

COLCHESTER'S

HOUSING STRATEGY



2022-2027

FOREWORD

Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities

Providing good quality homes is crucial to people's health and quality of life and supporting the provision of new and affordable housing across Colchester, is a key role for the Council.

Our new Housing Strategy for Colchester has been produced taking into account changes to national and local policy as well as the economic and social impacts of the Covid 19 Public Health pandemic.

Demand for all types of housing in Colchester continues to grow whilst the supply of affordable accommodation is reducing. To mitigate this, we need to look at ways in which we can work in partnership to increase the supply of affordable housing and make best use of the stock, as well as ensuring that existing and new homes meet the required standards and help to reduce carbon emissions.

In addition, we will also strive to support people from losing their homes and build sustainable communities where people want to live.

We recognise that there is no magic bullet, no one single action which will make a dramatic difference to the housing situation in Colchester. But by achieving lots of smaller actions and adding these together we believe we can make a significant difference. Working collaboratively in partnership will be key to the success of this Strategy.

The new Housing Strategy will set out our ambitions for housing in Colchester over the next 5 years and describe how we intend to use our resources and work with partners in both the public and private sectors to help us achieve our priorities.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Colchester's Housing Strategy 2022-27 sets out our vision for housing in the borough:

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

It recognises the importance of a safe and affordable home in ensuring healthy lives and levelling up access to life opportunities.

The Housing Strategy provides the overarching framework for the Council's housing policies and plans.

The new Housing Strategy has been developed by Colchester Borough Council and its partners who have identified the most important priorities and what we should do to:

- address key Housing issues and challenges
- recognise Housing as a key determinant for good health
- provide agreement for action and resource decisions

The scope of our new strategy meets the requirements of the Local Government Act 2003 for all Local authorities to have a Housing Strategy, which sets out 'its vision for housing in its area and objectives, targets, and policies' that explain how it will play a leading role to:

- Assess and plan for current and future housing needs of the local population
- Make the best use of existing housing stock
- Plan and facilitate new supply

- Plan and commission housing support services which link homes to support and other services that people need to live in them
- Have working partnerships that secure effective housing and neighbourhood management

We have collaborated extensively to produce this strategy and to ensure it is based on firm evidence.

We have updated and considered an in-depth evidence base to understand the details of housing need.

We have held a Consultation workshop with representatives from local housing organisations to help shape the new Housing Strategy by identifying the current challenges for housing in Colchester for both organisations and residents and how these can be addressed.

Following the consultation, we established a Project Group with partners to ensure a collaborative approach to designing the new Strategy. The group considered the challenges identified at the workshop and agreed priorities with collaborative actions to improve the housing situation in Colchester. This group met several times.

We have also tested our emerging ideas with Senior Officers, members of Cabinet,

PROJECT GROUP MEMBERS

Members of the Project Group include representatives from:

- **Colchester Borough Council** - Strategic Housing, Housing Client, Private Sector Housing and Planning Policy
- **Colchester Borough Homes** - Housing Options and Housing Management
- Amphora Homes
- Housing Developer
- Housing Association partners
- Supported Housing Provider
- Essex County Council
- North East Essex Clinical Commissioning Group

The Project Group identified the following key priorities that the strategy will focus on:

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 standards'*

Prevent Homelessness - *'We will prevent homelessness by working with partners to deliver Colchester's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy'*
(A separate document that sits under the Housing Strategy).

We have considered government policy in the development of the new strategy to ensure that it aligns with the priority housing issues identified nationally especially around:

- Initiatives for increasing housing supply and homeownership
- Reforming the welfare system
- Quality of housing in both the social and private sector
- Levelling Up

The themes for the new strategy also align with our partners strategies including:

- Essex Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Essex County Council Housing Strategy

Our work with partners is key to achieving the actions set out in our new Housing Strategy and we have ensured that this aligns with the work of existing partnerships and programmes including:

South - East Local Enterprise Partnership - bringing together key leaders from business, local government and education in order to create the most enterprising economy in England.

Gateway to Homechoice Project Board - manage the Allocations policy for the Gateway to Homechoice choice-based lettings scheme which consists of a single Housing Register and a choice-based lettings scheme for allocating social housing.

