WALTHAM FOREST
HOUSING BIG
CONVERSATION
FOREWORD

I am very passionate about delivering good quality housing for the residents in our borough. In July this year, I launched my three priorities for the Council: to keep Waltham Forest safe and clean; to work to ensure all residents have a safe roof over their head; and to improve residents’ life chances. Housing cuts across all three of these priorities: housing is not just about building houses but also about creating communities with good services, support networks, opportunities to study and opportunities to gain employment.

This is an exciting time in Waltham Forest. We want to develop relationships with our key partners and create relationships with new partners. I am delighted to be setting up a Strategic Partnership Board with our housing partners in order to take this work forward, and this Housing Big Conversation provides us with key insights and feedback to focus on achieving the best outcomes for the people of Waltham Forest. Please provide your ideas and comments on our Housing Big Conversation and help us shape our future housing services.

Cllr Clare Coghill
Leader of the Council

As a Council, one of our key priorities is ensuring a decent roof over everyone’s head. We are raising the standard of private rented accommodation in the borough. We have a robust and ambitious Council house-building programme and are working in partnership with housing associations and private developers to make sure that new housing developments in Waltham Forest meet our housing needs and aspirations.

But it’s also about more than just bricks and mortar. In Waltham Forest we see housing as central to the Council’s mission to improve the quality of people’s lives: providing advice and information, access to training and employment opportunities and linking with other Council and partner services to help residents build towards their vision for a better life.

Following on from our recent Housing Summit, this document sets out the context and direction of travel for Housing in Waltham Forest and starts the conversation around our future housing strategy.

Cllr Khevyn Limbajee
Portfolio Lead Member for Housing
ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

Transforming the housing offer in Waltham Forest is at the centre of the Council’s mission to improve the quality of people’s lives. We will be producing a new Housing Strategy in 2018, which sets out how we intend to achieve this through our future housing plans.

This direction of travel document is intended to encourage engagement with the development of the strategy, both within the Council and amongst partners and residents. It aims to set out the current context and direction of travel for housing in Waltham Forest, and pose the ‘big questions’ we should be asking as we prepare the borough’s new Housing Strategy. These big questions can be found in Section 6 of this document. If you would like to provide your views or comments on these big questions, please contact us using the details provided on page 24.
INTRODUCTION

The London Borough of Waltham Forest is a great place to live with diverse communities, excellent links to central London and beautiful surroundings. The borough has seen unprecedented growth over recent years and continues to be a top destination for people moving from abroad and within London.

Although this growth brings many benefits to the local area, it can also present challenges. Increased demand for housing has made it much harder for local people (especially younger people) to afford a decent home to rent or own, despite the borough historically being an affordable option compared to the rest of London. Problems resulting from overcrowding and rogue landlords are also a concern for local residents.

The Council recognises these challenges. That is why Housing – ensuring that everyone has a decent roof over their head – is one of the Leader’s key priorities. This includes a commitment to:

- prioritise affordable housing for local people
- take action against overcrowding and prosecute bad landlords; and
- improve the borough’s housing estates.

But we also recognise that housing is about more than just bricks and mortar. Housing is at the heart of the Council’s mission to improve the lives of residents in Waltham Forest: by providing access to additional services and advice, enabling people to feel safe and secure and to live healthy and independent lives, opening up opportunities for education, training and employment, and helping drive the borough’s economic and cultural offer.
Housing and related policies and guidance at all levels – national, regional and local – provide the framework for Waltham Forest’s Housing Strategy.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, which will come into force from April 2018, is a key piece of recent legislation affecting housing. It sets out new responsibilities for local authorities and public sector partners to tackle homelessness through a focus on earlier intervention and prevention.

All relevant legislation, policy and guidance relating to areas such as health and social care, borough development and economic growth, as well as housing, will be used to shape Waltham Forest’s new Housing Strategy.
LOCAL CONTEXT

INCREASE IN AVERAGE HOUSE PRICE OVER THE LAST TEN YEARS

WALTHAM FOREST RANKS AS THE SECOND MOST DEPRIVED LOCAL AUTHORITY AREA IN THE UK IN TERMS OF HOUSING DEPRIVATION

OVER A QUARTER OF HOMES IN THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR ARE OVERCROWDED

AS OF JULY 2017, THERE WERE 8,571 HOUSEHOLDS ON THE COUNCIL’S HOUSING REGISTER, OF WHICH OVER 2,700 WERE HOMELESS HOUSEHOLDS IN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

LACK OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING IS THE SECOND MOST FREQUENTLY MENTIONED CONCERN FOR RESIDENTS

£13.8 X AVERAGE INCOME

£

£ AVERAGE HOUSE PRICE

£

77%
THERE IS AN **INCREASE IN MULTI-TENURE ESTATES IN WALTHAM FOREST** AS LEASEHOLDERS INCREASINGLY RENT OUT THEIR PROPERTIES.

