

# Essex County Council Housing Strategy 2021-2025



Essex County Council

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# Foreword

I'm proud to welcome the publication of Essex County Council's first Housing Strategy.

We are not a housing authority so why do we need a strategy? Quite simply the quality of our homes and the places we live play an important role in all our lives.

The strategy sets out why housing is important to Essex County Council.

- For health and wellbeing; a safe, stable and accessible home is crucial to support health and wellbeing, inclusion and enable independence for all ages. This is especially the case for our more vulnerable residents where ECC has a specific care role
- For children and young people: we know that good quality, affordable housing provides the basis for a positive family environment to support children to get the best start in life
- For a strong, inclusive and sustainable economy: economic growth is key to better outcomes for Essex residents, housebuilding and the maintenance and improvement of existing homes plays a vital role in providing jobs, revitalising places and helping to promote Essex as a place to live, work, invest and study
- For a high quality of life and environment: Housing and the built environment is essential to achieve our ambitions on climate action ensuring new and existing homes and places are designed to support the transition to net zero greenhouse gas emissions. We need to see infrastructure delivered alongside new housing growth and housing that meets local needs, creating great places where existing and new communities benefit from a high quality of life.

This is our strategy. It 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.**

As a council we have a track record of taking action on housing. We commission specialist housing, secure infrastructure funding to support housing growth and direct development through Essex Housing.

However, we know that none of our goals can be achieved without the involvement of partners. We will continue to work closely with our borough, city and district partners who have the responsibility for housing and planning in their respective areas. We will engage with the development industry, affordable housing providers and our neighbours.

The strategy and action plan set the framework for how we will address the challenges we face. It sits alongside wider action we are taking to emerge stronger and more resilient than before the Covid-19 pandemic. We are committed to supporting local communities, jobs and businesses and we must do this with the aim of building a greener, more productive and fairer economy.

In order to keep the strategy relevant we will carry out an annual review of the actions to ensure they are up to date.

This Strategy is a way of signalling ECC's ambitions on housing, articulating the housing related work already being done and opportunities to do more to help achieve better outcomes for our residents, communities and businesses.

*Cllr Tony Ball, Cabinet Member for Economic Growth, Essex County Council*

## Introduction

Housing matters to Essex County Council (ECC). As signatories to the long-term aspirations for the county set out in the *Vision for Essex*, we support the ambition to use development of new homes over the next 20 years to improve the county. We want to enhance the features that make Essex a great place to live: our countryside, our coastline, our heritage - working with local people, businesses and communities.

We have embedded this vision in our *Organisation Strategy*, making it a priority to facilitate growing, thriving communities, and good quality, environmentally friendly new homes.

Housing goes well beyond new homes in growing communities. It underpins ECC's strategic priorities to enable economic growth, help people get the best start and age well, reduce health inequalities and create great places grow up live and work.

ECC set up the *Essex Climate Action Commission* in October 2019 to make progress in response to the challenge of climate change. We want to promote new ways to reduce carbon emissions from housing and promote green infrastructure as part of new housing growth.

The Covid-19 pandemic has underlined the important role that housing plays in supporting our health and wellbeing. The success of the work during the height of the public health emergency in 2020 to house and support rough sleepers provides an example of what can be achieved through close partnership working across the public sector. We can now build on this achievement in targeting our collective efforts to support recovery from the pandemic and beyond.

We have produced this Housing Strategy as a way for ECC to outline the actions we will take to achieve our strategic priorities and how we will work with our partners in the wider housing system.

## Consultation

The approach we are proposing is the result of many conversations with our partners and reflects the encouragement we have received for ECC to set out its own strategy and priorities on housing.

A public consultation<sup>1</sup> on the ECC Housing Strategy started on 3 March 2020. Given the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic the six-week consultation was extended to 12 weeks closing on 26 May 2020.

Notable areas of concern and opportunity raised through the consultation were:

- The need to deliver infrastructure alongside housing growth
- Highlighting the role that housing and development of new places plays in meeting wider environmental goals around climate change, habitat and biodiversity loss
- The importance of affordable housing to those who cannot access properties to rent or buy
- Opposition from several respondents to garden community proposals especially with respect to North Essex
- Concerns from residents over the planned level of housing growth in Essex and whether this was responding to local needs
- The need to regenerate existing homes and comments on specific developments and places
- The need for close working with housing partners to achieve outcomes together
- ECC to be clear on its role and how it will support local housing authority partners to deliver their statutory responsibilities.

We have updated the strategy based on feedback to the consultation and through additional engagement with housing partners. Further details on the consultation process and response can be found in the *Engagement and Consultation Activity report (Appendix 1)*.

## Working with partners

Ensuring the right homes are provided across Essex relies on the cooperation of partners. Our twelve borough, city and district partners have statutory responsibilities for housing and local plan making, ensuring land is identified for housing in the right places. Housing associations and private developers build homes across the county. Homes England are investing funding, land and expertise to support delivery on behalf of the government. We work together through a wide range of partnerships, including the *Housing Officer Groups* in Essex and South Essex, *Essex Developers Group* and the *South East Local Enterprise Partnership*.

## Our role in housing

ECC plays an important part of the housing system in Essex, our roles include:

- Planning, funding and delivering infrastructure to support housing delivery
- Working with borough, city and district partners and government on proposed new settlements, garden communities, and locally led regeneration projects
- Through Essex Housing as a developer of new open market, specialist and affordable homes on surplus public sector land, helping to meet housing need across the county
- Providing support to people at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping via Housing Related Support funding
- A statutory duty to provide accommodation and support to certain categories of Looked After Children and Care Leavers aged 16-17

- Provision of supported housing; coordinating, commissioning and market shaping activity to ensure housing is available for vulnerable people and those with special requirements
- Strategic coordination on crosscutting issues e.g. homelessness prevention, improving health and wellbeing, and commissioning integration support for resettled refugees.

