



# A HOUSING, HOMES & ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY FOR SURREY

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Commissioned by Surrey County Council & Surrey Delivery Board

Produced by Inner Circle Consulting

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# Introduction

## *... Purpose of this work*

Housing plays a fundamental part in people's wellbeing, their employment, health and relationships. Housing conditions, accessibility and mix are key determinants of a thriving and sustainable workforce and economy. Housing also links strongly to poverty, including fuel poverty, the cost of living as well as climate change and net zero ambitions. There are strong economic, health and community drivers for seeking to improve housing, accommodation and homes in Surrey.

The purpose of this work has been to provide, for the first time, an overview for all interested parties of the current state of housing, accommodation and homes in Surrey in a broad and contextual way across the county as a whole, supplementing the detailed work each district and borough does at a local level.

The first phase of work, in summer 2022, produced a baseline assessment of the current situation. This allowed for:

- i) Drawing attention to the scale and seriousness of the housing crisis in Surrey;
- ii) The identification of a set of priority issues that are deserving of more co-ordinated action;
- iii) The identification of shared barriers and issues that partners can present to the Government as needing change in national policies, structures, processes and decisions;
- iv) Shared learning across the county, using this work as a catalyst for encouraging wider discussion, bringing key partners together around common issues of concern and act as a driver for greater collaboration; and
- v) Having identified those issues that Government needs to address, also identifying how willing partners in Surrey could practically and pragmatically collaborate on tackling these shared issues in the housing crisis, which is presented as a Call to Action.

This work was commissioned by Surrey County Council, with a scope agreed by the Surrey Delivery Board (comprising District and Borough Leaders and Chief Executives) and has been delivered by Inner Circle Consulting through wider engagement with key stakeholders.

# Executive Summary

## *....Introduction*

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It is clear that there is a considerable amount of activity to encourage more housing, of all types, in Surrey, led by the district and borough councils; and examples of good partnership working to address specific need and opportunity. There are a number of barriers preventing successful delivery of the number and tenure of homes required to address need, however, and a recognition that more could be done, through partnership.

This strategy identifies opportunities for more partnership working and consolidates a joint call to the Government and a joint call to action to accelerate the solutions to the housing crisis Surrey now finds itself in.

The strategy does not, and should not, duplicate the very good work of the local authorities in their planning and housing functions.

## *... Headlines from the data*

Surrey is in the grip of a serious housing crisis. While this is very different from the scale and severity of the housing crises that might be seen in large cities, it is a crisis nonetheless and action is required to tackle it.

This housing crisis manifests most critically in the supply of homes that are truly affordable for local people, at all tenures and most income groups. This shortage of housing affects the lives of many local residents. It also deters or prevents people moving to, or staying in, Surrey. Critically, local businesses, the NHS and other public services are struggling to recruit and retain the staff needed to maintain good quality public services and a thriving local economy.

The high-quality way of life that Surrey is known for, and that residents rightly celebrate and wish to protect, is at risk from the shortage, quality and unaffordability of homes.

The housing crisis is not a single event. There are multiple strands, and action to tackle the housing crisis in Surrey requires simultaneous interventions on multiple fronts: there is no silver bullet solution – and the reality is that in improving one aspect of housing, there are potential negative knock-on consequences elsewhere.

## *... Recommendations for action*

Partners across Surrey need to work collaboratively to tackle the housing crisis. It is absolutely not an admission of individual shortcoming to recognise that more can be achieved together than alone. In almost every aspect of work, more joint working and

collaboration stands to yield better results for local people. Partners also have a golden opportunity, through joint work on public sector land, to take a stronger hand in the delivery of housing in the county, and so more proactively determine the quantity, tenure and quality of homes.

### *... A Call to Government*

Local Government in Surrey needs more power and more funding to tackle the housing crisis. To justify this, Surrey also needs to correct the record with popular perception. The conventional wisdom from those outside the county is that there can't be any problems in Surrey because of its historical reputation as a prosperous and successful part of the country. Making a case to Central Government or other funding bodies means telling a balanced and accurate story about the state of Surrey.

Local Government in Surrey would benefit from **greater powers to accelerate development from private developers** and a stronger hand in **land assembly and compulsory purchase powers to bring forward suitable land for housing and infrastructure**.

There is a need for **reform in the structure and longevity of government funding**, which often forces partners to dedicate resource to bid writing for small short-term pots of funding instead of planning long-term to meet local strategic need.

Where funding is available, it falls short of the amount needed to **fund Social Rent instead of 'so-called' Affordable Rent homes, the retrofit of housing or the funding of replacement homes within regeneration schemes**.

### *... A Call to Action*

Faced with other crises, partners in Surrey have worked quickly, effectively, and collaboratively; bringing ingenuity and creativity to solve problems on behalf of Surrey residents. That approach needs to be brought now to the Housing Crisis in Surrey.

This starts with **sharing best practice** between partners in the county so the same good idea doesn't have to be invented 11 times and could go much further by starting to coordinate and aligning interventions and resources and look to future initiatives such as **pooling budgets between services and authorities**. This is particularly true where support is provided to vulnerable residents and teams through county, D&Bs, housing associations and voluntary sector organisations. This approach should also see the **expansion of existing joint-working between neighbouring D&Bs to create larger, more strategic housing teams across Surrey. Local Government that can make best use of scale to drive better outcomes for residents**.

In meeting local housing need, **expanding Homeshare schemes** amongst anchor institutions and key employers could unlock significant numbers of rooms in underoccupied

homes for key workers. Meanwhile, **a greater range of older people's housing needs to be built** to meet the wider range of preferences and lifestyles of a diverse ageing population already residing in Surrey. This is closely tied to the need for **more step-down housing as an interim step between hospital and home care.**

7 Within the affordable housing sector, it's clear that, while "Affordable Rent" offers a more affordable home for some residents, it remains inaccessible to higher-need families who are unable to afford that level of rent. This leads to some high-need families remaining in Temporary Accommodation, which is insecure for residents and expensive for Local Authorities. Partners should try to increase the proportion of **Social Rent housing, especially family-sized homes, recognising that Affordable Rent homes are increasingly out of reach for families in the greatest need. Partners should explore ways to subsidise turning Affordable Rent units into Social Rent homes over time to respond to this affordability challenge.**

The greatest potential for Surrey Local Government, housing associations and other public bodies, such as the health sector and the Ministry of Defence in taking a stronger hand in the scale, size and affordability of new homes across the county is to make use of their existing land reserves. There is no consolidated map or register of publicly-owned land and no strategic approach across these key landowners to how that land could best be put to use, or who could deliver homes that are needed. **Mapping public sector land, establishing an effective and dynamic One Public Estate partnership and working together to create common principles for land disposal and development** would streamline and accelerate housing delivery without being so dependent on speculative external applications through the planning process. This approach requires public sector land owners to accept the fundamental principle that disposal of land cannot only be seen through a lens of maximising commercial return, but on achievement of wider objectives and community value such as facilitating the supply of new homes for social rent.

There are several good examples of high density, mid-rise developments in the County which exemplify the 20-Minute Neighbourhood principle and allows for greater independent living and more economically vibrant town centres. A lot of development, however, remains low-density, land-intensive and car-dependent. To protect green space and encourage more sustainable living in the face of the climate crisis, partners should look to **incorporate 20-minute neighbourhood principles into local policies and masterplans for new sites and look to support more active transport infrastructure across Surrey to make it easier to walk and cycle from residential, community, leisure and commercial areas.**

To accelerate the delivery of higher density (as opposed to high rise) flatted development in town centres, to support local economic vitality and vibrancy, **councils should explore supporting more Build-to-Rent (BTR) housing in town centres** to create a new housing offer away from the dominance of demand for market sale houses.

Retrofit and improvement of existing homes, whether in private, council or housing association ownership will be of growing importance in coming years. Higher energy prices

have changed the financial calculus for better-off families about whether to invest in insulation and heat pumps. Within the social sector there is a growing debate on how to fund retrofit, but a strong commitment that when funding becomes available it should be pursued. This represents not only a potential significant benefit for Surrey residents, but also a potential boost to the local economy and also contributes to net zero with a reduction in the use of embedded carbon in demolition and rebuilding. **Partners should collaborate on mapping the training, up-skilling and supply chain support needed to foster a local retrofit industry, so that when this market takes off, local residents benefit from jobs as well as better homes.**

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In the face of much lower domestic migration statistics than comparator counties in the South-East, it is important to recognise that Surrey is competing against a wide choice of locations across the South-East, and the rest of the country; it is not simply a case of 'build it and they will come'. **Updating and telling a Surrey Story for the twenty-first century** is a key part of understanding what will attract new economically-active residents into Surrey – so that the good quality of life in Surrey is preserved for future generations.

This strategy presents the evidence and, after considerable and extensive engagement with key partners, proposes ways that these issues can be addressed by willing partners. It is for the wider partnership in Surrey, between councils, housing associations, other public sector land-owners, service providers and the private sector to work together to meet these objectives.

# Methodology

Inner Circle Consulting was commissioned to prepare this work in the summer of 2022 with a scope agreed by the Surrey Delivery Board. The work was overseen by a steering group comprising representatives from District & Borough Chief Executives, Housing Officers, Raven Housing Trust & Surrey County Council.

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This work has been prepared by following the existing evidence. Districts and Boroughs in Surrey have a detailed understanding of local need and demand. Through the preparation of local plans, of local housing strategies and their work day-to-day, they know their immediate area in far more granular detail than this work attempts to cover.

## *... Gathering the Baseline Assessment*

Instead, this work provides, for the first time, a broad contextual analysis of the commonalities across the county, of the shared challenges and opportunities that confront decision-makers and service providers right across Surrey. The evidence is rooted in publicly available gold standard sources. During summer 2022, data was gathered from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, and from statistical returns prepared by the districts & boroughs in Surrey.

This data presents a snapshot of the situation. To interpret it and to understand the nuance behind the numbers, meetings were held with 31 stakeholders from across the county to hear first-hand their experience and view of housing in Surrey. Meetings were held with housing officers in the districts and boroughs, with council Chief Executives, with Housing Associations, the NHS, Homes England, universities, private developers and business representatives.

While perspectives varied, the unifying message from these meetings is that Surrey is in the grip of a serious and multifaceted housing crisis.

Having analysed the data, with the support of detailed local knowledge through stakeholder interviews, eight priority areas were identified for further interrogation. This Baseline Assessment was presented to the Surrey Delivery Board and to Surrey County Council elected members. Individual meetings were also offered to the leaders of the eleven districts and boroughs. A summary of the Baseline Assessment is available at [www.surreyi.gov.uk](http://www.surreyi.gov.uk).

## *... Testing through workshops*

In the autumn of 2022, four thematic workshops were held, with a broad cross-section of partners brought together, in-person, to discuss and debate both the evidence and potential ways of addressing identified problems. In many cases it was the first time participants had met in person, or the first time they'd sat down together since before the COVID pandemic



started. The four workshops focused on: supporting vulnerable residents & housing affordability; an ageing population & under occupation of housing; public sector land & delivery capacity; and the climate crisis and the twenty-minute neighbourhood concept.

### *... Surrey Housing Summit*

In December 2022, a Surrey Housing Summit was held at Surrey County Council's Woodhatch offices, bringing together over 100 Councillors, officers and external partners. Work to date was presented alongside two expert panels offering local testimony to the scale of the crisis and potential opportunities to tackle it. Questions and comments were collated from the audience through a mobile application, Slido, so that as many participants as possible were able to interact throughout the day.

### *... Next Steps*

This document presents the Baseline Assessment and the feedback gathered throughout extensive stakeholder engagement and presents back: a **Call to Government**: with what has been heard collectively from partners about what needs to change in national policy to address the Surrey housing crisis; and a **Call to Action**: outlining how partners in Surrey could work more effectively, collaboratively and with greater impact locally to meet local demand and need.

# Understanding the Surrey Housing Crisis

## Demand & Need

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Whether relatively wealthy or deprived, homeowner, home renter or homeless; the demand for housing is far outstripping the supply of housing, irrespective of various sizes, typologies, and tenures of housing. This is having far reaching social and economic impacts, placing strain on core local public service delivery and undermining key health outcomes for local residents. If left unaddressed, these interdependent challenges will continue to compound and push higher proportions of the local population into poverty and disadvantage while at the same time negatively impacting the quality of life of all residents.

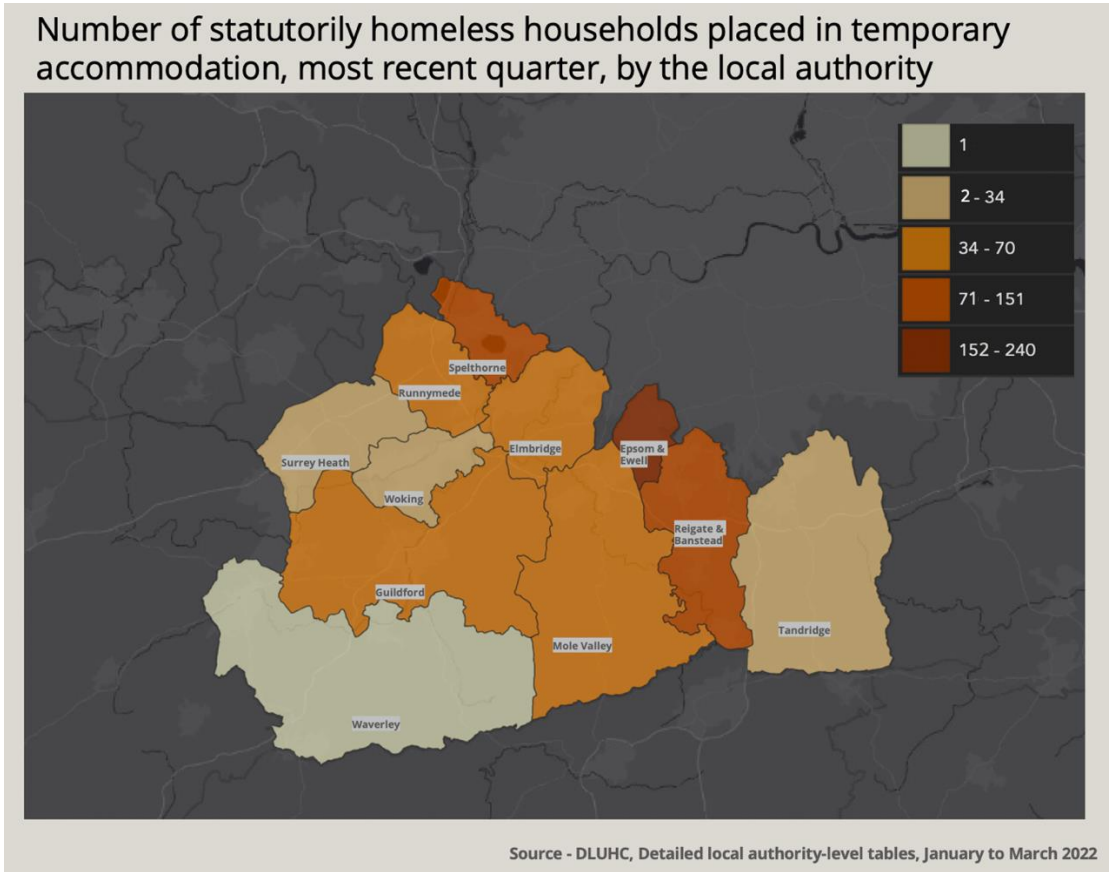
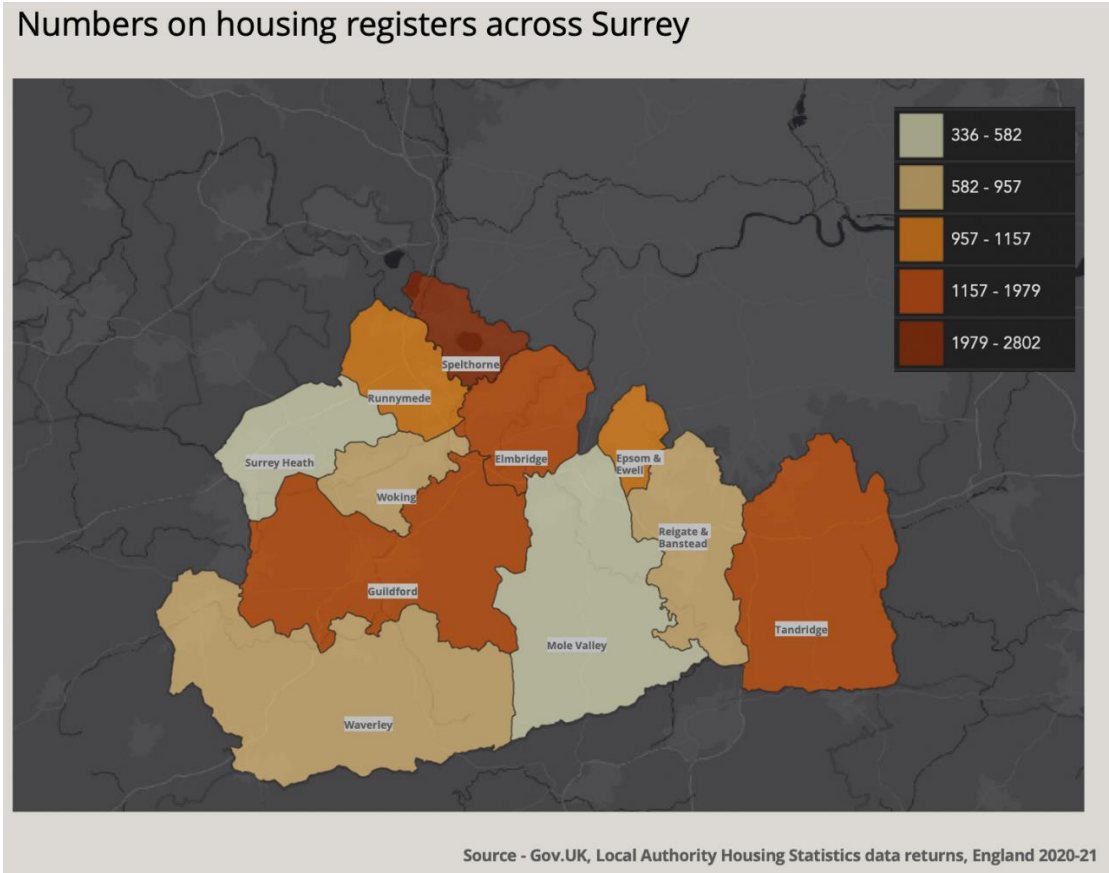
To understand the breadth of demand for housing throughout Surrey, this strategy was developed on a Baseline Assessment that assessed housing need for the following groups and typologies:

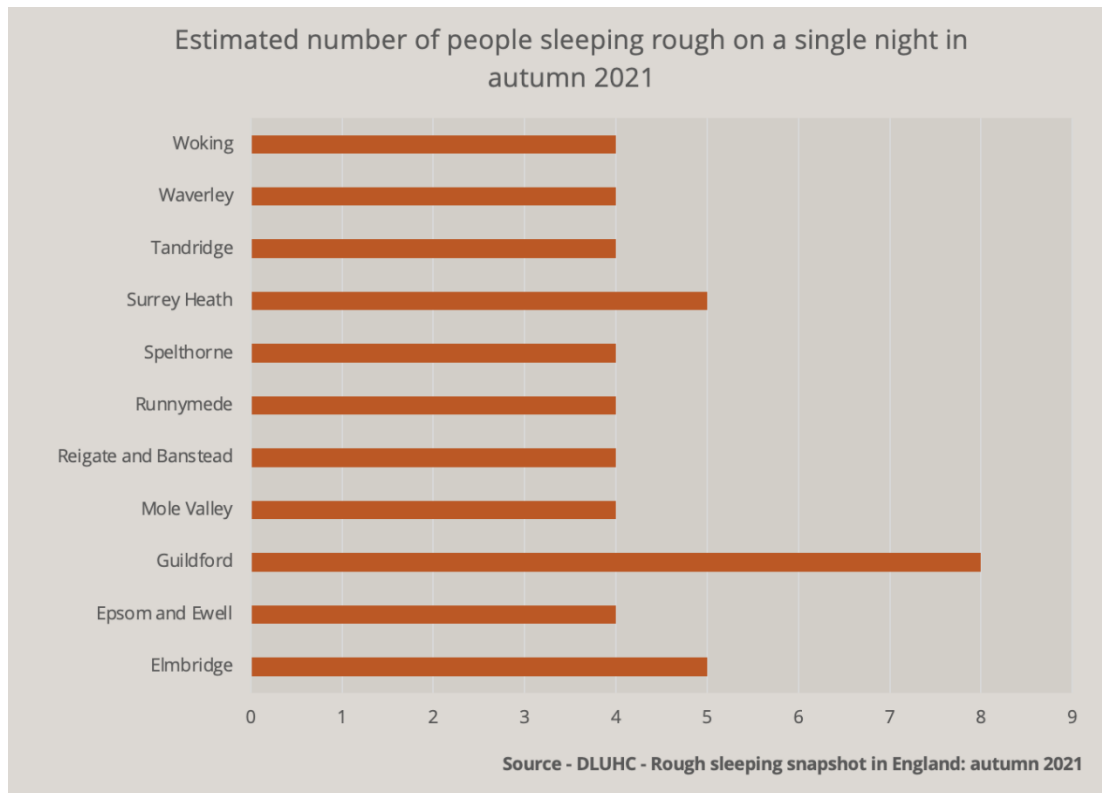
- Refugees and asylum seekers
- Homelessness and those seeking Temporary Accommodation
- Social and affordable housing
- Supported Independent Living
- Student Housing
- Private Rented
- Private Ownership
- Extra Care Housing
- Residential & Nursing Care Homes
- Children in care

Through analysis of this data, it is abundantly clear that, like much of England, Surrey is facing a housing crisis, affecting the lives of local residents, local businesses and local public services and entrenching the hardships that Surrey's most vulnerable residents face. However the nature of the crisis across Surrey is different, more complex and more challenging than in some other areas. This arises from the extremely high land values across a large geography, the very low rates of housing affordability, the very high proportion of Green Belt designations and other protected land types, an ageing population with reducing proportions of younger professionals; and the close proximity to London and Heathrow and Gatwick Airports yet failing to sustain its positive economic status compared to neighbouring regions.

