



South Ribble Housing Strategy 2020-2025

South Ribble Housing Strategy

2020-2025

Foreword

South Ribble Borough Council are pleased to introduce this new Housing Strategy for the borough which sets out our priorities for housing over the next five years. Our vision is that by 2025, South Ribble will offer good quality, safe and secure housing that our current and future residents can afford to live in and can call home. We recognise that having the right housing offer will help our local communities and neighbourhoods to thrive.

Housing and the homes that we live in play a key role in our lives and have a direct impact on our health and wellbeing. The priorities within this strategy aim to increase the availability and choice of quality housing across a range of tenures to meet the needs and aspirations of our current and future residents and importantly for our elderly and vulnerable residents. Tackling poor quality housing and the affordability of housing will help to address the health inequalities in our borough.

The Council is proud of the partnerships it has with our local Registered Providers (Housing Associations) and has worked closely over the years with our partners to deliver much needed affordable homes across the borough. Despite this, there remain gaps in our housing market. To address this, the Council has taken the decision to intervene directly in the housing market in developing and owning the first Council homes for over 25 years.

Cllr Bill Evans

Cabinet Member for Planning, Regeneration and City Deal



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Introduction and Background

The South Ribble Housing Strategy provides a framework for all of the Council's housing related functions and supports and underpins the Council's Corporate Plan 2019-23. The Strategy sets out the actions that will deliver the Council's vision and key housing priorities to ensure that South Ribble is a place where each one of our residents can find a quality, affordable home to live in where they can be happy, healthy and safe.

Housing is a key factor influencing our health and wellbeing and is it essential that we continue to improve lives and inequalities through the right type, number and quality of the homes in our borough that will meet the need and aspirations of our current and future residents. This Housing Strategy covers a five-year period to 2025 and will be reviewed and updated at relevant points. The action plan sets out the actions for 2020-2022 to deliver this strategy.

Location

South Ribble sits within Central Lancashire and offers excellent connections throughout the North West meaning it is a great location to be able to access the nearby cities of Preston, Liverpool and Manchester. South Ribble has good motorway links with the M6, M65 and M61 and has great links to the North and South of the country by Rail from Preston.

In addition to excellent accessibility, the borough also offers several national award-winning parks with Hurst Grange Park, Longton Brickcroft Nature Reserve and Worden Park all receiving the Green Flag Award.

Population and Households

South Ribble has a population of around 110,527 residents which has steadily grown over the years. Between 2016 and 2041, the population is set to increase by 1.9% which is a relatively small increase in comparison to other Lancashire authorities. However, during this same period the number of households in the borough are expected to grow by 7.3%.

Like many other areas of the country, South Ribble has an ageing population and our residents are living longer. By 2041, the population aged over 65 is projected to increase to 32,614 which equates to a 43.8% increase. This increase is more noticeable amongst residents over 75 with a projected increase of 84% and residents over 85 projected at 120%. Although people are living longer, this does not necessarily mean they are continuing to live quality lives for longer with many older people suffering from ill health or disability. This Strategy aims to tackle this by enabling more independent living and ensuring we have quality homes to improve health and wellbeing, not just of our older residents but of every resident in the borough.

Housing in South Ribble

There are 49,720 dwellings in South Ribble of which 89.5% are in the private sector, the majority being owner occupied. The remaining 10.5% of dwellings are within the social housing sector.

The average house price in South Ribble is £161,000 and average earnings are £27,680. Wards with the lowest house prices include Broadfield and Bamber Bridge West and wards

with the highest house prices include New Longton and Hutton East and Longton and Hutton West.

Median house price to earnings ratio in South Ribble is higher than for many other Lancashire authority areas at 5.82% with average house price at £161,000 and average earnings at £27,680. This compares to England with a ratio of 8.0%, the North West at 5.82% and Lancashire at 5.48%. Burnley has the lowest ratio at 3.61% and Ribble Valley has the highest at 6.78%.