## Our track record

We have an ambition to do more than the statutory minimum. We stand behind the ambitions of our partners for housing growth and reducing homelessness. We are well recognised as one of the leading county councils in the country on housing issues.

Over the last five years we have worked to establish positive relationships with our housing partners and support their wider housing aims. We have invested in strong delivery capability exemplified in Essex Housing and a strategic Housing Growth Team. We have published the award-winning *Essex Design Guide* to improve new housing development, including new content on digital, health and wellbeing, the ageing population, and Garden Communities. We played a key role in helping to secure over £317m of central government *Housing Infrastructure Fund* investment to benefit existing communities and deliver new infrastructure to enable housing growth in the county.

We work closely with our partners in borough, city and district councils on homelessness and rough sleeping. We have increased funding over the next three years to ensure every rough sleeper can receive support, if they want it, for as long as is needed. The funding will also help support families and individuals to keep their home if they face the threat of eviction or homelessness. We recently led a partnership of Essex local authorities to secure government *Next Steps Accommodation Programme* funding to help tackle rough sleeping.

## Our Housing Strategy

Our strategy is an ECC-owned document that closely links to those of our partners and sets out a coherent framework for our engagement with them. It reinforces our focus on priority localities and identifies opportunities for people to live well and independently of social care. It sets challenging goals and creates a practical framework to guide action.

The strategy sets out the broad housing challenges in Essex, but as an ECC-owned strategy we want to focus on areas where our expertise and resources can generate most value, not duplicate effort.

The strategy sets out three strategic 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.**

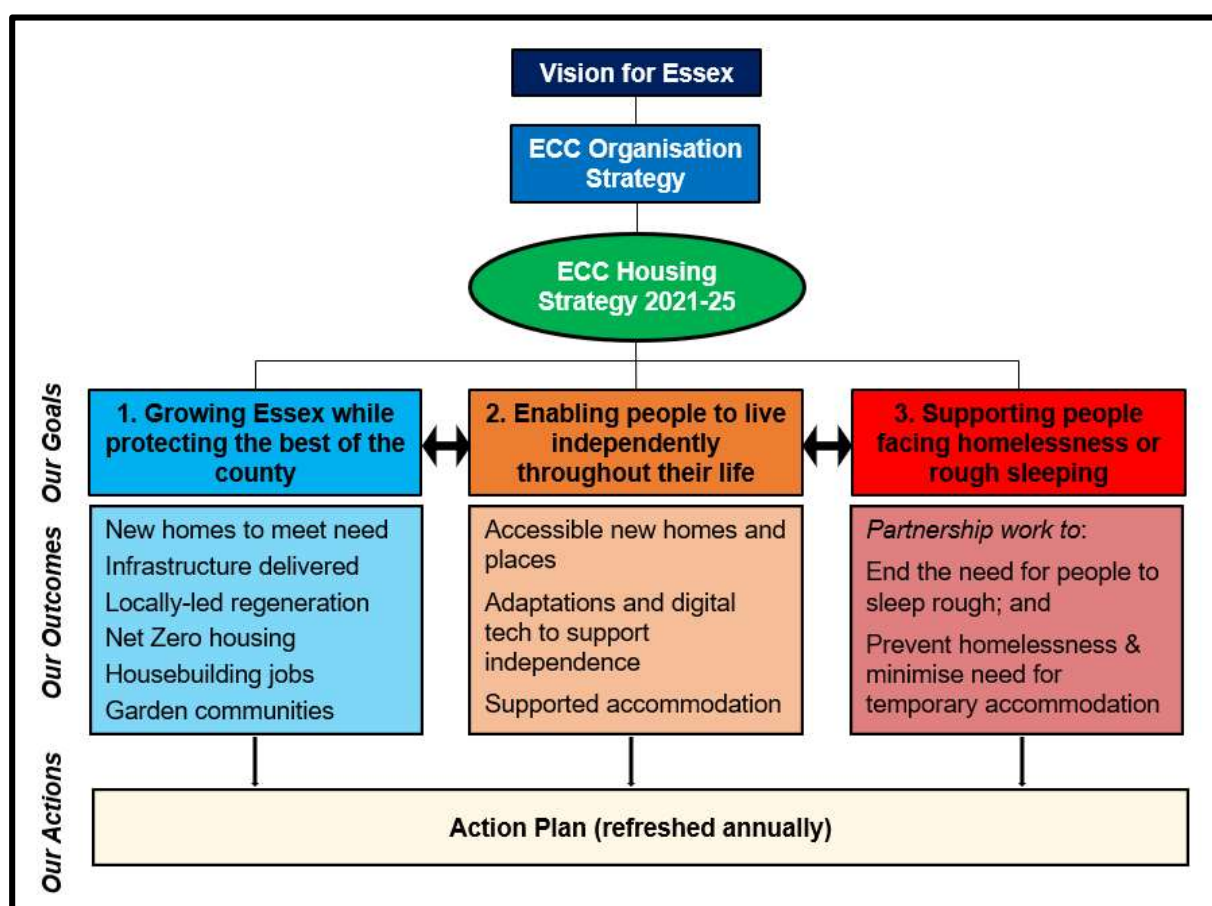
These goals will only be realised by working in partnership across the housing system. For each strategic goal we have identified outcomes that ECC will work to achieve with our partners.