The North - East Essex Health and Wellbeing Alliance - brings together authorities, commissioners and providers of health and wellbeing services including the 'Live well' approach.

Essex Housing Officers Group - working with local housing authorities across Essex to collaborate and share good practice and oversee the work of the housing sub groups.

The priorities identified for the new strategy will be achieved through the implementation of actions set out in a Delivery Plan, working collaboratively with a wide range of partners in Colchester.



The borough of Colchester covers an area of 324 square kilometres in north east Essex. It borders Suffolk in the north, along with three Essex districts – Tendring in the east, Braintree in the west and Maldon in the south west.

At its centre is the town of Colchester, surrounded by villages and smaller towns of distinct and complementary character. Some are in the Dedham Vale, a designated area of outstanding natural beauty.

Our largest towns are Wivenhoe, Tiptree and West Mersea. The island of Mersea is at the south of the borough, and it forms the borough's principal coastal area.

According to the Government's Indices of Deprivation, across Essex County, Colchester ranks as the 5th most deprived authority (out of the 12 Essex LAs) - up one place from 2015. This means that deprivation has decreased slightly in Colchester.

The most deprived areas of the borough are Magnolia, Forest and Salary Brook South (Greenstead Ward) and St Anne's Estate (St Anne's and St John's Ward).

The least deprived areas are Bergholt (Lexden and Braiswick Ward) and Drury (New Town and Christ Church Ward).

The health of people in Colchester is generally in line with the average across England.

Life expectancy in Colchester for men is 0.6 years better than the average for England, however in women the rate is 0.1 years lower than the England average.

SECTION ONE

Setting the scene - The local picture

STATISTICAL PROFILE OF COLCHESTER

| | |
|---|---|
| The total population of Colchester in mid-2020 | 197,200 |
| By 2030 the population is expected to grow to | 214,160 |
| In mid-2020, the estimated number of people aged 16-64 | 126,176 64% of the total population |
| In mid-2020 the estimated number of people in Colchester who were 65+ | 34,056 17.3% of the total population |
| As of 31 March 2021, the number of households in the borough | 84,041 |
| As of 31 March 2021, the household size | 2.38 |

KEY HOUSING STATISTICS

| | | |
|---|---|-----|
| The total number of new homes delivered for the year 2020-21 | 741 | |
| The number of affordable Homes delivered for the year 2019 - 20 | 101 (of which 59 homes were acquired by the Council) | |
| The average household size (persons) | 2.33 | |
| The number of properties sold under the Right to Buy scheme during 2020-21 | 46 | |
| The number of affordable homes let from April 2020 to March 2021 | 474 | |
| As of 31 March 2021, the household size | 2.38 | |
| The average household price (£) as of April 2021 | £338,193 | |
| The lower quartile house/flat price (£) as of April 2021 | £230,000 | |
| The total number of Empty Properties (classified as empty for Council Tax purposes) in April 2021 | 1,851 empty properties (1,734 privately owned or owned by Registered Providers and 117 owned by CBC) | |
| The length of time that Empty Properties have been empty | 0 – 6 months | 899 |
| | 7 – 12 months | 360 |
| | 1 – 2 years | 365 |
| | 2 – 5 years | 147 |
| | 5+ years | 80 |
| The number of households on the Housing Register as of March 2021 | 3,009 households | |
| The number of Homelessness households for 2020-21 | The Council accepted a full homeless duty for 185 households. Action was taken to prevent homelessness for 187 households and relieved homelessness for 136 households. | |
| The number of households living in temporary accommodation as of March 2021 | 209 households | |

More detailed information on Housing and Homelessness in Colchester can be found in the Evidence Base that supports Colchester's Housing and Homelessness Strategies.