As a result, homelessness is on the rise, demand outstrips supply for affordable homes, assisted living for older residents, placements for children, student housing and market private rental and the pipeline of further development fails to meet the gap by several orders of magnitude.

Surrey's housing crisis is particular to Surrey. It is not as severe as exists in London or other large cities, but it is a crisis, which is affecting local public services, the local economy and preventing local residents from leading good lives in a place that is renowned for quality of life.

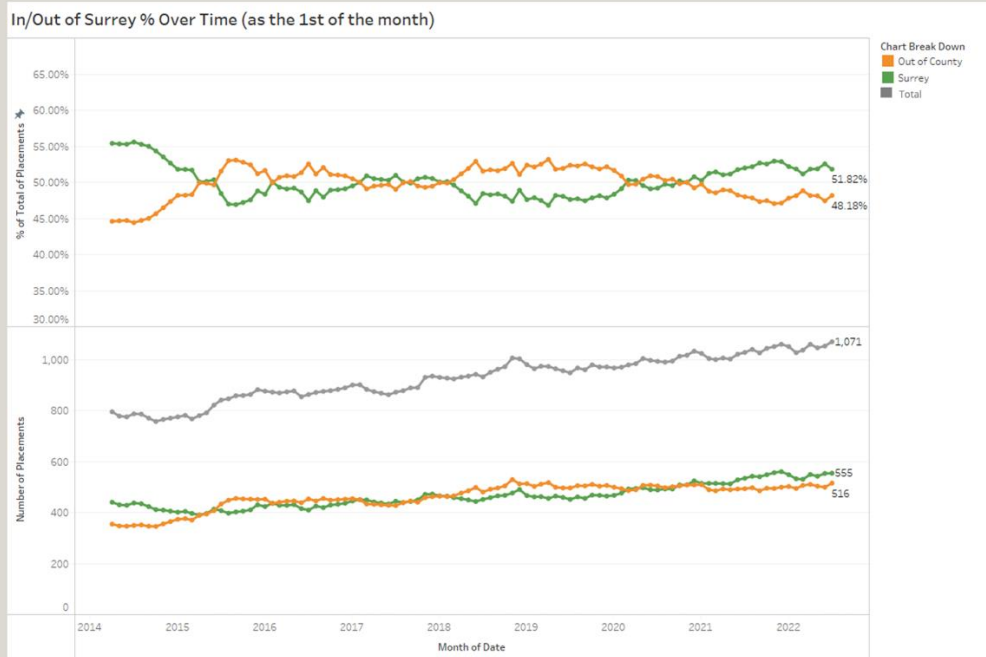




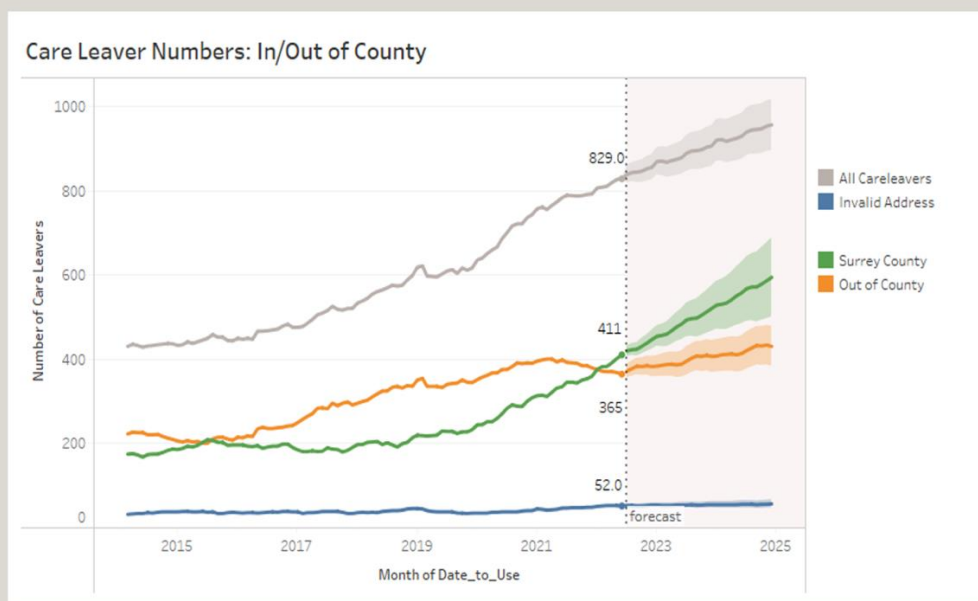
While numbers varied across districts & boroughs (D&Bs), there are several thousand individuals and families waiting on housing registers across Surrey, while only a few hundred are being housed in temporary accommodation (TA). A shortage of suitable housing means that in some cases families from Surrey who become homeless are not able to remain in their local area and are placed in other Temporary Accommodation elsewhere in Surrey or out of the county, away from existing schools, work and social networks.

The above graph indicates that no more than an estimated 10 individuals are sleeping rough in any of Surrey's D&Bs on a given evening, and while street homelessness is a serious issue for those individuals affected, and more visible to other residents than homelessness in Temporary Accommodation, it is not a primary feature of the housing crisis in Surrey.

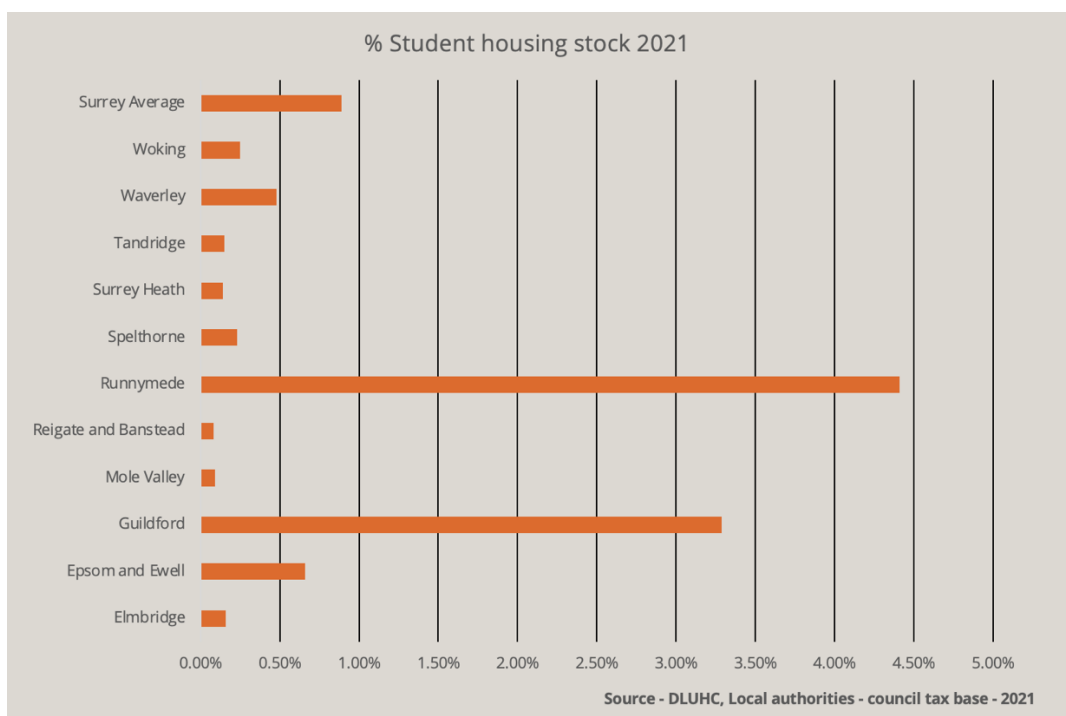
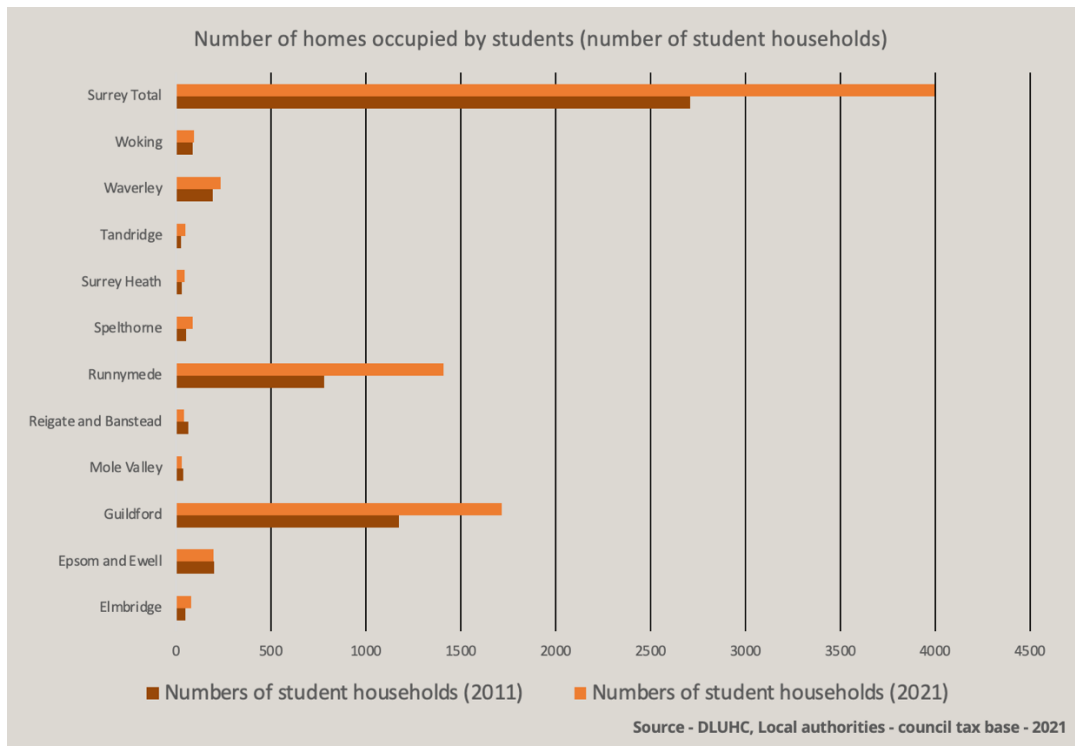
## Looked After Children Placements In/Out of County: All Placements



## Care Leaver: Demand over time



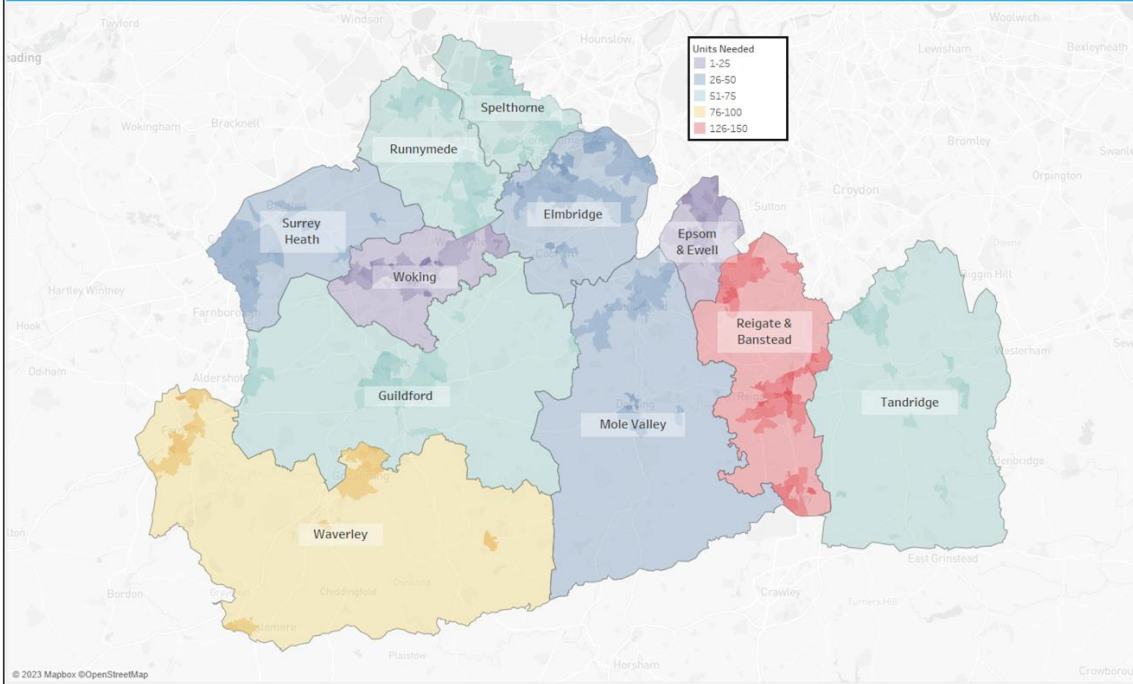
Figures provided by the County Council show that housing placements for children have steadily been rising in the last few years, and nearly half of those placements are being made out of the county due to the lack of available accommodation locally. While some of these children may be moving out of their locality to be re-homed with family elsewhere in the county – and for care leavers it could represent moving away to study or work - it nonetheless paints a picture of local housing systems under intense strain and results in having to move children out of the communities they know and have a strong connection with, simply due to a lack of suitable homes locally.



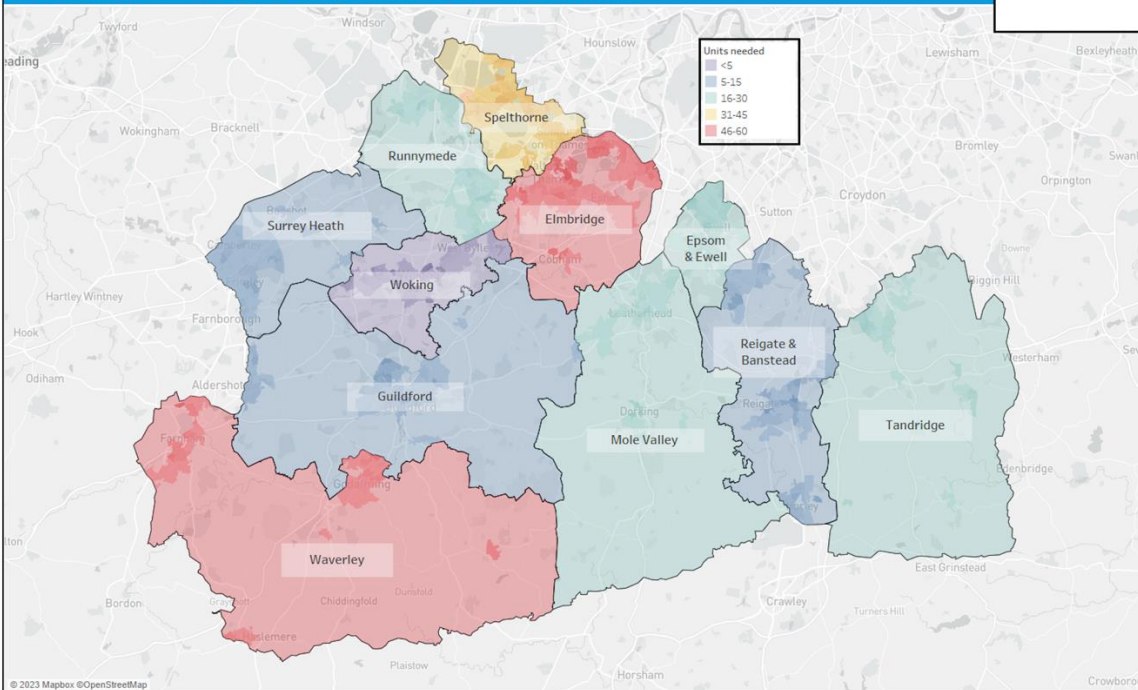
Numbers of student households have increased by an average of over 60% in 10 years, with particular concentrations in Runnymede and Guildford where this constitutes 3.5 – 4.5% of overall housing stock. As has been the case in similar circumstances elsewhere, this demand is likely to contribute to further pressure on private rental sector provision and housing of multiple occupation, particularly in town centres with access to universities and/or colleges and a higher concentration of night-time economy offerings. In addition, as students are exempt from paying council tax, this rapidly changing demographic places further strains on council services.

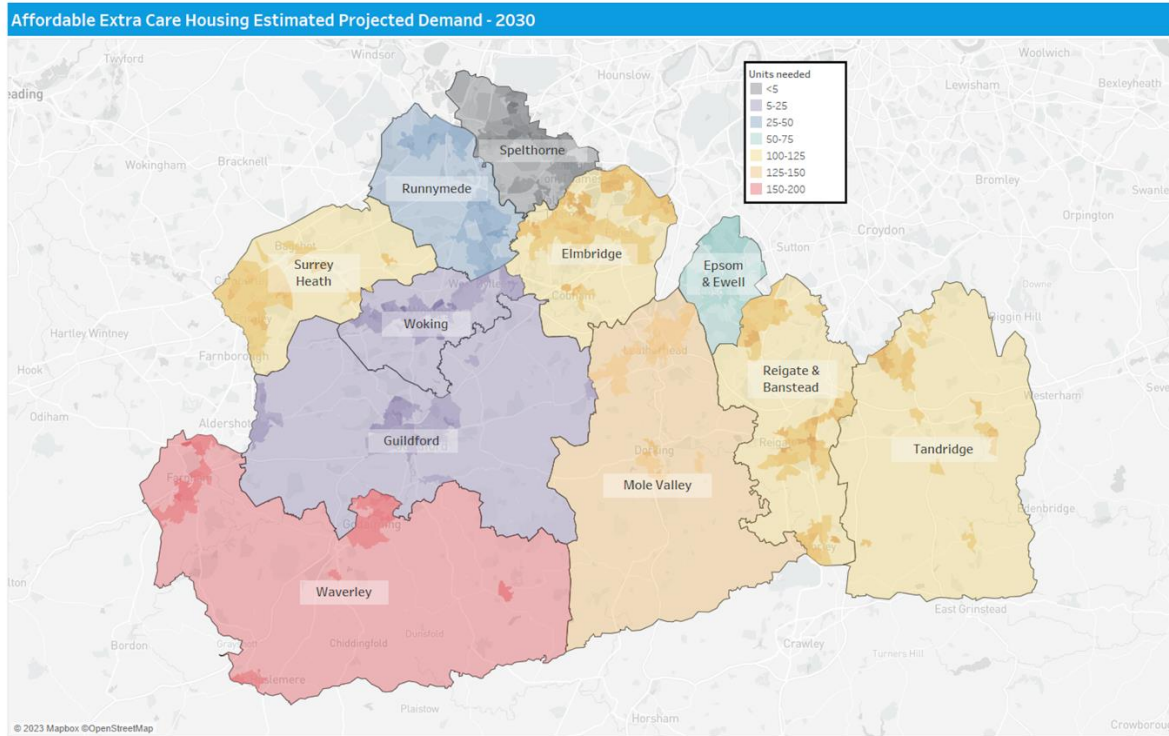


### Supported Independent Living Learning Disabilities and Autism Estimated Projected Demand - 2030



### Supported Independent Living Mental Health Estimated Projected Demand - 2030

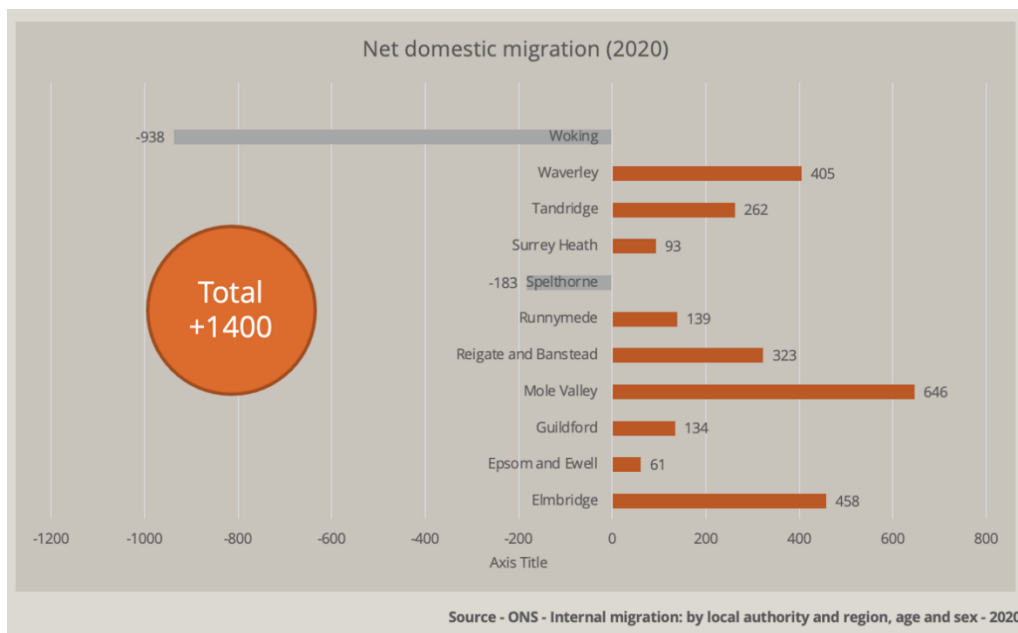




The demand models above provide conservative estimates of predicted demand to 2030. They highlight a county-wide deficit in provision in both Supported Independent Living and Affordable Extra Care Housing.