ECC's role in helping to achieve these outcomes and the actions we will take are set out in the Action Plan (**Appendix 2**).

**Figure 1.** (below) shows how the ECC Housing Strategy is informed by the Vision for Essex and ECC Organisation strategy, and the three goals of the strategy plus associated outcomes and actions.

We plan to review the Action Plan annually to update in line with any changes to ECC priorities and those of our partners as outlined in their housing strategies and local plans.

We will engage with our borough, city and district partners on the benefits of developing shared action plans to reflect local strategic priorities and context and the specific work that ECC is involved with in each area.













**Figure 1.** Diagram showing the ECC Housing Strategy's links to the Vision for Essex, ECC Organisation Strategy plus the strategy goals, outcomes and actions



## Housing in context

The ten facts and figures in **Figure 2.** below provides some general context for housing in Essex and for each of the three goals of the strategy.

General	
 642,000 dwellings in Essex (2019) <sup>ii</sup>	 Built up areas & gardens make up 9.4% of ECC land area <sup>iii</sup>
 Government Housing Delivery Test target of 8,355 additional homes a year across Essex <sup>iv</sup>	 Across Essex the average house price is 10.9 times average earnings <sup>v</sup>
Strategic Goal 1 Growing Essex while protecting the best of the county	
 Average of 6,660 homes delivered per year over last three years <sup>vi</sup>	 14% of CO2 emissions in Essex est. from housing, the second biggest source after transport <sup>vii</sup>
Strategic Goal 2 Enabling people to live independently throughout their life	
 Essex population forecast to grow from 1.5m (21% over 65) in 2020 to 1.65m (25% over 65) in 2040 <sup>viii</sup>	 £10.5m Disabled Facilities Grant funding to support home adaptations allocated to Essex in 2019-20
Strategic Goal 3 Supporting people facing homelessness or rough sleeping	
 24 people sleeping rough in Essex estimate from count in Autumn 2020 <sup>ix</sup>	 1,758 Essex households in temporary accommodation as of September 2020 <sup>x</sup>

**Figure 2.** Graphic showing contextual housing facts and figures for Essex linked to the strategic goals.

## Partnerships

In addition to working directly with housing partners we will engage through existing partnerships to achieve the goals of the strategy. A selection of the partnerships ECC will work with to achieve the goals of the strategy are outlined in **Table 1.** below:

Growth	Independence	Stability
	Essex Partners	
Essex	Leaders and Chief Executives meeting	
	Essex Resilience Forum	
	Health and Wellbeing Board	
	Essex Housing Portfolio Holders meeting	
Essex Planning Portfolio Holders meeting	Essex Housing Officers Group (EHOG)	
South East Local Enterprise Partnership	South Essex Housing Group	
Transport East	Supported Housing Partnership Board	
Essex Developers Group	Essex Well Homes Group	
North Essex Economic Board		
Association of South Essex Local Authorities		
Harlow Gilston Garden Town		
Essex Planning Officers Association (EPOA)		

**Table 1.** Selected partnerships that ECC will work with to achieve strategic goals

## Strategic Goal 1 Growing Essex while protecting the best of the county

### Context

National government has set out a clear ambition to increase levels of housebuilding with a target set to see an average of 300,000 homes built a year by the mid-2020s. To achieve this ambition the government has introduced the *Housing Delivery Test*, alongside the five-year housing land supply test, and amended the *National Planning Policy Framework* to encourage higher levels of housebuilding. Further proposed reforms were announced in 2020 with the publication of the *Planning for the Future* white paper aimed at speeding up and modernising the planning system and hailed as the most significant reforms to housing policy in decades.

ECC wants to see housing development that:

- Meets the needs of existing and new communities
- Supports economic growth and jobs
- Improves the environment and moves housing towards zero carbon.

### Outcomes

ECC will work with our partners to support their ambitions for housing, so that over the next 15 years collectively we will see the following outcomes.

## **1.a. The number of new homes meet local needs, including for affordable homes**

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Emerging Local Plans in Essex will bring forward land to deliver some 148,000 homes by the mid-2030s, around 9,700 a year. Over the last five years net annual housing additions in Essex more than doubled from 2,900 to 6,600 between 2013-14 and 2019-20 and affordable housing delivery reached a 24 year high of 1,700 homes in 2019-20. New homes should enhance the character of a place, provide high quality buildings that meet the expectations of good design.

The council will:

- Work with local planning authorities to support the progress of their Local Plans to help bring forward land for sufficient new homes
- Develop market, specialist and affordable homes through *Essex Housing*
- Work in partnership with the government, developers (including Small and Medium Enterprise house builders) and housing associations to support the delivery of new homes
- Continue to play a leading role in the evolution of the Essex Design Guide alongside Local Planning Authorities to promote beautiful, well-designed developments, shaped by local community involvement
- With partners explore the role of bringing empty homes back into use to increase the supply of new homes and improve the local environment.

Achievement of this outcome is supported by all the other outcomes.

We will monitor progress by:

- The number of annual net additional dwellings in Essex
- Annual numbers of additional affordable homes provided in Essex
- Essex Local Plans progress.

We will engage with:

- Local Plans, Essex Developers Group, South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP), Essex Planning Officers Association (EPOA).

## **1.b. Infrastructure enables the sustainable development of new communities and meets existing communities' needs**

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ECC only supports development that provides adequate infrastructure. We want to secure sufficient funding to deliver necessary infrastructure at an early stage to reduce the pressure on existing infrastructure and enable the delivery of new homes. ECC helped to secure £218m for the Beaulieu Station and North East Bypass in Chelmsford unlocking up to 14,000 homes and £99.9m for the Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community to develop a new link road and Rapid Transit system unlocking up to 7,500 homes.