SINCE THE LAST HOUSING STRATEGY

was published in 2015, we have worked together to:

- Develop 4,990 new homes in Colchester between April 2016 and March 2021
- Deliver 697 affordable homes in Colchester during the same period with our Housing Association partners
- Bring back 16 ex local authority properties to be used as Temporary Accommodation
- Bring back 78 ex local authority properties to be let as General Needs Accommodation at Social Rent – (8 bought in 2018/19, 35 in 2019/20 and 35 in 2020/21)
- Successfully purchase 100 properties through the Council's 100 Homes programme over an 18-month period, to be used as general needs housing, let at social rents through Gateway to Homechoice, for Colchester households.
- Deliver 31 new affordable homes on Council owned garage sites in 2015
- Achieve planning consent on Council land and assets at Creffield Road, Buffett and Scarfe Way, Military Road and Hardings Close delivering 32 new homes, 26 of which are affordable (some of these homes have been completed already, with the remainder due for completion Spring/ Summer 2022).
- Achieve planning consent to redevelop an existing sheltered scheme, Elfreda House, which will deliver 36 new homes to a much higher standard than the existing building. The new development will be completed in 2023.
- Develop Colchester's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-25 with organisations and agencies that support people that are homeless
- Implement a number of major projects and initiatives to improve the energy efficiency of our buildings, local businesses and households in the borough.

SECTION TWO

What we have achieved so far

- Key successes since the last Housing Strategy

- As of July 2021, Colchester's Council housing stock has an average EPC rating of 'C'
- Administer 399 Disabled Facilities Grants to adapt properties to enable people with disabilities to continue to live in them.
- Improve standards in the Private Sector by
 - Improving the safety of 706 homes
 - Removing 1,600 serious category 1 and 2 hazards from homes
 - Serving 39 improvement notices on non-compliant landlords to ensure compliance with housing standards

In addition, we have worked successfully in partnership with:

- 7 Local Authorities (LA's) in Gateway to Homechoice to review the Allocations Policy and upgrade the system
- 12 District Councils and Essex County Council (ECC) on a Homeless Families protocol, Prisoner release protocol, 16- and 17-year-old protocol and Hospital discharge protocol
- Health on key worker housing
- ECC, Essex LA's and the voluntary sector on the response to our duties under the Domestic Abuse Bill
- ECC on the recommissioning of housing support services
- Private Sector funders, Housing associations, Almshouses and Charities to increase the supply of affordable housing
- Homes England, where the Council now has Investment Partner Status



HOUSING SUPPLY

What are our strengths?

Working with developers and Housing Associations to aim to secure 30% affordable housing on newbuild sites

Building on the success of our Acquisition programme to increase the supply of affordable housing

Making better use of the Council's land and assets through our housebuilding programme

What are the challenges?

- Not enough affordable accommodation of all sizes available
- Need to put more pressure on developers to ensure adequate affordable housing is included in developments.
- Developers are focussing on policy changes – little risk with affordable housing but First Homes may change that dynamic.
- Lack of understanding about what type of housing is really needed – need to improve data sharing across organisations and partners
 - Affordability
 - House prices
 - Rental prices
- Need to work more closely with private landlords to help meet the needs for affordable housing to reduce reliance on social housing
- Make better use of the Council's housing stock by helping people downsize, to free up larger accommodation for families
- Not enough property that's adapted or can be adapted at reasonable cost to accommodate people with disabilities
- Lack of appropriate, emergency accommodation
- Ever increasing demand for social housing/number of households on the housing register

SECTION THREE

Housing in Colchester

Colchester has a long track record of joint working to meet housing need and tackle issues.

Our consultation workshop and the Housing Strategy Project Group identified the following strengths in this area along with challenges facing housing organisations and residents in Colchester over the next 5 years



SUSTAINABILITY AND COMMUNITY



What are our strengths?

Working in partnership with:
Essex County Council to ensure that the commissioning of supported housing meets the needs for people in Colchester

Private Sector landlords to encourage access to accommodation in the private sector for move-on

Voluntary sector and local organisations to encourage community cohesion, strengthen communities and enable behaviour change to help them become more self-sufficient.

What are the challenges?