There are different pressures on the system for each of the provision types. Investing in these types of provision will ensure residents are able to stay close to their communities, maintain support networks, and mixmise independence.

All maps show the estimated deficit in need to 2030 on a district/ borough level based on current supply. Darker areas indicate higher levels of population density, and allude to potential favourable locations for future development.

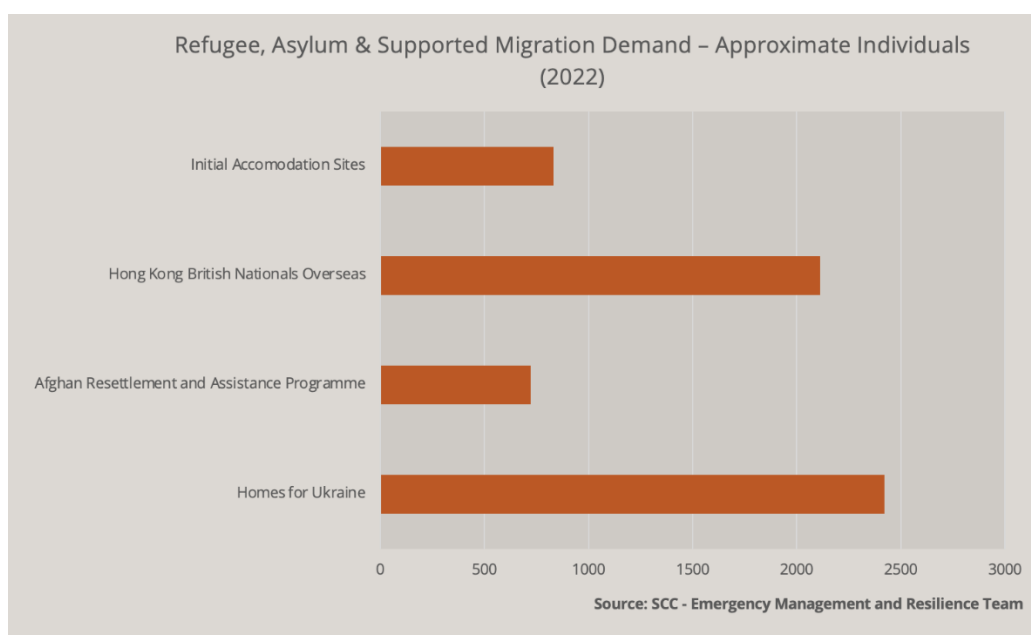




In terms of net internal migration, Surrey has experienced significantly less than comparator counties: increasing by 1,400 residents in 2020 while in the same year Kent and Hampshire both gained over 6,000 net new residents, East and West Sussex, combined, gained 8,000 additional residents. These figures exclude unitary urban areas, and paint a stark picture about Surrey falling behind neighbouring counties in the south-east of England.

This illustrates, alongside other related measures, that not only is Surrey's growth stagnant, but it is progressively falling behind comparators which are more successful at attracting the business owners and young professionals that contribute to economic growth and prosperity. This also reflects feedback from the NHS, Police and wider public services struggling to recruit and retain key staff.

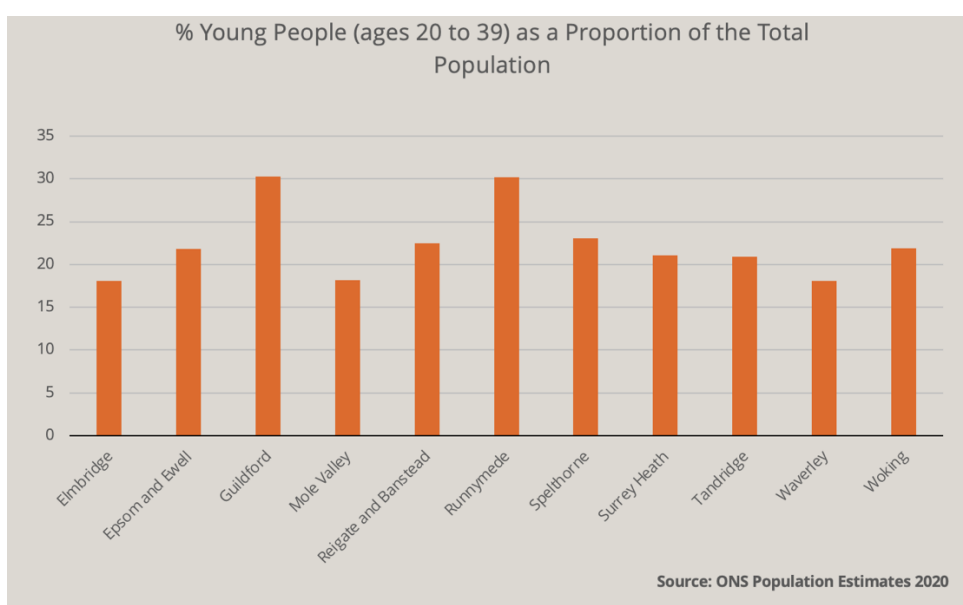
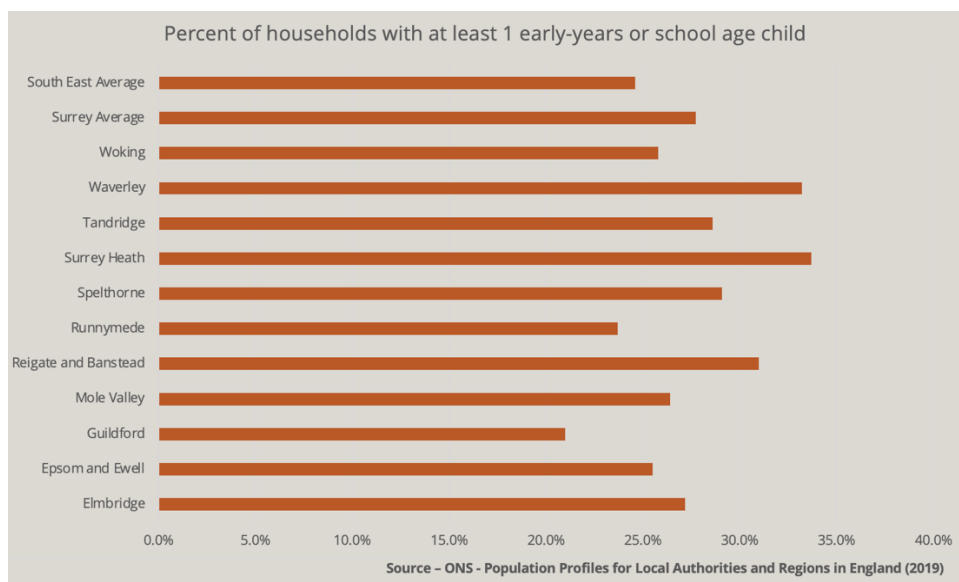
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Data provided by the County's Emergency Management and Resilience Team shows that many Surrey families have taken in Ukrainian refugees, with approximately 2,500 individuals in placements across the county. Homes for Ukraine uses spare rooms of voluntary residents rather than taking up other stock - connecting to the high levels of under occupation that we see in the county. There is a risk of this presenting a longer-term issue on local housing demand if placements come to a natural end or break down prematurely, and as Ukrainian guests establish roots and gain employment .

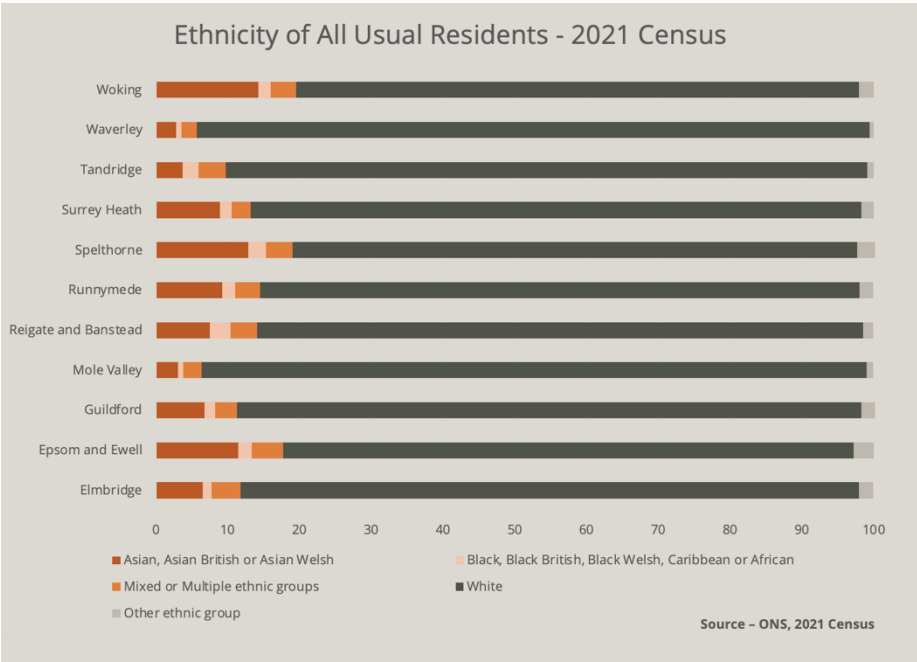
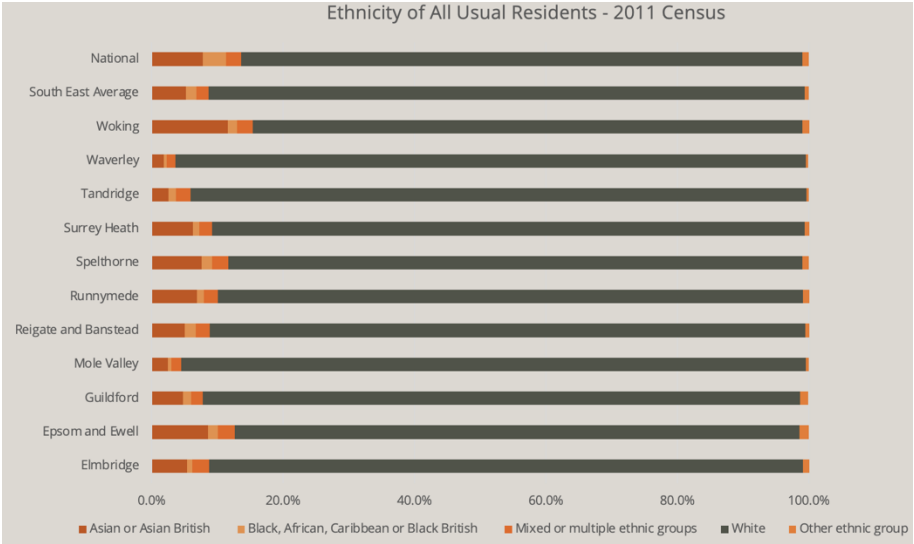
Private rent or home ownership will likely be out of reach of many refugee families if placements break down as the war continues and Ukrainians are unable to return home. In the absence of direct financial support from government this has the potential to place a significant further burden on the workloads of D&Bs to find alternative rehousing as families put down roots and form local connections.

Surrey has attracted significant numbers of migrants from Hong Kong; however, this population is largely financially self-sufficient and therefore reliant on private sector housing availability.



As a proxy for indicating the proportion of young families living in the county, the percentage of households with at least one early-years or school age child was extracted from the ONS. This indicates around a quarter of households in the county fitting in to this category. The percentage of young people (ages 20 to 39 years) as a proportion of the total population was used as a proxy for indicating the number of young professionals living in the county and shows 18 – 30% of district and borough populations falling within this category.

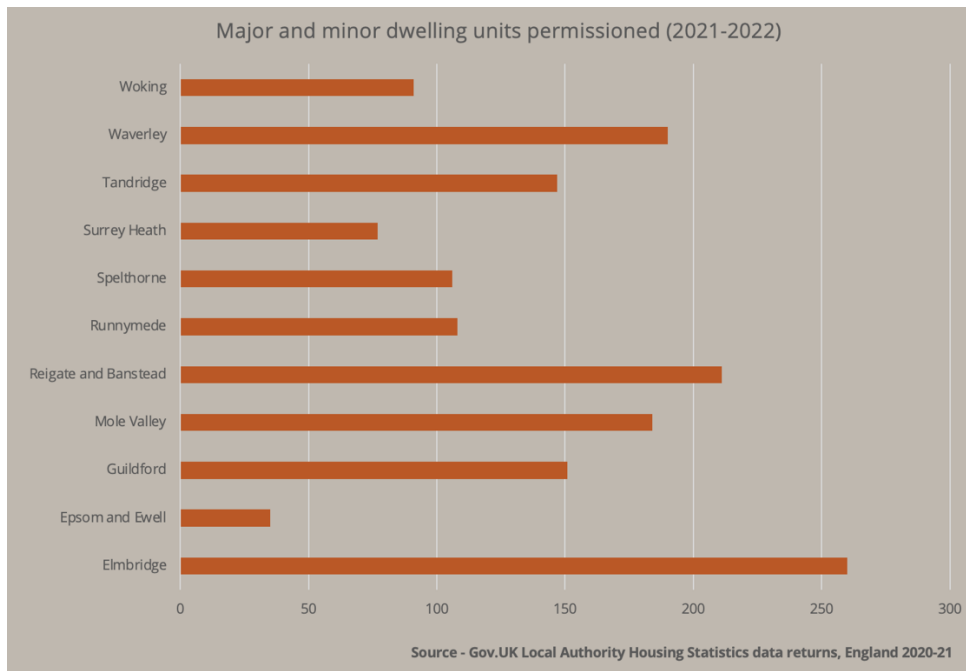
With relatively small numbers of young families and professionals, combined with minimal growth, there is a strong indication that they are being priced out of the county. Without housing for these groups in particular, there lies an existential threat to the Surrey way of life with an increasingly older population not matched by the proportion of younger residents to contribute to the economy, support growth and deliver essential services.



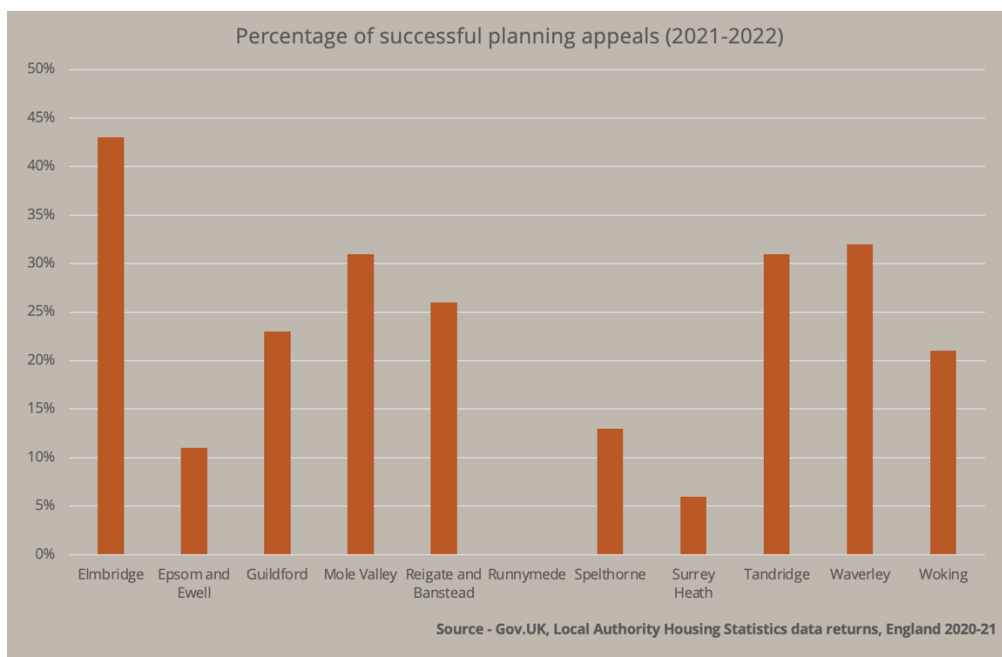
The demographic composition of Surrey is largely consistent with the wider South-East region. From 2011-2021 data, the ethnicity of Surrey has been predominantly White British, averaging around 80-90% across districts and boroughs, with minor increases largely among Asian or Asian British residents.

Supply

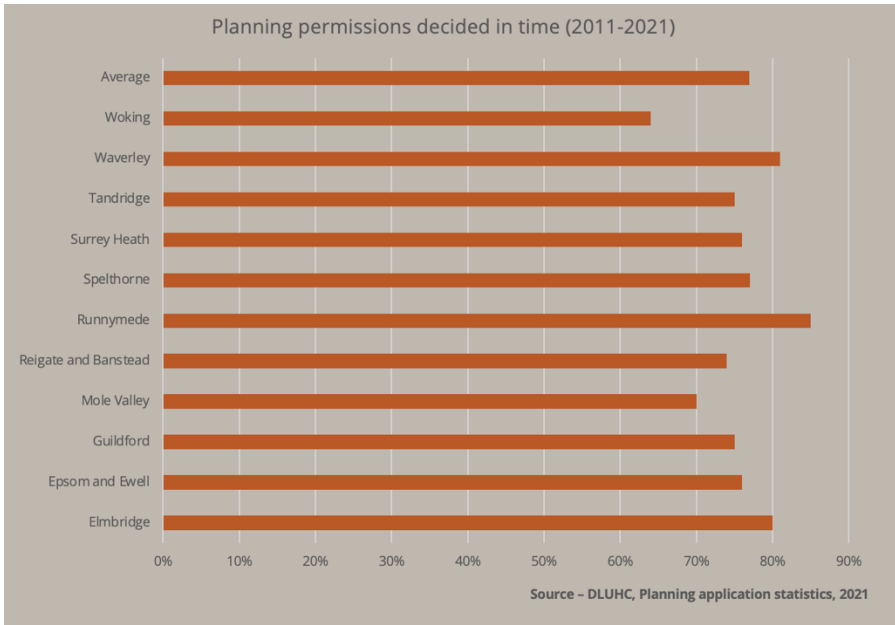
Key to meeting demand and tackling unaffordability is the provision of new housing to meet unmet and rising demand.



From 2021-2022, just over one thousand new dwelling units received planning permission across the county, with some boroughs and districts delivering a much greater share of this.

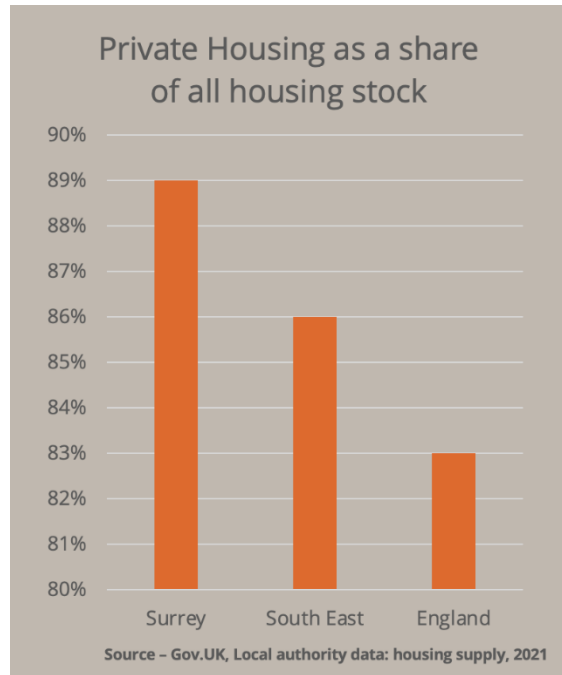


Successful planning appeals across the same period, were also measured and the data reflects that there were a number of policy-compliant development applications coming forward..