ECC is responsible for delivering and maintaining infrastructure including sustainable transport (cycle routes, footpaths etc.) and roads, adult social care provision and the full range of school provision from early years through to post 16 provision. ECC

received £26.96 million in s106 receipts to support infrastructure delivery in the 2019/2020 financial year and £34.14 million of new s106 obligations were agreed<sup>xi</sup>.

The council will:

- Work with local planning authorities to secure funding from developers to invest in transport, schools and other infrastructure
- Work with local planning authorities to ensure sufficient supporting infrastructure is included in Local Plans that set out future growth
- Seek central government funding to invest in transport and other infrastructure to support new housing development
- Engage with national policy development to advocate for sufficient infrastructure contributions from housing development including through change of use.

We will monitor progress by:

- Infrastructure funding obtained through government bids
- Funding secured for infrastructure alongside planned housing growth through developer contributions.

We will engage with:

- The Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), Homes England, Essex Planning Officers Association, Transport East.

## **1.c. House building provides jobs, develops skills and helps Essex firms to thrive**

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We know that housebuilding will play an important part of post-COVID economic recovery in Essex as each new home built supports over three jobs<sup>i</sup>. We want to maximise the opportunity for local people to gain the skills and experience to help build planned new homes and retrofit existing homes to meet net zero. Construction methods are changing, to reduce carbon emissions and to complete more components of homes off site. We want to see new homes built that are digitally connected as part of places that deliver the right employment opportunities for existing and new residents, allowing businesses to expand and attracting new investment into our county. We recognise that more homes will generate increased revenue through council tax and New Homes Bonus payments and that this helps to support the delivery of public services in Essex. Our new procurement policy aims to maximise social value opportunities - including the creation of employment and apprenticeship opportunities – achieved through our spending activity and influence in the market.

The council will:

- Work with partners to support the construction skills sector in Essex to increase the skills level of Essex residents to take up higher paid work
- Seek funding to grow the construction sector in Essex, including the uptake of Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) and building net zero carbon homes

- Bring together a Network of partners including business, universities, public sector and developers and others to ensure that opportunities to innovate new homes are identified and supported
- We will deliver a pipeline of activity which will support businesses to grow and to adapt to new opportunities, raise expectation and awareness amongst our communities of the benefit of sustainable homes.

We will monitor progress by:

- Uptake of construction apprenticeships
- The number of construction firms in Essex
- Growth in key sectors such as sustainable energy, heat generation and MMC.

We will engage with:

- Essex Developers Group, Essex colleges, Business and Universities, SECTA, I-Construct, SELEP – Success Essex Business Board and Opportunity South Essex.

### **1.d. New housing developments are built - and existing homes retrofitted - to meet net zero carbon requirements**

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Improving the energy efficiency and use of renewable energy in existing and new homes will play a crucial role in supporting efforts to address climate change and the legally binding target for the UK to bring all greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050. The Essex Climate Action Commission's interim report identified the importance of decarbonising new and existing homes to achieve net zero. The transition to zero carbon requires a change to the design of new places, as well as individual homes. Neighbourhoods should be designed to encourage walking, cycling and use of public transport, and reduce carbon emissions from other travel, for example through provision for electric vehicles. We will promote this approach through the emerging Local Transport Plan. We want to encourage development that increases, improves and joins up green infrastructure such as street trees and Sustainable Drainage Systems, aligned with the objectives of the *Essex Green Infrastructure Strategy 2020*.

The council will:

- Implement agreed recommendations of the Essex Climate Action Commission
- Work with partners to support progress to decarbonise new and existing homes in Essex
- Promote Government funding available to Essex households to reduce carbon emissions from their homes
- Promote greater use of public transport, cycling and walking to tackle congestion and improve health and wellbeing
- Promote the expansion and improvement of accessible, multifunctional green infrastructure alongside housing development.

We will monitor progress by:

- Energy performance of new and existing homes

- New housing development that encourages and incentivises active and low carbon travel.

We will engage with:

- The Essex Climate Action Commission, Essex Developers Group, EPOA, Transport East.

### **1.e. New high-quality homes and places are built across planned new garden communities in Essex**

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The establishment of new settlements in line with Garden Community principles is a key route to achieving many of the above outcomes. ECC support delivery of new housing growth which meets garden community principles as progressed by local planning authorities via Local Plans.

The council will:

- Work in partnership with the relevant Local Planning Authorities on Chelmsford Garden Village, Dunton Hills Garden Village, Harlow Gilston Garden Town and Tendring Colchester Borders
- Engage with Local Planning Authorities on emerging Garden Community proposals.

We will monitor progress by:

- Homes developed in garden communities in accordance with Garden Community principles.

We will engage with:

- Local planning authorities, developers, MHCLG, Homes England.

### **1.f. Locally led regeneration schemes deliver economic, social and environmental benefits in key localities**

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Well planned housing can help regenerate town centres by bringing more people to support retail, business, public transport, and the night-time economy.

The council will:

- Work with partners to develop and deliver local regeneration schemes including housing to deliver economic, social and environmental benefits in key localities and town centres
- Engage with government on national policy that impacts on town centre regeneration efforts, in particular permitted development rights.

We will monitor progress by:

- Investment secured to fund regeneration work.

We will engage with:

- Relevant local partnerships, Homes England.

