Analysis of supply and demand for social rented housing in Central Bedfordshire

This analysis of supply and demand for social housing in Central Bedfordshire has been undertaken to inform the development of Central Bedfordshire Council’s Tenancy Strategy.

The analysis looks at how well the current supply of social rented housing is working to meet housing needs, by looking at the waiting times of applicants on the housing register, and the number of people currently waiting for social housing.

The analysis also looks at under-occupation in the Council’s rented stock, to understand what impact on housing supply might be achieved by tackling under-occupation.

This document is a summary of the analysis. More information about the detailed figures behind the analysis can be obtained from Mary Goodson, Housing Policy Advisor, by telephone on 0300 300 5515; email at mary.goodson@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk; or by writing to

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1. Housing stock in Central Bedfordshire by tenure and type

Data from the 2001 census shows that in 2001 around 77% of Central Bedfordshire’s housing stock was owner-occupied, and around 14% was social rented housing. Data on housing stock tenure from the 2011 census has not yet been published. It will show an increase in the number of dwellings in Central Bedfordshire across all tenures.

There are 11,008 units of general needs rented social housing (council and Housing Association) across Central Bedfordshire. There are a further 2,447 units of sheltered housing for older people.

In addition there are 791 units of Shared Ownership and Intermediate Rented housing

2. Lettings of social housing

During 2001-12, there were a total of 1,068 lettings of social housing. These 1,068 lettings include 230 lets of newly built social rented housing, and 838 lettings of social rented properties which became empty because the previous tenant moved out.

Analysis of waiting times shows that on average, the households allocated these properties had been on the housing register for 40 weeks. Around 80% of households had been waiting for less than one year when they were allocated their property.

More detailed analysis shows that in general, households had longer to wait if they were in low housing need; and that no allocations of two, three and four bedroom houses were
made to households in the lowest housing need (in Band 3A). Waiting times were also generally longer for one bedroom properties and 2 bed houses.

Analysis of lettings by location showed that a higher proportion of lettings in the south of Central Bedfordshire were made to applicants with urgent housing need than in the north. Lettings to Band 3 are 63% of all lettings in the north, and 52% of all lettings in the south.

3. The housing register

There were a total of 4213 households on the Housing Register in Central Bedfordshire at 1 April 2012. Of these, 1956 are in ‘social housing need’, in Bands 1, 2 and 3. A further 2257 households are in Band 4. These households are not assessed as being in social housing need. This definition is drawn from the legislation and means those that the law requires us to give reasonable preference to in the allocations scheme. Only 100 of the lettings made in 2011-12 were made to applicants from Band 4.

Analysis of waiting times shows that on average, households on the housing register have been waiting for 106 weeks. However, more detailed analysis indicates that the majority (around 77%) of households on the housing register have been waiting less than 1 year.

Where households have had extended waiting times on the housing register, this can be for a number of reasons. It can simply indicate that the household has not been successful in bidding for properties, and that the system has therefore not been able to meet the household’s needs. It may also be that the household has been holding out to bid for a particular type of property in a particular area and is prepared to wait for that vacancy to be advertised. However, long waiting times can also be caused by households having a period of ‘reduced preference’ when they are on the list but unable to bid, for example because of issues with anti-social behaviour. Some very old applications are ‘inactive’, meaning that the applicant has found their own housing and given up their application, but not told the Council to take their name off the list.

A total of 168 Central Bedfordshire Council tenants were registered for a transfer to a different social rented property at 1 April 2012. Of these, 100 are in social housing need, meaning that their current property is unsuitable for them in some way. The remaining 68 tenants have registered for a transfer simply because they wish to move, but do not meet the legal definition of being in social housing need, and so are waiting in Band 4.

Amongst transfer applicants, 40% of those applicants that are in social housing need have been waiting longer than one year.

4. Homelessness demand

During 2011-12, Central Bedfordshire Council accepted a full duty to house 169 homeless households. Of these, the majority were homeless because they had been asked to leave their current home by their parents.

During 2011-12, Council officers carried out 523 Homelessness Preventions. This is where a council officer helps the applicant who is threatened with homelessness to stay in their current home, or to make a planned move to alternative accommodation.
5. Strategic Housing Market Assessment

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) is carried out on behalf of the Council by an independent consultant, and includes research into housing needs.

The SHMA recommends that between 2010 and 2021, the following new social rented homes are needed in Central Bedfordshire in order to meet housing need:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bed size</th>
<th>New social rented requirement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One bed</td>
<td>2400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two bed</td>
<td>1900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three bed</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four bed</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6500</td>
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</tbody>
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6. Under occupation

The information available to the Council suggests that around 1198 tenants are under-occupying their council property. The Council believes that by reducing under-occupation, more need for family sized housing can be met from within existing council housing stock.

Contact us...

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