

Progress Report 2023

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’

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 (2022) and Delivery Plan Update (2021-22) can be found [here](#).

Update

This Housing Strategy Progress Report 2023 contains some highlights of the actions in the Strategy that have been achieved or progressed during 2022-23.

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

Implement Colchester's Local Plan which seeks 30% of all new homes to be affordable on sites with over 5 homes in rural areas and more than 10 in urban areas.

Support and promote government initiatives for first-time buyers.

Research and identify the process for the implementation of the First Homes initiative for Colchester

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

Progress

The council continues to seek a 30% affordable requirement on all qualifying developments. 100 affordable homes were delivered via s106 requirements during 2022/23.

A First Homes pilot scheme of 10 homes was successfully completed, with 9 of the 10 homes going to households with a connection to Colchester.

In 2022-23, CCC purchased 42 properties, 4 of which fulfilled and concluded the 100 Homes project which commenced 2020. The mix of properties included 18 houses and 24 flats/maisonettes. The average EPC for flats after refurbishments was a rating of C80 (increase from C69). The average EPC for houses after refurbishments was a rating of B82 (increase from C67).. In March 2023 a local lettings policy was approved to ensure all 3- and 4-bedroom properties are restricted to accepted homeless applicants in temporary accommodation.

Challenge

Identify and support the need for adaptable and accessible properties as part of new developments

Actions

Negotiate the provision of homes built to enhanced accessibility standards (Part M4 Cat 2 & 3) to include wheelchair accessible homes on sites where affordable housing is being provided

Include the provision of enhanced accessibility standards in Councils newbuild development programme

Progress

New developments are delivered to Cat 2 standard (adaptable), unless above ground floor (Cat 1 only). Where units may be suitable for full time wheelchair users, the units will be delivered to Cat 2 enhanced standards.

Cross Cottages includes 1 x 4 bed bungalow that will be let as Code 1 (full time wheelchair user). 2 x 2 bed bungalows Code 2 (level access shower) and 2 x 1 bed ground floor maisonettes (Code 3 ground floor).

Hedge Drive will deliver 1 x 2 bed bungalow (Code 1). Veronica Walk will include a 1 x 3 bed Code 2 house, Wheeler Close will include 2 x 2 bed Code 2 flats, and Prospero Close will include 1 bed Code 3 maisonettes.

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



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

In 2022/23, CCC successfully achieved grant funding from the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) in excess of £1M to improve the energy performance of 105 homes via a retrofit programme (a tender period is in place and work is due to commence in Jan 24).

In conjunction with the existing budget for climate emergency work, 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.

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 & (additional provisions) Regulations 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 as necessary.

Progress

Through the work of the PSH team in 2022/23:

- 129 visits/inspections were made of HMOs
- 50 HMO Licences were issued with those HMOs all ensured to meet required standards.
- 77 HMOs were improved
- 2 x Civil Penalty Notices were served on landlords for the offence of failing to licence an HMO to the combined value of £9,167
- 1 x Civil Penalty Notice was served on a landlord for the offence of failing to comply with Management Regulations applying to HMO to the value of £9,167

There are around 100 HMO licence applications that have been received and are currently pending or being processed. There are 340 HMOs with a live licence.