the district for three continuous years. This puts households in a 'Catch-22 situation', where they cannot afford to stay in Uttlesford and require an affordable home, but in leaving the district they may disqualify themselves from joining the housing register.
- 11.28 Shelter is particularly critical of the poor conditions and lack of security in the PRS; the Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (**CD L2**) raises concerns about insecurity of tenure (termination of assured shorthold tenancies being one of the main reasons for homelessness in the District) as well as wider difficulties in the PRS in respect of the availability and affordability of housing.

Conclusions

- 11.29 Evidently the consequences of failing to meet affordable housing needs in any local authority are significant. In the case of Uttlesford, there is nothing short of an affordability crisis. The Council's corporate documents demonstrate that the Council is all too aware of the impacts this is having on residents in Uttlesford in housing need.
- 11.30 Future of affordable housing supply in Uttlesford looks bleak with likely delivery being well below the current annual average. It is fair to say based on evidence that the future supply of affordable housing appears to have collapsed. This merely serves to further compound the acute affordability problems that the ECC is facing.
- 11.31 It is clearly imperative that more affordable housing is delivered in Uttlesford now to arrest the affordable housing emergency and prevent further worsening of the situation. The words of the Inspector at the Oxford Brookes University campus (**CD J4**) ring true,

"It is sometimes easy to reduce arguments of housing need to a mathematical exercise, but each one of those households represents a real person or family in urgent need who have been let down by a persistent failure to deliver enough affordable houses."

- 11.32 I am strongly of the opinion that a step change in delivery of affordable housing is needed now.

- 11.33 The ongoing affordability crisis in Uttlesford will detrimentally affect the ability of people to lead the best lives they can. The National Housing Strategy requires urgent action to build new homes, acknowledging the significant social consequences of failure to do so.

The Benefits of the Proposed Affordable Housing at the Appeal Site

Section 12

- 12.1 The Government attaches weight to achieving a turnaround in affordability to help meet affordable housing needs. The NPPF is clear that the Government seeks to significantly boost the supply of housing, which includes affordable housing.
- 12.2 As set out in the previous chapter there are significant social and economic consequences for failing to meet affordable housing needs at both national and local authority level. Uttlesford is no exception to this.
- 12.3 The appeal scheme will provide up to 93 affordable dwellings on site comprising 70% affordable housing for rent; 25% First Homes and 5% shared ownership. The wider social and economic benefits of affordable housing per se are commonly recognised.
- 12.4 As set out in Chapter 2 the benefit of affordable housing is a strong material consideration in support of development proposals. However, there are more nuanced and specific benefits of the proposed tenures, and these are explored below.

Affordable Housing for Rent

- 12.5 Affordable housing for rent is a tenure of affordable housing that are exclusively provided by housing associations (not-for-profit organisations that own, let, and manage rented housing) or a local council. Social tenants rent the property from the housing association or council, who act as landlord. Tenants are ordinarily nominated from the Council's Housing Register.
- 12.6 Annex 2 of the NPPF (2021) is clear that for rented affordable housing products *"the rent is set in accordance with the Government's rent policy for Social Rent or Affordable Rent, or is at least 20% below local market rents (including service charges where applicable)"* (Emphasis added).
- 12.7 Asides from the benefit of cheaper rents, affordable housing for rent offers a more secure form of renting than the PRS. Tenancies are typically offered on a long-term basis – normally for at least five years – although some Registered Providers offer lifetime tenancies.

- 12.8 Unlike private landlords, Registered Providers are regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing. Should a complaint arise, a tenant will have recourse to a formal complaints procedure and the Housing Ombudsman. Unlike in the PRS (where ‘no fault’ evictions can occur) a tenant of affordable rented housing can make a complaint or seek repairs without fear of it affecting their tenancy.
- 12.9 The proposed affordable housing will have the benefit of being brand-new properties, built to the latest energy efficiency and accessibility standards as required under Building Regulations. Modern homes are far more energy efficient than the older housing stock, helping to keep heating bills lower in the context of a widely-recognised cost of living crisis.

First Homes

- 12.10 First Homes is a discounted market sale housing tenure type which is designed to meet the needs of a sub-sector of the community who are in need of homes, but for a variety of reasons do not qualify for other tenure types of affordable homes.
- 12.11 The First Homes scheme is designed to allow people to get on the housing ladder in their local area, and in particular to ensure that key workers are able to buy homes in the areas where they work.
- 12.12 The First Homes criteria are the minimum requirements a housing unit must meet in order to qualify as a First Home:

“a) a First Home must be discounted by a minimum of 30% against the market value;

b) after the discount has been applied, the first sale must be at a price no higher than £250,000 (or £420,000 in Greater London); and,

c) the home is sold to a person who meets the First Homes eligibility criteria, as set out in the first 2 paragraphs under First Homes eligibility criteria.”

