

Housing Strategy

 Epping Forest
District Council
www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk



Working with our communities to provide great places where people want to live, work, thrive and prosper in safe good quality homes that meet their needs.

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FOREWORD

As the Cabinet Member for Housing, I am delighted to present the Council's Housing Strategy for 2023 – 2027. I have lived in the district my whole life and I am proud to call it home.

This is a beautiful area to live in, across the large geography of the district we have much contrast. Our forest and nature reserves are stunning. These are complimented by historic buildings that feature a wide range of architectural styles and periods across the district. We have rural villages and towns mainly to the north and east as well as suburban towns to the south that border with London.



With high demand comes challenge, particularly the supply of safe, good quality homes that all of our residents can afford to live in. It is important that the variety of homes available and housing related services are designed to meet the needs of all our residents and their families at various stages of their lives. This includes younger people, where it can often be a challenge for them to find housing locally and stay in the place they grew up.

This Housing Strategy demonstrates our commitment to working in partnership with our communities to provide great places where people want to live, work, thrive and prosper. This is a live working strategy with a realistic delivery plan. I shall ensure that the delivery plan is reviewed and updated with our partners every year between now and 2027.

Cllr Holly Whitbread
Housing and Strategic Health Partnerships Portfolio Holder

INTRODUCTION

This Housing Strategy highlights the golden thread from our Corporate Plan 2023 - 2027 through to the housing related services that we provide in the district.

For Stronger communities

we will:

- safeguard vulnerable people. Our teams will support residents in need, providing support and equality of opportunity in a district that is safe for everyone.

For Stronger place

we will:

- protect and enhance our green spaces for future generations while providing decent, safe homes to meet all needs.

For a Stronger Council

we will:

- improve customer access to our services.

We will achieve these corporate objectives through our commitment to listen, work with our partners and target our resources where they are needed most during these challenging times and make a positive impact on people's lives by:

- making every penny count
- striving to improve services
- delivering value for money.

To demonstrate our commitment, we have consulted the community and agreed the following shared vision for housing in the district over the next five years:

OUR VISION

Working with our communities to provide great places where people want to live, work, thrive and prosper in safe good quality homes that meet their needs.

OUR PRIORITIES

We have collectively agreed five key housing priorities to focus on between 2023-2027:

Priority 1: Increasing the supply of affordable housing

Priority 2: Ensuring quality, safety, and high standards

Priority 3: Promoting health, wellbeing, and independence

Priority 4: Facilitating economic growth and regeneration

Priority 5: Protecting and enhancing the environment

Our Housing Strategy sets out the aims and objectives we have agreed with residents and partner organisations in the district and includes a housing delivery plan with clear measurable outcomes that we are committed to achieving and reviewing together on an annual basis.

VALUES AND BEHAVIOURS

Commitments we have made in our Housing Strategy are enshrined in our values and behaviours:

Trust - We will be open and honest with each other and our customers. We will treat everyone with respect and take responsibility for our actions.

Performance - We will take pride in our work and celebrate our achievements. We will learn from our mistakes and always do what we say we will do.

One Team - We will work together as One Council, supporting each other and our partners to achieve better results for everyone.

Customer - We will put our customers at the heart of everything we do, providing services that are tailored to the different needs of our communities.

Innovation – We will seek new ways of working to improve and change to meet new challenges.

LOCAL CONTEXT

Epping Forest District is one of the most sought-after places to live in the UK.

Our district is one of 12 district, borough and city local housing authorities located in Essex. We are classified statistically as urban with significant rural populations, covering an area of approximately 339 square kilometres, divided into 24 town and parish councils.

There are mainly rural and lightly populated areas in the north and east, and more densely populated in the south (bordering the London boroughs of Enfield, Waltham Forest, Redbridge, and Havering).

The majority of residents live across four key towns - Buckhurst Hill, Epping, Loughton, and Waltham Abbey.

In 2019 our district was ranked 200 out of 317 lower tier authorities in England in relation to six indices; income, employment, health, education, crime, barriers to housing and services, and the environment (one being the most deprived).

Our overall ranking has improved gradually since 2007 achieving its highest level when last recorded in 2019. Our total score is made up of mainly affluent geographical areas with several pockets of relative deprivation.

(source Gov.UK National Statistics English indices of deprivation 2019)

Population growth

The 2021 National Census recorded the district as having a resident population of around 135,000. This is an increase of 8.3% from around 124,700 in 2011.

We have an aging population. Over the last ten years the number of residents aged 65 years

and over has increased by 16.6%, the number of residents aged 15 to 64 years has risen by 5.7% and the number of children aged under 15 years has increased by 9.6%.

(Source ONS Census 2021)

Households by tenure type

There are estimated 54,557 households in the district. Approximately 70% of households are owner-occupiers and about 15% rent from private landlords. Around 14% of households live in social rented housing.

The Council is the largest social landlord in the district providing homes for 11% of households. The Council's portfolio of 6,465 properties includes general needs houses and flats, disability adapted properties, sheltered accommodation for older and vulnerable people and hostels for homeless households. Housing Associations provide just over 3% of residential premises in the district.