- Lack of access to supported housing, particularly when trying to house vulnerable people
- More support needed to enable people to remain in their own home, "lifetime in the community"
- More move-on options from supported accommodation for vulnerable groups
- An increase in more residents with chaotic lifestyles and anti social behaviour which lead to evictions and who are more difficult to move on
- Securing accommodation for asylum seekers and refugees
- More people in temporary housing – lack of security
- Regeneration of estates needed where there are pockets of vulnerability
- Tools made available to the parishes directly to build a neighbourhood/community development plan
- Enable communities to become more self-sufficient and help themselves

STRUCTURE, STANDARDS AND REDUCING CARBON EMISSIONS

What are our strengths?

Improving the condition of the housing stock to improve energy efficiency

Successfully working with landlords to improve the condition of housing in the private sector

Our Council approach to driving up standards in homes developed under Permitted Developments

What are the challenges?

- Current housing stock needs to be modernised and improved
- Environmental agenda may impact on affordability
- Need to improve smart technologies within homes
- Living in poor quality homes links directly to health issues and lower educational attainment
- Housing standards need to be improved as poor housing conditions impact on quality of life
- Homes need to be compliant with modern standards including - damp/mould, carbon emissions/fire safety/adequate heating
- We need to ensure that permitted developments are fit for purpose as difficult to enforce under planning



OUR VISION FOR HOUSING

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

To achieve this vision and mitigate the challenges for housing in Colchester, 4 Key Priorities have been identified for our new Housing Strategy.



KEY PRIORITY 1

Supply

- 'We will increase the supply of quality affordable homes'

The impact of the pandemic and supply chain issues has resulted in a decrease in the number of affordable homes across the country in the last year with completions of affordable rented homes hit the hardest. This contrasts with the previous year which saw a record number of affordable homes delivered. Colchester has followed this trend.

An increase in households across the borough has had a significant impact on housing growth and the demand for different house types and tenures. The demand for affordable rented housing continues to outstrip supply and with the increase in house prices and the cost of living the gap between the supply and demand for affordable housing is set to widen.

In Colchester's emerging Local Plan, the allocation for affordable housing is 30% on all proposals considered a major development where 10 or more homes will be provided, or the site has an area of 0.5 hectares or more, but current allocations are 20%. (In designated rural areas the threshold is lower, above 5). Once the local plan is adopted the requirement will be 30% affordable housing on all sites with a mix of housing types and tenures.

There has been significant growth and demand for Private Rented Sector accommodation in Colchester and we need to ensure that this provides good quality and affordable accommodation for our residents.

SECTION FOUR

Our Vision and Key Priorities

- How we will deliver the Strategy

THROUGH OUR NEW HOUSING STRATEGY:

- We will deliver market and affordable housing to meet housing demand and need through our emerging Local Plan
- We will continue to purchase properties through our Acquisition programme to help increase supply
- We will continue to work in partnership with Developers, Housing Associations and Almshouse charities to maximise the supply of affordable housing on new developments
- We will maximise the Council's land and assets to deliver new housing through our housebuilding programme and identify future developments
- We will continue to partner with Homes England to deliver affordable housing through their Affordable Homes Programme 2021-26
- We will ensure that the Council's new housebuilding programme will provide a mix of dwelling types and sizes to meet the range of households on the register, including accessible homes where possible
- We will continue to support government initiatives to help people who wish to buy their first home.
- We will work with Private Sector Landlords to ensure they are supported to provide good quality homes.
- We will provide incentives and support to encourage tenants to downsize to reduce under occupation and make best use of the Council's housing stock.
- We will Identify and support the need for adapted properties as part of new developments

CASE STUDY:

Increasing the supply of affordable housing

- 100 Homes Programme



Building on the success of the Council's Acquisition Project, In September 2020 Cabinet approved the purchase of 100 properties over an 18-month period within the Housing Revenue Account. The properties were to be used as General Needs housing, let at social rents through the Council's Choice Based Lettings system, Gateway to Homechoice, and reserved specifically for Colchester households.

The properties were to be bought through the Right to Buy Back covenant and the open market and would predominantly be ex Local Authority properties. Although there was also the possibility to purchase non-Ex LA properties to suit specific needs if required such as medical requirements or larger properties (4/5 bed properties).

The budget was set at £21,000,000 for the programme with an additional £1,000,000 to achieve an average Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) of B across the programme.

There was also a focus on providing more accessible homes.