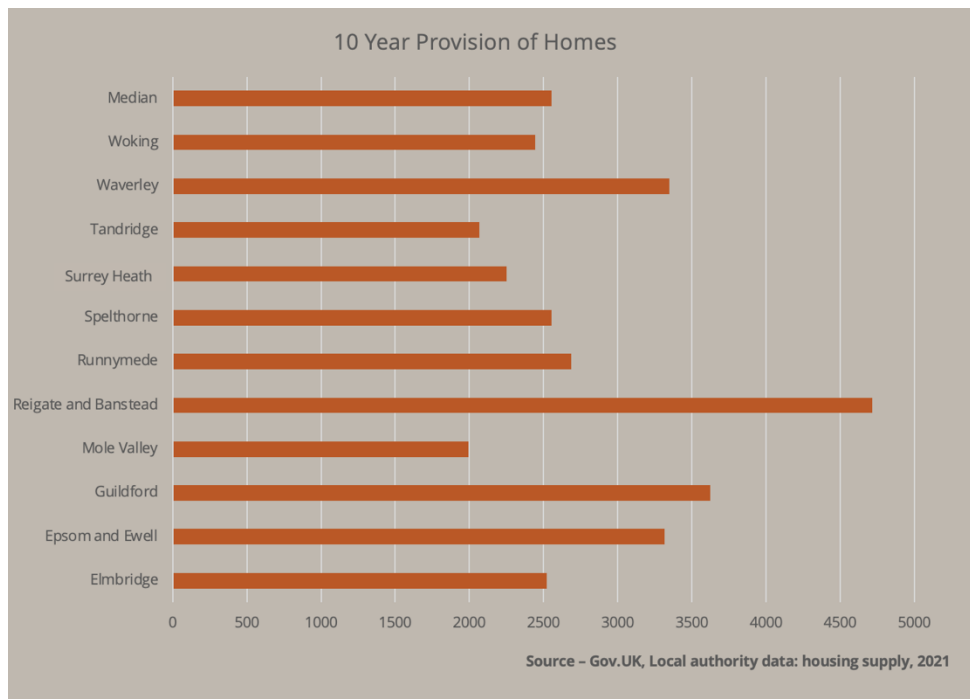


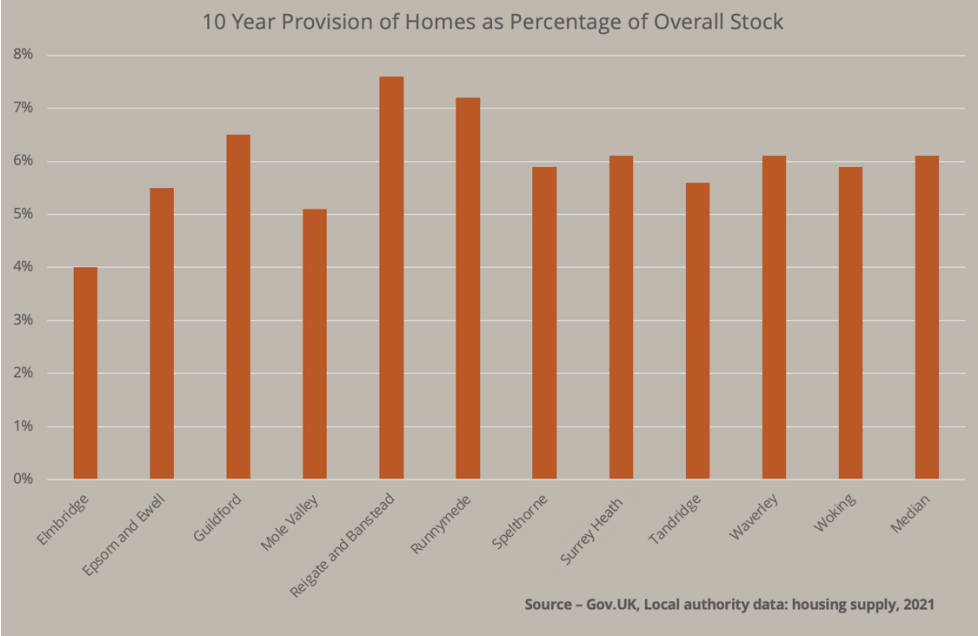
Across districts and boroughs, most planning applications were granted (either on application or following appeal) reflecting a need to attract more applications overall to meet demand. Capacity of local planning authorities is reflected well over the period of 2011-2021, despite a national and regional shortage of local government planning professionals, in that the vast majority of decisions were made and managed within the statutory timeframe. However, the limited supply of planning professionals will continue to be a challenge for all planning functions going forward.

As of 2021, 14,135 households across the county were registered as requiring support with housing, whilst, during the same decade, only 2,923 affordable rent homes and 1,788 social rent homes were built, representing approximately 6% of Surrey’s overall housing stock.

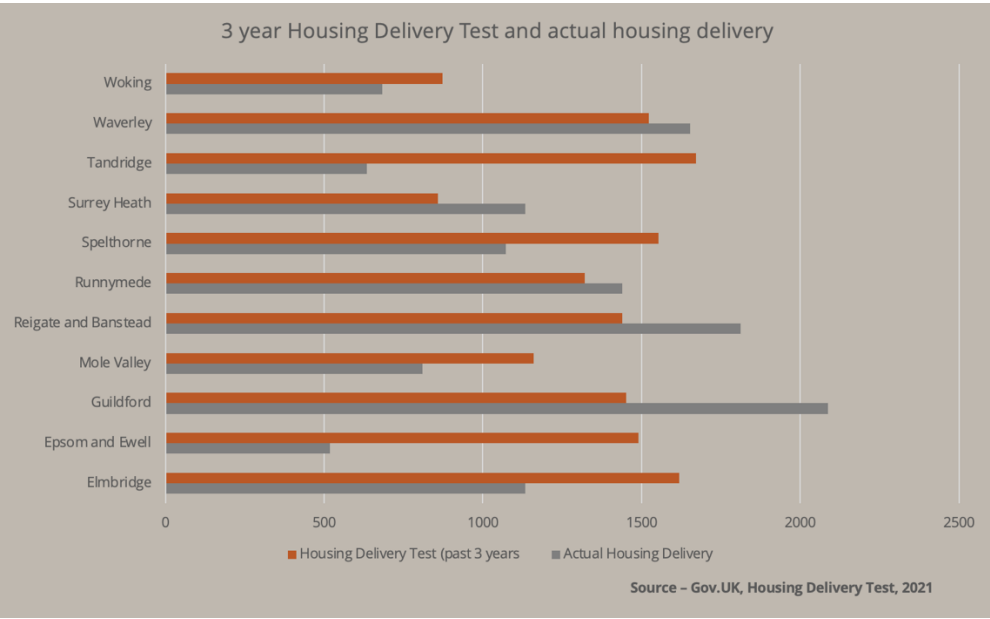


If Surrey's housing market had the **same proportions of affordable housing as the wider South-East** there would be an **additional 10,170 affordable homes** in the county. If it had the same proportion as **the English average, which includes London and other main cities**, there would be **25,424 more affordable homes**.





From 2011–2021, each district and borough provided an average of approximately 2,500 new homes, which represents around 6% of each of their overall housing stocks.



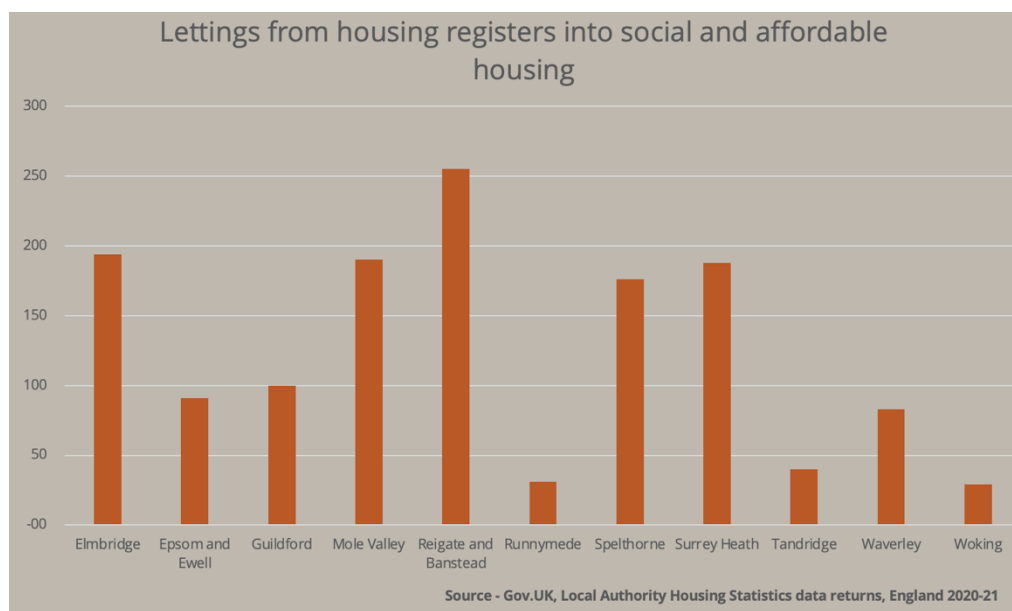
Set by central government, the Housing Delivery Test compares the targets set for delivery of new homes with actual housing numbers delivered and is a helpful way for understanding the ability of local authorities to meet local housing needs.

As of 2021, several of Surrey’s districts and boroughs are far exceeding their test in the three-year period, while others are not reaching the halfway mark. Across the county, the overall delivery rate against the government’s target reached 87%. This level of performance within a planning authority requires the preparation of an action plan setting out how that authority would respond to the shortfall and increase the rate of house building within its area.

D&Bs	Major PRP (>30%)	Major PRP Name	Proportion of overall local PRP stock owned	Proportion of PRP's portfolio in district
Epsom & Ewell	Yes	Rosebery Housing Association Limited	65%	90%
Reigate & Banstead	Yes	Raven Housing Trust Limited	64%	83%
Spelthorne	Yes	A2Dominion South Limited	86%	42%
Elmbridge	Yes	Paragon Asra Housing Limited	75%	23%
Surrey Heath	Yes	Accent Housing Limited	74%	16%
Mole Valley	Yes	Clarion Housing Association Limited	77%	3%
Guildford	No	N/A	N/A	N/A
Runnymede	No	N/A	N/A	N/A
Tandridge	No	N/A	N/A	N/A
Waverley	No	N/A	N/A	N/A
Woking	No	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source - Regulator for Social Housing, Geographic look-up tool (SDR data), 2021

In around half of Surrey's districts and boroughs, there is a single Registered Provider of social housing that owns a majority of the local stock; however, they have a varying proportion of their overall portfolio in the locality. This table sets out the relative relationships that local authorities and housing associations have across Surrey – where there is a clear potential for partnership, where the relationship is unbalanced and the local authorities without an obvious key partner for whom direct delivery or ad hoc partnerships may form the basis for stronger local housing growth.



Lettings from housing registers into social and affordable housing vary widely between districts and boroughs which is largely contingent upon what stock is available in those areas.

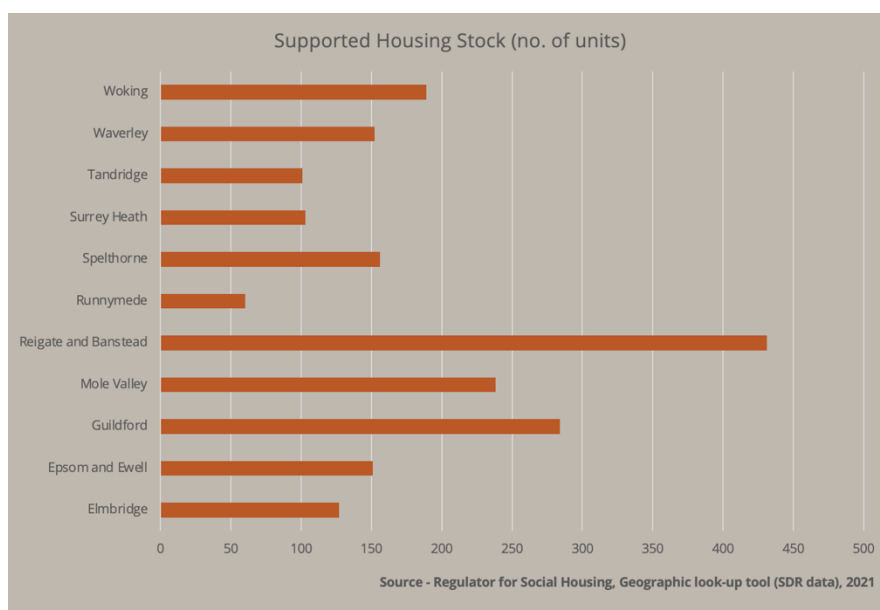


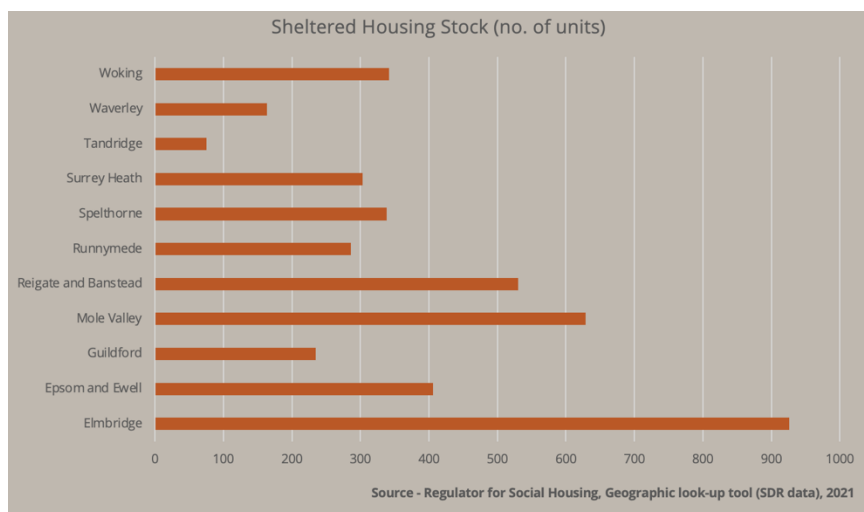
Districts & Boroughs	Extra Care Homes	Supported Independent Living – Learning Disabilities & Mental Health	Supported Independent Living – Learning Disabilities	TOTALS
Elmbridge	-	-	12	12
Epsom and Ewell	93	-	-	93
Guildford	59	-	-	59
Reigate and Banstead	53	-	16	69
Runnymede	51	-	-	51
Spelthorne	-	12	-	12
Surrey Heath	109	-	-	109
Woking	-	-	16	16
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>421</b>

Additionally there are two units planned for Care Leavers:  
 Dorking Care Leavers – 4 beds  
 Epsom Car Leavers – 4 beds

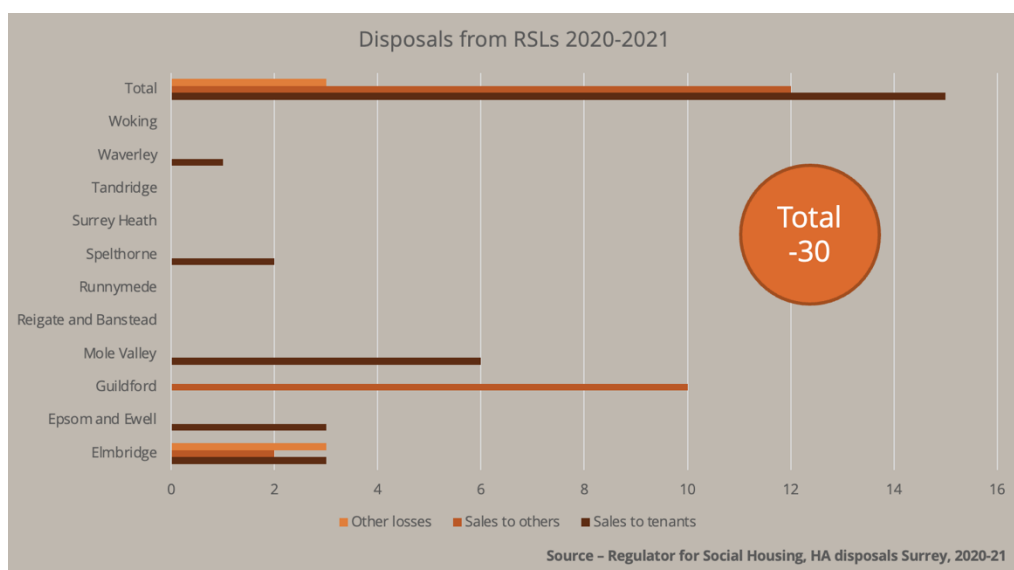
Source: Surrey County Council

The above table shows pipeline sites for Affordable Extra Care Housing (ECH) and Supported Independent Living (SIL) as part of SCC's Accommodation with Care and Support Programme. These are subject to planning permission approval.

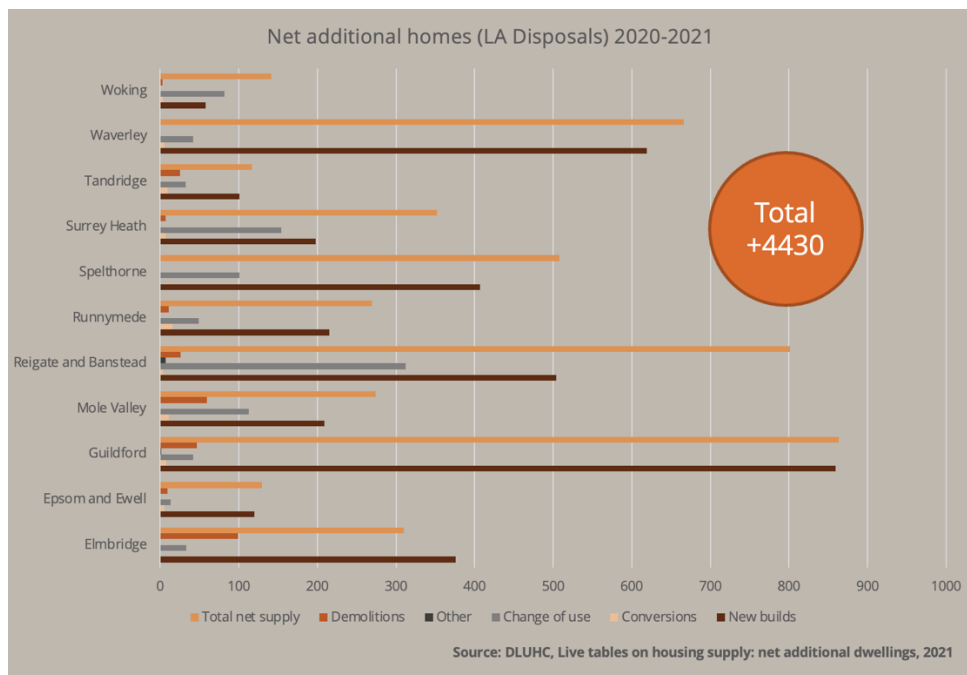




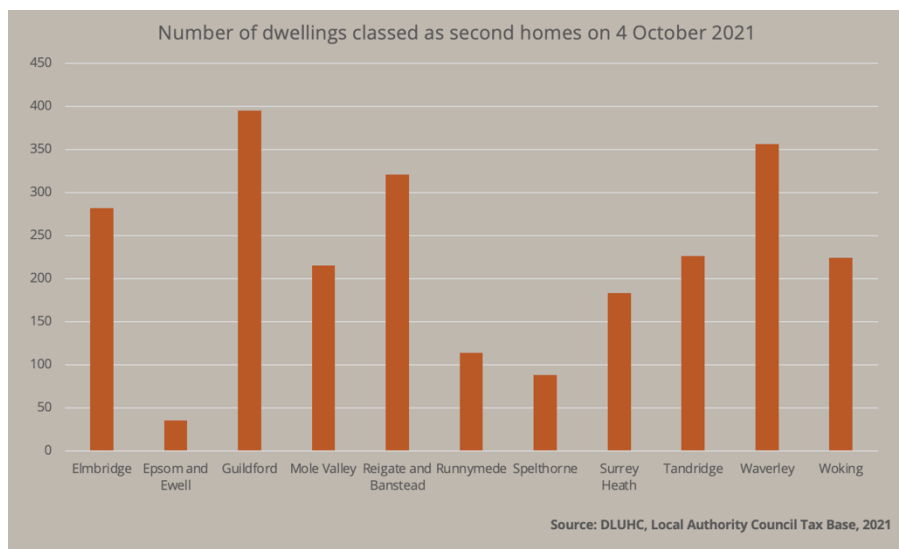
Surrey's stock of Supported and Sheltered housing is spread unevenly across the county, meaning older residents and those requiring assistance in their accommodation may need to travel to other districts and boroughs to find vacancies, as indicated previously by the gaps in demand. To note, Supported Housing is distinct from Supported Independent Living which Adult Social Care commissions.

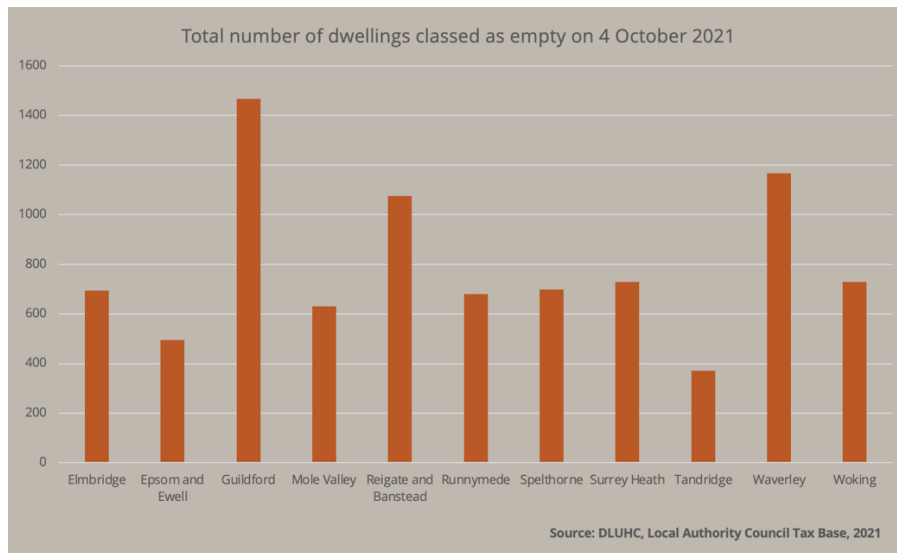


In speaking with stakeholders, there was significant concern expressed that RSLs were having to consider disposals of stock based on the cost of retrofit to new standards. On investigation, this isn't yet borne out by the data. However, it is clearly a conversation that is being had within the social housing sector, and there is an opportunity to think about how to address this issue before it becomes a serious problem.



Accounting for changes of use, conversion, demolitions and other disposals by local authorities, there was still a net 4,430 additional homes provided in Surrey between 2020-2021.





Tax base data shows that there are around 2,500 second homes in Surrey, and significantly larger numbers of entirely empty homes across the county. However, these figures are dwarfed by the overall shortfall. While there is mileage in looking at empty or second homes, it is a very limited mileage.