Housing supply and demand

The demand for all types of housing in the district far outweighs the supply of available homes to buy or rent on the open market, through affordable home ownership schemes or social housing for rent.

The succession of recent global challenges have all negatively impacted national and local housebuilding aspirations due to shortages in the labour market and materials, escalating costs and environmental considerations.

The Council's emerging Local Plan shapes future development in the district up to 2033. It sets out the level and distribution of planned growth, including new homes and employment land. The Local Plan identifies a requirement for 11,400 new properties for the period 2011-2033. This includes a requirement for 2,851 new affordable homes between 2016-2033.

Harlow and Gilston Garden Town

We will collaborate with neighbouring councils to meet the demand for new housing. 16,000 sustainable new homes are planned across Harlow and Gilston Garden Town by 2033, of which 3,900 are proposed in the Epping Forest District local authority area.

Supporting new developments

Housing Services will continue to work with planning colleagues to implement the Local Plan. This will include supporting the development of appropriate housing for market sale, affordable home ownership, shared ownership, rent to buy, market rent and affordable rent. And providing evidence where necessary to ensure the mix of housing on individual sites reflects the needs of the local community.

Housing need

As a local housing authority, we operate a housing register for the allocation of Council and Housing Association accommodation (at affordable rent or social rent) to qualifying people in emergency, urgent or moderate housing need. On 31 March 2022 there were 1,314 households on the register waiting to be rehoused. There is a high demand for properties of all sizes although the greatest need is for 2-bedroom family homes.

NATIONAL CONTEXT

Housing reform remains high on the Government's agenda. This is reflected in the largescale proposals to stimulate housebuilding, policies to address climate change and legislation to completely overhaul the regulation of social housing after the enquiries into the fire at Grenfell Tower, and more recently of the private rental market.

Our Housing Strategy takes account of the range of current and emerging legislation and regulatory codes identified at the end of this document, and in particular the Building Safety Act, the Care Act, the Social Housing Regulation Bill, the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill and the Renters Reform Bill.

As a stock holding and developing local housing authority we must prepare for:

- enhanced consumer standards, greater scrutiny, and proactive regulatory inspections
- a new regulator for building safety
- new Government targets for environmental sustainability
- an uplift in energy efficiency through the Future Home Standard
- a new standard for decent homes
- a new complaint handling code and an increased role for the Housing Ombudsman
- a New-Homes Ombudsman for owners of new-build homes

The above measures have come soon after a range of statutory duties that have been introduced over recent years to prevent and reduce homelessness, end rough sleeping, and generally improve health and wellbeing.

The increasingly complex statutory and regulatory requirements coincide with a succession of unprecedented challenges as the nation recovers from a pandemic, responds to climate change and the effects of the war in Ukraine and tackles a cost-of-living crisis.

By September 2022, inflation had reached its highest level in 40 years along with a notable rise in interest rates, predicted to continue, after being very low for more than 10 years.

We recognize that in this fragile geo-socio-economic environment, we must maintain agile services and flexible policies to respond swiftly to the changing needs of our community.

We have a commitment to review and update our housing delivery plan with our named partners, at least once a year, but more frequently if necessary; to evaluate our progress and consider wider social, economic, environmental, and technological opportunities and challenges as they arise.

OUR FIVE STRATEGIC HOUSING PRIORITIES

Our Housing Strategy is made up of five priorities with associated aims and objectives and clear measurable outcomes that we aim to deliver with our partners over the next five years.

INCREASING THE SUPPLY OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Together we will:

Maximise opportunities to increase the supply of suitable affordable housing including intermediate rent and low cost home ownership in the district.

We will achieve this through:

The Council Housebuilding Programme

Delivering a range of Council owned housing including new family homes on old garage sites, we aim to build around 195 Council homes for rent by 2026.

- We will actively pursue land purchase opportunities and joint ventures and have created attractive hoardings as a marketing tool to generate interest.
- We will explore the potential to develop a variety of tenure types for affordable rent and affordable home ownership.

Strong partnerships

Working in partnership with Homes England and Qualis (our wholly owned company) as well as other registered providers to increase the range of new developments that meet local need.

- We will strengthen the working arrangements with Planning Services and potential developers of affordable housing including early discussions to improve efficiency and prevent avoidable delays to scheme delivery.

Funding opportunities

Maximising opportunities to secure funding for a mixed portfolio of affordable housing, we will:

- continue to work with Homes England to submit strong timely bids for funding where it is appropriate and in the local interest to do so.
- generally pursue the maximum percentage of developer contributions to affordable housing on individual sites, in accordance with the emerging Local Plan where it is viable to do so.
- generally expect the affordable housing mix to reflect the housing market in terms of size of units, unless local evidence demonstrates that on some sites a different approach needs to be taken in accordance with the Local Plan.

The private rented sector

Continuing to work with private landlords in these challenging times to improve access to good quality affordable private rented housing for people in housing need.

- Our Private Rented Sector Lettings Officer will liaise with landlords on an individual basis to prevent and relieve homelessness and arrange settled accommodation.
- We are preparing for the potential impact on supply of Government proposals to reform the private rented sector including the end of no-fault evictions, the introduction of a decent home standard, and changes to landlord and tenants' rights, responsibilities, and enforcement action.