## **Strategic Goal 2** Enable people to live independently throughout their life

### Context

Housing, health and social care are intrinsically linked. The population of Essex is ageing. The percentage of the Essex population over 65 is forecast to increase from 21 percent in 2020 to 25 percent in 2040 and the percentage of over 85s increasing from three to five percent over the same period<sup>xii</sup>.

Well-designed housing and places can make a positive contribution to the health and wellbeing of residents. They enable independent living into old age by promoting active lives, walking and cycling in safe and accessible streets. They mitigate isolation through the design of sociable inclusive neighbourhoods where marginalised citizens can benefit from support and make a contribution. In addition, good quality supported housing is vital: providing a safe, stable and supportive place to live can be the key to unlocking better outcomes for vulnerable people, from tackling poverty and disadvantage to managing crises, rehabilitation or maintaining people's independence.

ECC wants to see housing that is:

- Designed to be accessible
- Adapted to become accessible to meet the changing needs of residents, especially as they age
- Has support and care available for those who need it, provided by people and technology.

### Outcomes

ECC will work with our partners to support their ambitions for housing, so that over the next 15 years collectively we will see the following outcomes.

#### **2.a. New homes and places are designed for residents to live independent and healthy lives**

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Achieving high standards of accessibility and adaptability in mainstream housing is necessary to ensure that Essex is safe and welcoming to all individuals, whether already affected by a disability or at risk in future, and whether living in Essex or visiting.

And to achieve our goals as a council we rely on a skilled workforce to provide the care and support to residents of Essex. We want to work with partners to investigate ways that the housing offer in Essex can help to ensure we are able to attract and retain workers.

The council will:

- Through the Essex Design Guide influence the market to ensure that more developers provide homes that promote independent living and healthy lives over the long term



- Work with local planning authorities to reflect the needs of the council's care cohorts in Local Plans and where appropriate, planning applications
- Engage with partners to understand the housing needs of key workers.

We will monitor progress by:

- Local Plan requirements for percentage of new dwellings to meet accessible, adaptable and wheelchair user dwellings standards.

We will engage with:

- Essex Planning Officers Association, local planning authorities, developers.

## **2.b. Homes are adapted and digital technologies adopted, to support residents to live independently**

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Most people want to stay in their homes as they age. Adapting homes helps people to live at home as they become less independent. ECC work closely with local housing authorities to ensure the effective administration of Disabled Facilities Grants for home adaptations - £10.5m in grant funding was awarded to Essex in 2019-20 - to improve residents' quality of life and promote independence.

Technology plays an increasingly important role in helping people to live meaningful independent lives. We are working with our partners to develop practical technologies to support people and integrate these into our care model.

The Council will:

- Work with housing authority partners to administer Disabled Facilities Grants to adapt Essex residents' homes
- Capitalise on the opportunities the Care Technology Contract presents to test and learn how care technology in accommodation can support individuals' wellbeing and help them stay independent for longer.

We will monitor progress by:

- Disabled Facilities Grant spend and outcomes
- Outcomes of care technology pilots.

We will engage with:

- Essex Well Homes Group; housing authorities, Clinical Commissioning Groups, care technology providers.

## **2.c. Access to high quality specialist and supported accommodation for those who need it**

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The fastest growing population in Essex is people aged over 85. We are committed to enabling older people to live independently.

We want good quality housing with care for people who need it, for example some adults with disabilities or autism, people with mental health support needs, physical and sensory impairments, people with dementia, care leavers and young adults with special educational needs and disabilities. As a social care authority ECC has lead responsibility in this area.



The council will:

- Develop 'pathways' to ensure there is sufficient accommodation of the right type to meet the different levels of care and support needed by care groups
- Commission providers to offer support to group that needs help to stay in their accommodation
- Deliver an Independent Living programme to bring forward new schemes of housing with on-site care for people with care and support needs
- Through Essex Housing deliver independent living on public land alongside market housing
- Publish the projected need for specialist housing with care in Essex
- Engage with Essex planning authorities to reflect the need for housing with care in Local Plans for future housing growth.

We will monitor progress by:

- Number of new independent living units with on-site care for older people, for people with disabilities, and other groups, developed through our programme
- Data on accommodation pathways to show the match between demand for specialist accommodation and its supply.

We will engage with:

- Local planning and housing authorities, housing associations, Homes England.

## **Strategic Goal 3** Support people facing homelessness or rough sleeping

### Context

The government has committed to ending rough sleeping by the end of this Parliament in 2024 – three years earlier than the previous commitment<sup>xiii</sup>. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 introduced new duties for local authorities to prevent and relieve homelessness. The public sector has come together to work jointly to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping in Essex.

ECC is committed to providing support to people at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping, alongside local housing authorities in Essex who are responsible for providing accommodation. ECC seeks, in partnership with local housing authorities, to eliminate the need for people to sleep rough, minimise the number of families sleeping in temporary accommodation, and support people threatened with eviction, so they do not become homeless. ECC works closely in partnership with other public sector bodies to support the shared responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are homeless.

ECC want to see a housing system that:

- Provides households with support when they are at risk of eviction
- Promotes the welfare of homeless children
- Provides the help people sleeping rough need to move into and keep accommodation.

## Outcomes

ECC will work with our partners to support their ambitions for housing, so that over the next 15 years collectively we will see:

### **3.a. Partnership working to end the need for people to sleep rough in Essex**

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On 26 March 2020 the Government tasked Local Authorities<sup>xiv</sup> to accommodate all rough sleepers as part of the public health response to COVID-19. Local Housing Authorities in Essex responded at pace to move rough sleepers into accommodation working in close collaboration with partners, including ECC, Police, Health and voluntary sectors. Support was put in place for accommodated individuals including ECC commissioned services, substance misuse and complex needs support; the provision of food; and primary healthcare. This coordinated action has saved lives and has provided a platform to secure ongoing housing and support for Essex rough sleepers.