## Policy Context

National Housing Policy is in a state of constant change. Government support for house building targets, for local intervention or support is currently subject to ongoing debate, and discussion. The coming years will see a General Election and there is a chance of further change to housing or planning policy in the run up to and after that election. Local authorities across Surrey need to be prepared for the ground to shift under their feet, and have the opportunity to work collectively, to develop a strong common cause enabling them to collectively advocate for greater power and funding from the Government over the next few years.

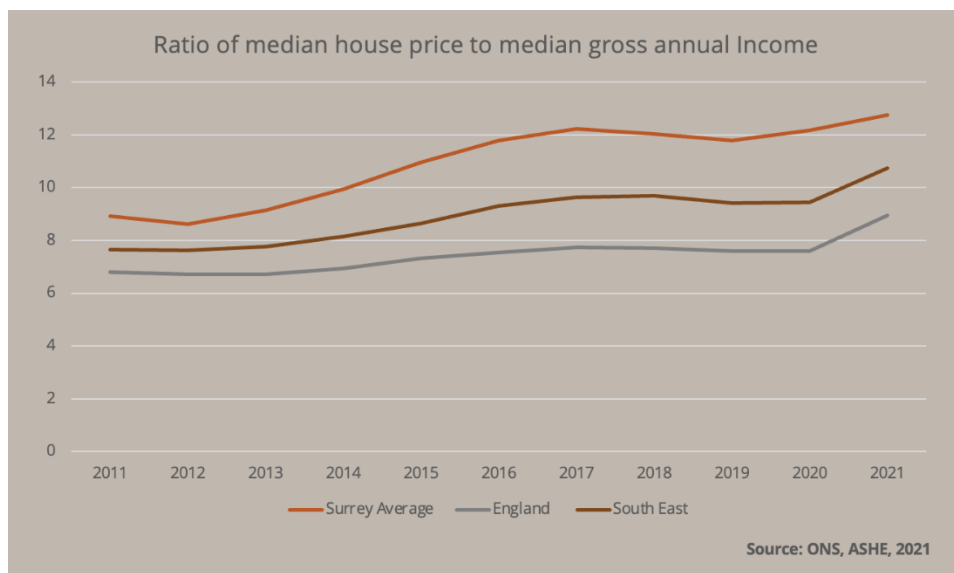
Recent policy documents from across the districts and boroughs of Surrey expressed shared issues surrounding housing supply, including:

- Identified challenge in determining site locations; a need for more density overall; a focus on town centre growth (development in existing urban areas); and a need to improve accessibility/transport linkages/connections to employment areas.
- A focus on bringing forward new homes of a size & tenure to match demand reflected in housing waiting lists; specific distributions per/locality; and regional strategies shared between D&B's.
- Confirmation of overwhelming need for more affordable housing as identified in past/other policy documents and needs assessments and varied confidence in capacity to achieve housing targets. Local policies identify target figures below the latest Housing Delivery Test targets set by central government.

- The significant scale of Green Belt and conservation area/AONB and similar constraints is compounding the availability of land for development. Local policies and designations, already varied between D&Bs, are now under further review following recent indications from central government of additional Green Belt restrictions. In current policy documents, some land with former uses (i.e., MoD) has been identified for development and some councils are looking toward larger rural sites and/or small sites.
- Promotion of development on existing/council-owned sites/already built-up areas; use of Development Planning Documents to support development of the right type and in the right location; opportunities for mixed-uses, conversion and redevelopment; and wide support for changes in use classes,
- Policy documentation identified the significance of recruiting and retaining essential workers/keyworkers (acknowledging that the definition of this is not concrete); and some housing sites have been identified with a large proportion of affordable units earmarked for keyworkers proximate to hospitals (i.e., Ashford Hospital), largely facilitated through RSLs.

## Affordability

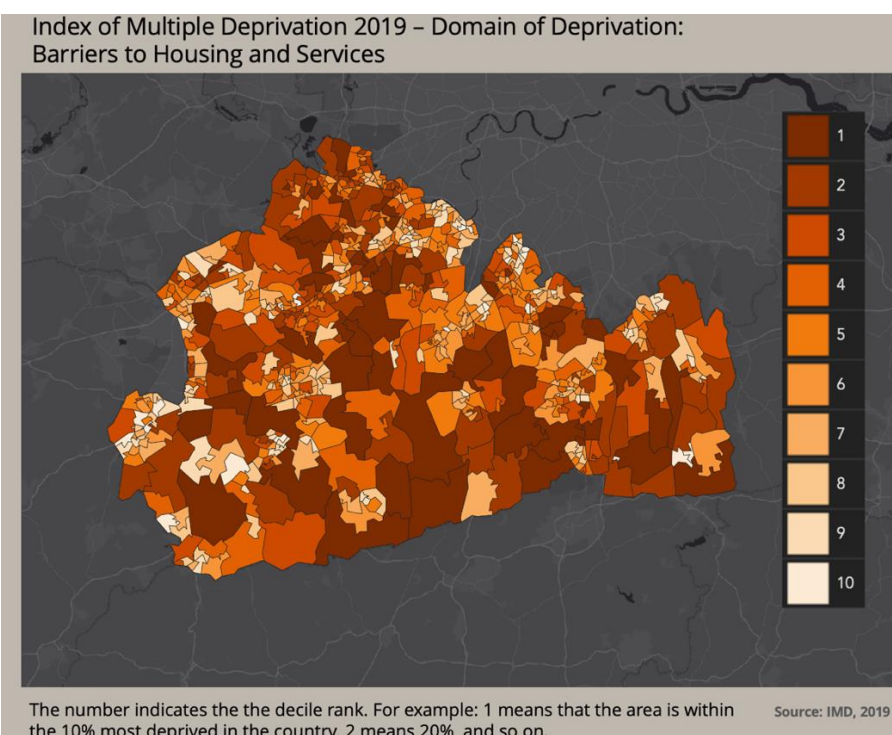
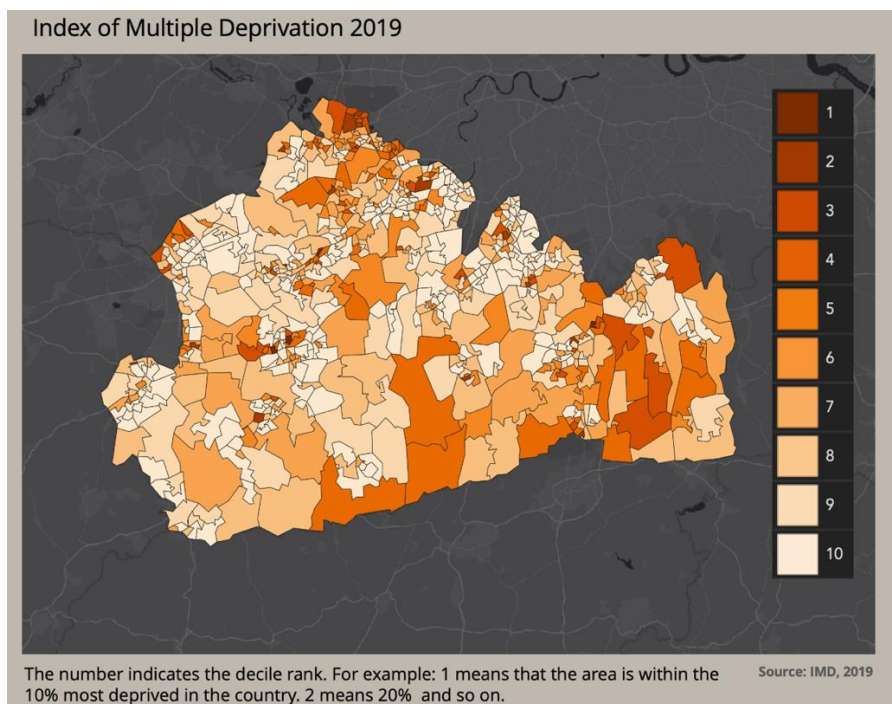
The affordability of housing has become an increasingly significant issue across England over the last decade, however, data suggests that the problem has become particularly pertinent in Surrey with affordability figures worse than those found at a national-level and across the South-East.



The trend of Surrey's median house prices being higher than both the national and South-East averages persist, and also in being proportionally higher than median incomes. **Surrey is not only more unaffordable for private ownership than England or the wider South-East, it has also become more unaffordable more quickly, with the ratio rising 50%**

since 2011, compared to 40% across the wider South-East. The ratio of median earnings to median house prices (i.e. average earners buying average houses) is now almost 13, placing home ownership out of reach for most people. This is an average across the whole of Surrey, which itself contains multiple housing markets – and in some wards and locations in Surrey the ratio between median earnings and median house prices will be even greater.

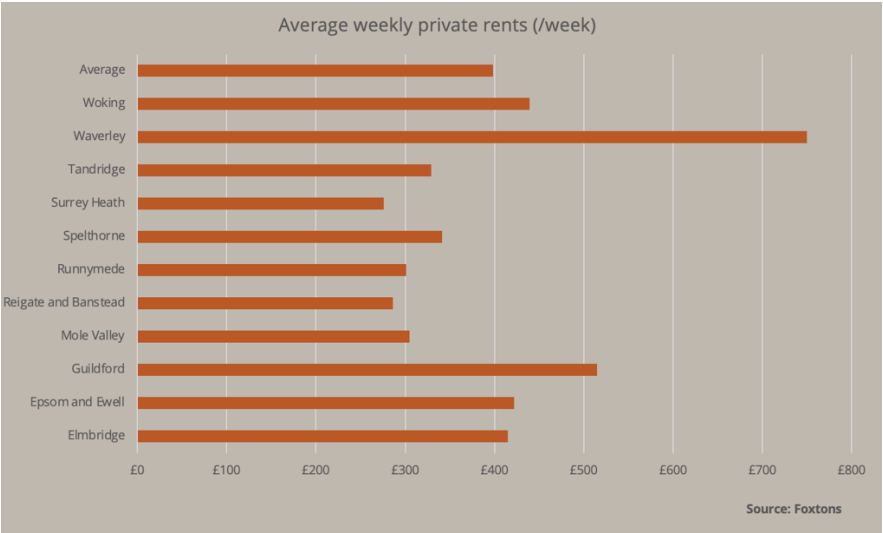
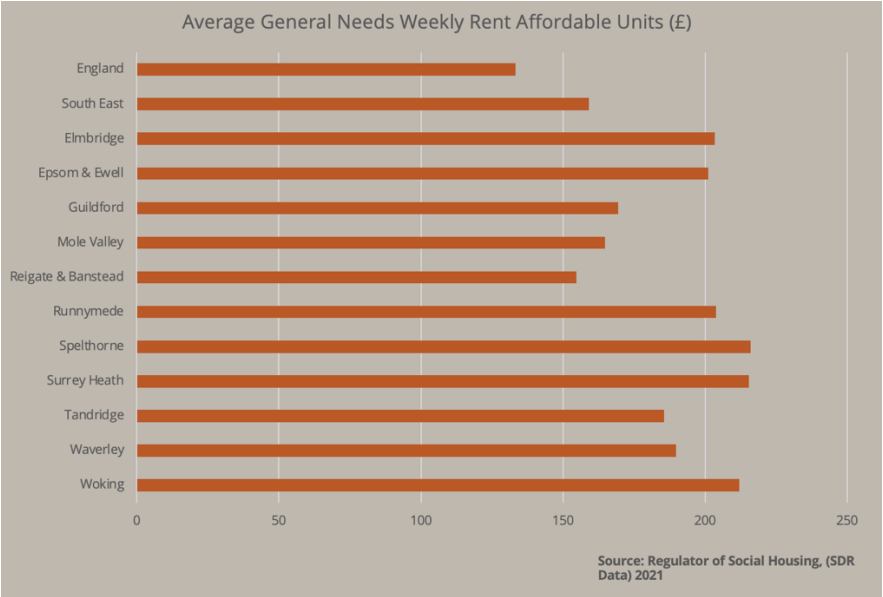
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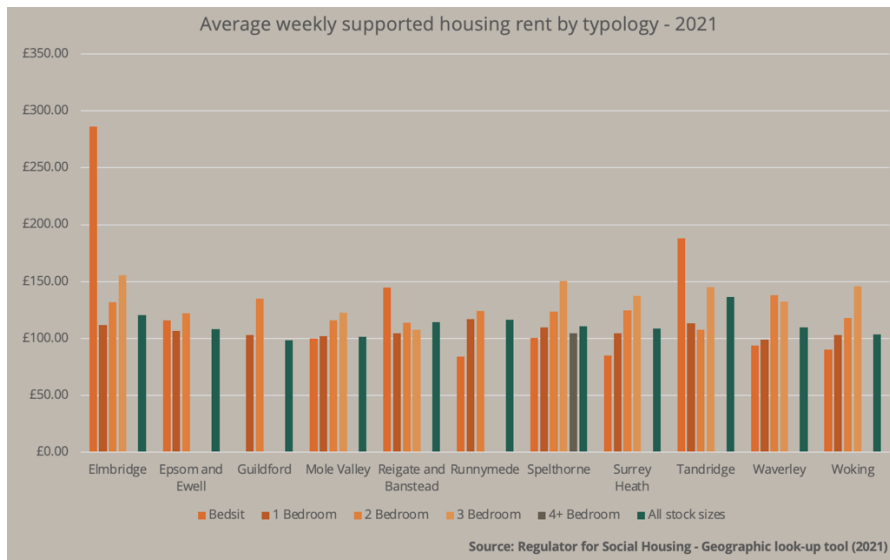
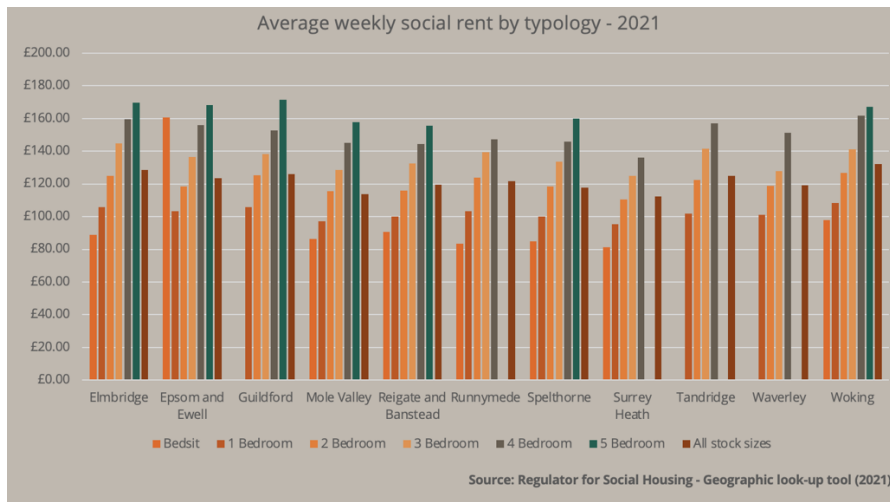


As an overview of where residents face barriers to being able to afford housing or otherwise, the 2019 Indices of Multiple Deprivation show several pockets of extreme poverty, in the top 10% most deprived areas in the county. However, the overall picture remains fairly

prosperous with some of the 10% least deprived areas found in the more rural parts of the county.

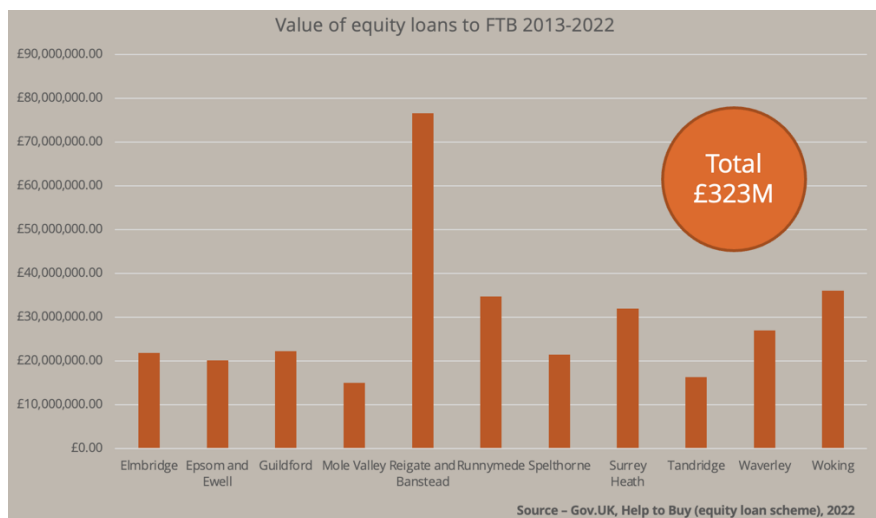
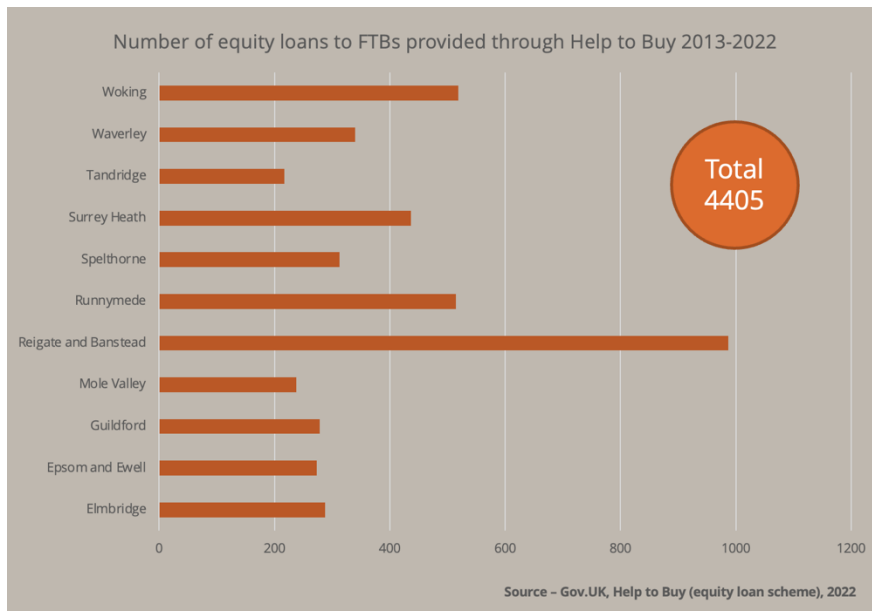
There is, indeed, a mix across Surrey, however the distinctions illustrated on the first map above express very different experiences of deprivation, and, consequently, access to affordable housing between neighbours. As the second map shows, barriers to housing and services are a particularly constraining feature of deprivation across the county, especially away from town centres in lower density areas of the county.



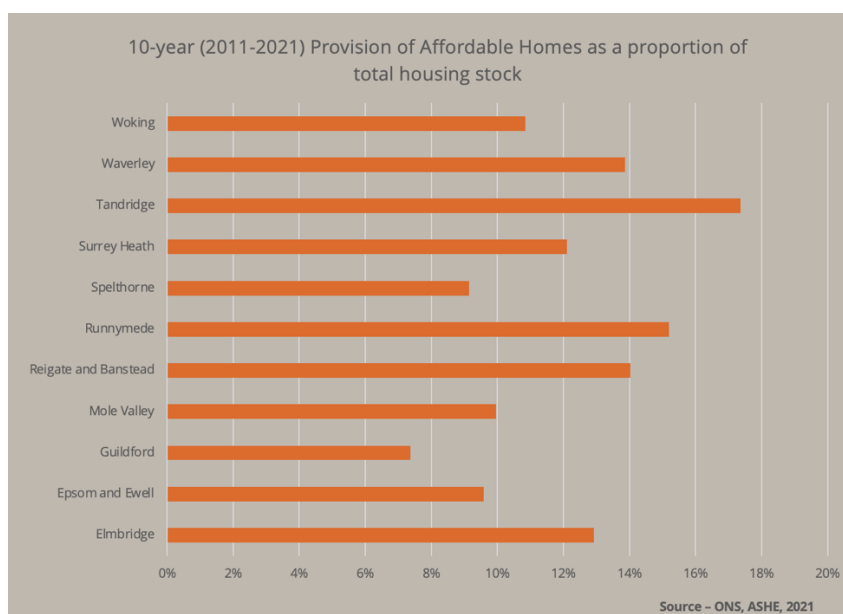
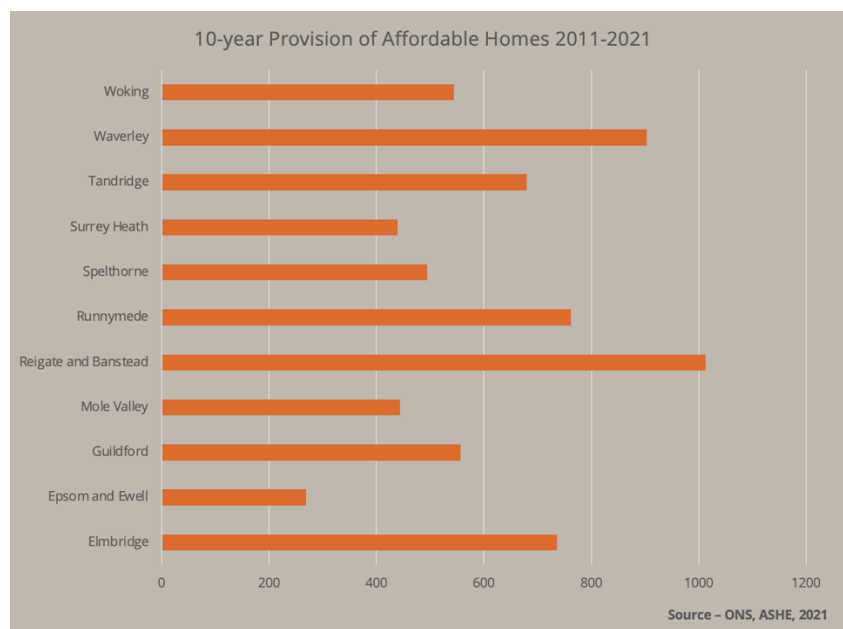


Average general needs weekly social and affordable rents across Surrey largely sit above national and south-east averages, while private rents vary more widely across the districts and boroughs. Rents by bedroom size are relatively consistent across the county, while there are several outliers by average weekly supported housing rent by bedroom size.