Allocating accommodation

Allocating Council and Housing Association accommodation fairly and efficiently in accordance with our updated Allocations Scheme for 2022- 2027.

- We will make best use of available temporary and settled accommodation, aiming to minimise the void turnaround time, and assist and incentivise people who want to move to smaller accommodation and/or sheltered housing.

ENSURING QUALITY, SAFETY, AND HIGH STANDARDS

Together we will:

Provide and maintain high quality safe housing and neighbourhoods that meet or exceed local and national quality, safety, satisfaction, and service standards and ensure residents feel respected, listened to, and have redress if things go wrong.

We will achieve this through:

Safe buildings

Complying with the new Building Safety Act and the Construction Design and Management Standards, we will:

- rigorously adhere to our statutory building safety obligations and construction design and management standards for the homes we build and maintain directly, and the services provided for us by Qualis Group Ltd. (Qualis) our wholly owned company, and other contractors.
- ensure compliance and transparent internal and external scrutiny of the big six; fire, gas, electricity, water, asbestos, and lifts, and all associated health and safety building regulations as they are introduced.

Decent homes

Managing our assets to ensure properties meet the new Decent Homes Standard.

- Our Asset Management Strategy will set out how we will work in partnership with Qualis to ensure we meet and maintain the revised Decent Home Standard for our stock.
- We will ensure the provision of a cost-effective repairs and maintenance service that responds to the needs of tenants, offers choice and meets all requirements for the health and safety of residents in their home.

Resident involvement

Listening and treating residents with respect, increasing opportunities for resident involvement, and delivering the tenant satisfaction measures.

- We will gather, report on and respond to the nationally agreed tenant satisfaction measures covering repairs, safety, neighbourhoods, anti-social behaviour, and complaints.
- Through our Resident Involvement Strategy, we will put customers at the heart of what we do, from helping to decide on new services and estate improvements to getting actively involved with scrutinizing and improving the services we are already providing.

Customer care

Inspiring and training staff to provide excellent customer care and professional high-quality housing services.

- Through our tenant census we will gather up-to-date information to ensure we are equipped to provide fair access to services tailored to meet the diverse needs of our communities based on their circumstances.
- We will upgrade our ICT systems to increase efficiency, improve digital communication with our residents where appropriate, and for staff to provide and receive information when out and about in our neighbourhoods.
- We will continue to invest in ongoing professional development of our staff to ensure they have the technical knowledge, skills and experience to fulfil the Council's duties.

Accountability

Taking a co-regulatory approach to ensuring that we are adhering to the regulatory framework for social housing and supporting tenants to hold us to account.

- We will maintain an efficient review of our services and work collaboratively with residents, Members of the Council, the Regulator for Social Housing, and the Housing Ombudsman to make sure we operate within Consumer Regulations and the Complaints Handling Code.

HEALTH WELLBEING AND INDEPENDENCE

Together we will:

Promote health and wellbeing to enable residents to live safe independent lives and receive the appropriate housing related support when it is needed.

We will achieve this through:

Joint working

Actively utilising our position on the Health and Wellbeing Board and its focus the Robert Wood Johnson model of the wider influences on health and wellbeing and interdependencies with housing prospects to achieve good outcomes for residents.

- We will take every opportunity to pursue efficient partnership initiatives with Public Health, Epping Forest Community Safety Partnership, Social Care, Communities and Culture and third sector organisations in keeping with the requirements of the Health and Care Act.
- We will build on opportunities to share services with other professionals, such as co-located NHS clinicians specialising in mental health and substance abuse, to help people who may also be struggling to obtain or sustain settled living arrangements.

Appropriate assistance

Offering appropriate assistance at the right time for people who are, or may become vulnerable, to build resilience and live independent lives to the best of their ability.

- We will continue to develop trauma-informed services for people in housing need and provide training for our staff to understand traumatic stress, how it can affect reactions and the complex needs of survivors.
- We will take advantage of multi-agency whole person support and referrals to statutory, voluntary, and business services available at the Community Hub.
- We will pursue Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation for the services we offer to survivors of domestic abuse.
- We will ensure that aids and adaptations are accessible, and the application process is fair, transparent and efficient to support residents to retain their independence as their mobility needs change.

Personal housing plans

Taking a whole person approach to personal housing plans that also address individual experiences, and aspirations through the principles of social prescribing.

- We will incorporate principles of social prescribing in Personal Housing Plans for people who approach the Council in housing need.
- We will listen and agree a plan with practical step-by-step measures to help individuals help themselves achieve their longer-term aspirations as well as addressing their immediate needs.
- Achieving aspirations may include agreeing to join free online training and a savings plan to set up a small business, or planned steps to improve a credit score to qualify for shared ownership or rent to buy.

Removing barriers

Actively removing barriers that may unintentionally prevent people from accessing our services.

- We will review housing related aspects of the National Disability Strategy and create an action plan to ensure people with mental health, physical health and learning disabilities can fully participate in consultation and that disability is included in hate-crime policies.
- We will use learning from equalities impact assessments and health impact assessments to provide fair and equitable services.