The lower-quartile house price to earnings ratio is the second highest in Lancashire at 6.57% meaning that house price affordability is even higher for those looking to get on to the property ladder. The only authority in Lancashire with a higher ratio is Ribble Valley at 6.82%.

Local Economy

South Ribble has a total of 3,890 businesses with 54,400 people employed and offers an excellent business location being at the heart of the intersection of three motorways. The authority is one of few in Lancashire that has a consistent record of high employment rates. South Ribble benefits from net commuter flows with average earnings in South Ribble being higher when measured by place of residence in comparison to place of work. High commuting out-flows and in-flows are experienced to and from Chorley and Preston.

Links to Local Strategic Documents

Corporate Plan

The Council's new Corporate Plan 2019-23 has recently been published setting out the Council's vision and corporate priorities for the next 4 years. The housing priorities within the Corporate Plan are as follows:

- Reduce the number of homeless through developing a health and prevention focused approach
- Seek to deliver different models to provide quality homes that people can afford to live in whether they choose home ownership or rental accommodation
- Identify actions to take forward from the 'Private Sector Stock Condition Survey'
- Work with partners and developers to manage the rate of delivery of new homes and commercial floor space by unlocking City Deal sites prioritising infrastructure development

In addition to the above housing priorities, the Corporate Plan sets out actions to improve the health and wellbeing of residents and communities through improvements to pathways, woodlands and open spaces as part of the ongoing Green Links programme.

The Council has set a target to become Carbon Neutral by 2030 and will develop a strategy in order to achieve this. To contribute to this target and to help improve the air quality in South Ribble, the Council has introduced its 'Our Big Tree Plan' initiative and plans to develop 110,000 trees in South Ribble, one for each resident in the borough. To date, 30,000 trees have been planted across different locations in the borough.

Central Lancashire Local Plan

The Central Lancashire authorities of Chorley, Preston and South Ribble are currently in the process of undertaking a review of the Central Lancashire Adopted Core Strategy and individual Local Plans with a view to developing a single Central Lancashire Local Plan. At this stage it is envisaged that a finalised Local Plan will be prepared for adoption by 2023.

Priorities set out within this Housing Strategy and the progress made to deliver the actions will inform the on-going review of the Local Plan.

Central Lancashire Economic Regeneration Strategy

The new Central Lancashire Economic Regeneration Strategy is currently in the process of being developed. A good quality affordable housing offer is needed to attract and retain a skilled workforce and will support increased employment levels to achieve economic growth enabling people to both live and work in the borough.

South Ribble Homelessness Strategy

The South Ribble Homelessness Strategy 2017-2020 outlines three priority areas for the Council and its partners to work to reduce homelessness across the borough and sets out in an action plan how this will be achieved. The Homelessness Strategy is currently undergoing review with an updated strategy to be published during 2020/2021.

South Ribble Community Strategy

The South Ribble Community Strategy 2019-2024 sets out the shared vision for South Ribble as a place to live, work and do business between local communities, service providers and businesses. The strategy sets the vision for South Ribble to continue to be known as one of the best places in the UK to live, work and do business and to enable communities to continue to be amongst the best places to learn, thrive and grow.

South Ribble Strategic Housing Priorities

There are four overarching strategic housing priorities which shall inform and focus the council's approach to Housing during the lifetime of the Housing Strategy. They are:

Vision	By 2025 South Ribble will offer good quality, safe and secure housing that our current and future residents can afford to live in	
Priorities	Ensuring safe, secure, quality homes across all housing tenures that people can afford to live in	Enable the delivery of affordable housing and supporting a balanced housing market
	Supporting people to remain independent and help improve health and wellbeing and quality of life in their own homes	Reducing and Preventing Homelessness

Quality Homes

Ensuring safe, secure, quality homes across all housing tenures that people can afford to live in

Disrepair and HHSRS

The Council has statutory responsibilities to address disrepair within the housing market, particularly those elements which are assessed as Category 1 hazards, as defined in the Housing Act 2004.

