

INTRODUCTION TO HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS

Helping towns consider how Housing & Homelessness can contribute to Town Investment Plans, local enterprise and ultimately town prosperity



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What's the aim of this document?

This document is intended to be a very brief introduction to Housing and Homelessness, it aims to do 3 things:

- Help a local authority think about whether housing will be a significant element of their Town Investment Plan (TIP)
- Encourage a local authority to look at the data on housing and homelessness for their area, and what the impact of this might be on economic development and the wider community
- Make the links between housing and homelessness and other aspects of economic development, and social and environmental impacts to provide supporting evidence of need and rationale for projects in the TIP

How to use this guide

Housing and homelessness are critical issues for towns and the wellbeing of residents. Where there are opportunities for the Towns Fund to support housing development, these will need to form part of priorities outlined in Annex A of the guidance document.

This guide highlights the data and evidence you will need to provide to describe levels of housing need in your town.

You can use this information in outlining your needs and challenges and describing the vision and strategy for your town

Whilst some housing challenges will be difficult to address directly with Towns Fund investment, this guide begins to draw out the links between Housing and Homelessness and other aspects of economic development and regeneration - you can use this to inform your rationale for other Towns Fund interventions.

Is Housing an important element of your Town Investment Plan?

This section will help you to consider whether housing should form part of your TIP

Is Housing an important element of your Town Investment Plan?

Housing matters for economic development. The right housing can enhance economic performance and create desirable places to live and work; but without care it can also lead to segregation and pockets of poverty.

Often housing investment has taken place in isolation from the wider economic context, and without a deeper understanding of the current and future housing needs. The Towns Fund provides an opportunity to improve the use of housing as an enabler of economic growth, but to do this housing policy needs to be responsive to local economic development plans.

It is important to ensure the right type of new or improved homes are delivered, in the right place. If housing is treated as an isolated issue, future investment is unlikely to achieve either sustainable growth or the outcomes desired. The answer is to implement an integrated strategy for housing and economic development, meeting the housing needs of everyone and creating thriving communities.



The following are factors local government should consider when establishing the importance of housing in Town Investment:

The role of local government in place shaping to promote economic prosperity and the wellbeing of communities.

The type and quality of the available housing offer and its impact on the health and wealth of places.

The availability of good housing and attractive neighbourhoods to attract and retain people, and provide support for those who need it.

The importance of skills to places' economic performance, attracting and retaining the right skills base that will encourage inward investment.

The opportunity to address deprivation and maximise the potential for achieving a virtuous circle that can deliver greater economic inclusion.

The role of housing investment itself in driving local economic activity.

Housing data and evidence to support completion of your TIP

You can use the data identified in this section to provide evidence of the needs and challenges in your area in section one of your TIP, and to provide the rationale for housing interventions in section two

Housing data and evidence to support completion of your TIP

Understanding housing need and supply:

- What is the current mix of tenure types in your area?
- How many households currently live in temporary accommodation, what is the median length of stay?
- Where does demand outstrip supply, for what size homes?
- How affordable is your private rented sector?
- What type of tenure will people you hope to attract to the area be looking for?
- Does the local housing market cater for people on lower incomes?
- Does the local housing market enable people to move between tenures, for example entry to home ownership?

Understanding the needs of your current and future population:

- Housing need is an unconstrained assessment of the number of homes needed in an area. Assessing housing need should be the first step in deciding how many homes need to be planned for. This shouldn't be dependent on the availability of land, it's about understanding the population need for housing both current and in the future.
- You can find the government approach to assessing housing and economic development need here:
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-development-needs-assessments>

Alongside this you should use your joint strategic needs assessment to align plans with health and wellbeing strategies and commissioning plans to support transformation in improving health, care and wider services for people in our communities. Government guidance for JSNAs can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/joint-strategic-needs-assessment-and-joint-health-and-wellbeing-strategies-explained>

Housing data and evidence to support completion of your TIP

Empty homes and private sector housing challenges

- When considering investment to address empty homes, low quality stock, and private sector housing challenges it's important to be aware that the Towns Fund is designed to encourage longer term investment in the public realm, directly benefiting communities. Investment to support private landlords will need to consider public benefit above all else.
- As outlined in the Further Guidance document 2.2 the focus around housing need should be on linkages and rationale between need / opportunity, vision, strengths and projects for the longer term.
- Data on empty homes and stock quality can be found here:
<https://data.gov.uk/dataset/14119867-501d-4acb-92c2-2b1fafe9c5b4/empty-homes> and
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/english-housing-survey>



Housing data and evidence to support completion of your TIP

Understanding your housing market and tenure types:

- Your housing market is likely made up of the following types of tenure: Temporary accommodation, Social housing, Affordable housing, Market rent, Private rented sector, Entry level home ownership, Home ownership - including second homes, Holiday accommodation (in some locations)
- In order to understand how your local housing market is behaving it's important to look at your statistical neighbours and national trends. Where is the housing market failing, over or under supply, inflated above market rents, sections of the population excluded from accessing certain tenures?
- Which types of tenure are you looking to increase and why? What types of goods and services will new residents require, who will provide these and where will they live?