Housing for older people

Modernising our housing services for older people and the Sheltered Housing that we provide to make the best use of assistive technology, disability adaptations and available properties.

- We will upgrade residents' emergency alarm systems and provide group demonstrations and question and answer sessions.
- We will review the supply and demand for our sheltered housing schemes and produce a strategy with residents to meet current and future need.

ECONOMIC GROWTH AND REGENERATION

Together we will:

Offer help and advice to bridge the gap between the cost of living and the ability of households (particularly those most in need) to meet these costs, and create great places where people want to live, work and prosper.

We will achieve this through:

Tackling the cost-of-living crisis

Promoting and delivering initiatives to reduce energy bills and the take up of help that is available to meet increasing household costs and manage debts and a time of hardship.

- We will provide up-to-date advice and signpost residents to services and organisations that provide practical assistance, ranging from foodbanks to furniture schemes and help with application forms etc.
- We will review the support available for Council tenants struggling to pay their rent or at risk of losing their home and how to access free debt advice schemes.
- We will administer short-term financial assistance for a limited number of people facing urgent hardship, while investing in energy efficient technologies for newbuild and retrofit dwellings for longer term solutions.

Promoting employment and training initiatives

Where appropriate, encouraging households in housing need to take up employment, training, and apprenticeship initiatives, to improve their economic wellbeing and address local skills shortages.

- Our investment in staff development and wellbeing means our Council is one of 30 large employers in Essex known as 'Anchor Organisations'.
- We will promote the 'Develop me' interactive hub to link local employers with residents seeking employment or training. We have secured funding for a job coach to support people experiencing multiple disadvantages (including homelessness) into work.

Estate regeneration

Creating great places where Council housing and mixed tenure estates are viewed as privileged parts of the district where people want to live, work and prosper.

- We will continue to engage local residents with major planned works, and welcome social enterprises to help raise funds and improve the look and feel of our estates.

First steps to home ownership

Promoting opportunities for residents to take their first steps to homeownership.

- We will actively promote the steps to buying a home or a share of a home for the first time. This will be through targeted campaigns, information on our website and discussions with households in social housing seeking advice about current and future schemes and initiatives such as shared ownership and rent to buy.

Local solutions

Considering local solutions such as keyworker housing to address local skills shortages in specific areas if there is a need and community led demand.

- We have modified our Housing Allocations Scheme 2022- 2027 to allow for local lettings plans to facilitate keyworker housing in exceptional circumstances subject to Cabinet approval on a scheme-by-scheme basis.

PROTECT AND ENHANCE THE ENVIRONMENT

Together we will:

Preserve, restore and celebrate the natural environment and the cultural heritage that is unique to the district, whilst providing decent, safe homes and fulfilling our pledge to reduce carbon emissions to net-zero by 2030.

We will achieve this through:

Green spaces

Improving the look and feel of the green spaces on our council and mixed tenure estates.

- We will focus on protecting enhancing and maintaining green spaces through sympathetic landscaping, tree planting, and community growing schemes.

Sustainable homes and lifestyles

Increasing energy efficiency, diminishing the use of fossil fuels minimising the impact on biodiversity, creating less waste, and reducing maintenance.

- We will support sustainable development, promoting modern methods of construction and the use of green materials where feasible.
- Where possible our new-build Council housing will meet Passivhaus standards. Passivhaus will also be considered for retrofitting existing stock depending on suitability and cost.
- We will increase the availability of sustainable transport options such as electric vehicle charging points (EVPs), pedestrianised areas and cycle stores for new-build Council housing and mixed tenure regeneration schemes.
- We will work collaboratively to reduce, reuse and recycle more of the waste produced during the development and maintenance of our estates.
- We expect other registered providers to follow the Council's Employers Requirements for well-designed sustainable housing when developing affordable housing in the district.

Designing out crime

Designing out crime and the fear of crime to deter opportunity for criminal activity, reduce vulnerability to crime and improve the quality of life for our residents.

- We will work collaboratively with the Community Safety Partnership to incorporate good design into new developments and estate improvement schemes.

- We will maximise joint funding opportunities following the successful Safer Streets bid which included the removal of local crime generators.

Environmental health

Working in partnership to tackle environmental health issues such as noise and air pollution, fly tipping, anti-social and criminal behaviour, the condition of private sector stock and licencing laws.

- We will work collaboratively with colleagues and other agencies to access the full range of tools to successfully prevent and efficiently resolve environmental health issues including evidence gathering, targeting hot-spots and enforcement action where necessary.

Raising awareness

Launching campaigns to raise awareness of how to protect and respect the environment whilst saving money.

- We will regularly publicise hints and tips on how to reduce carbon emissions and the benefits of doing so.
- We will produce social media campaigns to reduce reuse and recycle more of the waste generated in local homes and on estates.

PARTNERS

We would like to thank the following key strategic partnerships and organisations that have attended workshops and signed up to the priorities and themes within this strategy. They have also given in principle agreement to contribute to the production and delivery of an annual delivery plan.