The Council will continue to carry out enforcement proceedings where disrepair issues are identified, and significantly within the Private Rented Sector, although this does not exclude Social Rented Sector or Privately Owned Properties.

A scheme for undertaking proactive investigations, inspections and enforcement on known areas of the borough with low housing standards is currently being implemented with the employment of a fixed term enforcement officer.

The Council has an existing policy in place to improve the quality of homes in the borough by helping home owners to tackle maintenance issues, particularly in addressing and removing Category 1 hazards. The Building Research Establishment have recently undertaken a survey into the stock of South Ribble. The survey findings will be assessed and will inform a review to the Councils assistance policy.

The above actions are aimed at significantly reducing the incidents of disrepair within the boroughs housing stock, especially the occurrences of Category 1 hazards, safeguarding and improving the health and wellbeing of our borough's residents and future population.

Empty Homes

The Council is committed to encouraging owners of long term empty properties (those empty for over 2 years) to bring them back into use quicker to support the provision of housing available within the borough.

As of 1 April 2020, changes will be made to Council Tax charges to introduce an additional premium for properties that have been empty and unfurnished for more than 2 years. Long term empty properties can attract squatters, vandalism and anti-social behaviour and are a blight on the community and this change aims to tackle this. These changes are intended to complement and enhance the Councils empty property policy which clearly sets out the Councils approach to addressing long term empty properties in the borough.

Changes to the Council Tax Long Term Empty Premium charge are as follows:

Effective Date	Empty Period	Existing Premium	Proposed Premium
1 April 2020	2-5 years	50%	100%
	5 years+	50%	200%
1 April 2021	2-5 years	50%	100%
	5-10 years	50%	200%
	10 years+	50%	300%

Further, from 1 April 2020 the amount of discount eligible for second homes in the borough will be reduced from 10% to 0%, therefore introducing a 100% charge for second homes.

The borough has approximately 650 empty properties which can fluctuate depending on market conditions, the council offer assistance for owners of long-term empty properties to return them back into use which then is repaid back through the rental income.

Energy Efficiency and Affordable Warmth

Fuel poverty can affect everyone, regardless of their tenancy. Not being able to afford to keep a home adequately heated is one of the factors associated with reduced health outcomes. Whilst the incidence of fuel poverty in South Ribble at 9.5% is the lower than elsewhere in the North West, it is still an important target to address.

The Council currently provides independent advice and where possible sources funding both internally and externally to help residents install energy efficiency measures to their home. External funding is secured through the Energy Company Obligation (ECO), Affordable Warmth criteria or using the Councils Energy Company Obligation Flex Criteria, in 2018/19 the funding secured to help residents was £115k. The Council will continue to build on the successful delivery of Energy Schemes in the borough which has been recognised by being commenced in 2018 and again in 2019 by the National Energy awards.

Environmental Sustainability and Improving Air Quality

The growing impact of the changing climate is becoming more identifiable each season. It is now agreed by the scientific community and most governments that the level of global warming must be limited to 1.5°C to prevent serious risk to health, livelihood, food security etc. This has been emphasised in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report published in 2018. The report highlighted that at the time (2018) we only had 12 years left in which to take the serious action required to avert the crisis and avoid the worse impacts.

After traffic emissions the biggest Carbon emitters are general energy generation (including that used by the domestic sector for heating) and domestic emissions. It is therefore vital that measures are drastically taken to improve the efficiency and insulation of domestic property across the borough.

In line with the Council declaration of a Climate Emergency in June 2019 and the objective to make the borough carbon neutral by 2030, combined with the government's target of 2050, housing across the borough needs to become more environmentally sustainable. This will need a dramatic rethink on how housing is constructed, insulated and fuelled, for both existing and future housing. The Council will actively investigate ways to improve efficiency of current homes with housing partners, possibly through incentives and grants to look at ways of economically moving people away from a reliance on gas and other non-renewable fuel sources.