Housing data and evidence to support completion of your TIP

Understanding homelessness:

People become homeless for lots of different reasons; key factors include a lack of affordable housing and unemployment, life events can cause individuals to become homeless, and those who have a family history of insecure housing are more likely to experience it themselves. Often homelessness follows a relationship breaking down, losing a job, mental or physical health problems, or substance misuse - homelessness can be the trigger for substance misuse. Having inadequate or insecure housing makes it much harder for people to address these problems. Other circumstances that may lead to homelessness include leaving care, leaving the services, or leaving prison. Women fleeing domestic abuse are often faced with homelessness when they leave. Many people become homeless because they can no longer afford their rent, or are served a section 21 notice by their landlord.

People experience homelessness in different ways, rough sleeping is the most visible form of homelessness but not the most prevalent. Understanding each type of homelessness leads to better support and a better view of homelessness as a whole. Building a picture of the number of people who are homeless is complicated. This is due to the different ways each type is counted and the limitations of each approach.

Rough sleeping: bedding down in the open though often secluded in parks or other 'hidden' spaces, sleeping on public transport, living in tents or 'bashes'.

Temporary accommodation: generally placed by a local authority or charity this includes night/winter shelters, hostels, B&Bs, refuges, private and social housing.

Hidden homeless: dealing with their situation informally, this might be staying with family and friends, sofa surfing, living in unsuitable housing such as squats, sharing rooms between shift workers, living in makeshift accommodation such as sheds.

A coordinated approach between Housing Needs, Planning, and Economic Development is essential in creating neighbourhoods to attract and retain people, and provide support for those who need it most.

Housing data and evidence to support completion of your TIP

Data on homelessness

Rough sleeping figures - data on rough sleeping is poor, national street count data from MHCLG provides an approximation, and comparable national information

Street activity - including substance misuse and begging, information available from local community safety and policing teams

Homelessness approaches to the council - submitted via HCLIC to MHCLG

Households in temporary accommodation - submitted to MHCLG

MHCLG held data can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/homelessness-statistics>

Crisis Homeless Monitor is a good source of information:

<https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/homelessness-monitor/>

Centre for Homelessness Impact has a variety of evidence tools:

<https://www.homelessnessimpact.org/tools>



Links with other aspects of economic development and wellbeing of a place?

This section will help inform your strategy, theory of change and the rationale for housing and related interventions

How else might housing and homelessness impact on the economic development and wellbeing of a place?

The changes we expect to see in towns will be accelerated as the country responds to COVID-19. As we reimagine centres of civic life, use spaces differently and enable new communities to emerge, housing can be a positive element of diversification. Homes generate footfall for businesses, create vibrant places, and can provide an alternative use for unviable retail spaces.

Recent changes to planning regulation means that it will be easier to change 'empty' offices and retail units into homes through permitted development rights potentially bringing more activity to empty streets and neighbourhoods.

However, homes need to be well designed liveable places with access to community services and supporting infrastructure. Towns need to balance the need for new housing to accommodate local needs and rejuvenate places, with the need to create sustainable places that do not add to demand for public services.

Housing has clear links to most aspects of regeneration and economic development, I have picked out 4 areas to highlight here:

Neighbourhoods

Housing and wellbeing

Regeneration

Education and skills

How else might housing and homelessness impact on the economic development and wellbeing of a place?

Neighbourhoods

The new planning White Paper suggests a future planning system that places more emphasis on communities participating in the design of towns, neighbourhoods and communities. Community participation in planning (particularly plan making) has been shown to increase local acceptance of new housing development.

Housing and wellbeing

Regeneration

Neighbourhood planning will remain an important part of the system and is a potential method for towns and town boards to take forward elements of their investment plans in partnership with local people. Neighbourhood plans have some legal weight in the planning system and critically are subject to a local referendum before they can be adopted.