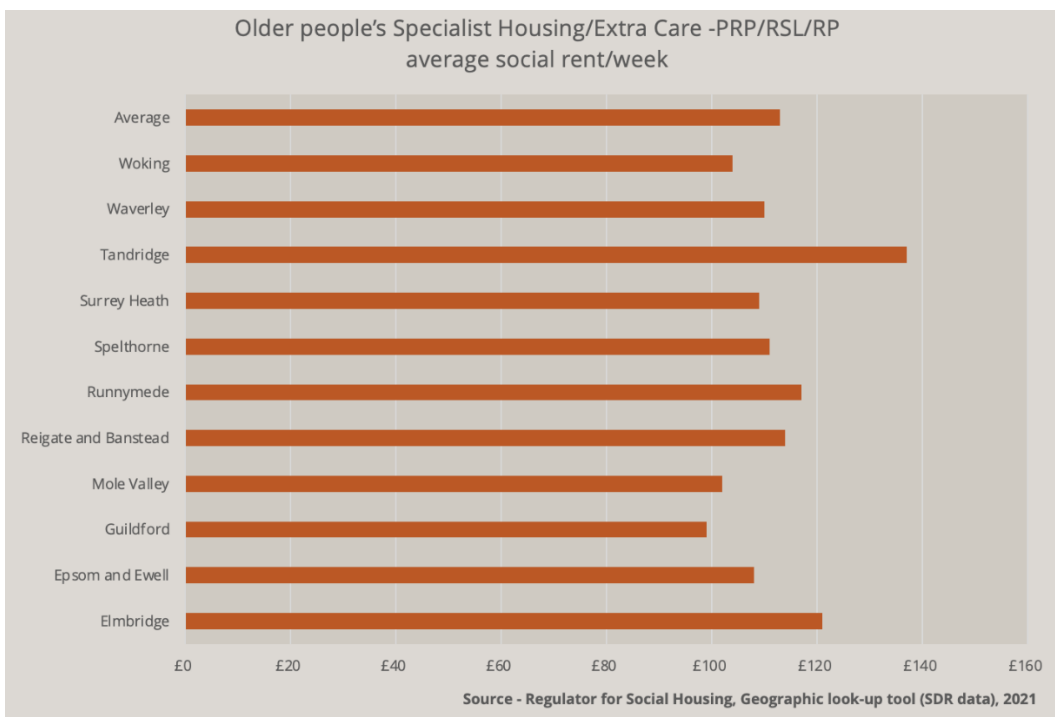
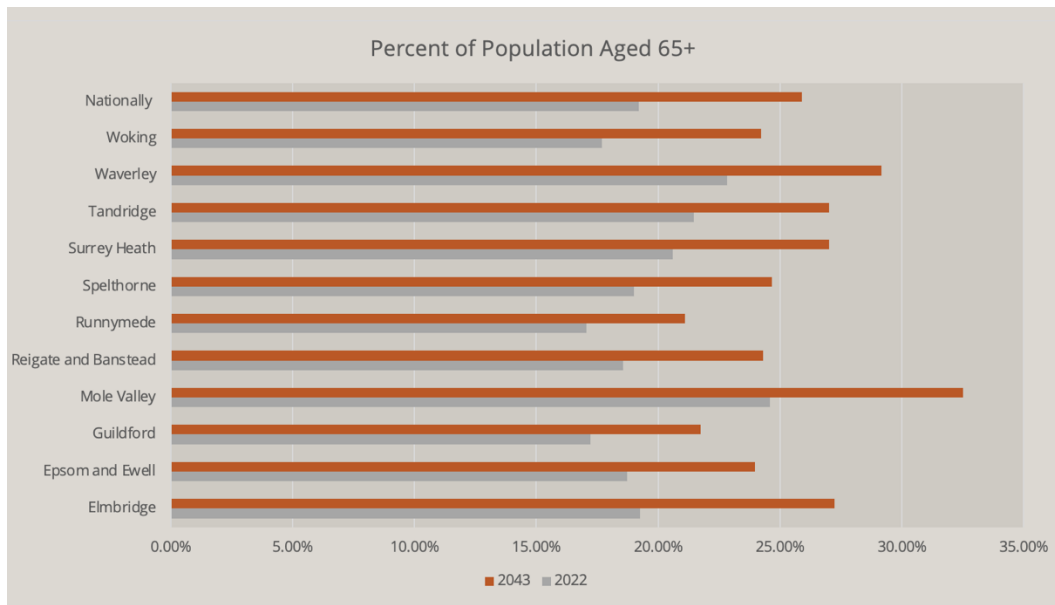
The number of equity loans to first time buyers provided through the Help to Buy scheme was used to measure the level and scale of support for them in the county. The data indicated that there were 4,405 loans issued from 2013 to 2022, and the value of those loans totalled £323M. Significant Government funding went into supporting the first-time buyer market in Surrey during this period.



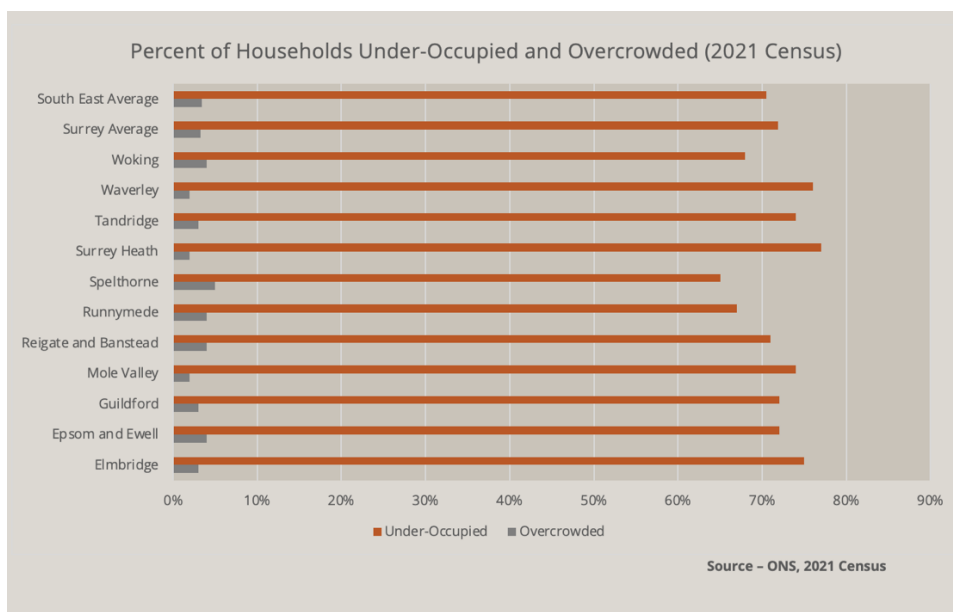
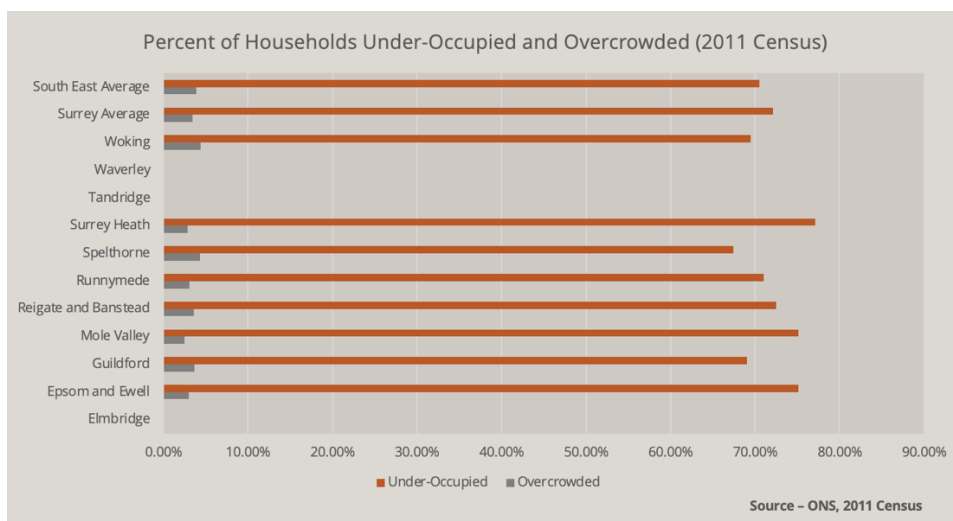
The provision of affordable homes from 2011 to 2021 represents approximately 12% of the overall proportion of housing stock in the county during that time, with the remaining 88% of homes built in the past decade in the county being private homes for ownership.

## Health & Inequality

For the purposes of this strategy, it was crucial that the circumstances that can further compound the barriers to accessing affordable housing be assessed to understand the range of issues that can deepen negative impacts on the health and inequality experienced by residents.



Like the rest of England, Surrey's residents aged 65 and above is growing. Those 65+ currently comprise around 20% of the population, and that is set to increase to between 25-30% by 2043. With a further ageing population, there comes heightened demand on Specialist and Extra Care Housing. The current average rent of those kinds of housing provided by Registered Social Landlords and Registered Providers in Surrey is classified as affordable by the Regulator for Social Housing at approximately £110/week.



Many older residents are living in the homes they have lived in for most of their lives, with more bedrooms than they require, contributing to under-occupation rates of above 70% in some parts of the county. As the tables above show, there have been some reductions in under-occupation rates between the 2011 and 2021 censuses – but in all parts of the county rates remain over 60%.

Legislation is shifting such that private rental properties will also be subject to the Decent Homes Standard, but at the time of developing this strategy, only the data on homes owned by Local Authorities was available; it showing inconsistent levels of homes not meeting the standard. Note also that data was unavailable for some districts and boroughs.

In recent months the problem of damp and mould in all housing tenures has become a more prominent issue. The impact of fuel poverty, poorly insulated homes and historic disrepair in some homes has brought a much sharper focus on how many lower-income and vulnerable residents are living in unhealthy homes.

Nationally there is a shortage of trained, skilled repairs workers who are needed to maintain, repair and refurbish affordable homes in the housing sector. This is compounded by high rates of inflation in costs and labour while rents, which provide the funding for services, have been capped, frozen or cut in recent years, reducing the income and available budget for work.

## A Sustainable Economy and Inward Investment

***"It gives a lot of stress to people, you see it on them, the lack of housing, the lack of a decent place, where they want to be... it means they're less productive and it's worse for business in that respect too."***

7

The relatively low level of house building in Surrey means that fewer jobs are being created in construction or within the local supply chain to support construction and maintenance of homes. With significant national funding from Homes England available for the delivery of housing, the county is missing out on investment.

Surrey has a prosperous and successful economy. This success requires an ongoing supply of skilled, educated labour to work in established industries and to create new companies and opportunities for the future.

The very low levels of inward migration, with four times as many residents moving to comparator counties like Kent or Hampshire than to Surrey, means that the county is missing out on the economic benefit these residents could provide.

Business representatives reported that recruitment in town centres and high streets was extremely difficult, with residents unable to afford to live near to jobs or, increasingly, unable to afford the commute to work. This is putting at risk the quality and range of shops and services in Surrey's town centres.

There is also difficulty in retaining keyworkers across the public sector. Within the NHS, Surrey Heartlands Health and Care Partnership conducted a survey which found that the single biggest stated reason for resignation amongst nurses was relocation elsewhere and that affordable housing was the largest factor in choosing where to work. Surrey Heartlands saw 196 nurses who had been recruited from overseas leaving over a 12 month period. At an investment of £22,000 to recruit each nurse, this cost the local NHS £4.3 million in just one year.

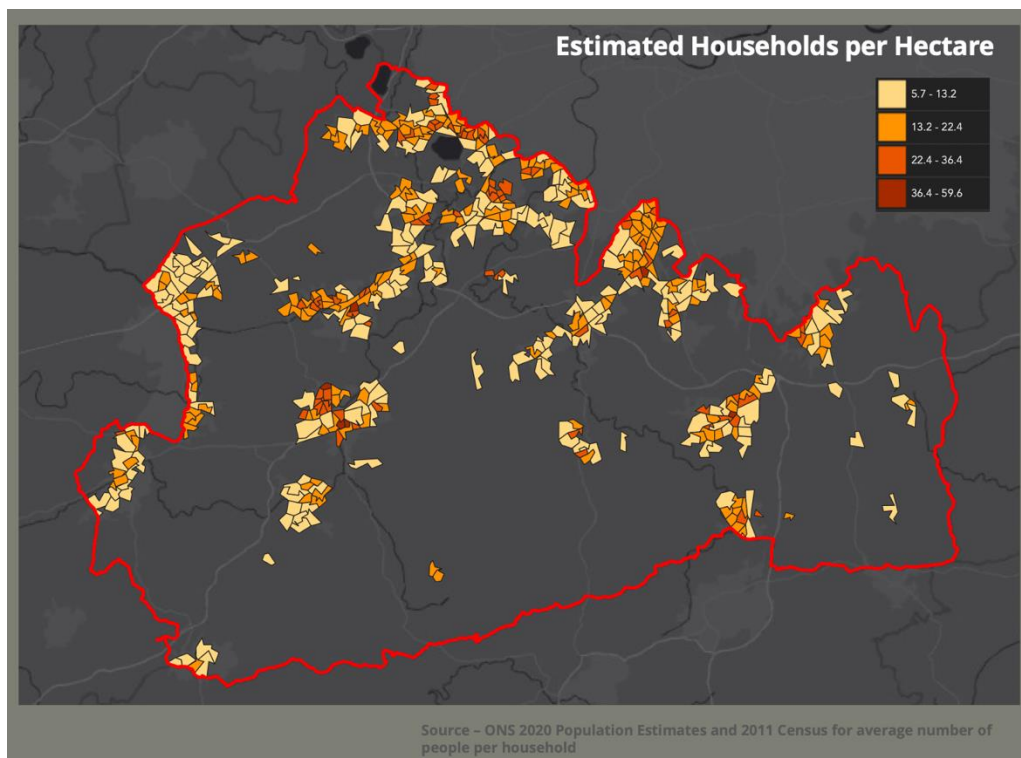
The unaffordability and shortage of housing, and the suburban profile of much of the county is also acting as a deterrent to international workers and graduates, who are economically productive and highly mobile.

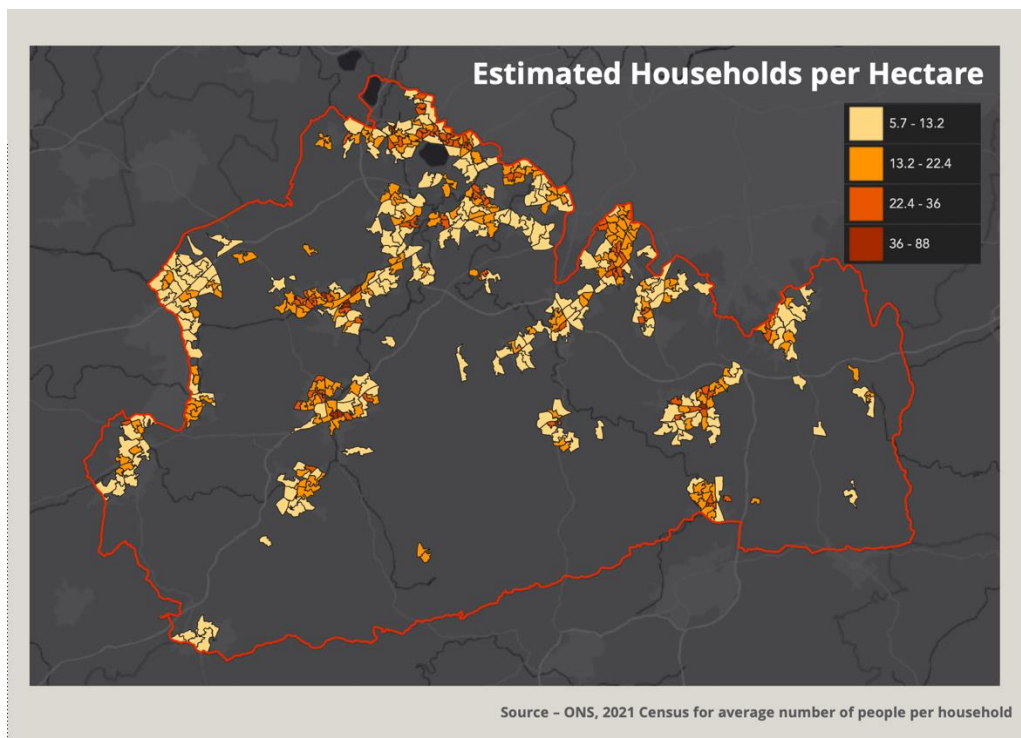
***"We made a very senior job offer recently, and on a good salary, and [they] had a look round here and decided it wasn't worth moving."***

## Climate Crisis & 20-Minute Neighbourhoods

7

The emissions from Housing are a major contributor to climate change but is not yet seeing the scale of transformation that is already starting to occur in transport-related emissions through the introduction of improved engine designs and new hybrid and fully electric vehicles. The local authorities in Surrey have declared climate emergencies and have committed to reaching net zero in the coming decades, albeit to different timescales. Each district and borough has its own climate action plan or carbon-reduction policies contained within other planning documents. To understand the county's preparedness to reach these ambitions, a consideration of the density of housing in the county, the energy efficiency of buildings, the potential of retrofit, and the number of households experiencing fuel poverty is necessary.

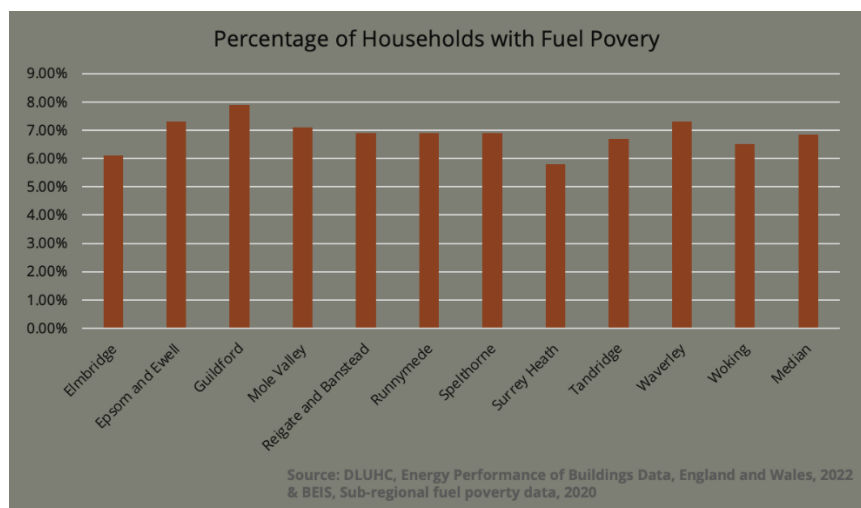




In the case of the former, aside from a few pockets of concentrated households near town centres, there is little density across the county to contribute to an ambition of 20-minute-neighbourhoods and their associated benefits. Research by the Town and Country Planning Association has pointed to densities of 70 dwellings per hectare (dpa) as being needed to deliver the sort of density required for a 20-minute neighbourhood. Data from across Surrey shows that nowhere in the county meets this threshold, with the highest density Lower Super Output Area, in central Woking, reaching 59.6 households per hectare.

This means that not only are residents faced with longer journeys to access services, shops and employment opportunities, but that they are also having to spend a larger share of their income on car journeys or having to rely on public transport, which can be expensive and unreliable.

The energy performance of buildings as assessed by the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy mirrors the national average with an average EPC rating, for homes that have been assessed, of D. This indicates the potential scale of work to be completed to improve and retrofit homes in Surrey to meet higher standards of insulation and efficiency.



Those experiencing fuel poverty comprise nearly 7% of households in Surrey, however this data was captured before recent energy price increases and is therefore the rate is expected to be higher than this shows. Some estimates are now suggesting that if these price increases are sustained, it will put almost half of households in fuel poverty in 2023. Surrey County Council has prepared an action plan to support residents through this winter with Warm Hubs and other interventions.



## Priority Strategic County-Wide Themes

The data is very clear that there is a serious housing crisis in Surrey, and that it affects all tenures and all levels of income (even where this may be less obvious to some residents). Conversations with over 30 stakeholders, together with the data, pointed to the following as priority themes and issues for action:

### The Importance of Partnership Working

#### *... Shared solutions to shared problems*

Partners across the county have been clear about their desire for greater partnership working in Surrey, and frustration at the unrealised potential in the face of high demand and need. There was evidence of some good work already undertaken by the Districts and Boroughs in collaborating with partners and encouragement of step-down options, but the overwhelming response was that more could be done.

This was brought home strongly with the praise for the effective partnership between district and borough councils and Surrey County Council Public Health, during the pandemic and in the provision of emergency accommodation for very vulnerable adults between 2020 and 2022. There was also a lot of positivity around work between local authorities on refugee and asylum provision and the partnership approach to working with highly vulnerable families being delivered through the family support teams.

