

Progress Report 2024

Background

Local Authorities are required to have a Housing Strategy, setting out their vision for housing in the local area and providing an overarching framework for policies and plans. The Housing Strategy is a key strategic document for the Local Authority and recognises the importance of a safe and affordable home in ensuring healthy lives and levelling up access to life opportunities.

The current Housing Strategy was adopted in July 2022. It sets out our ambitions for housing in Colchester over a five-year period and describes what the Council and its partners (in both the public and private sector) will do to help address the key housing issues and challenges facing the residents of Colchester.

The Housing Strategy 2022-27

The overarching vision for the strategy is:

‘Colchester, where all residents have access to a safe and affordable home that promotes health and equality, in a sustainable community’.

To achieve this vision, 4 key priorities were agreed:

- **Supply** – ‘We will increase the supply of quality affordable homes’
- **Sustainability and Community** – ‘We will support people to maintain their homes and build sustainable communities’
- **Structure** – ‘We will reduce carbon emissions from homes and improve quality and standards’
- **Prevent Homelessness** – ‘We will prevent homelessness by working with partners to deliver Colchester’s Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy’

The preceding Housing Strategy Delivery Plan Update & Progress Report (for 2022-23) can be found [here](#).

Colchester’s Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025 and its associated Delivery Plan are separate documents that sit under the Housing Strategy. The latest Progress Report (2023) and Delivery Plan Update (2022-23) can be found [here](#).

Update

This Housing Strategy Progress Report 2024 contains some highlights of the actions in the Strategy that have been achieved or progressed during 2023-24.

The Delivery Plan which sets out the actions to deliver the aims of the Strategy contains a complete update and is included as an addendum.

Priority 1: 'We will increase the supply of quality affordable homes'

Challenge

Work in partnership with Developers and Housing Associations to maximise the supply of affordable housing on new developments

Actions

Continue to purchase ex local authority properties through the Acquisition programme (using right to buy receipts) to increase the supply of affordable housing

Progress

Exceeded affordable housing supply target (2020-2023) of 380 by delivering 390 affordable homes including Registered Providers via S106 (including Affordable rented and shared ownership), CCC New Build & Acquisition Programme and the First Homes scheme.

CCC has purchased (or "acquired") a total of 45 properties within 2023-2024. 9 of the 45 acquisitions were allocated to the Department for Levelling Up's Local Authority Housing Fund projects including 2 properties ringfenced for homeless temporary accommodation and 4x 3-bed new-build houses. The mix of properties included 18 flats/maisonettes and 27 houses.

Challenge

Maximise the use of the Council's land and assets to deliver new housing

Actions

Delivery of new housing on Council owned sites to increase housing.
In 2019 the Council committed to deliver 350 additional social homes owned by the Council over 5 years.
The Council's HRA newbuild developments are designed to meet the "Future Homes 2025" standard (option 2) principles to achieve a 31% carbon saving.

Progress

Phase 3 garage sites are under way and have progressed well throughout 2023/24. 2 sites were completed and let with another 2 sites due to complete in July / August 24 (bringing total CCC Acquisition / New Build delivery to 311) and the final site is due in April 25. Further detail provided on the Delivery Plan Update.

In 2023/24, CCC created a viability model of the housing stock based on the Nett Present Value of each home; this has been used to identify those homes that do not contribute positively within the 30 year business plan.

Currently, CCC are disposing of 71 & 72 Maidenburgh Street as they are not considered viable. The Council has also agreed to purchase the viability module within the NEC housing system to allow consistent analysis of the stock viability and make this transparent.

Priority 2: Sustainability and Community – ‘We will support people to maintain their homes

Challenge
 Improve tenancy sustainment and work proactively with residents to provide advice and assistance around budgeting, work and debts

Actions

Promote pre-tenancy workshops/early intervention for arrears.

Promote financial Inclusion to help tenants to budget and provide long term improvements for residents in financial difficulty and reduce long term dependency on discretionary funds.

Work with ECC to identify how commissioned services such as the Housing Related Support Floating Support Service and Phoenix Futures can work better with Colchester tenants and landlords alike, supporting households at risk/reducing evictions and building positive relationships between landlords and tenants.

Progress

In 2023/24, CBH’s Tenancy Sustainment Team:

- Were awarded inequalities funding for a further year to support an additional 12 hours per week case work
- Worked in partnership with Phoenix Futures (funded by ECC) to provide supported housing for prison leavers (at Frank Clater Close)
- Attended Multi Disciplinary Team (MDT) Hoarding monthly meetings to discuss high risk cases
- Attended Live Well Neighbourhood MDT’s to discuss partnership approach support for tenants at risk of eviction
- All staff completed welfare rights training to offer tenants budgetary advice and support
- A dedicated Financial Inclusion Officer was appointed to continue partnership work with Signpost and SSAFA (the Armed Forces charity).

Challenge
 Create neighbourhoods and communities which are sustainable

Actions

Develop partnerships with residents, the voluntary sector, community organisations and wider local service providers, especially on new housing schemes/developments.

Work in partnership with the Community Police to implement new legislation from the ASB Police and Crime Act and undertake enforcement action as necessary.

Introduce a co-ordinated approach to community engagement with voluntary sector and housing providers.

Progress

CBH continue to have a solid partnership with Essex Police, often working in key areas of the City together to tackle issues. This has included CBH forming a Landlord Antisocial Behaviour Forum which Essex Police now lead on.

In 2023/24, CBH were responsible for:

- 3 Evictions for ASB
- 6 Closure Orders
- 2 Partial Closure Orders
- 34 Notice of seeking possession issued for ASB

CBH also delivered/led on:

- A Coffee and Chat roadshow across a number of HRA communities to listen to the views of residents.
- A Residents Voice group which met monthly

Priority 3: Structure – ‘We will reduce carbon emissions from homes and improve standards’

Challenge

Reduce Carbon emissions in new and existing homes by 2027

Action

Identify funding opportunities and schemes to help reduce carbon emissions from new and existing homes

Progress

CCC are in the process of delivering upgrades to 105 homes, utilising in excess of £1million of funding through the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF). This will improve the energy performance of these homes via a retrofit programme due to complete in 2025.

In conjunction, CCC are making progress to achieve the target of all homes reaching a minimum EPC rating of C by 2030.

All homes purchased under the Council’s acquisitions programme are being improved at the initial void stage to achieve EPC C as a minimum and an average of EPC B across all newly acquired properties. This target is being met, ensuring there will be less requirement for retrofit works at a later date.

New build CCC homes being are designed towards future homes standards and all new build acquisitions are required to have high EPC rating.

Challenge

Ensure that houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) are safe and well managed

Action

Ensure HMOs are managed in accordance with the Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation (England) Regulations 2006 & 2007

Undertake statutory duty to license all mandatory HMOs under the provisions of the Housing Act 2004 Part 2

Use enforcement powers to raise standards where landlords refuse to work with CCC or where landlord fail to licence properties a necessary.

Progress

Through the work of the PSH team in 2023/24:

- 107 visits/inspections were made of HMOs
- 84 HMO Licences were issued with those HMOs all ensured to meet required standards.
- 74 HMOs were improved.
- 1 x Civil Penalty Notice was served on a landlord for the offence of failing to licence an HMO to the value of £5,000. The landlord has appealed this CPN to the Tribunal Service.
- 86 HMO licence applications received and are currently being processed.

At the end of 2023/24 there were 360 HMOs with a live licence. Licences last for a maximum of five years, when they expire a renewal application is required. New licensable HMOs are always coming to our attention.