- **Active Essex**
- **Adult Social Care (ECC)**
- **Airey Miller**
- **B3 Living**
- **Basildon Council**
- **BPM Ltd.**
- **Changing Pathways**
- **Chelmsford City Council**
- **CHES Homeless**
- **Child & Family Wellbeing Services (ECC)**
- **Community Hub (EFDC)**
- **Community Safety Partnership (EFDC)**
- **Cultural Forum (EFD)**
- **Department of Work and Pensions**
- **Disability and Autism Team (ECC)**
- **ECD Architects**
- **Epping Team Ministry**
- **Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (EPUT)**
- **Hastoe Group**
- **Health and Wellbeing Board (EFD)**
- **Housing Growth Lead (ECC)**
- **Housing Options (EFDC)**
- **Indecon Ltd.**
- **MAPPA Crime and Public Protection (ECC)**
- **Peabody Outreach Support**
- **Phoenix Futures**
- **Planning Authority – Policy (EFDC)**
- **Qualis Group Ltd.**
- **Relate**
- **Rural Community Council of Essex**
- **Tenant and Leaseholders Panel (EFDC)**
- **Voluntary Action Epping Forest**
- **West Essex Clinical Commissioning Group**

DELIVERING THE STRATEGY

Monitoring arrangements and accountability:

- An annual delivery plan will be drawn up with the partners who have contributed to developing the strategy, statutory partnerships and other organisations who come on board during the lifetime of the strategy.
- Actions on the delivery plan will be reviewed each year and approved by the Portfolio Holder for Housing.
- Lead organisations and officers will be agreed for each action on the delivery plan.
- Progress and outcomes will be tracked and recorded for each action every six months.
- The lead organisation for each action will be responsible for informing partners of any issues or risks between progress updates with a view to resolution.
- The annual delivery plan will be published as an appendix to the strategy and updated as appropriate.

GLOSSARY

Affordable housing

Housing that is provided for rent or shared ownership for people who cannot afford to purchase a property on the open market.

Affordable rent

Rent that is up to 80% of the local market rent. This differs from social rent which is set by a government formula. Affordable rent is typically higher than social rent.

Aids and adaptations/assistive technology

Devices and property adjustments for people with restricted mobility or disabilities, to improve their ability to do things around the home.

Building resilience

Increasing an individual's ability to cope with challenges and recover following hardship or difficult times.

Community Safety Partnership

The statutory partnership concerned with the effects of crime and disorder in the district. The partnership includes representatives from police, probation, council, health, and fire and rescue.

Corporate Plan

The Council's aspirations for local residents and communities and the principles it will work to.

Decent Home Standard

A national standard ensuring social housing is fit, has modern facilities, is structurally sound and is energy efficient.

Developer contributions

Any contributions from a developer/development towards affordable housing or infrastructure.

Digital communication

Any computer-based technology for communicating with people, sharing information, and entertainment.

The District

The geographic administrative area covered by Epping Forest District Council.

Economic growth

The process by which the wealth of an area increases over time, including the production of goods and services, employment, skills, and education.

Garden Town

Brand-new housing developments that consider green spaces, ecological services, greener transport, and infrastructure as part of a master plan.

Homes England

Government agency that promotes and provides grant funding to increase the number of new homes built in England. Its remit includes affordable homes and homes for market, sale or rent, and bringing empty homes back to use as affordable housing.

Housing Association/registered provider

Social landlords providing affordable housing to rent or buy, who are registered and regulated by the Regulator for Social Housing.

Housing market mix

A breakdown of the number of properties on a development for market sale or market rent by size and type.

Housing register

A waiting list of people who qualify for social housing in the district.

Housing Ombudsman

Looks at complaints about housing organisations including local authorities and Housing Associations. Some complaints from Council tenants may be the responsibility of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

Key worker

Someone whose job is to keep essential services like health, education and public safety running (normally in the public sector). Staffing levels may be affected by the supply of affordable/available housing close to employment.

Local Plan

A local council plan that sets out a vision for future development in the district for commercial or residential use. It helps decisions on planning applications and other planning related decisions.

Mixed tenure estates

Housing developments that contain a mixture of homes owned outright, secured on a mortgage, rented from a private landlord, or rented from the Council or a Housing Association.

Older person

For the purpose of sheltered housing or assisted living, an older person is an applicant aged 60 or over.

Passivhaus standard

An international low energy design standard developed to provide a high level of indoor comfort through insulation and positioning. It takes a 'fabric first' approach that requires very little energy for heating or cooling.

Personal housing plan

An action plan agreed between a resident in housing need and the Council to work together to prevent or relieve homelessness or address other housing need(s).

Public health

Activities coordinated across different organisations to promote good health, prevent disease, and prolong life.

Qualis Group Ltd.

A group of three companies - Qualis Commercial, Qualis Management, and Qualis Living – wholly-owned by the Council to enhance the District through regeneration, investment, and property management.

Retro-fit

Any improvement to an existing building to improve its energy efficiency.

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation social determinants of health

A widely recognised framework of social factors that influence a person's health and wellbeing. These include income, education, their environment, family and social support, community care, diet, and activity.

Safer Streets fund

Government funding that local authorities and Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) can pursue for crime prevention plans in areas affected by high levels of neighbourhood crime, such as burglary and robbery.