New homes must be built to a very high standard using environmentally sustainable materials and methods of construction that will minimise the use of energy and the impact on the climate, ideally ensuring new properties are carbon neutral.

The Council will, through the local plan and improved planning guidance, ensure new dwellings are built to a more sustainable level than currently being construction, with emphasis over construction of carbon neutral dwellings.

Given the increasing risk to the health and safety of the general public from climate change developers must ensure that they are providing the most energy efficient, climate conscious developments possible, while at the same tie including measures to mitigate against the harmful impacts of climate change e.g. flooding, excess heat & cold.

What We Will Do:

- Ensure the Council delivers a proactive approach to tackle and reduce housing disrepair in the borough
- Review and update the Council's Housing Assistance Policy
- Support the development of quality homes through Modern Methods of Construction that contribute to environmental sustainability and improving air quality
- Investigate ways to improve efficiency of current homes
- Provide assistance to insulate homes
- Provide assistance to install central heating into homes
- Work with all major utility providers to attract funding for measures into the borough through ECO (Energy Company obligation)
- Work to strength the Local Plan to ensure new properties are carbon neutral or as close as possible
- Investigate ways to fund improvements to existing housing stock to improve insulation and energy efficiency

Housing Delivery

Enable the delivery of affordable housing and supporting a balanced housing market

South Ribble sits within the Central Lancashire Housing Market Area along with Chorley and Preston Councils. The three Councils are currently in the process of reviewing the strategic planning policies for Central Lancashire with a view to delivering a single Central Lancashire Local Plan. The new Local Plan will help to drive forward housing delivery in the right location with the right infrastructure in place. South Ribble is also part of the Preston, South Ribble and Lancashire City Deal which offers opportunities to unlock economic and housing opportunities creating growth and welcoming new employers, residents and facilities providing key infrastructure for the borough.

The below table shows the number of housing completions over the last 5 years which demonstrates an average of 21% new affordable homes delivered over the period:

Year	New Homes	New Affordable Homes
April 2014 – March 2015	486	84
April 2015 – March 2016	371	150
April 2016 – March 2017	189	25
April 2017 – March 2018	318	40
April 2018 – March 2019	491	97
<i>Average</i>	<i>371</i>	<i>79</i>

There is an established need for new affordable housing in South Ribble and a need for a balanced housing market including family homes, executive homes, bungalows, homes for private rent and older and vulnerable people's housing. A balanced housing market will offer a range of quality homes to meet the housing needs and aspirations of our current and future residents and households but will also provide an attractive offer and opportunity for people to live and work in the borough ensuring a skilled workforce can be retained and attracted to the borough.

South Ribble's Local Housing Needs and Demand Study identifies housing affordability for a range of workers in the borough. The study suggests that whilst market housing is particularly unaffordable those on lower quartile incomes, affordability of housing is still a struggle for those on median incomes.

Social and Affordable Rent

Homes in the social sector equate to just over 10% of the total homes in the borough with an identified need for more homes to be delivered. Over recent years, new build development in South Ribble has focused on Affordable Rented homes. Whilst Homes England now fund the development of Social Rent homes as well as Affordable Rent homes, South Ribble is not a priority area for this to happen. The Council will therefore look to intervene to ensure that Social Rent homes are provided on new housing developments across the borough.

Affordable Home Ownership

Since the publication of the new National Planning Policy Framework during early 2019, the definition of affordable housing has widened to include a variety of products to help people get onto the property ladder. The Framework also now requires at least 10% of homes on major developments to be provided as affordable home ownership. The Council will review its Affordable Home Ownership Position statement to ensure that the affordable home ownership tenure being provided on new housing developments is genuinely affordable for residents of South Ribble enabling people to get onto the property ladder.