CBC worked in partnership with CBH on the project and by the end of February 2022 all 100 properties had been identified within the agreed budget.

The programme helped to increase the number of affordable homes during the period of Covid 19 when housing developments had stalled. Although the programme also suffered from delays in sourcing materials to complete the works on the properties, to bring them up to lettable standard, by working collaboratively and building on the strengths within the partnership solutions were identified.



KEY PRIORITY 2

Sustainability and Community

- We will support people to maintain their homes and build sustainable communities'

Providing support to people at the right time is essential in helping people maintain their tenancies and build sustainable communities.

Consultation with housing organisations identified a lack of supported housing in Colchester to meet the needs of all groups and move-on opportunities to reduce the reliance on social housing.

We are inspired by One Colchester's Communities Can approach, recognising the strengths in our communities and the value of encouraging self-help. This is all the more important at a time when the demands on organisations and agencies are high and their resources are stretched. We will need to work collaboratively to ensure that these essential services are delivered.

Providing advice and support upstream to residents to help them maintain their homes by offering debt and budgeting advice will help to reduce evictions, preventing people from losing their homes.

THROUGH OUR NEW HOUSING STRATEGY:

- We will ensure a co-ordinated approach to supported housing across the council, social care and health.
- We will conduct a mapping exercise to identify the current stock profile of supported housing for all groups across Colchester to identify gaps in provision.
- We will continue to work with partners to identify move-on opportunities for vulnerable groups.
- We will work in partnership with other providers to ensure a sufficient supply of housing for older people, including extra care.
- We will work with partners to ensure that there is an adequate supply of specialist housing and support available to meet the needs of residents with a disability.
- We will improve tenancy sustainment by working proactively with residents to provide advice and assistance around budgeting, work and debts.
- We will adapt properties where possible to allow tenants to stay in their homes and remain within existing communities and support networks.
- We will continue to work with residents to improve the external environment on the Council's housing estates.
- We will empower communities to become more self-sufficient by enabling them to help themselves.
- We will work with colleagues and partners to develop masterplans in key areas i.e., the town centre to ensure that housing is included.
- We will capitalise on regeneration schemes i.e., the Heart of Greenstead to ensure good quality housing is delivered.

CASE STUDY:

Improving the external environment on the Council's housing estates

- Greenstead Housing Panel



Empowering people to take an active part in the Community that they live in helps us to make improvements where they are most needed and gives residents a say in what is important to them.

In 2018 Colchester Borough Homes developed a local tenant panel to help improve Greenstead Housing Estate. The purpose of the group is to make recommendations and decisions on estate improvement requests and monitor the performance.

The requirements to be a member of the Panel are that you must be a current tenant or leaseholder of Colchester Borough Council living on the Greenstead Housing Estate and therefore have a specific interest and knowledge. The role of a panel member is to help monitor:

- The performance of the local housing management services for Greenstead
- The quality of maintenance and other contracts within the estate

- Raise and discuss local housing related issues
- Agree budget proposals for estate improvements, landscaping schemes and community funding

Since the panel started it has been responsible for agreeing £10,000 work of community fund projects each year specifically for Greenstead.

The Panel has also approved landscaping improvement schemes and estate improvements.

Comments and feedback from the Panel are also fed into the Heart of Greenstead Project.

The scheme has helped residents to have a say and take pride in the community that they live in.

CBH also carried out estate tours with tenants and Councillors to identify estate improvements and have developed an Estate management standard and strategy.



KEY PRIORITY 3

Structure

- 'We will reduce carbon emissions from homes and improve standards'

Housing is responsible for about one fifth of all carbon emissions, therefore schemes to decarbonise existing homes are just as important as the energy efficiency of new properties. Social housing is generally more energy efficient than privately owned homes but much of it could be better.

An improvement to the fibre of the housing stock in all tenures is needed to enhance standards, reduce carbon emissions, and raise the energy efficiency of housing in the Borough.