However, many participants pointed to the need for stronger partnership working between key players across the county, in relation to the provision of housing and accommodation, which was less than the sum of its parts. Despite multiple forums for discussion, the scale of opportunity for partnership working was not yet being realised.

A question we heard asked in different ways by a wide range of participants was “How is the case for investment in housing in Surrey being made? And by whom?”

There are multiple and, sometimes, competing agendas and priorities around housing and accommodation in Surrey and there is a clear opportunity for a more joined up and strategic approach to attracting further investment in all types.

In this research we have seen significant amounts of common ground in policy aspiration and in the challenges faced. Partners are facing similar, if not the identical, issues with the same funding constraints and the same pressures. With widespread alignment on policy responses, there is a strong foundation for a partnership approach across Surrey that would be more than the sum of its parts.

## Understanding Public Opinion

7

The conventional wisdom that was heard repeatedly in this study is that there is not support from within Surrey for more housing. Whilst everyone recognised the need for more homes and expressed a desire for that need to be met, we heard that the case for more homes wasn't being made for fear of falling on the (perceived) wrong side of public opinion. Given this, it is important for partners to work together on the development of a shared narrative about how the right additional housing in the right places can protect and enhance the quality of life that local residents prize so strongly and enable their children and grandchildren, as they grow up, to have the opportunity to also make the local area their home.

While housing is a key issue in local elections, residents are also voting on a wider range of local and national issues. Anxiety about public opinion regarding growth and development can be a barrier to partners confidently committing to long-term joint working on housing growth. There is no clear evidence at the current time, however, about the level of understanding or the state of local opinion in Surrey about the scale of the housing crisis or the desire to act to resolve it. This is something public sector partners have a responsibility in addressing, ensuring that local people understand the wider detrimental consequences of a no-growth strategy, and the significant benefits that can be secured through appropriate levels of housing growth in the right places.

## An Ageing Population & Under Occupation

### *... Building for a resilient population*

The data clearly indicates an issue of under-occupation in Surrey which is exacerbating the housing supply problems and reducing the stock available to house families; again reflective of the regional picture for the South-East.

Through the consultation undertaken, this is felt to be attributable, at least in part, to the gap in provision of appropriate specialist/extra care/supported housing units that would enable older residents to move into more suitable accommodation for their long-term needs.

This anecdotal evidence is supported by the data on ageing population for Surrey which indicates considerable growth. This is not unique to Surrey (and reflects the national picture) but clearly demonstrates pockets of particular growth in older residents within the county and a rate of growth exceeding the national picture in some areas. For example, ONS estimates indicate that a third of Mole Valley's population will be over 65 by 2043. An older population will be more dependent on health care and social care services, requiring a larger working-age population to be able to live in Surrey and deliver these essential services. Further, the suburban form of much of Surrey, coupled with under-provision of public transport connections, places additional financial burden on those care workers who are required to travel between clients living in their own homes.

It is recognised, however, that this issue is not just one about having the right housing stock but also the right practical support, advice and incentives in place to encourage a move out of the family home and into sustainable, suitable accommodation.

## Housing [Un]affordability

Despite the median income levels for the county being higher than the national or regional levels, the house price affordability ratio across the county is also higher than comparator areas and has accelerated by more than the wider south-east, suggesting an issue across the board but a particular concern for those earning under the median wage.

7

Consultation responses suggest this is impacting on filling job roles across a range of sectors, from essential workers to senior level managerial roles. This is supported by the data suggesting the lowest level of in-migration to the county across all its comparator areas (and net population loss in some parts).

Whilst efforts to deliver affordable housing across the county are demonstrable and ongoing; the percentage of the overall stock of the county remains low and far below the supply required to meet demand. The majority of affordable rented housing over the past decade has been at Affordable Rent rather than Social Rent, placing this tenure out of reach of many families subject to benefit caps. Private home ownership is particularly high in the county, a historic feature of Surrey but one that is now contributing the lack of supply of affordable housing.

Affordability is, without doubt, a growing national issue but the data and consultation suggests that the situation is particularly pronounced in Surrey, making it a less feasible option for growing families, young graduates or young professionals to continue to afford to live within the county, or for workers with the skills and qualifications the economy needs, or for households to move to the county and/or businesses to locate here.

## Supporting Vulnerable Residents

While there was considerable praise for the effective 'partnership in a crisis' approach taken by councils during COVID, there was a wider feeling that a system under considerable strain is often marked by fragmentation, with individual services understandably retreating back to a focus on their core statutory responsibilities, anxious about protecting limited budgetary resource and therefore pushed into working in a siloed way.

### *... Responding to new burdens*

This was brought into sharp focus by the number of additional burdens that Districts and Boroughs are taking on in response to a large number of Refugees and Asylum Seekers. A large number of Surrey residents have opened their homes to Ukrainian refugees, with communities across the county going out of their way to welcome refugees. As the war enters its second year many Ukrainian families are confronting the possibility that they may not be able to return home for years, if at all. These families are putting down roots, making friends, settling into school, work and community life – but still mostly dependent on spare rooms.

As placements break down or come to an end, it's the responsibility of local Districts & Boroughs to find alternative accommodation in a housing market that is already expensive and unable to meet extant need. In some cases, Surrey's D&Bs find themselves in competition when it comes to securing Private Rented Accommodation with organisations working on behalf of the Home Office to find homes for Asylum Seekers, who will then hold a local connection to the area if their claim for Asylum is approved by the Home Office.

### *... Overstretched and fragmented systems*

There was particular frustration expressed that "housing is picking up the slack" from a lack of funding or provision for high-needs families or individuals and that problems were being passed around, rather than being resolved in partnership.

This was the one area where it felt that a shared sense of purpose or common endeavour would bring potential partners together out of their siloes. The fraught and pressured environment, that many of the professionals we spoke to operate in, means that there's limited space or time to address these questions with a strategic long-term view: "Every day is crisis management now".

### *... People-centred services*

Given the rate of housebuilding, the cost-of-living crisis and the extant levels of need, there is an important question about how multiple agencies and organisations, all acting within constrained budgets and resource, can work better together to maximise what they have for the benefit of residents who need that support, and whether current structures are an insurmountable barrier to progress.

From across the county, we heard the same response about land. First, that most councils who are seeking to develop don't have much, if any. Second, that there was a feeling that the County Council didn't have a process for working with Districts and Boroughs on identifying land within their boundaries that could be developable in the medium and longer term beyond the Call for Sites in the Local Plan process.

7

From within SCC, we heard that the process for identifying land as obsolete was best described as 'iterative', with service areas effectively able to put a hold on land that 'might be needed' in the future. When land was identified as suitable for disposal the County's policy, after 12 years of austerity, has been to seek the best return on the land for the public finances. Going forward all partners need to consider how they can factor in public value rather than just short-term commercial financial return, into decisions about how surplus sites are disposed of. Taking such an approach will probably still deliver positive commercial outcomes for the public purse (for example temporary accommodation costs), but over a longer period,

*... Collective action*

There is serious appetite from local authorities and RSLs to bring forward land in the public interest, but they are not able to compete with the open market on price.

Stakeholders who work within Surrey and elsewhere across the country described the situation in Surrey as 'unusual' in not having a well-developed partnership around public land held by all local authorities and public sector partners.

We see significant alignment in policy aspirations and strategic ambition around housing from all partners in Surrey, and the potential for a collaborative approach to assets to deliver this agenda.

*... Taking greater control over quality, quantity & price of homes*

A genuine partnership approach to public sector land would look at demand and need on a wider basis, taking into account delivery capacity, scale and a range of sites. Partners would need to be prepared to pool resource for shared benefits, recognising that greater scale will attract resource into the county with the potential for partners to collectively exert greater proactive control over the type, scale, size and affordability of housing being delivered in their local area.

## More Councils, Building More

From all sectors in Surrey there are outstanding examples of work being undertaken to deliver more homes, of all tenures, meeting a wide range of need and demand in the county. Several councils have more than exceeded the tests set by the Government and were praised by external organisations for having “grasped the nettle” on town centre regeneration and brownfield land.

*... Not being developer-dependent*

Spelthorne Council has set up Knowle Green Estates, a wholly owned council delivery company, which has already delivered a range of affordable homes in Spelthorne.

Elsewhere, effective partnerships are being put in place between RSLs and Housing Associations, as with Raven and Reigate & Banstead Council, with a real focus on delivering more genuinely affordable homes.

However, there is also significant risk to capacity across the county.

First, changes in housing associations over recent years have seen many local HAs absorbed into larger national organisations, who some participants felt weren't sufficiently focused on Surrey. Indeed, given the very high land values in Surrey, in the absence of strong partnerships helping to bring forward new developments, housing associations will simply face the choice of making their investment funds go further by building in neighbouring regions instead.

Second, many participants felt that councils who no longer held stock were concerned about “the sheer administrative burden for a relatively small organisation of getting back into housing: the time, the money, the resource” which could lead to ‘delivery deserts’ if a siloed approach is pursued.

Third, we heard again and again about the challenges of estate regeneration, particularly for older people's bedsits from the 1960s and 1970s, given the rules that Homes England operates within to not fund replacement units.

## The Climate Crisis

The response to the climate crisis in this study fell into one of two related areas:

- 1) Changing investment priorities away from new housing development and into retrofit and refurbishment of existing homes.
- 2) Anxiety over climate-based resistance to new homes and new housing.

7 Priorities for stock-holding bodies, whether councils or housing associations have changed. There is significantly more focus on improving existing stock where possible, and a growing conversation about consolidating stock where that isn't financially possible, with some planning to dispose of existing social and affordable homes where it isn't economical for them, within existing budgets and grant regimes, to bring them to the required environmental standard.

Rising fuel costs and fuel poverty means that retrofit has an important role to play in improving the quality of homes in the county. Work is already being carried out at a county level to promote and fund retrofit, and there is potential for greater co-ordination and shared learning between partners.

There was concern that the Climate Crisis would become a focal point for opposition to new homes, without a compelling case from the outset about the long-term social, economic and climate benefits that additional housing will bring to Surrey and its existing population.

## 20-Minute Neighbourhoods

Several participants pointed to densification in central Woking as a '5-minute neighbourhood' in the making, but questioned what this would mean elsewhere in existing low-density suburbs across much of the county, and whether there was a plan for testing and delivering the concept in practice.

Surrey's Adult Social Care services have identified the real opportunity provided through the 20-minute neighbourhood concept of being able to provide older, vulnerable and disabled residents with access to services within close proximity of their homes and potentially providing a more attractive downsizing option for those currently living in large family homes some distance from shops, transport and services.

*... Low density, highly connected*

Others pointed to a lack of appetite for density in a county where the prevailing form of development is detached or semi-detached housing on the edge of existing settlements. In these cases, the risk emerges of traffic-dependent development. Examples from elsewhere where 20-minute principles have been retrofitted into existing low-density towns or villages have focused on transport connections, particularly for cycling and walking, to make it easier to connect people to shops and services without relying on parking provision.



## A Call to Government

### *... Correcting the record: what Surrey needs from the Government*

Surrey's reputation and brand is as a place of prosperity. The Sunday Times recently published an article referring to Elmbridge as "the leisure and pleasure borough". One participant in the study said that Surrey marketed itself as "a sort of south-east Shangri-La". The received wisdom is that Surrey is prosperous, healthy and successful – and this is true for a significant portion of the local population.

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Yet that good quality of life, which has attracted people to Surrey for generations, is under threat. As the Baseline Assessment shows, there is a lack of suitable, affordable housing, combined with hundreds of homeless Surrey families in Temporary Accommodation, thousands of Surrey residents on housing waiting lists, and many thousands of potential Surrey families who have moved and settled elsewhere in the south-east of England because Surrey no longer offers the quality of life they to which they aspire.

Responding to this challenge rests first and foremost in the hands of Surrey's decision makers in the Town Halls and Civic Centres across the county. There are, however, structural issues that make those decisions more difficult, placing barriers in the way of local councils being able to act in the best interests of their communities. Part of this work has been to bring partners together to discuss what needs to change in national policy to help address the housing crisis in Surrey.

### *... Greater power to speed up development*

A great deal of frustration was expressed at the slow pace at which planning permissions are 'built out' by developers. The slow pace of development, particularly across larger lower-density sites where homes are completed and sold-off, was cited as driving scepticism among residents about the need for further planning permissions when others remained incomplete. There are many reasons why sites with planning permission may be built out slowly which are beyond the control of developers: supply of labour or materials, or economic conditions, for example. The lack of means for councils to compel developers to build homes or to be able to use the track record of developers in building out previous planning permissions as a material consideration in planning applications (to help distinguish between those applicants seeking to establish land value and those seeking to build homes)

### *...More certainty and consistency in the planning system*

Regular reviews of the planning system by the Government has led to Local Plans being withdrawn or paused, including several within the County, leading to the delay in the delivery of potentially thousands of much needed new homes. More certainty and consistency in the

planning system is will enable councils to move forward with confidence in developing and delivering their plans.

### *... Funding for social rent*

7 It was widely acknowledged that there is insufficient funding for affordable housing in Surrey. Most of the funding for affordable housing over the past decade has gone on investing in Help to Buy or in Affordable Rent, and while this has helped a significant number of local residents to secure a home, it has failed to address the housing needs of local families who need a Socially Rented home. The average rent for an Affordable Rent home in parts of Surrey is now more than the average weekly earnings for a woman working part-time in the County of £222.

To meet local need, Surrey needs more grant funding for Social Rent, at scale, and at a level that makes it viable as part of all types of residential development in the County,

### *... Funding for regeneration*

***"Our sheltered housing isn't desirable, but we can't afford to redevelop so we've expanded the age range... but now it's multigenerational... 55-year-olds and 105-year-olds.... it wasn't designed for that."***

Government rules mean that grant funding from Homes England is restricted to funding net additional homes. This means that replacement of small bedsits with family-sized homes doesn't attract grant funding, and the rebuilding of poor-quality housing estates to deliver better quality homes for existing tenants, as well as an uplift of housing on existing housing land, is more difficult. As a result, Greenfield development is often more financially viable, despite being less supported by many communities.

The Government must change grant funding rules to, in the first instance, require an uplift in floorspace, rather than units, or to provide funding for replacement homes, where this leads to the provision of better-quality and lower carbon-emitting homes. This would help unlock brownfield and town centre sites where landowners, including councils, cannot make the finances work to rebuild or redevelop land to provide much needed housing. This would not require an increase in available funding, just in the rules about which homes are eligible for funding.

### *... Greater Power over Land Assembly*

Local councils know their local areas well and have strong regeneration ambitions. These are sometimes frustrated by a lack of power over land assembly and a slow and expensive compulsory purchase system. Where councils have ambitions to build more genuinely affordable housing, or homes for First Time Buyers, they may be blocked by existing landowners who want to sell to the highest bidder (who may then deliver fewer affordable homes or dedicated homes for First Time Buyers).

### *... Structure of Government funding*

Again and again, service providers stressed their frustration with the structure of government funding. Small pots of money, available over short periods of time, each provided in a way designed to elicit results that could be announced as a success. This creates a focus on short term planning, rather than looking to invest in long-term approaches, which would create better outcomes and better value for the public.

### *... Funding for bus travel*

Surrey is a low-density county. With the cost of fuel, private car ownership is increasingly out of reach of lower income families. Bus travel is the only viable way to link homes on the edges of communities to local services or employment. In some cases, partners reported reluctance for some clients to accept homes in more rural settings because of the isolation, even if they were affordable.

### *... Funding for Retrofit*

***"You can't spend the same pound twice, if we spend it on retrofit then we can't spend it on a new home"***

The cost of bringing homes up to environmentally sound standards is significant. For Housing Associations and stock-owning local authorities this represents a serious challenge to budgets and means less money will be spent on building new homes for local families as budgets are squeezed. The need to meet higher EPC standards also means that some councils and RPs with available funding are choosing not to buy more homes to meet local need, because the cost is prohibitive at a time when they are already committing to investment in their existing stock.

Furthermore, and more concerning, some Housing Associations are actively planning to dispose of existing social rent homes on the private market, because the cost of retrofit is too high. This is not yet showing up in the data from the Regulator of Social Housing, but it is a significant issue which is looming on the horizon for Surrey, which already has fewer Social and Affordable homes than comparator areas. Identifying this issue before it becomes a serious problem, with a chance to prevent it, is a golden opportunity.

The government must provide additional funding for retrofit and refurbishment of existing social homes, or to bring newly acquired homes up to standard. In the absence of additional funding, and in the ongoing absence of regeneration funding to replace poor-quality homes, exemptions or extensions to meeting stricter EPC standards should be provided for newly acquired stock or for existing social housing where the cost to retrofit or refurbish is not viable under current grant schemes. In the short-to-medium term this would provide stock-holding authorities with the certainty that they were not acquiring significant liabilities in pursuit of meeting their social aims and values.

***"We will keep investing in new supply, but money is being pulled into existing stock, into retrofit, and having to cover the cost of replacement... so there'll be fewer affordable homes built as a percentage of new supply."***

## A Call to Action

*... Partnership: treat a crisis like a crisis.*

***“We can’t just carry on as we have been and doing it all ourselves”***

Surrey has a housing crisis but this isn’t universally recognised. At the sharp end of the spectrum the crisis has been so long-running that it has become Business as Usual. The effect of the Housing Crisis in Surrey is now much broader, affecting a wide range of public services and the private sector economy, even when not recognised as such.

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When faced with other crises, especially during the COVID pandemic, partners have pulled together with a sense of common purpose and determination. This approach needs to be taken with housing, recognising it for the crisis it is and applying the same pace and determination as in COVID.

***“We all worked so well together in COVID, we’re good in a crisis, and this is a crisis”***

*... Sharing best practice*

Across the County there are numerous examples of best practice, whether on building new homes, working in partnership with housing associations, investing in retrofit of homes, there is good work being done. This work is being shared by exception, with participants in workshops often not aware of what else was happening across the county. Existing partnerships were often based on individuals knowing each other – but despite numerous forums for partnership, there wasn’t an approach to sharing and celebrating success and innovation.

The workshops that were held as part of this strategy brought people together, in some cases for the first time, sparking conversations about joint work, sharing ideas and building a community of practice. Space should be given to continue the opportunities for partners from a broad cross section to come together to discuss and address common issues on a more regular basis.

*... What do older people really want: multigenerational, housing typology, access to services*

While there is a shortage of all kinds of housing in Surrey there is a very visible failure to provide for older people. This is seen in the very high levels of under occupation. Whatever is being built for older people in Surrey isn’t of the type, scale or location to attract older people, living in Surrey, to downsize and move in.

A wider range of housing that would be more attractive to older people, including co-housing and multigenerational developments should be brought forward, particularly in town centres where older people would have walkable access to shops and services. Older people are more likely than the wider population to use in-person shops and services, rather than using

online services (a fact that will likely change over time) and so proximity to town centres will help both with reducing isolation and provide support for local high streets.

#### **CASE STUDY – Multigenerational Development, Nursing Home and Student Accommodation – Netherlands**

To increase community connection between older and younger groups, a Dutch programme provides free rent to university students in exchange for 30 hours a month of their time engaging with the residents of a neighbouring nursing home. In this programme, students teach the older residents new skills such as using email, social media and art lessons, as well as reading literature and poetry which has been shown to make those with dementia more comfortable. The research behind this shows that it reduces loneliness and social isolation while improving wellbeing and extending the life expectancy of the older people participating.

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#### *... Support for downsizing*

Surrey has very high levels of under occupation: couples or single adults living alone in large family-sized housing. In many cases this is a home that these people have lived in for a very long time and downsizing to a smaller home, that better meets their needs, is not a simple or easy decision. This is made more difficult with a lack of information about housing options and support with moving.

Raven Housing Trust built a dedicated scheme for downsizers based on the Housing our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation (HAPPI) report from 2009, which has reported success in supporting older residents to move to homes that better meet their needs. Models such as these should be rolled out, or shared, across the county to provide a single front door for older people looking for advice and support on housing options.

#### **CASE STUDY - ExtraCare Charitable Trust Scheme – Stoke Gifford, Bristol**

Research shows that not only does the under occupation of larger homes restrict private and social housing supply for households who could use extra bedrooms, but older people staying in unsuitable accommodation can contribute to poor mental and physical wellbeing. That said, the barriers for older residents moving include the costs of relocation, a shortage of properties meeting needs, and the stress of uprooting from familiar settings. To address these challenges, ExtraCare Charitable Trust is developing a 261-home village that links housing, health and social care, and includes leasehold sale, affordable rent and share ownership units. The facilities are designed with community in mind, and include assistive technologies to help assess when health and social needs change the services required for residents.

#### *... Homeshare schemes for key partners, a co-ordinated approach.*

High levels of under-occupation also offer the opportunity for a greater use of spare rooms. This is particularly true during the current cost of living crisis when homeowners may be in need of additional incomes, and private renters' budgets are harder stretched than they have been before. The NHS in Surrey is already piloting home sharing to find spare rooms for essential worker staff. Private companies already offer services to check and screen renters to be paired with older people with a spare room who don't yet need live-in care but whose families would appreciate an extra pair of eyes on their loved ones.

Given the scale of under-occupation and the shortage of housing for young professionals in public service and for graduates in the private sector, there is ample scope for a Surrey approach from key partners, which pilots a larger home-sharing scheme. While this would not address statutory demand for housing services in the county, it would help address demand for more affordable private rented options, reduce under occupation and so make better use of Surrey's existing housing stock, as well as more intangible benefits that come from reducing social isolation amongst older residents. While no one would pretend that young professionals wouldn't prefer a home of their own, this should still be considered as part of the local housing puzzle.