Self and Custom Build Housing

The Council keeps a register of individuals and associations interested in Self and Custom Build homes. This provides an indication of the demand for self and custom build within South Ribble. The information held by the register will allow the Council to develop Housing, Planning, Asset Management and Regeneration policies to support the kinds of self and custom build projects that would be the most appropriate.

Developer of Quality Homes

Quality, safe, secure housing plays a key role in ensuring our residents can lead healthy, happy lives and will enable communities to thrive.

Place, Homes and Environment are a thematic corporate priority and the Council shall use its resources to intervene in the housing market where it is failing to provide good quality affordable housing for residents. The Council will use its resources to intervene directly in the housing market through the direct provision of new housing as well as acting as strategic enablers to support, encourage and hold accountable Developers and Registered Providers to provide good quality homes and to optimise the amount of affordable housing provided in the borough. As a way to progress these ambitions, the Council has registered as a Social Housing Provider with the Regulator of Social Housing.

The Council wishes to make a bold statement in relation to quality, space and environmental standards which sets the benchmark for others to follow. This can be seen through the Council's plans to develop 15 dwellings at the former McKenzie Arms site in Bamber Bridge to achieve up to Passivhaus Standards in relation to carbon reductions through smart construction, high levels of insulation and the use of renewables.

The Council is looking to take a more active role in the housing market by looking at how the Council can use its own land to build housing to meet a range of housing needs and intervene where the market is not delivering. The Council shall undertake a review of its land holdings and identify potential sites which could be utilised as part of a Council led new build programme.

What We Will Do:

- Review and refresh the Central Lancashire Local Plan, including emphasis over energy efficient and affordable homes

- Develop a South Ribble Strategy for new build which will identify the scale of new development it wishes to deliver and identify where it will intervene to address market failure
- Review Council land holdings to identify land that could be brought forward to support housing development
- Develop the former McKenzie Arms site up to Passivhaus Standards
- Bring forward the first Council owned houses in the Borough for over 25 years
- Identify and work with key strategic partners to continue to bring forward and enable the delivery of affordable housing in the borough to meet need
- Enable the development of more homes for Social Rent in the borough
- Review the need for the different types of intermediate housing products across the borough

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Health and Wellbeing

Supporting people to remain independent and help improve health and wellbeing and quality of life in their own homes

Housing for older and vulnerable people

South Ribble has an ageing population which is expected to grow over the coming years. The vast majority of older people want to remain in their homes as they get older, but many will require support in order to do so. To meet the current and future need and aspirations of older and vulnerable people, a range of homes need to be planned for.

The Council recognises the importance of the need for different types of housing including bungalows, accessible and adaptable homes, lifetime homes. Providing diverse housing options will help enable older people to move to more appropriate accommodation where they want or need to do so. The Council will introduce a policy to address the needs of older people in the borough and will help to inform housing developed through the planning process.

Disabled Facilities Grants

The council continues to be proactive in supporting people to remain independent in their own homes. This involves arranging the delivery of a range of housing related interventions including disrepair assistance and advice, energy measure, etc utilising the Better Care Funding (BCF) this enables the council to continue to deliver a high-quality service for disabled facilities grants.

Disabled Facilities Grants service provides residents support both financial and practical they need so that they can start to benefit from the adaptation sooner without any unnecessary delays using an installer of their choice. In 2018/19, the council received 296 adaptation referrals. This was a significant increase on the previous year, when 127 DFGs were approved.

Extra care

The Council is committed to enabling the development of an Extra Care scheme in South Ribble in order to provide high quality housing, care and support to residents who need it. The Lancashire County Council Care and Support Strategy 2018-2025 identifies the provision of at least one Extra Care scheme in each local authority area in Lancashire as one of its key strategic priorities.

Presently, South Ribble is one of the few authorities in Lancashire that lacks an Extra Care scheme and through its Housing Strategy, the Council shall work closely with the County Council, care providers and key stakeholders to ensure that a site for a high-quality Extra Care scheme is identified, commissioned and delivered within the lifetime of the Housing Strategy.