(PPG, Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 70-001-20210524)

- 12.13 Homes meeting the above minimum criteria can be sold as First Homes and are considered to meet the definition of ‘affordable housing’ as laid out in Annex two of the NPPF.
- 12.14 In order to ensure First Homes are provided for those households who are most in need, First Homes are subject to the following eligibility criteria:
- a. A purchaser of a First Home must be a first-time buyer;

- b. Purchasers of First Homes, whether individuals, couples or group purchasers, should have a combined annual household income of less than £80,000 (or £90,000 in London); and
- c. Purchasers must be able to get a mortgage to fund a minimum of 50% of the discounted purchase price.

- 12.15 The local council may also set some additional eligibility conditions. In the case of Uttlesford District Council, the First Homes Planning Advice Notice 2022 (**CD H7**) explains that the Council will apply local connection criteria to applicants for first and subsequent sales, for the first three months of marketing each First Home.
- 12.16 A section 106 agreement securing the necessary restrictions on the use and sale of the property and a legal restriction on the title of the property ensures that the above restrictions are applied to the property at each future sale.
- 12.17 There is extensive support from the government in respect of enabling home ownership which has culminated in the introduction of First Homes as an affordable tenure.
- 12.18 The introduction of this tenure will strengthen and increase the delivery of Discount Market Sale Homes, as set out in Annex 2 of the NPPF.

Shared Ownership

- 12.19 Shared Ownership units are a tenure of affordable housing where first time buyers, and those that do not currently own a home are given the opportunity to purchase a share in a new build or resales property.
- 12.20 Shared ownership schemes are provided by housing associations or private developers. The details, costs and restrictions involved can vary by provider.
- 12.21 Annex 2 of the NPPF (2021) is clear that affordable routes to home ownership (including Shared Ownership) *“is housing provided for sale that provides a route to ownership for those who could not achieve home ownership through the market”* and is set *“at a price equivalent to at least 20% below local market value”*.
- 12.22 The Government’s April 2022 Capital Funding Guide sets out that the cost of a Shared Ownership property should be calculated using the full market value of the property at the point of initial sale.

- 12.23 The main benefit of Shared Ownership properties is that people can start by buying as little as 10% share in a property and deposit can be 5% of the price of that share, rather than the whole property.
- 12.24 The rent paid on the remaining share is charged at a discounted rate (usually 2.75% of the property value per year). In addition, stamp duty can generally be deferred until you increase your share of the property to 80%.
- 12.25 With Shared Ownership, it is possible to buy more of the home by “staircasing” i.e. increasing the share. Shares can be bought in 1% increments, which will in turn reduce rent paid.

Benefits of the proposed Affordable Housing at the appeal site

- 12.26 The proposed affordable housing meets the requirements of Policy H9 of the adopted Local Plan, which seeks 40% affordable housing on qualifying developments. As I have set out at section 9 of this Proof of Evidence, affordable housing policies have been held by Inspectors to capture a benefit, rather than to ward off harm or needed in mitigation.
- 12.27 The affordable housing benefits of the appeal scheme are therefore:
- a. 40% of the scheme provided as affordable housing – a total of up to 93 affordable homes;
 - b. An addition of 70% (or up to 65) affordable homes for rent;
 - c. An addition of 25% (or up to 23) First Homes prioritised for local applicants;
 - d. An addition of 5% (or up to 5) Shared Ownership dwellings;
 - e. A deliverable scheme which provides much needed affordable homes;
 - f. Which provide better quality affordable homes; and
 - g. Greater security of tenure than the private rented sector.
- 12.28 In my opinion these benefits are substantial and a strong material consideration weighing heavily in favour of the proposal.

The Weight to be Attributed to the Proposed Affordable Housing

Section 13

- 13.1 The NPPF is clear at paragraph 31 that policies should be underpinned by relevant up-to-date evidence which is adequate and proportionate and takes into account relevant market signals.
- 13.2 Paragraph 59 of the NPPF sets out the Government's clear objective of *"significantly boosting the supply of homes"* with paragraph 60 setting out that in order to *"determine the minimum number of homes needed, strategic policies should be informed by a local housing need assessment"*.
- 13.3 The NPPF requires local authorities at paragraph 61 to assess and reflect in planning policies the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups, *"including those who require affordable housing"*.
- 13.4 I also note the findings of Inspector Kevin Ward in July 2015 who considered (and subsequently allowed) an outline planning permission for the erection of up to 90 dwellings with vehicular access on to Hollybush Lane and associated public open space, landscaping and drainage work on land at Firlands Farm, Hollybush Lane, Burghfield Common, Reading, Berkshire (**CD J8**).
- 13.5 Mr Ward identified that the individual benefits of a scheme are not transferable, as each development should be considered on its own merits. Mr Ward indicated at paragraph 58 that:
- "Whilst it may be that similar economic and social benefits could be achieved from other sites including the preferred option sites, I do not consider that this is relevant to the assessment of whether the particular proposal before me represents sustainable development in its own right."*
- 13.6 The context of this decision is in relation to a previously determined appeal at Mans Hill also located within Burghfield Common (**CD J9**). Mr Ward set out his comments in relation to the distinction between the two appeals at paragraphs 70 and 71, which I set out below:

“70. I have given careful consideration to the decision of the Inspector who dealt with the appeal at Mans Hill. It is worth emphasising that in that case the Inspector was considering a noticeably larger proposal adjoining a different part of the village. Whilst I have approached the issue of housing land requirements and supply from a different perspective, I reach the same conclusion that Policy HSG.1 of the Local Plan should not be considered up to date and the proposal should be assessed in the light of Paragraph 14 of the NPPF.

71. As explained above I take a different view as to the weight to be given to the emerging HSADPD and do not consider that the particular proposal before me would undermine the plan making process. I have also taken a different view of the weight to be attached to social and economic benefits as I consider that the proposal should be assessed in its own right in terms of sustainable development. Notwithstanding this, it is clear that the Inspector in the Mans Hill case had significant concerns regarding the adverse effect on the character and appearance of the area. I do not share such concerns in relation to the proposal before me.”

13.7 As can be seen in relation to Mr Ward’s comments at paragraph 58, it is for each case to be considered on its individual merits.

13.8 Another appeal that considers the issue of benefits is the development for 71 dwellings, including affordable provision at 40%, equal to 28 affordable dwellings on site at Hawkhurst in Kent (**CD J10**). In critiquing the Council’s views with regard to the affordable housing benefits of the scheme, the Inspector made the following comments:

“The Council are of the view that the housing benefits of the scheme are ‘generic’ and would apply to all similar schemes. However, in my view, this underplays the clear need in the NPPF to meet housing needs and the Council’s acceptance that greenfield sites in the AONB are likely to be needed to meet such needs. Further, I agree with the appellant that a lack of affordable housing impacts on the most vulnerable people in the borough, who are unlikely to describe their needs as generic.” (Paragraph 118)

13.9 I agree, the recipients of up to 93 homes here will not describe their needs as generic.

13.10 Uttlesford District Council is facing an affordability crisis, with the Council’s own corporate documents and emerging Local Plan all recording the impacts that this is having upon residents in this district. Households are being ‘priced out’ of renting and buying homes in Uttlesford, and the affordability indicators all show a bleak and

worsening situation. This is perhaps exemplified by the Housing Register, which had 1,337 households at the last count in March 2021; and the lower quartile affordability ratio, with lower quartile houses costing over 14 times lower quartile earnings in Uttlesford in 2021.

Relevant Secretary of State and Appeal Decisions

- 13.11 The importance of affordable housing as a material consideration has been reflected in a number of Secretary of State (“SoS”) and appeal decisions. Of particular interest is the amount of weight which has been afforded to affordable housing relative to other material considerations; many decisions recognise affordable housing as an individual benefit with its own weight in the planning balance.
- 13.12 Brief summaries of appeal decisions relevant to this appeal are summarised at **Appendix JS8**. The full decisions are included as Core Documents.
- 13.13 Some of the key points I would highlight from these examples are that:
- a. Affordable housing is an important material consideration;
 - b. The importance of unmet need for affordable housing being met immediately;
 - c. Planning Inspectors and the Secretary of State have attached substantial weight and very substantial weight to the provision of affordable housing; and
 - d. Even where there is a five-year housing land supply the benefit of a scheme’s provision of affordable housing can weigh heavily in favour of development.

Summary and Conclusion

- 13.14 There is a wealth of evidence to demonstrate that there is a national housing crisis in the UK affecting many millions of people who are unable to access suitable accommodation to meet their housing needs.
- 13.15 What is clear is that a significant boost in the delivery of housing, and in particular affordable housing, in England is absolutely essential to arrest the housing crisis and prevent further worsening of the situation.
- 13.16 Market signals indicate a worsening trend in affordability across Uttlesford and by any measure of affordability, this is an authority in the midst of an affordable housing emergency, and one through which urgent action must be taken to deliver more affordable homes. I have no doubt that every one of the affordable homes will be allocated to a household in need.

- 13.17 In this context, the proposed 40% affordable housing, totalling up to 93 homes, will make a significant and tangible impact on the lives of those real households in need who will occupy each affordable home. The scheme will enable up to 93 more households to access good, affordable accommodation
- 13.18 In light of all the evidence, I consider that the proposed affordable housing is an important social benefit of the appeal scheme and should be attributed **substantial weight** in the determination of this appeal.