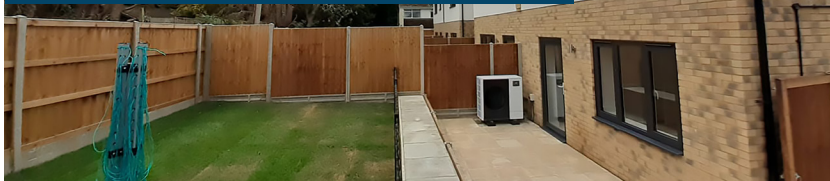
Fuel poverty is one of the biggest contributors to health inequalities. Therefore, we must tackle fuel poverty to improve living standards for people on low incomes, and encourage a more energy efficient housing sector.

THROUGH OUR NEW HOUSING STRATEGY:

- We will identify funding opportunities and schemes to help reduce carbon emissions from new and existing homes
- We will encourage the take up of initiatives to reduce fuel poverty and improve energy efficiency of homes across the borough
- We will work with developers to ensure that all new homes are built to future homes standards
- We will invest in Council new build properties to ensure they are thermally efficient
- We will invest in the fabric first approach in reducing energy demand of the Council's existing homes
- We will encourage private landlords and agents to provide well managed and decent quality properties
- We will review our services and adopt new collaborative approaches to continue to deliver effective and efficient services for tenants
- We will ensure that Council and Housing Association homes meet the required standards and building safety compliance regulations
- We will work with tenants to encourage them to adapt their lifestyles to help reduce carbon emissions

CASE STUDY:

Tackling inequality and improving health outcomes



Helping people live healthy lives is core to our housing work. We know that having an affordable home is a key determiner of people's health.

One of the measures we adopt to increase the supply of affordable homes is to use the proceeds from the sale of Council homes bought under the legal Right to Buy to acquire homes on the open market to increase the stock of social housing. During the coming two years we aim to acquire 90 homes in this way.

These homes are truly affordable to local people as they are let at social rent levels (typically 60% of market rents). They are let based on people's housing need and tend to help house people on the lowest incomes.

However, we also know that these homes need to be warm and dry to be healthy. Cold and damp homes are more expensive to heat, result in more carbon emissions, and have a strong link with poor health.

Our local NHS Clinical Commissioning Group recently awarded us £900,000 to carry out work to these properties to significantly improve their energy efficiency. This work will be on top of the repairs we carry out routinely to ensure they meet the standards for social housing.

This grant funding will enable adaptations that will help reduce bills for low incomes households, avoid the health issues associated with cold housing, and reduce carbon emissions. At a time of increasing fuel bills, making these homes cheaper to heat is crucial to allowing people to keep their homes at a healthy temperature.

All the homes purchased will receive works to improve their energy performance certificate (EPC) rating to an average of C (B for houses, C for flats), with the funding from the CCG used to achieve this. An EPC measures the energy efficiency of a property on a scale of A-G.

We have found that each property needs on average £7,300 to significantly improve its thermal efficiency. This work includes improving glazing, heating systems, or adding solar panels.

This initiative forms part of our wider efforts to tackle inequalities and improve health outcomes. In particular, it complements our work to improve energy efficiency in private sector housing to improve residents' health outcomes.



KEY PRIORITY 4

Prevent Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

- We will prevent homelessness by working with partners to deliver Colchester's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-25

The 4 key aims for the strategy are:

- Increasing access to accommodation and providing settled homes.
- Helping people to sustain their accommodation.
- Improving the health and wellbeing of people who experience homelessness
- Improving communication and challenging the perception and culture of homelessness

[CBC-Housing-Colchester's-Homelessness-and-Rough-Sleeping-Strategy-2020-25-Colchester's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.pdf](#) (windows.net)



Demand for housing in Colchester that is safe, affordable and meets the needs of our residents continues to create challenges that require us to work together and with imagination.