Settled accommodation

Either social rented housing or private rented housing that will be available to rent for at least six months.

Social housing

Homes for rent and associated services for people whose personal circumstances make it difficult to meet their housing needs in the open market.

Social rent

Low-cost rent that is set by a government formula for some Council and Housing Association properties. It is lower than market rent and usually lower than affordable rent.

Statutory and regulatory duties

Statutory and regulatory responsibilities of the Council. Core services it is required to provide and the actions expected as defined in law or by the Government.

Third sector organisations

Independent organisations motivated by the desire to achieve social goals - rather than distribute profit - and reinvest any surpluses to pursue their goals.

Trauma informed services

Increasing awareness of how trauma can negatively impact individuals/communities and their ability to feel safe or develop trusting relationships with public services and their staff.

Wellbeing

Being comfortable, healthy, and happy. This may include mental health, satisfaction, a sense of meaning or purpose and ability to manage stress.

Whole-person approach

Looking at all areas of a person's life to identify what may help with prevention intervention or recovery from sleeping rough.

LINKS AND REFERENCES

The strategy pays due regard to the following:

<p>Corporate Plan 2018-2023</p>	<p>The Strategy supports Epping Forest District Council's Corporate Plan objectives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Epping Forest Corporate Plan 2023-2027(Draft)
<p>Regulatory Standards</p>	<p>The Strategy pays due regard to the following regulatory guidance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocation of Accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England June 2012 as amended • Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) (Amendment) Regulations June 2021 • Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 • Future Homes (and Building) Standard • Homelessness Reduction Act 2017: Homelessness Code of Guidance • Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) • Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code July 2020 (revised 1 April 2022) • National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) March 2012 as amended • Public Sector Equality Duty April 2011 • Regulator of Social Housing Economic and Consumer Standards • Improving Access to Social Housing for Victims of Domestic Abuse in Refuges November 2018
<p>Legislation</p>	<p>The Strategy supports the following legislation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 • Building Safety Act 2022 • Care Act 2014 • Children's Act 1989 and Children's Act 2004 • Data Protection Act 2018 • Domestic Abuse Act 2021 • Equality Act 2010 • Fire Safety Act 2021 • Homelessness Act 2002 as amended • Housing Act 1985 • Housing Act 1996 as amended • Housing and Planning Act 2016 as amended • Immigration and Social Security Coordination Act (ISSC) 2020 • Localism Act 2011

Emerging legislation	<p>The Strategy takes into account the following emerging legislation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill • Local Authority (Housing Allocation) Bill • Renters Reform Bill • Social Housing (Regulation) Bill
Related strategies	<p>The Strategy is linked to the following strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Infrastructure Strategy 2021 • Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-2027 • Resident Participation Strategy 2022-2027 (Draft)
Related policies and guidance	<p>The Strategy is linked to the following policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocations Scheme 2022-2027 • Anti-social Behaviour and Hate Crime Policy • Customer Complaints Policy • Decant Policy (draft) • Domestic Abuse Policy 2022-2025 (draft) • Health Impact Assessment Guidance • Income Recovery Policy 2020 • Privacy Policy • Safeguarding Policy • Sustainability Guidance 2020 • Tenancy Policy 2022-2027

VERSION CONTROL LOG

Version	Date	Details	Author
1.00	20/12/2022	Cabinet approval	Janice Nuth
2.00	25/08/2023	Publication with Delivery Plan	Chris Walsh

Housing Strategy 2023 – 2027

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APPENDIX 1: ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN

Priority 1 - Increasing the supply of affordable housing							
Aim		Project	Task	Lead	Partners	Target time	Measuring success
Maximise opportunities to increase the supply of suitable affordable housing including intermediate rent and low cost home ownership in the district.	1.1	Actively pursue land purchase opportunities and joint ventures.	Map areas with building potential in the district on the back of the Local Plan.	Head of Development	Housing Association preferred partners Contractors	Ongoing	Volume of land identified for development.
			Discuss options for development with partners.				Number of new homes, including new affordable homes.
	1.2	Explore the potential to develop a variety of tenure types for affordable rent and affordable home ownership.	Produce a Shared Ownership Policy which looks at other innovative methods of improving access to homeownership.	Head of Development	Housing Strategy Team Manager	31 December 2023	Shared Ownership Policy produced and published. Number of new homes, including new affordable homes.
1.3	Work on improving efficiency to prevent avoidable delays to scheme delivery.	Strengthen the working arrangements with Planning Services and potential developers of affordable housing including early discussions.	Head of Development	Planning Services	Ongoing	Reduced number of scheme delivery delays.	