COUNCIL HOMES SOLD THROUGH RIGHT TO BUY FROM APRIL 2016 - SEPTEMBER 2017

131

2014

1,810

Dwellings required per annum

2039

1,180

13,331

approx. 30,000

11,092

4,183

Deprived older person households

AND EXPECTED TO GROW BY **4.8% OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS** (OR BY ABOUT 200 HOUSEHOLDS)

11,092

Council homes

Housing association homes

TMO homes

Private homes
Waltham Forest is part of the East London Housing Partnership (ELHP), which was set up in 2003 in recognition of the increasing housing demand and limited supply within East London. The partnership seeks to address housing need at a sub-regional level by improving the supply of quality housing; preventing and minimising homelessness across boroughs; influencing the housing agenda in East London and lobbying for increased quality and availability of housing; and working collaboratively to promote quality, consistency and choice in services to customers in the sub-region.

For the Housing department, we have been transforming services with the aim of achieving the following outcomes:

- 12,000 new homes built by 2020;
- homelessness is most effectively managed;
- the quality of housing in the private rented sector improves;
- tenant satisfaction increases.
THINK FAMILY

The Housing department sits within the Families and Homes Directorate of the London Borough of Waltham Forest. The Council’s ‘Think Family’ programme aims to set a new bar for public service delivery to residents, families and communities.

Ensuring access to good quality, affordable housing is recognised as a key element of supporting residents to thrive, to be actively engaged in their local communities and to achieve the Council’s vision for all families in Waltham Forest to be safe, well, independent and resilient.

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Waltham Forest’s Economic Growth Strategy 2016–2020 outlines how the Council will use its powers and influence to guide economic growth and work with partners to realise the economic opportunities for the borough, in order to ensure prosperity and a good quality of life for all.

Housing growth is one of the strategy’s five key themes, with the aim of significantly increasing the housing supply, as well as the range and type of tenure in the borough.
KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

To understand the direction of travel for Housing in Waltham Forest, it is important to recognise some key achievements over recent years. These include:

- **Delivering more affordable housing than any other London borough** over the last three years, having achieved an average of 47 per cent affordable homes – 21 per cent higher than the London average.

- **Creating the Waltham Forest Housing Service** by bringing the Council’s arms-length management organisation (ALMO), Ascham Homes, back in-house. This has helped ensure stronger oversight, transparency and accountability, better value for money for residents and closer links between Housing and other Council services.

- **Setting up Waltham Forest Developments** – the wholly-owned Council company set up to assist Council-led regeneration – as well as the Council’s house building programme, which is on track to deliver 900 homes by 2021.

- **Starting building works on site at the Marlowe Road Estate**; the first in the Council’s Estate Regeneration programme. The Marlowe Road project will see 430 new homes built for social rent and private sale, in addition to a new Energy Centre, landscaping, green spaces, play areas and commercial spaces.

- **Launching a successful private rented sector licensing scheme**, with 20,500 licenses issued and 64 prosecutions of rogue landlords.
• Successfully integrating the Housing department within the Families and Homes Directorate and its ‘Think Family’ programme – helping families in Waltham Forest to be safe, well, independent and resilient.

• Introducing an innovative system for spot booking nightly-let accommodation through a partnership agreement with the London Boroughs of Newham, Redbridge and Enfield.

• Developing a Housing-led Local Area Coordination Pilot, which started in February 2017. Local Area Coordination is an integrated, evidence-based approach to supporting people with disabilities, mental health needs, older people and their families/carers to build towards their vision for a better life, based on their strengths, goals and needs.

• Taking a strong approach to tackling anti-social behaviour and protecting residents from gangs by obtaining closure orders on five properties associated with gangs, drugs and firearms, and successfully facilitating the safe relocation of several vulnerable adults whose homes had been taken over by gang members.

• Introducing a new Resident Engagement Strategy, following an independent review of resident engagement in the borough. This includes the creation of a Residents Charter developed in partnership with tenants and leaseholders, to provide a clear set of promises and service standards that we will regularly report on.

• Relaunching our resident engagement framework and putting tenants at the heart of service delivery, including a range of open days and engagement events each year.

• Establishing a successful pre-eviction panel, resulting in three quarters of residents who attended the panel retaining their tenancy.

• Creating step-down flats available for out-of-hospital use, relieving pressure on the NHS and ensuring that the after care available is appropriate for the resident.

• Working as part of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub to offer a single front door into early help and children’s social care, to ensure that joint decisions can be easily made about how best to meet a child’s needs.
• **Providing sheltered accommodation**, to allow residents to access independent living services in the borough.