Education and skills

One of the most important elements of creating successful new communities and growing existing communities is the provision of social and community infrastructure. As well as neighbourhoods and residents being able to decide on where a proportion of the Community Infrastructure Levy is spent (thereby more clearly demonstrating the link between new homes and new infrastructure, a key resident concern), it is possible for towns to more actively involve communities in the ownership and management of community assets. As well as designating buildings as 'assets of community value', communities can also bid to purchase and run these assets should the owner decide to sell.

How else might housing and homelessness impact on the economic development and wellbeing of a place?

Neighbourhoods

Housing and wellbeing

Regeneration

Education and skills

Physical health

Housing can have an influence on our physical health, particularly for older and younger residents. A warm and dry house can improve general health outcomes and specifically reduce respiratory conditions. Many people struggle to adequately heat their homes or are unable to address maintenance needs due to affordability or inattentive landlords, which can lead to negative impacts on their physical health.

Mental health

Housing also has an influence on our mental health and wellbeing – Inadequate, insecure, or problematic housing causes significant mental health challenges. For example children living in crowded homes are more likely to be stressed, anxious and depressed, have poorer physical health, and attain less well at school.

Safety

Good health depends on having homes that are safe and free from physical hazards. Provision and maintenance of high quality, suitable accommodation that meets required standards of safety is essential. Ensuring fire safety is paramount following the tragedy at Grenfell.

How else might housing and homelessness impact on the economic development and wellbeing of a place?

Neighbourhoods

Housing and wellbeing

Regeneration

Education and skills

Poverty

Poor quality, insecure housing is much more of a risk for some families than others; housing quality varies dramatically with social and economic circumstances. Families with few financial resources are most likely to experience unhealthy housing and are typically least able to find alternative accommodation or improve their current home. Pockets of poor quality housing in less advantaged neighbourhoods further compounds racial and ethnic as well as socioeconomic disparities in health. High housing-related costs place a particular economic burden on low-income families, forcing trade-offs between food, heating and other basic needs.

Along with conditions in the home, conditions in neighbourhoods also have a powerful effect on health. Social, physical and economic characteristics of neighborhoods affect short and long term health. A neighbourhood's characteristics may promote health by providing places for children to play and for adults to exercise that are free from crime, violence and pollution. Social and economic conditions in neighbourhoods may improve health by providing access to employment opportunities and resources including public transportation, and good schools.

How else might housing and homelessness impact on the economic development and wellbeing of a place?

Neighbourhoods

Housing-led regeneration can bring new life to areas of towns that may have suffered from decline of traditional industries, offices and retail offers. Housing can provide eyes on the street to improve community safety, new footfall to local businesses, new affordable accommodation for local families and new ideas and resources for community asset management.

Housing and wellbeing

Housing led regeneration takes many forms and can make a strong contribution to land value uplift, attracting grants and investment; alongside economic opportunities, both through development and delivery of services. From schemes which demolish existing buildings to start afresh, schemes which use permitted development rights to 'quickly' convert offices or retail units to homes, to [community land trusts which engage local residents on the co-design of existing homes](#), all come with a different mix of opportunities and challenges.

Regeneration

Building clarity amongst public bodies, about the regeneration approach to be taken in different areas, requires clear planning policy, communication and engagement with residents. Estate renewal, that is demolishing existing homes to re-provide more and better quality homes, is a particularly contentious route that requires careful deliberation of the consequences of breaking up family and community bonds.

Education and skills

Planning policy already provides tools to protect current homes but the government's white paper on planning reform suggests a starker difference between those areas to be protected (generally for environmental or heritage reasons), those areas for renewal (that is increasing housing density in existing communities) and growth (town extensions for new homes and communities).

When seeking opportunities for new housing to meet local need, the full range of existing public sector assets should be considered. The [One Public Estate](#) programme run by the Cabinet Office, Government Property Unit and Local Government Association, provides funding and support to councils to build a better picture of the land and asset holdings of all public agencies, and how they can be utilised differently for housing or other uses.

How else might housing and homelessness impact on the economic development and wellbeing of a place?

Neighbourhoods

Investing in the education and skills of a community can increase incomes and therefore affordability for some groups, improving housing and social outcomes. This is particularly relevant for low income households in receipt of benefits following recent welfare reforms.

Housing and wellbeing

The relationship between the types of housing available and the skills you wish to attract and retain, along with the services and goods those people will consume provides useful information to inform the mix of tenure and types of housing needed in a locality.

Regeneration

Further reading on the links can be found here:

Education and skills

<https://www.centreforcities.org/reader/delivering-change-housing-associations-can-tell-us-employment-skills/housing-associations-skills-provision/>

<https://lemonsandcrane.co.uk/resources/Crisis%20-%20Missed%20opportunities.pdf>

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