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<p>Maximise opportunities to increase the supply of suitable affordable housing including intermediate rent and low cost home ownership in the district.</p>	1.4	<p>Prepare for the potential impact on supply of Government proposals to reform the private rented sector including the end of no-fault evictions, the introduction of a decent home standard, and changes to landlord and tenants' rights, responsibilities, and enforcement action.</p>	<p>Work with Team Manager Homelessness and Team Manager Rehousing.</p>	<p>Housing Strategy Manager</p>	<p>Private Sector Lettings Officer Environmental Health Team</p>	<p>In line with the national changes</p>	<p>To be determined when the Government has agreed the way forward.</p>
	<p>Work with the Commercial Director to ensure that a supply of good quality private rented housing is available in the district.</p>		<p>Head of Development</p>	<p>Qualis</p>	<p>2027</p>	<p>There is an increase in the range and quality of private sector rented homes in the district.</p>	
	1.5	<p>Make best use of temporary and settled accommodation.</p>	<p>Aim to reduce void turnaround time and assist tenants wishing to downsize.</p>	<p>Rehousing Team Manager</p>	<p>Qualis</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Reduced void turnaround times. Number of people who have downsized.</p>

Priority 2 - Ensuring quality, safety, and high standards

Aim		Project	Task	Lead	Partners	Target time	Measuring success
<p>Provide and maintain high quality safe housing and neighbourhoods that meet or exceed local and national quality, safety, satisfaction, and service standards and ensure residents feel respected, listened to, and have redress if things go wrong.</p>	2.1	<p>Managing our assets to ensure properties are compliant with health and safety requirements and meet the existing and then the new Decent Homes Standard.</p>	<p>Ensuring that the council is compliant with its legal responsibility by producing a Council Housing Asset Management Strategy.</p>	<p>Head of Asset Strategy</p>	<p>Qualis</p>	<p>December 2023</p>	<p>The Decent Homes Standards are met. Compliance standards are met and maintained. Housing Asset Management Strategy produced and published.</p>
	2.2	<p>Gather, report on and respond to the nationally agreed tenant satisfaction measures covering repairs, safety, neighbourhoods, anti-social behaviour, and complaints.</p>	<p>Procure a survey provider to gather data from tenants on the tenant satisfaction measures.</p>	<p>Housing Strategy Manager</p>	<p>Service Manager of Contracts</p>	<p>August 2023</p>	<p>The annual survey will be in place, and all collected data will be submitted to the Regulator of Social Housing.</p>
	2.3	<p>Through our Resident Involvement Strategy, we will put customers at the heart of what we do, from helping to decide on new services and estate improvements to getting actively involved with scrutinizing and improving the services we are already providing.</p>	<p>Ensure the Resident Involvement Strategy is agreed by Cabinet and implemented.</p>	<p>Housing Strategy Manager</p>	<p>Resident Involvement Officer</p>	<p>July 2023</p>	<p>Resident Involvement Strategy produced and published.</p>

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<p>Provide and maintain high quality safe housing and neighbourhoods that meet or exceed local and national quality, safety, satisfaction, and service standards and ensure residents feel respected, listened to, and have redress if things go wrong.</p>	2.4	<p>Through our tenant census we will gather up-to-date information to ensure we are equipped to provide fair access to services tailored to meet the diverse needs of our communities based on their circumstances.</p>	<p>Analyse data gathered from the tenant census, use this information to test the equality of delivery of policy and services.</p>	<p>Housing Strategy Manager</p>	<p>Resident Involvement Officer</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Improved Equality Impact Assessments.</p>
	2.5	<p>We will upgrade our ICT systems to increase efficiency, improve digital communication with our residents where appropriate, and for staff to provide and receive information when out and about in our neighbourhoods.</p>	<p>Implement the delivery of new operating system.</p>	<p>Housing Director</p>	<p>All Housing Teams</p>	<p>October 2023</p>	<p>The new system will be in place and fully functional.</p>
	2.6	<p>We will continue to invest in ongoing professional development of our staff to ensure they have the technical knowledge, skills and experience to fulfil the Council's duties.</p>	<p>Encourage staff to enrol on training courses that will enhance their professional knowledge.</p> <p>Ensure that professional development is recorded with HR.</p>	<p>Service Managers</p>	<p>HR</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Number of staff who have completed training courses.</p> <p>Evidence recorded within HR files.</p>

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<p>Provide and maintain high quality safe housing and neighbourhoods that meet or exceed local and national quality, safety, satisfaction, and service standards and ensure residents feel respected, listened to, and have redress if things go wrong.</p>	<p>2.7</p>	<p>Taking a co-regulatory approach to ensuring that we are adhering to the regulatory framework for social housing and supporting tenants to hold us to account.</p>	<p>Keep up to date with new changes in the framework and a record of evidence to support compliance.</p>	<p>Housing Strategy Manager</p>	<p>All Housing Team Managers</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Evidence recorded and filed appropriately.</p>

Priority 3 - Health wellbeing and independence

Aim		Project	Task	Lead	Partners	Target time	Measuring success
<p>Promote health and wellbeing to enable residents to live safe independent lives and receive the appropriate housing related support when it is needed.</p>	3.1	<p>We will take every opportunity to pursue efficient partnership initiatives with Public Health, Epping Forest Community Safety Partnership, Social Care, Communities and Culture and third sector organisations in keeping with the requirements of the Health and Care Act.</p>	<p>Identify practical projects through the Health and Wellbeing Board and associated action groups.</p>	<p>Public Health Improvement Officer</p>	<p>Health and Wellbeing Board and Action Group Partners</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Number of successful projects completed.</p>
	3.2	<p>We will continue to develop trauma-informed services for people in housing need.</p>	<p>Ensure all housing staff were trained to understand traumatic stress, how it can affect reactions and the complex needs of survivors.</p>	<p>Housing Strategy Manager</p>	<p>All Housing Team Managers</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>All customer facing housing staff to have completed trauma informed training.</p>
	3.3	<p>We will pursue Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation for the services we offer to survivors of domestic abuse.</p>	<p>Achieve Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance accreditation.</p>	<p>Directorate Specialist – Technical Services</p>	<p>Domestic Abuse Support Specialist</p>	<p>(Can take 3 years to achieve) We are in year 2.</p>	<p>DAHA accreditation achieved and maintained.</p>