Local Housing Authorities in Essex have the statutory responsibility for homelessness. ECC's role is to commission support for rough sleepers and in a convening role to bring partners together.

The council will:

- Work with partners to raise funds to offer support and accommodation for rough sleepers
- Continue to improve working arrangements with partners to reduce the number of people becoming homeless as they leave the criminal justice system, health, or care settings
- Develop interventions with partners to reduce the time rough sleepers spend living on the streets
- Co-ordinate work with partners to respond to the on-going impact of Covid-19 on people sleeping rough.

We will monitor progress by:

- The number of rough sleepers reported by local housing authorities informally and through the annual count
- The number of rough sleepers supported by ECC commissioned services.

We will engage with:

- Housing authorities, health partners, criminal justice partners, the voluntary sector, substance misuse services and support providers, and government.

### **3.b. Partnership working to prevent homelessness and minimise the need for temporary accommodation**

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The rise of the private rented sector, changes to benefit rules and a lack of social housing are putting a strain on the housing system in Essex. As at September 2020 over 1,700 homeless households from Essex including over 2,100 children<sup>x</sup> were

housed in temporary accommodation. This figure does not include placements of homeless people into Essex from London and elsewhere.

The Government took steps from March 2020 to protect those who rent, or own their home becoming homeless during the pandemic. These steps reduced the numbers of households presenting as homeless, but there is a risk of an increase in homelessness as protections lift and the financial impact of Covid-19 continues to be felt. In response to the crisis ECC committed an additional £1.5m to bolster the support we provide to families and individuals at risk of homelessness and rough sleepers for a three-year period from December 2020.

The private rented sector provides a diverse range of accommodation and plays an important role in the Essex housing market. However, over the last ten years the ending of tenancies by private landlords has risen to become the number one cause of homelessness in the county. Domestic abuse is a further major cause of homelessness as people leave abusive partners.

People facing homelessness need to find a secure home. Without sufficient affordable accommodation, households spend time in temporary accommodation waiting to be housed permanently. Ninety percent of parents said their children suffered from spending time in temporary accommodation<sup>xv</sup>. The poor outcomes and negative impacts from living in temporary accommodation are amplified in large blocks converted from offices under permitted development rights such as Terminus House and Templefields in Harlow.

The council will:

- Commission advice and support for households in Essex who are facing eviction
- Support victims and their children in domestic abuse safe accommodation, working jointly on housing solutions with local housing authorities
- Engage with London boroughs to reduce the number and vulnerability of homeless households placed into Essex from the capital
- Work with housing authorities to explore ways to ensure households in private rented homes benefit from good quality, stable and affordable accommodation
- Work with local authorities, developers and Homes England to explore ways to increase the supply of affordable housing in Essex
- Work with local partners to understand the impact of high housing costs on household financial wellbeing
- Challenge government policy that leads to sites developed under permitted development becoming large temporary accommodation blocks.

We will monitor progress by:

- Number of people facing homelessness supported
- Monitoring the placement of homeless households into Essex by London Boroughs
- The number of households in temporary accommodation.

We will engage with:

- Housing authorities, health partners, criminal justice partners, the voluntary sector, substance misuse services and support providers, and government.

## Delivery & Action Plan

The ECC housing strategy is a four-year document with annual reviews of the action plan to ensure it remains relevant and up to date. Our strategic goals set out what we aim to achieve in the medium to long term. The activity that ECC will take to achieve our strategic goals in the short term are set out in the action plan (**Appendix 2**). The action plan highlights the role ECC will play in delivery – whether that is in a lead role, where we have shared responsibility as part of a partnership, or where we are playing a supporting or influencing role to help achieve outcomes.

The Strategy does not commit ECC to any new expenditure with all activity included in the action plan delivered using existing allocated resources. Where new funding is required to progress an action, this will be subject to due ECC processes seeking new resource allocations.

## Appendix 1 - Engagement and Consultation Activity Report

*Separate document*

## Appendix 2 - Action Plan

Strategic Goal 1 - [Growing Essex while protecting the best of the county](#)

Actions	ECC Role	ECC Lead	Key Partners
<b>a. The number of new homes meet local needs, including for affordable homes</b>			
Work with borough, city and district partners to bring forward Local Plans and associated planning documents, mitigating the impact of costly unplanned development by securing the supply of quality housing and other land uses, in the right places with accompanying infrastructure	Support	<b>Planning</b>	All Essex Local Planning Authorities
Essex Housing to deliver towards its Five-year Business Plan targets (2020-25) – Including the delivery of 988 new homes (of which an estimated 44% would be affordable or to meet a specialist need)	Lead	<b>Essex Housing</b>	Local Planning Authorities
Supporting partnership work seeking to increase affordable housing delivery in Essex.	Support	<b>Housing Growth</b>	Borough, city and district councils EHOG, EPOA
Work with partner local authorities to strengthen the town planning system in Essex ready to address and respond to proposed government reforms	Support	<b>Planning</b>	Borough, city and district councils, EPOA
Increase the capacity and capability in the Essex planning system, by securing external funding for additional pan-Essex resource and providing bespoke training and development.	Support	<b>Planning</b>	Place Services, EPOA