Since the last Housing Strategy, we have:

- Successfully worked in partnership with developers and housing associations to build more affordable homes
- Improved relationships with our health and social care colleagues to provide housing solutions for vulnerable residents to improve their quality of life
- Worked with local organisations to encourage communities to become more self sufficient
- Implemented several major projects and initiatives to improve the energy efficiency of our buildings, local businesses, and households in the borough

What we will do:

RESEARCH

INFLUENCE

PARTNER

FACILITATE

COLLABORATE

SECTION FIVE

The way we work

At a time of limited resource for all partners, we need to coordinate our efforts, collaborate inclusively, work to our strengths, and be open-minded about new opportunities. We have developed strong working relationships with Essex County Council, Neighbouring District Councils, North East Essex Clinical Commissioning Group, Registered Provider's and Charities to achieve more than we could alone. We will:

- Increase our understanding of local need and sharing our knowledge with partners
- Identify opportunities to stimulate the development of new affordable homes
- Use existing assets to encourage new investment
- Develop strong relationships to allow productive collaboration with others
- Build on our existing partnerships to make our efforts more effective
- Concentrate on our role as facilitator rather than trying to 'do' everything ourselves

NATIONAL POLICY

There is currently no national strategy for housing. The last national housing strategy 'Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England' was published by the coalition government in 2011. Since that time the Government has announced a number of policies and policy changes aimed at addressing its priority housing issues.

- **Increasing housing supply** - through Planning reforms; a Housing White Paper; supporting Garden Communities; initiatives to unlock land; supporting local authorities and housing associations to increase the supply of affordable housing through Homes England grant funding.
- **Increasing homeownership** with a focus on making it more affordable - through the introduction of the Help to Buy equity loan scheme; rent to buy scheme, lifetime ISA, changes to shared ownership minimum shares; mortgage guarantee scheme; changes to stamp duty land tax; stamp duty land tax holiday; introducing a right to shared ownership.
- **Reforming the welfare system** - through the implementation of universal credit.
- **Reforming the private rented sector** - through a commitment to bring forward a Renters Reform Bill and abolish s21 (no fault) evictions for private renters.
- **Addressing homelessness and rough sleeping** - through the Homelessness Reduction Act and financial support to local authorities to reduce rough sleeping, increased financial support during the Covid -19 public health pandemic and a national commitment to ending rough sleeping.
- **Dealing with cladding and fire safety** - with the introduction of approved document guidance on Fire Safety to meet the Building Regulations 2010.
- **Protection for Social Housing Residents** - The Social Housing White Paper was published in 2020 with a focus on resident voice and influence. The white paper presents a charter setting out seven commitments that social housing residents should be able to expect from their landlord. The overarching themes are building and resident safety, and resident voice.
- **Levelling up White Paper published in 2022** - setting out 12 missions to tackle inequality. The work contained in the Housing Strategy will contribute to achieving a number of these.

SECTION SIX

National and Local Policy context

– This section sets out key national and local policy that was considered in the development of the Housing Strategy.

LOCAL CONTEXT

South East Local Enterprise Partnership

The South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) brings together key leaders from business, local government, further and higher education in order to create the most enterprising economy in England through exploring opportunities for enterprise while addressing barriers to growth.

The SELEP covers Essex, Southend, Thurrock, Kent, Medway and East Sussex and is the largest strategic enterprise partnership outside of London. The SELEP works at a strategic level across the region, with leaders from the private and public sectors, to create the best possible environment for businesses of all sizes and sectors to fulfil their potential.

Gateway to Homechoice Project Board

The Project Board manage the Allocations policy for the Gateway to Homechoice choice-based lettings scheme which consists of a single Housing Register and a choice-based lettings scheme for allocating social housing. The Partner Organisations (POs) that are part of the scheme include:

Babergh District Council, Braintree District Council, Colchester Borough Council, Ipswich Borough Council, Maldon District Council, Mid Suffolk District Council and East Suffolk District Council.

The Project Board is made up of housing managers from the participating POs and Registered Providers. The scheme is subject to a consortium agreement. Registered providers, charities, community land trusts and almshouses (RPs), also allocate properties using this scheme and are subject to a Service Level Agreement. The list of RPs which participate in the scheme are listed on the Gateway to Homechoice website: <http://www.gatewaytohomechoice.org.uk/Data/ASPPages/1/277.aspx>

The scheme aims to provide a consistent approach to accessing housing across the diverse area of operation of the scheme and where possible, to ensure that applicants have choice over where they live.