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<p>Promote health and wellbeing to enable residents to live safe independent lives and receive the appropriate housing related support when it is needed.</p>	3.4	<p>Review the housing related aspects of the National Disability Strategy.</p>	<p>Create an action plan to ensure people with mental health, physical health and learning disabilities can fully participate in consultation and that disability is included in hate-crime policies.</p>	<p>Housing Strategy Manager</p>	<p>Service Manager Housing Needs and Management</p>	<p>December 2024</p>	<p>Action plan in place with clear targets being met.</p>
	3.5	<p>Modernising our housing services for older people and the Sheltered Housing that we provide to make the best use of assistive technology, disability adaptations and available properties.</p>	<p>Produce an Older Persons Strategy.</p>	<p>Housing Strategy Manager</p>	<p>Older Peoples Team Manager</p>	<p>December 2023</p>	<p>Older Persons Strategy produced and published.</p>
			<p>Upgrade the emergency alarm systems in sheltered accommodation.</p>	<p>Older Peoples Team Manager</p>	<p>Procurement Team</p>	<p>November 2024</p>	<p>New alarm systems installed.</p>

Priority 4 - Economic growth and regeneration

Aim		Project	Task	Lead	Partners	Target time	Measuring success
<p>Offer help and advice to bridge the gap between the cost of living and the ability of households (particularly those most in need) to meet these costs, and create great places where people want to live, work and prosper.</p>	4.1	<p>Promoting and delivering initiatives to reduce energy bills and the take up of help that is available to meet increasing household costs and manage debts and a time of hardship.</p>	<p>We will review the support available for Council tenants struggling to pay their rent or at risk of losing their home and how to access free debt advice schemes.</p>	<p>Income Recovery Team Manager</p>	<p>Epping Community Hub partners</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Overall percentage of rent arrears owed, monitored on a monthly basis.</p>
	4.2	<p>Where appropriate, encouraging households in housing need to take up employment, training, and apprenticeship initiatives, to improve their economic wellbeing and address local skills shortages.</p>	<p>Promote the 'Develop Me' interactive hub to link local employers with residents seeking employment or training.</p>	<p>Homelessness Manager via the Job Coach</p>	<p>Corporate Communications Team</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Number of people helped into work.</p>
	4.3	<p>We will actively promote the steps to buying a home or a share of a home for the first time.</p>	<p>Launch targeted campaigns, provide information on our website about current and future schemes and initiatives such as shared ownership and rent to buy.</p>	<p>Housing Strategy Manager</p>	<p>Corporate Communications Team</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Campaigns successfully launched. Up-to-date information available on our website.</p>

Priority 5 - Protect and enhance the environment

Aim		Project	Task	Lead	Partners	Target time	Measuring success
<p>Preserve, restore and celebrate the natural environment and the cultural heritage that is unique to the district, whilst providing decent, safe homes and fulfilling our pledge to reduce carbon emissions to net-zero by 2030.</p>	5.1	<p>Where possible our new-build Council housing will meet Passivhaus standards. Passivhaus will also be considered for retrofitting existing stock depending on suitability and cost.</p>	<p>Delivering a high percentage (80%) of new council house building as Passivhaus.</p>	<p>Head of Development</p>	<p>Contractors</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Number of new council houses built to Passivhaus standards.</p>
		<p>Ensure retrofitting of council housing is covered in the Asset Management Strategy.</p>	<p>Head of Asset Strategy</p>	<p>Housing Strategy Manager</p>	<p>December 2023</p>	<p>Housing Asset Management Strategy produced and published.</p>	
	5.2	<p>We will increase the availability of sustainable transport options such as electric vehicle charging points (EVPs), pedestrianised areas and cycle stores for new-build Council housing and mixed tenure regeneration schemes.</p>	<p>Continue to work with the Sustainable Transport Officer to ensure that availability is maximised across the district.</p>	<p>Head of Development</p>	<p>Sustainable Transport Officer & Head of Asset Strategy</p>	<p>Over the life of this plan</p>	<p>Number of sustainable transport options available within the district.</p>
	5.3	<p>Designing out crime and the fear of crime to deter opportunity for criminal activity, reduce vulnerability to crime and improve the quality of life for our residents.</p>	<p>We will work collaboratively with the Community Safety Partnership to incorporate good design into new developments and estate improvement schemes.</p>	<p>Head of Development and Head of Asset Strategy</p>	<p>Community Safety Partnership</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>An appropriate measure needs to be identified during 2023/4 for levels of crime affecting council housing residents.</p>

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