Actions	ECC Role	ECC Lead	Key Partners
Expand the Essex Design Guide to address climate change considerations and best practice in response to higher density developments in 2021-22	Lead	<b>Planning</b>	EPOA/Place Services, Borough, City and District councils, Essex Developers Group
Investigate ways that ECC can support partnership work to bring empty homes back into use	Support	<b>Housing Growth</b>	Borough, city and district councils
<b>b. Infrastructure enables the sustainable development of new communities and meets existing communities' needs</b>			
ECC direct investment to secure increased infrastructure funding through a) establishing a pan-Essex development viability team; and b) introduction of CIL charging schedules in Maldon and Castle Point	Lead	<b>Planning</b>	EPOA, Borough, city and district Councils in particular Maldon and Castle Point District Councils
Deliver Housing Infrastructure Fund investment in Tendring/Colchester Borders and North Chelmsford to enable the development of garden communities	Lead	<b>Infrastructure delivery</b>	Colchester Borough and Tendring District Councils; Homes England
Develop and submit funding bids to government to invest in infrastructure ahead of housing development	Lead	<b>Housing Growth</b>	Borough, city and district councils, Transport East
<b>c. House building provides jobs, develops skills and helps Essex firms to thrive</b>			
Work with partners to support the construction skills sector in Essex to increase the skills level of Essex residents to take up higher paid work	Partner	<b>Economic Growth</b>	Essex Developers Group, SELEP, Training Providers, Borough, city and district Councils
Seek funding to grow the construction sector in Essex, including the uptake of modern methods of construction and building net zero carbon homes	Support	<b>Economic Growth</b>	Developers, MHCLG. Local authorities

Actions	ECC Role	ECC Lead	Key Partners
<b>d. New housing developments are built - and existing homes retrofitted - to meet net zero carbon requirements</b>			
Progress agreed Climate Action Commission recommendations impacting on housing	Partner	<b>Planning/ Housing Growth/ Sustainable Transport</b>	Borough, city and district councils, EPOA, Essex Developer Group
Develop a network of key Essex partners and businesses to explore achieving net zero, including sustainable energy for new build homes in Essex.	Partner	<b>Place and Public Health</b>	Businesses, local authorities
Provide energy and financial wellbeing advice to 2,500 households across Essex by November 2021 through the Warm Homes fund.	Lead	<b>Strengthening Communities</b>	Citizens Advice Essex (delivery partner)
Develop a new zero housing scheme built using modern methods of construction with £3.1m South East New Energy (SENE) grant funding.	Partner	<b>Energy and Low Carbon</b>	University of East London, MHCLG
Secure additional funds to reduce the carbon impact of existing homes in Essex (Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, Green Homes Grant, Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, Public Sector Low Carbon Skills Fund)	Lead	<b>Energy and Low Carbon</b>	Government, businesses, housing associations, housing authorities
Develop policy for sustainable travel and walkable neighbourhoods for new housing developments, including through the Essex Design Guide and emerging Local Transport Plan	Lead	<b>Transport Strategy/ Sustainable Transport</b>	Borough, city and district councils, EPOA Essex Developers Group, Transport East
Progress housing related actions from the Essex Green Infrastructure Strategy, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Ensure new homes deliver percentage biodiversity increase contributing to wider net environment gain principle.</li> </ul>	Support	<b>Environment and Climate Action</b>	EPOA Place Services Developers

Actions	ECC Role	ECC Lead	Key Partners
– Deliver multifunctional green infrastructure in new developments such as garden communities			
<b>e. New high-quality homes and places are built across planned new garden communities in Essex</b>			
Partnership working to progress Chelmsford Garden Village including master planning, piloting net zero housing, and progress on the northern bypass	Partner	<b>Planning</b>	Chelmsford City Council Homes England Developer Consortium.
Partnership working to progress Dunton Hills Garden Village through the Local Plan Examination, pre-application and planning application process	Partner	<b>Planning</b>	Brentwood District Council Developer
Partnership working to progress Harlow Gilston Garden Town through the outline planning application process, including a focus on sustainable travel, and seek to secure funding for early infrastructure delivery	Partner	<b>Planning</b>	Harlow, Epping Forest and East Herts District Councils Herts CC & Homes England Developers
Partnership working on Tendring Colchester Borders including master planning, pre-application engagement, and making a planning decision on the new spine road	Partner	<b>Planning</b>	Colchester Borough and Tendring District Councils Developers
<b>f. Locally led regeneration schemes deliver economic, social and environmental benefits in key localities</b>			
Develop an action plan to support the evolution of key town centres, in response to the acceleration of structural economic changes resulting from Covid 19	Partner	<b>Economic Growth</b>	Borough, city and district councils
Secure investment via funding initiatives for key Town Centres and plan for regeneration delivery	Partner	<b>Economic Growth</b>	Harlow District and Colchester Borough Councils
Continued involvement in work to support improved housing conditions in Jaywick Sands, in conjunction with key partners	Partner	<b>Economic Growth</b>	Tendring District Council, Environment Agency, Homes England