The Essex Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS) 2018 – 22

This strategy promotes a shared vision for health and wellbeing in Essex, setting out key countywide strategic priorities, which focus on four areas:

- Improving mental health and wellbeing
- Addressing obesity, improving diet and increasing physical activity
- Influencing conditions and behaviours linked to health inequalities
- Enabling and supporting people with long-term conditions and disabilities.

The priorities are delivered by local government, the NHS and other partners together through the Health and Wellbeing Board.





The North East Essex Health and Wellbeing Alliance

The Alliance brings together authorities, commissioners and providers of health and wellbeing services including the 'Live well' approach which places Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) at its heart.

The partnership work together to tackle the causes of ill health, with a focus on prevention and by adopting a Neighbourhood approach to improve health and wellbeing.

Essex County Council Housing Strategy 2021-2025

The ECC Housing Strategy sets out the actions ECC will take to help achieve progress towards three goals:

1. Growing Essex while protecting the best of the county
2. Enabling people to live independently throughout their life
3. Supporting people facing homelessness or rough sleeping.

Although ECC are not a housing authority the strategy sets out why housing is important at a county council level and acknowledges that the quality of our homes and the places we live play an important role in all our lives.

ECC commission specialist housing, secure infrastructure funding to support housing growth and direct development through Essex Housing. The strategy is a commitment to work with borough, city and district partners who have the responsibility for housing and planning.

Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2014

Colchester Borough Council commissioned research to help shape future housing and planning strategies in the area. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires all local planning authorities to prepare a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA).

The SHMA is an assessment of people's housing needs within an area, based on statistical evidence and survey data.

The purpose of a SHMA is to provide local authorities with robust and credible information and data that can be used as part of its evidence base to inform future policies and decision-making related to housing and planning. Such assessments should consider housing market areas, and therefore need to be prepared jointly between neighbouring authorities. The local authorities of Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Maldon and Colchester have worked collectively in commissioning their SHMAs.

Colchester Borough Council Strategic Plan 2020-23 - The Council's Strategic Plan • Colchester Borough Council

The priorities in the new Housing Strategy will deliver against the Council's strategic Plan priorities in particular the pledge to "increase the number, quality and types of homes" and under this the goal to.

- Deliver 30% affordable housing across all our own housing sites
- Deliver 380 affordable homes
- Improve existing Council homes to keep them in good repair and improve energy efficiency
- Build new Council homes for our residents
- Ensure all new homes are designed to a high quality across all tenures
- Continue to improve and modernise available housing for older people



The Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2013 – 2043

Colchester's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan sets out the priorities, plans and actions for the Council's homes & tenants over the next 30 years.

The HRA Business Plan shows how Colchester Borough Council will maintain its existing homes; the viability of current plans and how they translate in the long term; identifies that money should be available for investment in new homes, existing homes and services to tenants.

The Plan includes information on the condition of council properties, how much money will be spent on improving properties and how Colchester Borough Council plan to meet the housing needs of its tenants.

The Housing Asset Management Strategy

The strategy sets out the key priorities and levels of investment that are planned over the next five years, together with considering the longer-term investment requirements, that link to the Housing Revenue Account (Business Plan).

The strategy broadly covers the following key areas:

- Investing for the Future
- Keeping Your Home Safe and Secure
- Preparing for Climate Change
- Homes for Life
- Rethinking Use

Our Strategy and Climate Emergency Action Plan

Colchester Borough Council declared a Climate Emergency in July 2019 and since then have developed a Climate Emergency Action Plan on how the Council plans to reach carbon neutrality by 2030.

Communities Can ... a collaborative approach

Echoing the title of the December 2020 COVID-19 Marmot Review, to "build back fairer", the Communities Can strategy sets out the ways in which the local community will work together to reduce inequalities.

The Housing Strategy is intended to be a working document and therefore actions will be implemented throughout the life of the strategy.

The Delivery Plan will be monitored by the Housing Strategy Project Group and other key stakeholders and updated.

A report on the progress of the Strategy and Delivery Plan will be produced on an annual basis and circulated to the relevant stakeholders and the Portfolio holder with responsibility for housing. The report will also be published on the Colchester Borough Council website.

SECTION SEVEN

How we will monitor the Housing Strategy and Delivery Plan

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