

## 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**This Housing Strategy sets out how the council, along with its partners, will respond to the housing challenges faced by the borough in order to provide good quality housing options.**

The council's Corporate Plan 2016-2021 sets out the vision for the borough and contains the high level priorities it will focus on in order to deliver this vision. One aspect of the Corporate Plan makes specific commitments regarding housing:

*"We will regenerate town centres and ensure quality homes for residents"*

Corporate Plan 2016-2012, Promise 3

The Housing Strategy responds to this promise by setting out the vision for all housing in the borough, making clear links to other equally important issues such as health, crime, education, environment, economic development and social inclusion, all of which are critical to creating well designed and functioning places for residents to live, work and play in.

The strategy has been prepared collaboratively through focused engagement with a range of internal and external stakeholders, in line with the council's adopted Community Engagement Strategy 2015.

The Housing Strategy proposes the following vision:

*"We want to ensure Basildon is the place in Essex people choose to live because there are a choice of homes, a pleasant environment and solid communities that can support their wellbeing and aspirations. A place that people feel proud to call home."*

The key priorities to achieve this vision are:

- 1. Meeting future growth needs**
- 2. Making the best use of existing homes**
- 3. Supporting residents to create communities they wish to live in and be part of**
- 4. Improving access to housing opportunities and choice**

There are a number of challenges for the council and its partners in achieving these priorities. Below we explain some of the challenges we have identified and the types of activities and initiatives we may use to overcome these in order to achieve our goals.

### **Priority 1: Meeting future growth needs**

#### **Challenges**

- The borough population continues to grow naturally, which raises supply challenges in meeting the borough's own housing demand
- With rising property values and rent prices predicted to continue, and an increase in households moving out of London into the local area, there is a challenge to supply enough housing, in particular housing which remains genuinely affordable to local residents
- We need homes to be attractive and well built
- We need homes for employees of local businesses.

#### **Some of the ways we will overcome these challenges are:**

- Making the most of opportunities presented in the Local Plan, to increase market, affordable and specialist housing
- Putting in place design guides to encourage higher quality developments.
- Ensuring new homes enhance and contribute to neighbourhoods
- Introduce Tenure, Type and Unit Size Guidance to provide clarity to developers on our expectations of new housing in the borough
- Maximise on-site or financial contributions by developers to provide new affordable homes

- Delivering a range of quality market, intermediate and affordable housing via the Council's housing company, Sempra Homes
- Developing our relationship with the borough's key housing providers and developers to ensure that between us, we can deliver a range of quality housing products that will increase overall supply to meet our growing need.
- Seeking to deliver custom and self-build opportunities as indicated by the custom and self-build register.

**Priority 2: Making the best use of existing homes**

**Challenges**

- It important that our existing homes are well maintained and suitable for the families who live in them. Much of the housing in Basildon is of a similar age which creates challenges as it begins to need refurbishment
- We need to find ways to manage and maintain our council owned housing stock despite rent cuts
- The private rented sector in Basildon is growing and we need to ensure private rented housing is of good quality and well run.

**Some of the ways we will overcome these challenges are:**

- Developing a local standard to ensure our council housing stock is safe and sound
- Determining how we can make best use of our homes for older people so that they meet the needs of our current and future population
- Reviewing our existing land assets to identify opportunities for the provision of new homes
- Reducing under-occupation of council housing by marketing the alternatives to our tenants and supporting the increase in supply of smaller properties into which they could move
- Achieving a better understanding of the challenges private home owners in the borough are likely to face in respects of building condition, energy efficiency and repair
- Taking action to identify Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) within the borough and license those that fall within the Environmental

Health licensing criteria to ensure tenants are protected from sub-standard living conditions.

- Prosecuting all landlords who compromise tenants' safety
- Continuing to make the case for increased Better Care funding for disabled facilities by outlining the health and social care cost savings this provides
- Working with Essex Social Care and Health Services to ensure promptly to access disabled facilities grants
- Actively detecting and pursuing cases of tenancy fraud
- Exploring the reasons why we have long term empty homes in the borough and develop an effective strategy for bringing them back into us.

**Priority 3: Support residents to create neighbourhoods they wish to live in and be part of**

**Challenges**

- As part of our drive to increase the number and quality of homes, we also need to ensure the borough is a place where people choose to live throughout their life, as they develop their careers, raise their families, and grow old
- Ensure communities are empowered to do more for themselves, so they can shape, build and sustain the communities they want to be part of
- We need to be proactive in addressing crime and antisocial behaviour.

**Some of the ways we will overcome these challenges are:**

- Reviewing the ways we engage with residents including exploring alternatives such as virtual and online mechanisms.
- Supporting our communities to thrive on their own and be independent by encouraging volunteering opportunities, through the Strengthening Communities Policy
- Delivering the Community Safety Partnership Strategy, Gangs and Serious Organised Crime Strategy and the Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy to improve the safety of our residents, their families and communities.

- Investing in improvements to our housing estates
- Ensuring our regeneration schemes promote communities in which people wish to live by providing quality neighbourhood services and public realm improvements including the streets, pathways, right of ways, parks, publicly accessible open spaces and any public and civic building and facilities.
- Supporting Essex County Council's social resilience map initiative.

**Priority 4: Improve access to housing opportunities and choice**

**Challenges**

- We want the borough to be a place with homes which residents aspire to live in;
- It is important that all residents can access housing which meets their needs.
- We know that increasing house prices and rents form a significant barrier to people accessing housing in the borough. Helping residents to gain employment, improve their employment prospects and maximise their income will enable them to have more choice about their housing and more control over how and where they live.
- Funding for housing related support is being reformed. We need to ensure that those in need of support can still access it.
- We need to ensure the most vulnerable members of our community are supported by effectively preventing homelessness in our borough.

**Some of the ways we will overcome these challenges are:**

- Developing really strong links with the Basildon and Brentwood Clinical Commissioning Group and Basildon and Thurrock University Hospital and Essex County Council to ensure our services are more joined up and we can support the health and

wellbeing of residents through healthy housing initiatives such as reducing fuel poverty and preventing falls

- Working with our partners, such as the DWP to support residents into employment or skills training so they can improve their life opportunities
- Working with our partners to identify ways to continue to deliver services to vulnerable people who require housing related support or specialist accommodation
- Monitoring and updating the Homeless Prevention Strategy Action Plan every year so it is capable of responding to changes and demands
- Considering the findings of the Sheltered Housing Review with regard to service delivery alongside the Housing Needs Study 2015 and the Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2016 and Local Plan to determine how we can best meet the housing needs of older people from our existing stock and future developments
- Working in partnership with other housing and care providers to ensure a sufficient supply of housing for older people is available, including extra care
- Managing customers' housing expectations from the start so they are clear about the type of housing available to them and how much it will cost. We will also help them to help themselves to find a solution that works for their needs
- Identifying more land for legal Gypsy and Traveller sites to be developed as part of the Local Plan process
- Exploring ways to prevent homelessness amongst low income single people unable to access social housing due to the application of the single room rate of Local Housing Allowance
- Reviewing our housing allocation policy to ensure it is meeting the housing needs of people we accept as having a need for affordable rented housing.