## Strategic Goal 2 - Enabling people to live independently throughout their life

Actions	ECC Role	ECC Lead	Key Partners
<b>a. New homes and places are designed for residents to live independent and healthy lives</b>			
Respond to consultations on Local Plans and significant planning applications to increase the supply of supported housing	Partner	<b>Housing Growth</b>	Developers; Borough, city and district councils
Respond to consultations on national policy changes to promote accessible and specialist housing provision through the planning system.	Lead	<b>Housing Growth</b>	Developers; Borough, city and district councils, MHCLG
Explore with anchor institutions (e.g. councils, schools, hospitals, fire, police) ways to increase provision of key worker housing. For ECC this will include teachers, the social care workforce and foster carers	Support	<b>Sustainable Growth</b>	NHS, Housing associations
Source housing for resettled refugees and support them to integrate in Essex	Lead	<b>Housing Growth</b>	Borough, city and district councils
<b>b. Homes are adapted and digital technologies adopted, to support residents to live independently</b>			
Use ECC's Care Technology Contract to test and learn how care technology in accommodation can support individuals' wellbeing and help them stay independent for longer	Lead	<b>Adults Technology Commissioning</b>	Borough, city and district councils, Developers
Work in partnership with local housing authorities to review and monitor Disabled Facilities Grant funding for home adaptations to improve resident's quality of life and promote independence	Partner	<b>Adults Strategic Commissioning</b>	Borough, city and district councils, Essex Well Homes Group, Clinical Commissioning Groups
<b>c. Access to high quality specialist and supported accommodation for those who need it</b>			
Develop new Independent Living schemes for people aged 55 and over with care needs with nomination rights for ECC	Lead	<b>Housing Growth</b>	Borough, city and district councils; Housing Associations

Actions	ECC Role	ECC Lead	Key Partners
Essex Housing to deliver against its Five-year Business Plan targets (2020-25) in securing planning permission for new specialist needs housing and Independent Living schemes for Older People units	Lead	<b>Essex Housing</b>	Local Planning Authorities
Commission new supported living for adults with disabilities; adults with mental health needs; and adults with physical and sensory impairments, and develop proposals for housing schemes for adults leaving hospital with very complex needs.	Lead	<b>Housing Growth</b>	Borough, city and district councils, Housing Associations
Define the requirements for specialist housing needed across Essex, to inform Local Plans and the wider market	Lead	<b>Housing Growth</b>	Borough, city and district councils

### Strategic Goal 3 – Supporting people facing homelessness or rough sleeping

Actions	ECC Role	ECC Lead	Key Partners
<b>a. Partnership working to end the need for people to sleep rough in Essex</b>			
Work in partnership to develop bids, seek external funding and support the delivery of homeless and rough sleeper initiatives	Partner	<b>Housing Growth</b>	Borough, city and district councils, Third sector, MHCLG
Evaluate and improve commissioned services to support rough sleepers. Deliver increased investment to expand the services provided through Peabody and Phoenix Futures.	Lead	<b>Wellbeing and Public Health</b>	Borough, city and district councils
<b>b. Partnership working on homeless prevention and support to minimise the need for temporary accommodation</b>			
Delivery and review of existing homelessness protocols – prison release, hospital discharge etc. – to improve partnership approach to homeless prevention	Partner	<b>Housing Growth</b>	Districts; NHS; HMP Chelmsford

<b>Actions</b>	<b>ECC Role</b>	<b>ECC Lead</b>	<b>Key Partners</b>
Develop and implement protocols between ECC and District councils to improve joint working on housing vulnerable people, including– 16-17 year olds, Domestic Abuse and care leavers.	Partner	<b>Children and Families</b>	Borough, city and District councils
Ongoing evaluation and continuing improvement of ECC's contracts supporting homeless prevention activity and supporting those in temporary accommodation.	Lead	<b>Wellbeing and Public Health</b>	Borough, city and District councils
Negotiate a bilateral agreement with London Boroughs to ensure vulnerable homeless households placed in Essex are housed appropriately and with ongoing support	Partner	<b>Housing Growth</b>	Borough, city and District councils
Challenge the practice of converting commercial buildings into temporary accommodation under permitted development rights by joint lobbying to government, and support local initiatives to improve standards in existing blocks	Support	<b>Housing Growth</b>	Borough, city and District councils
Explore ways that ECC working with housing authorities can support the improvement of standards in private rented sector	Support	<b>Housing Growth</b>	Borough, city and District councils
Develop further ways to support families and individuals affected by domestic abuse via accommodation-based solutions, by delivering ECC's new duties under the Domestic Abuse Act.	Partner	<b>Children and Families</b>	Borough, city and District councils

## Endnotes

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- i [ECC Housing Strategy consultation documents March 2020](#)
- ii [Government \(MHCLG\) Statistics on dwelling stock by tenure and district \(Table 100, December 2020\)](#)
- iii [Green Essex Strategy Appendix 3, Table 1 \(p.16\)](#)
- iv [Government \(MHCLG\) Housing Delivery Test: 2019 measurement](#)
- v [Office for National Statistics House price to workplace-based earnings ratio](#)
- vi [Government \(MHCLG\) Housing supply: net additional dwellings \(Table 120\)](#)
- vii [Committee on Climate Change \(2018\) UK Housing Fit for the Future \(p.11\)](#)
- viii [Office for National Statistics \(2020\) Population projections local authorities: Table 2](#)
- ix [Government \(MHCLG\) Rough sleeping snapshot in England: autumn 2020](#)
- x [Government \(MHCLG\) Statutory homelessness in England: July to September 2020](#)
- xi [ECC Infrastructure Funding Statement 2019-20](#)
- xii [Essex Open Data - 2016 based subnational population projections](#)
- xiii [Government \(MHCLG\) Prime Minister pledges new action to eliminate homelessness and rough sleeping, December 2019](#)
- xiv [Letter from Minister for Rough Sleeping and Housing to Local Authorities March 2020](#)
- xv [Shelter \(2004\) Sick and tired: The impact of temporary accommodation on the health of homeless families](#)

**This information is issued by**  
Essex County Council

Contact us:  
[daniel.baker@essex.gov.uk](mailto:daniel.baker@essex.gov.uk)

Housing Growth Team  
Essex County Council  
Chelmsford  
CM1 1QH

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**Published March 2021**