### *... Investing in more step-down housing*

Hospitals across the country are struggling to find suitable step-down housing options for older people who are medically fit to be discharged from hospital but unable to safely return home. While full-time residential care may be inappropriate, and in short supply, for these people, step-down housing would relieve pressure on hospitals in the county. It would also enable older people, who may be sceptical about moving into bespoke older people's housing, to move with confidence – knowing that this housing is only a temporary step. A pilot with Spelthorne BC, in north-west Surrey, has demonstrated demand for this kind of temporary housing.

### *... A focus on social rent*

***"We all had concerns about Affordable Rent when it was introduced, but now we see homes going to low priority families because high need families just can't afford them, so they stay in TA"***

The majority of affordable rented housing built in Surrey in the past decade has been at Affordable Rent levels, i.e., at up to 80% of the market rate (compared with Social Rent which is typically just 50% of market rents). While all this housing is occupied, and the families and individuals who live there benefit from below market rents, so-called Affordable Rent is still priced out of the reach of many households including those in professional roles and working in essential services. Affordable rent is also having a distorting impact on the housing market.

First, within the affordable rented sector, housing associations report being unable to let new older people's housing to existing tenants because it would require them moving from their Social Rent homes into smaller, more expensive Affordable Rent homes. This is exacerbating under-occupation and means that family-sized affordable homes are not being made available for families. It also puts pressure on other services, including Adult Social Care, where adaptations are needed to existing homes to enable older people to continue living there as they cannot afford to move into newer, more suitable accommodation.

Secondly, Affordable Rent homes are simply not affordable to many of the people and families in high need on housing waiting lists across Surrey. The average rent in parts of



Surrey for an Affordable Rent home is higher than the average weekly earnings of a woman in Surrey who works part-time. Districts and Boroughs reported that Affordable Rent homes often went to families in low need with higher incomes. Consequently, councils are having to provide expensive, insecure, temporary accommodation to some of these families who are unable to afford private rents or secure a socially rented home due to short supply.

7 While Affordable Rent homes clearly address demand within Surrey, they come at the cost of exacerbating other problems. Partners should focus, wherever possible, on building Social Rented homes, and should explore options to change the rent level of existing Affordable Rent homes to Social Rent through grant, reserves or looking to subsidise rent levels to bridge the affordability gap.

It should be recognised that such a shift may lead to fewer overall affordable homes being delivered, without an increase in grant funding, as Affordable Rent fits housing viability models better for providers (it generates more income than social rent). However, it would mean that genuinely affordable homes are provided for those families in greatest housing need in Surrey.

*... Joining up the dots on potential savings to the public purse*

***"We aren't doing preventative work anymore; it's just mopping up the consequences of market failure"***

In all local government structures, there is inevitable fragmentation between different directorates and teams within and between councils. In two-tier areas like Surrey, that fragmentation is more pronounced, with housing separated from children's services, public health, adult social care and domestic abuse services – despite often serving the same residents.

Similarly, whilst there should be a clear business case for further significant investment in social rented and other forms of more affordable housing, this case can often be difficult to make when those organisations responsible for the investment (e.g. housing associations and stock-holding district and borough councils) are not necessarily the organisations that will benefit directly (e.g. acute hospital services, Health and Adult and Children's Social Care, Domestic Abuse Services and sectors struggling to recruit essential workers).

***"Everyone's budgets are stretched, everyone is over capacity but sometimes it feels like we're protecting resource instead of working in partnership for the people of Surrey"***

Financial constraints have meant that teams in all local authorities are acutely aware of delivering best value for money for residents and ensuring that budget is appropriately allocated and spent. There is the potential, however, to pilot pooling of budgets either across boundaries or in joint teams between different public sector organisations in the same geography where services are being provided to the same residents, whether through housing or a form of support within the care system. This joint approach has the potential to



reduce waste, improve efficiency and deliver better outcomes for residents all while fostering a stronger partnership between and within these organisations.

This approach was exemplified during the COVID pandemic when some of the most vulnerable local residents, including those facing multiple disadvantage (substance misuse, mental health, engagement with the criminal justice system, domestic abuse) alongside homelessness. This approach brought together health, social care, housing and public health around a problem that needed solving. This can be built on and expanded for other issues across the county.

New approaches may learn from those existing in the county linking housing and accommodation with those with complex needs. [The Public Health Changing Futures Programme](#) funded to £2.8M by DLUHC National Lottery ("Tackling Multiple Disadvantage in Surrey") has thirteen Lived Experience Experts with multiple disadvantage/complex needs engaged in co designing projects. Twelve additional Lived Experience Experts with multiple disadvantage/ complex needs are being engaged over the next few weeks. We have recently appointed a Project Manager to co-ordinate community engagement requests. Healthwatch has been engaged in the development of the group.

[The Changing Futures Programme](#) now has eighteen Trauma Informed Specialists (commissioned via local Surrey VCSE organisations) offering up to eight hours of Trauma Informed Care and Support to people with multiple disadvantage / complex needs in communities. The programme is currently funded to support 60 people in Surrey's communities and links them to all local community assets, including housing.

**CASE STUDY – Better futures for vulnerable people – Somerset Strategic Housing Group**

Vulnerable groups in Somerset were struggling to have complex needs met while navigating health and care services and also facing a housing supply shortage. At that time, partners were not working closely together enough and services were not joined up to help these residents access housing and receive the support that they needed.

The Somerset Strategic Housing Group learnt from the new ways of working that they piloted while providing emergency accommodation during COVID-19. They developed a new leadership and governance structure to manage the delivery of a shared vision and joint ownership-commissioning. This resulted in impacts on individuals and communities while adding service savings to reinvest in more preventative methods.

*... Working together across boundaries to avoid duplication*

***"Post COVID it's just a tsunami of health issues... more homelessness... more complex needs, mental health problems.... housing is just picking up the slack"***

Similarly, housing teams are hard pressed across the 11 districts and boroughs to deliver a wide range of services to an ever-expanding population of need. There is already joint working between some districts and boroughs and housing officers expressed support for these arrangements. There is significant policy alignment across many of the districts and

boroughs in Surrey on housing policy, all districts and boroughs are facing many of the same issues and all have the same statutory responsibilities.

There is clear capacity for more shared working and pooling of resources. Housing teams across the county are doing similar jobs eleven times. This makes it harder for teams to foster specialisms. It also means that when one district or borough launches a new initiative that others see as best practice it then has to be replicated, from scratch, 10 times. It also means that external partners, including housing associations and service providers need to maintain eleven separate relationships.

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Joint working and a greater pooling of resources wouldn't require any district or borough to relinquish any decision-making power over any aspect of their housing service but would give them access to teams that would be large enough to dedicate resource to specific challenges and allow officers working within those teams the ability to specialise and develop their careers. This is not about reducing headcount but increasing capacity through joint working.

Districts and boroughs should look to pool as many housing functions as possible, for example, in county wide or in sub-regional clusters.

*...OPE partnership – building on trust*

### ***"We'd love to build.... but where? We have no land"***

There is no consolidated map or database of publicly owned land and property in Surrey. There is serious potential to unlock public sector sites to give local government and partners across Surrey greater control and power over how and when the development of housing comes forward. There are potential funding sources to support this work and provide appropriate partnership governance around the identification of sites that could be suitable for housing, or housing-related infrastructure. As the land is in public ownership it would be for the relevant public authority, whether a local council, NHS institution, Central Government, or education to decide what to do with the land – but the first step is working together to identify what is available.

Public sector partners across Surrey should partner to work with One Public Estate to identify land in their ownership across the county, so that suitable sites for housing can be identified and partners can jointly agree an approach to realising the greatest social benefit from that land.

*... Strategic support from Homes England*

There is significant funding available from Homes England to boost the supply of housing in Surrey, particularly more affordable housing. To bring this funding to Surrey there would need to be a programme of sufficient scale and quantum to identify Surrey as a strategic partner for Homes England. This would require public sector landowners to come together to identify suitable sites and agree a strategic approach to land (see below) in order to be able

to demonstrate both an adequate pipeline of development and a willingness to work together in a joint endeavour to tackle the housing crisis in Surrey.

#### **CASE STUDY – Homes England Strategic Partnership – ASELA**

The Association of South Essex Local Authorities has entered a partnership with the government's housing and regeneration agency (Homes England) to receive support for their proposals for housing growth as a part of the region's broader social, environmental and economic vision. The partnership is centred around a shared business plan that sets out special and thematic priorities for delivering a strong pipeline of potential opportunities in the area.

#### *... A strategic approach to land*

Different public sector landowners have different policies regarding the disposal of public sector land. This has bred distrust between some organisations where best price has been used as the driving policy in land disposal, rather than social value.

Rather than asking any one organisation to change their policy on their own it would be better if all public sector landowners agreed a common set of principles on the disposal of any public sector land, or a common approach with common principles on procuring development partners for public sector land.

This should include: exploring the opportunity to offer other partners within the public sector or affordable housing sector first refusal on any land being disposed; minimum thresholds for affordable housing should be agreed, including exploring granting outline planning permission on public land prior to disposal to avoid land auctions driving the price of the land up to a point where the delivery of affordable housing is not considered viable by the private sector; public sector land owners should also consider setting requirements on appropriate density for town centre sites and environmental standards so that developments on public sector land, irrespective of who builds them, set the standard for new housing in Surrey.

Encouraging a more open and constructive pre-application discussion between public sector landowners and the local planning teams may be productive in maximising the potential of sites in public ownership for housing, rather than schemes only being presented once uses and broad development principles have already been established.

#### **CASE STUDY – Electronic Property Information Mapping Service (e-PIMS)**

The Government Property Unit has produced a map for up-to-date information on the land of:

- government departments
- non-ministerial departments and their executive agencies
- arms length bodies
- non-departmental public bodies
- special health authorities

The map can be used to identify and map developable public sector land that may then be eligible for a One Public Estate partnership. The GPU also provides training on how to use this tool effectively.

#### *... A joint approach to Greenbelt*

Greenbelt has always been a defining part of the attractive character of Surrey, so any previous release of Greenbelt for specific identified needs has been met with some debate and/or opposition. Whilst there remains pressure from some quarters to identify and release other suitable low-quality Greenbelt to meet very specific need for infrastructure or specialist housing, planning policies across the county unanimously work to protect the Greenbelt from further development. Further, recent measures announced by central government suggest further protection to the Greenbelt.

A common response to this emerging policy in order to establish a common set of principles, agreed across Surrey local would give residents more confidence and offer reassurance that there is a careful, strategic approach to an issue that will always attract serious scrutiny and that local government, as a matter of course, will resist ad hoc release of Greenbelt land.

#### **CASE STUDY – ‘Exceptional’ Circumstances to Release Greenbelt Land – Planning Resource**

Planning Resource has highlighted the most common exceptional circumstances that have been used to make the case to release greenbelt land to meet specific needs, rather than just general private development. These are:

- Unmet need for local development
- Release is most sustainable option (i.e., proximate access to services and transportation)
- Lack of contribution to greenbelt purposes
- Creation of defensible boundaries
- Limited visual impact
- Provision of infrastructure
- Reuse of brownfield land

*... Capacity to deliver*

***"We can't wait for the market.... you could be waiting 1,000 years for a home"***

There is a mixture of capacity and appetite across the public sector in Surrey to build housing across the public sector in Surrey. Several authorities are stock holding and are building homes, others have set up a council-owned house building company, others work in partnership with local housing associations. Some have expressed reservation about the management and administration, technical capacity, regulation and financial risk associated with directly delivering housing. A partnership approach would help accelerate housing delivery within the public sector, particularly on public sector land.

In some parts of the County there are housing associations closely aligned with districts and boroughs and in these places a preferred partner approach to delivery makes a great deal of sense. Across the rest of the county, particularly if a co-ordinated approach to public sector land is taken forward, identifying districts or boroughs with house building capacity and experience, or a developing housing association, to lead housing delivery would give partners the ability to plan long-term, commit appropriate resource, and have greater oversight and control of housing delivery in the county.

***"You need density to make this real or it's just 20 minutes in a traffic jam...."***

This strategy did not interrogate planning policy or cut across the local plan process. However, an area of focus in the scope agreed by the Surrey Delivery Board was on 20-minute neighbourhoods as a way of embedding sustainability in development and promoting independent living for all residents. Surrey is a low-density county. Even at its most dense, in Woking, density levels fall short of what would normally be expected for a 20-minute neighbourhood. This means that many residents are car dependent and live at a distance from shops and services.

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While the existing built environment is not going to be comprehensively redesigned there is potential with new settlements, urban extensions, or regeneration areas to embed the principles of 20-minute neighbourhoods: designing for gentle density that ensures shops and services are a short walk, cycle or wheel away from home, and ensuring that active transport measures are designed in as a first principle. Local plans should look to incorporate these principles into site allocations for larger developments or should consider Development Plan Documents to embed these principles into newly identified sites.

**CASE STUDY – Hailsham, 10 Minute Town**

Hailsham is a small town of 20,000 people in East Sussex. The Town Council adopted a neighbourhood plan, following a referendum in 2021 which puts 20-minute neighbourhood principles into practice within the town.

The proposals do not envisage a radical shift in density or scale of development, but does look to improve active transport links throughout the town to make it easier for residents to walk and cycle around the town.

***"It's just impossible for first time buyers in Surrey, there might be pockets.... but now you have to factor in travel time and fuel costs... I just don't know"***

Build-to-Rent housing (BTR) has emerged in the UK over the past decade but is very common in the United States and Europe. Developments of flats are built by a single owner who then acts as the landlord, providing housing management and longer-term tenancies within the private rented sector. These developments are usually built more quickly and completed sooner than comparable schemes with homes for sale. This is because the market can absorb these homes more quickly as there is less of a financial hurdle (no large deposit or mortgage required) for occupants.

BTR housing doesn't tend to yield traditional social rent housing (although some local authorities have acted to secure this) and the affordable offer tends to be a form of Discounted Market Rent (DMR) which may be similar in cost to some Affordable Rent products in Surrey.

Looking to secure BTR development close to transport hubs and major employment centres could accelerate housing delivery in Surrey and provide a better housing offer for young professionals, graduates and key public service workers.

#### **CASE STUDY – Newbury Build-to-Rent**

Build to Rent developer Grainger is completing 232 homes in the centre of Newbury. The scheme will complete in phases over just 12 months. Once completed the homes will then be managed by Grainger.

All the homes are for rent on a 'Stay As Long As You Want' tenancy model with an initial tenancy of up to three years. Residents are able to bring pets with them, the homes have fibre broadband, a co-working space, a bookable meeting room. Renters will also have an onsite Resident Service Team to respond to any issues with their homes.

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#### *... Active Transport*

Low density across Surrey means that many residents are car dependent. A lack of funding for comprehensive local bus services means that without a car many residents are isolated from shops, jobs and services. Where 20-minute neighbourhoods have been introduced as policy elsewhere, they have focused on retrofitting active transport measures with support for segregated cycle lanes to make journeys more viable and attractive and safe for new or anxious cyclists. As a sustainable and low cost means of transport, better walking and cycling options should be actively explored to link all town centres with suburbs.

#### **CASE STUDY – Better Points**

As investment in active transportation infrastructure can be prohibitive for encouraging more sustainable and healthy forms of travel, the app-based programme Better Points seeks to reward individuals for choosing to use public transportation and walking or cycling to incentivise behaviour instead. This programme provides users with vouchers for town centre businesses to draw residents into active travel while simultaneously contributing to the local economy.

#### *... Building a strong circular economy through Retrofit*

Whether at a small scale today, or in a much larger scale in the years to come, Retrofit is a growing part of the housing ecosystem, brought further into focus through the recent fuel price increases reducing the ability of low income households to heat their homes. Almost all councils in Surrey have declared a climate emergency and have set targets for reaching net zero carbon. Without retrofit of housing (or replacement of that housing with new, zero carbon housing) those targets will be impossible to meet.

Surrey County Council is already working to provide grants and support for retrofit. All stock holders are exploring routes to retrofit and investigating the condition of their stock. First there is potential for joint-working on stock investigation and on pooling buying power, through partnership, to get a better deal for the public sector in Surrey.

More proactively, this is a huge opportunity for Surrey. This will be a growing sector of the economy, with wider benefits for industries within the supply chain. This could be an economic cost to Surrey, or an opportunity to develop a strong local retrofit economy. This



needs to be a holistic approach, starting with schools and colleges, reskilling for trained adults whose skillset can be adapted to new technology, space and support for industry to develop and grow locally, and co-ordination between partners with budgets to make sure the spend goes not just on projects in Surrey, but generates community wealth within Surrey.

#### **CASE STUDY – Skills Strategy and Action Plan, Programme Co-Production – Hampshire County Council**

Despite an increase in funding for careers and skills in recent years, initiatives and funding lacked local alignment. The County wanted to ensure that work was not replicated across Districts and Boroughs while also increasing capacity and resilience through a shared programme. Led by council's economic development services and a joint skills management board, Hampshire capitalised on strong partnerships with providers, employers and skills programme networks to build closer relationships with and amongst the Districts and Boroughs, meeting regularly to ensure they were coordinating on the best ways to reach the objectives of their shared strategy together.

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#### **CASE STUDY – Green New Deal – Camden Council**

Camden commissioned an integrated plan to bring together employment, skills and local economic benefit into the design of the housing retrofit programme from the outset. Beyond traditional procurement, this approach will ensure that community engagement, as well as additional employment, and updating the skills of new and existing workers, are designed in to the project and reflect the demands of the growing market for 'green construction'.

... Surrey's Brand

***"Historically Surrey has marketed itself as the detached-house-with-space-for-two-cars sort of place"***

Surrey is a diverse and prosperous county. For the most part people lead good, healthy lives and have chosen to live in Surrey because of the excellent quality of life offered to them. Participants in this study spoke about the historic way it was seen as 'England's California' and the phrase 'Shangri-La' was mentioned more than once. The flip side is that others talked about the county being seen by outsiders as a firmly suburban place, which may lead some potential residents to discount the county without proper consideration as a place to settle or raise a family. It also means that Surrey is discounted for much-needed government funding, including Levelling Up as it is thought of as a place with no issues that need resolving. Correcting the record and presenting an updated Surrey Story is an important part of attracting investment and support from the Government and attracting more residents.

The domestic migration figures paint a stark picture of people moving elsewhere in the South-East, and leaving Surrey in significant numbers. While some of this is a direct consequence of the unaffordability of housing compared to other areas, thought should also be given to how Surrey can better market itself to potential residents, businesses, and investors so that the housing market can attract and cater to a wider range of residents.





## Taking This Forward

This strategy presents the evidence of the Surrey Housing Crisis. Its existence is undeniable, and the pernicious scale of that crisis is a real threat to the vitality, prosperity, and security of all parts of the county in the coming decades. It identifies an agenda for lobbying central government as well as practical actions that local government and partners can take locally to address that crisis.

However, there's no power to compel action. The decision on whether to act rests with local councils, housing associations, and other partners. The challenge was put repeatedly from stakeholders in the summer: 'Who is making the case for housing in Surrey?' and there is an undeniable risk that without a driving force behind this work, it risks being placed on the figurative dusty shelf.

There are several existing partnership forums: the One Surrey Growth Board, the Surrey Forum, the Surrey Delivery Board, the Surrey Planning Officers Association and the Surrey Chief Housing Officers Association. All of these have a role to play in discussing, advocating and driving the change needed.

Some of the recommendations in this strategy can be taken forward by individual partners or clusters of partners subject to their appetite for change. Decisions on approaches to planning sit firmly within the remit of the individual Districts and Boroughs; approaches to pooling housing team responsibilities is a conversation to be had between Districts and Boroughs.

However, in others there will be a requirement for strong programme management and formal governance: establishing a partnership that can drive a skills, employment and economic growth agenda focused on the opportunity that retrofit offers; or in establishing a Surrey Land Partnership, which could access significant funding and provide far greater control for local government in the county to drive the delivery of affordable housing and infrastructure that their communities need. These will require dedicated additional resource and programme management and a shared partnership approach to governance that builds trust and confidence between equal partners.

If partners were to take forward the proposal for a strategic partnership on public sector land then an indicative approach would require dedicated resource to work with members of that partnership to deliver the following at pace:

- a) Establish and agree appropriate governance for the partnership;
- b) Map all publicly-owned land;
- c) Categorise all publicly-owned land according to current use and planning status;
- d) Work with partners to establish i) need and ii) aspiration for land use;
- e) Agree a priority list of sites;
- f) Agree procurement of a development partner, creation of a joint venture, use of direct delivery or disposal routes, including disposal with planning permission for land;

- g) Manage sites through those processes;
- h) agree clienting arrangements for land where a development partner or joint venture is procured.

It may be that this approach could move even more quickly if piloted with one district or borough in the first instance, but the real benefit would come from an ambitious approach that brought all public sector landowners to the table to work on a common endeavour on behalf of the people of Surrey.

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An ambition should be set among all willing partners to identify a land assembly opportunity in every District and Borough in Surrey in the twelve months from the adoption of this strategy. This would demonstrate commitment to working together, to bringing forward public land in the interest of the people of Surrey and create momentum for more joint working with common purpose.

In the interests of maintaining a partnership approach to the delivery of this strategy one of the existing boards, whether OSGB, SDB or the Surrey Forum should be agreed as the cheerleader for advancing the strategy, beating the drum for action on the housing crisis, and having the appropriate convening power to bring partners together to agitate for greater collective action and, jointly, partners could agree to take adapt this strategy into a formal delivery plan with agreed actions and a timetable to ensure clarity, certainty and to help better deliver meaningful change on this most important of issues.