• **Finding ways to combat fuel poverty**, in particular the **Fuel Switch Project**, currently in delivery, which will install heat meters and in-flat display units into Waltham Forest Housing residents' properties. These meters enable residents to pay for their exact consumption and the monitors will allow the residents to monitor their usage in real time.

• **Implementing the Loft Conversion and Community Room Conversion schemes** in the borough, to assist families living in overcrowded conditions who have been placed on the transfer list.

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*Working in partnership with Family Mosaic/Peabody to deliver affordable homes on a former NHS site with the help of Right To Buy funding*

*Working with local residents*

*New Council homes completed in 2017*
We have identified three key themes which we believe summarise the current direction of travel for Housing in Waltham Forest. Building on recent key achievements, we have set out in this section the current and planned activities under each theme, which demonstrate this direction of travel.
PUTTING HOUSING AT THE HEART OF THE COUNCIL’S MISSION TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF PEOPLE’S LIVES…

...BY SHAPING PLACES THAT WORK FOR LOCAL PEOPLE

- We are working closely with colleagues in Property, Economic Growth and Regeneration to increase the number of new homes (including affordable housing) delivered in the borough, including through the use of surplus Council-owned land and assets.
- We are identifying ways to provide affordable housing for key workers and residents on low and middle incomes, to ensure inclusive growth where no-one is left behind.
- We are raising the standard of the private rented sector to reduce antisocial behaviour and other problems associated with overcrowding.
- We will be working closely with Planning colleagues on the new Local Plan and a coordinated vision for housing and infrastructure development in the borough to ensure sustainable communities.
...ADOPTING A ‘THINK FAMILY’ APPROACH TO DEVELOP NEW WAYS OF WORKING...

- We are further integrating Housing within the Think Family programme to transform our offer to residents and provide a ‘one front door’ approach to accessing Council services.
- Learning from our Local Area Coordination pilot programme, we are developing a better understanding of how we can support and empower residents to build better lives based on their strengths, talents and skills.
- We are supporting residents into our Adult Learning Service, to help them develop their skills and employability.

...AND COLLABORATING WITH PARTNERS TO ACHIEVE THE BEST OUTCOMES

- We are working in partnership with neighbouring boroughs, other local authorities and the Greater London Authority to lobby government and achieve more housing delivery and supporting infrastructure in the subregion.
- We are exploring how we can align our plans with private developers, registered providers and voluntary and community sector organisations to achieve better outcomes.
- We are working with partners to prepare for the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act, focusing on early intervention and prevention of homelessness by helping residents access support, advocacy, information and advice.
ENSURING A DECENT ROOF OVER EVERYONE’S HEAD...

...REGARDLESS OF WHAT STAGE OF LIFE THEY ARE AT

- We are using insight gained from our study into young people’s housing needs and aspirations to better understand how we can support the next generation of residents to access affordable housing to rent or buy.
- We are exploring the best housing and support solutions for vulnerable groups who may otherwise find it difficult to access suitable housing.
- We are working with colleagues in adult social care to review older people’s housing provision, so we can offer the right accommodation and support services to older residents, reducing social isolation and under-occupation.
- We will explore and pilot innovative approaches to shared housing, including multi-generational models that can benefit both younger and older residents.

...BY ENSURING THE RIGHT MIX OF HOUSING

- We are protecting the stock of family housing in the borough by implementing legislation to prevent unauthorised conversion to houses in multiple occupation.
- We are delivering a range of additional new homes in the borough, both directly through our Council house-building programme (250 units by 2021 with a further 500 units in the pipeline) and via our development company, Waltham Forest Developments (900 units by 2021).
- We are regenerating our Marlowe Road and Montague Road estates to provide more good quality homes for social rent and private sale.
- We will use evidence from the latest Strategic Housing Market Assessment to help determine the right mix of housing size and tenure for Waltham Forest, including social rented, affordable, intermediate, specialist, accessible, community-led and market housing.
...BY MANAGING THE QUALITY OF HOUSING AVAILABLE

• We are exploring ways to improve our mandatory private landlord licensing scheme to continue to raise the standard of private rented sector accommodation in the borough and clamp down on rogue landlords.
• We are re-procuring our repairs and maintenance contract in 2018 to ensure a responsive, value for money service for our tenants and leaseholders.
• We are continuing our Council housing improvement programme to make sure all Council homes go beyond Decent Homes standards and meet all fire safety and other regulations.
• We are helping residents access support to make their homes safer, warmer and drier, through fuel poverty reduction and energy efficiency programmes.
• We are working with colleagues in Public Health to produce a Housing Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and will use this to identify further ways to improve our residents’ health and wellbeing through housing.