Enforcement

The Council will fulfil its statutory requirements and continue its enforcement activities with respect to action under the Housing Act 2004 and other relevant legislation. This will help protect and improve the health and wellbeing of residents within the borough, many of which fall into those identified as being in significant deprivation. The enforcement work will primarily cover the private rented sector but will also look at those most in need of help who are owner occupiers.

The Council is also commitment to employing a temporary pro-active housing enforcement officer to tackle known problem areas of the borough.

What We Will Do:

- Work with partners to bring forward the Council's first Extra Care scheme
- Develop and introduce a new policy to meet the needs of older and vulnerable people in the borough
- Work to ensure high levels of customer satisfaction are obtained from customers using the DFG service
- Work to reduce the waiting times for customer requiring DFG assistance
- Continue to spend the DFG funding in a responsible and efficient manner
- Employ a proactive housing enforcement officer
- Continue with the housing enforcement activities

Homelessness

Reducing and Preventing Homelessness

Reducing and preventing homelessness in the borough is a key priority and is addressed in full through the Council's Homelessness Prevention Review and Strategy. Consultation is currently ongoing with key strategic partners to review and refresh the strategy focusing on:

Homelessness prevention

Allocation of social housing

Support for vulnerable customers

Youth homelessness

Rough Sleeping

Allocation of temporary accommodation

All councils have a legal responsibility to help homeless people and their families, and to ensure their rights are upheld. The council has strict rules about who is homeless and in priority need. The work of the Housing Options and Homelessness Service is guided by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which brought in a number of significant changes and extended and strengthened the duty for local authorities to deal with the causes of homelessness. As the Act has now been in operation for over 12 months it is timely to review the prevention of homelessness strategy.

The homeless population within the borough tend to be those in housing who are threatened with homelessness for varying reasons, those who are in insecure accommodation such as staying with friends or relatives (sofa surfing) and a small cohort who are actually street homeless some of the time. The service is seeing increasing presentations from people with multiple needs and barriers to housing, this is exacerbated by cuts to funding at a county level. There are a number of prevention initiatives already in place funded through homelessness grant and this strategy shall examine what other actions and initiatives could be undertaken in order to improve our approach to prevention.

Consultation has been carried out with the homeless network and a review of causes and trends is currently being undertaken

The Homelessness Strategy must address the following:

- a. preventing homelessness in the district
- b. securing sufficient accommodation is and will be available for people in the district who are or may become homeless
- c. securing the satisfactory provision of support for people in the district who are or may become homeless or who have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again

The variety of prevention initiatives currently in place appear to work well. However, there are a number of gaps and improvements that could be made and feedback from partner agencies at the homeless network identified some issues requiring further work and addressing to help improve the service further.

The strategy shall need to be signed off by cabinet and consultation will be undertaken with members ahead of this to determine their priorities for the service. It is clear that prevention is a top priority for the Council and this shall be a focal point of the new Homelessness Strategy. An action plan will be drawn up to address the issues highlighted within the strategy. The action plan will seek to deliver the priorities as identified within the strategy. Officers shall prioritise actions under their control and will work with partners to highlight and lobby for change in relation to wider national and strategic issues.

What We Will Do:

- Deliver the actions identified throughout the lifetime of the Homelessness Strategy

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References

National

National Planning Policy Framework

Housing Health and Safety Rating System (Housing Act 2004)

Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

Decent Homes Standard

Local

South Ribble Corporate Plan 2019 – 2023

South Ribble Local Plan 2015

Central Lancashire Adopted Core Strategy 2012

South Ribble Borough Council Housing Assistance Policy 2017

South Ribble Homelessness Strategy 2017-2020

South Ribble Borough Council Council Tax Local Empty Discounts and Exemptions Policy

South Ribble Borough Council Empty Properties Policy

South Ribble Local Housing Needs and Demand Study 2019

South Ribble Community Strategy 2019-2024