...AND HELPING RESIDENTS FIND THE RIGHT HOUSING SOLUTION FOR THEM

• We are improving the information and advice we provide to residents about the range of housing options available to them both within and outside of London, including market and intermediate rent, shared ownership, rent-to-buy, transfers and mutual exchange.
• We are reviewing the way our Housing Register works to make sure only eligible residents with a genuine chance of obtaining housing through the Council are accepted onto the borough’s Housing Register.
• We will review how Council tenancies are set up so we can offer increased flexibility and make the best use of Council resources, in line with government legislation.
EMPOWERING AND ENGAGING RESIDENTS...

...BY BECOMING A DIGITALLY ENABLED COUNCIL

- We are prioritising evidence-based, insight-led and data-driven interventions so that we can better understand the needs of our residents and ensure high impact, value for money services.
- We are investing in our staff skills to improve the way we deliver services and become a digitally-led organisation.
- We will explore new technologies to improve the energy efficiency, safety and performance of our housing, creating ‘smart’ homes that are fit for the future.

... IMPROVING THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE FOR TENANTS AND LEASEHOLDERS

- We are developing self-service technology to make it easier for tenants and leaseholders to contact us, report repairs and check rent and service charge accounts when it's convenient for them.
- We are streamlining our customer access to ensure that our ‘one front door’ approach minimises separate and unnecessary interactions with the Council.
- We are working to engage more actively with tenants and leaseholders on our estates to ensure a range of views are represented and listened to.
• We are exploring opportunities to work with residents on self/custom-build, rent-to-buy, co-housing and community-led housing initiatives.

• Through signposting and a joined-up approach with other Council and partner services, we are reducing fuel poverty, helping residents to live independently and to improve their health and wellbeing.

• We are providing employment and apprenticeship opportunities on new housing developments to help residents upskill and work towards greater economic certainty.
This section highlights some of the key questions about Housing in Waltham Forest that need to be considered during the development of the new Waltham Forest Housing Strategy. It does not seek to answer these questions, but provides guidance towards areas of exploration for the upcoming strategy.

**Positioning Housing at the centre of everything the Council does**

- Is affordable housing being provided in the right locations and with the right facilities and infrastructure alongside it?
- What should the borough’s intermediate housing offer look like?
- What does ‘good’ look like in modern London for Housing, and how does a council get to ‘good’?
- Should Local Area Coordination or similar models be rolled out across the borough?
- How can increased digital enablement within the Council benefit external partners, as well as residents?
- How can financial mechanisms enable local authorities to maximise their ability to benefit the local community?
- How can the Council work more closely with its housing association partners to develop a shared offer for residents?
Ensuring a decent roof over everyone’s head

• What can we do to ensure younger people see a future for themselves in Waltham Forest?

• How can the Council work to address the challenge arising from the increasing number of older residents with complex health and care needs?

• How can we encourage movement and ‘right-sizing’ within the borough’s existing housing stock?

• Which models of specialist housing, care and support provide the best outcomes for vulnerable groups?

• How could the Council shape the local older people’s housing market?

• How can we continue to raise the standard of private rented sector accommodation in Waltham Forest?

• How can we work with partners to deliver more affordable housing and reduce homelessness?

Resident empowerment and engagement

• How can we use ‘smart’ technology to gather data and improve our housing service offer?

• How can digital be used to engage and empower residents?

• How can we further encourage community-led housing in Waltham Forest?

• How can increased service integration and partnerships better empower residents?

• How can we improve the health and wellbeing of our local communities through our approach to housing development and services?
DEVELOPING THE STRATEGY

SUMMER 2017
Direction of Travel document

NOVEMBER 2017
6 Nov – 15 Dec
consultation

DECEMBER 2017
Direction of Travel document consultation

DECEMBER 2017
stakeholder workshops

JANUARY 2018
JANUARY 2018
scoping document

MARCH 2018
MAY 2018

JUNE 2018
consultation on final draft

OCTOBER 2018
publish final strategy
HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

We will be holding a series of stakeholder workshops over the coming months to explore the big questions and help develop our future housing plans.

If you would like to be involved in these workshops, ask questions or provide comments about the Housing Big Conversation, please get in touch using the contact details below:

**In writing:**
Housing Strategy and Partnerships
Waltham Forest Council
Cedar Wood House
2d Fulbourne Road
London E17 4GG

**Email:** housingstrategy@walthamforest.gov.uk

**Twitter:** #WFHousingBigConversation
REFERENCES

1. LB Waltham Forest Borough Profile 2017
3. LB Waltham Forest Insight Review, Leader’s Priorities: Housing, June 2017
4. LB Waltham Forest, available at: https://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/content/statistics-about-borough
5. LB Waltham Forest Housing Service
6. LB Waltham Forest, Strategic Housing Market Assessment (Cobweb Consulting), 2017