

# Basildon Borough Local Development Framework

## Topic Paper TP5 Housing

February 2012



### What is housing and why are we concerned about it?

1 Housing is the most crucial form of infrastructure for human activity, providing shelter from the elements, and local authorities in particular have a major strategic role in addressing the housing needs of all residents, across all housing tenures, in the communities which it serves. Five key elements form the basis of a local authorities strategic housing role<sup>(1)</sup>, these are:

- Assessing and planning for the current and future housing need of the local population across all tenures;
- Making the best use of existing housing stock;
- Planning and facilitating new supply;
- Planning and commissioning housing support services which link homes and housing support services; and
- Working in partnership to secure effective housing and neighbourhood management on an on-going basis.

2 Other activities or functions relevant to a local authority's strategic housing role include maximising the use of existing housing stock in the social and private rented sectors; the transformation of housing estates and creating mixed communities; joining up services to support sustainable communities and developing policies to link social tenants to employment and skills.

### The changing situation

3 The Government published a draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) on 25 July 2011 as a key part of their reforms to make the planning system less complex, more accessible and to promote sustainable growth.

4 The draft NPPF contains a number of references to the presumption in favour of sustainable development, and the need to support economic growth through the planning system. The Government expects the planning system to deliver the homes, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs, while protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment<sup>(2)</sup>.

5 As part of plan making, the NPPF states that local planning authorities "should have a clear understanding of housing requirements in their area. They should prepare a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) to assess their area's full housing requirements and prepare a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) to establish realistic assumptions about the availability, suitability and likely economic viability of land to meet the identified requirement for housing over the plan period"<sup>(3)</sup>.

6 The Government's key housing objective is to increase significantly the delivery of new homes, with everyone having the opportunity to live in high quality, well designed homes, which they can afford, in a community where they want to live<sup>(4)</sup>. This means:

- increasing the supply of housing
- delivering a wide choice of high quality homes that people want and need
- widening opportunities for home ownership; and
- creating sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities, including through the regeneration and renewal of areas of poor housing.

7 Other changes proposed in the NPPF<sup>(5)</sup> relevant to housing are:

- A move towards a concept of "developable" land where local areas decide the most suitable locations for

1 DCLG, The Strategic Housing Role of Local Authorities: Powers and Duties, 2008

2 DCLG Draft NPPF, 2011, Paragraph 2

3 DCLG, Draft NPPF, 2011, Paragraph 28

4 DCLG, Draft NPPF, 2011, Paragraphs 107 to 113

5 DCLG, Draft NPPF, 2011, Impact Assessment Part B3

housing growth based on their local circumstances;

- Requiring local councils to allocate an additional 20% of sites against their five year housing requirements; and
- The removal of the national minimum site size threshold for requiring affordable housing to be delivered.

## Our Vision

8 Our collective vision for the Borough is: *"To make Basildon a fair and inclusive place, where the community have a healthy, safe place to live and work and improve the quality of life now and for future generations"* <sup>(6)</sup> For all individuals and families, the quality and convenience of their living accommodation has a huge impact on that quality of life. We should seek to enable the provision of housing that meets the needs and aspirations of all our residents.

9 This topic paper considers the current state of housing in the borough and identifies the main issues which may need to be overcome for the future.

10 Basildon has been identified as a national priority area for regeneration growth <sup>(7)</sup>. Due in large part to its location, the borough's population is expected to reach 194,600 by 2031 <sup>(8)</sup> To accommodate this, we will need to promote sustainable regeneration and deliver housing growth through high quality, locally distinctive sustainable developments and supporting infrastructure <sup>(9)</sup>, without compromising the environmental qualities that make the borough a desirable place to live.

## National Policy Context

11 The thrust of Government housing policy is to increase the number of houses available to buy and rent, including affordable housing; improve the flexibility of social housing (through increasing

mobility and choice); promote home ownership; protect the vulnerable and disadvantaged through tackling homelessness and supporting people to stay in their homes; and making sure that homes are sustainable and of a high quality.

12 Local authority planning policies should bring forward sufficient land for housing in areas where there is access to jobs, shops and leisure by means other than by the car. The efficient use of land through higher density, mixed use development and the use of suitably located previously developed land is also promoted <sup>(10)</sup>.

13 A supplement to Planning Policy Statement 1 <sup>(11)</sup> provides guidance for local authorities to identify sites which are in the most sustainable locations and which moderate the effects of a changing climate by utilising the Code for Sustainable Homes <sup>(12)</sup>. The Code sets standards for key elements of design, energy efficiency and construction which affect the sustainability of a new home.

14 PPS3: Housing <sup>(13)</sup> sets out Government's key housing policy goal of ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent home, which they can afford and in a community where they want to live. The policy statement provides specific guidance on achieving a mix of housing, requiring a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) to be prepared so that the LDF can include policy direction on the proportions of households that are private market or affordable; the profile of household types requiring market housing; and the size and type of affordable housing required.

15 Planning Policy Statement 3 emphasises that the LDF should identify a sufficient number of housing sites over a period of at least 15 years based on evidence of current and future levels of need and demand for housing <sup>(14)</sup>. Such locations

6 Draft Basildon Borough Community Strategy 2011-2036, Basildon Renaissance Partnership, 2011

7 Draft Basildon Borough Community Strategy 2011-2036, Basildon Renaissance Partnership, 2011

8 Draft Basildon Borough Community Strategy 2011-2036, Basildon Renaissance Partnership, 2011.

9 Draft Basildon Borough Community Strategy 2011-2036, Basildon Renaissance Partnership, 2011.

10 DCLG (2005) PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development, paragraph 27

11 DCLG (2007) Supplement to PPS1: Planning and Climate Change, paragraph 24

12 DCLG (2007) Supplement to PPS1: Planning and Climate Change, paragraph 32

13 DCLG (2011) PPS3: Housing - paragraphs 29 and 33

14 DCLG (2011) PPS3: Housing - paragraphs 32 and 34

should contribute to cutting carbon emissions, the re-use of vacant and derelict sites or industrial and commercial sites, be accessible to local community facilities and help to develop mixed sustainable communities<sup>(15)</sup>. Using the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) and/or other evidence, the LDF should identify housing sites to deliver housing in the first five years<sup>(16)</sup>.

**16** PPS3 also provides detailed guidance on the provision of affordable housing, with Local Planning Authorities, in their Local Development Documents, expected to<sup>(17)</sup>:

- Set an overall target for the amount of affordable housing to be provided;
- Set separate targets for social-rented and intermediate affordable housing;
- Specify the size and type of affordable housing that is likely to be needed;
- Set out the range of circumstances in which affordable housing will be required. The national indicative minimum site size threshold for affordable housing is 15 dwellings, although LPA's may set lower thresholds where viable and practical); and
- Set out an approach to seeking developer contributions to facilitate the provision of affordable housing.

**17** In delivering new housing, PPS3 requires the effective use of existing housing stock to identify and bring into use empty housing and buildings<sup>(18)</sup>. Land should be used effectively and efficiently, such as by re-using land that has been previously developed<sup>(19)</sup>.

**18** The Government has moved away from the prescriptive application of minimum housing densities set at a national level,

in order to give local authorities greater flexibility to set their own density ranges that suit the local needs in their areas. Research has shown that there is no correlation between urban quality and density<sup>(20)</sup>. Density is only a measure. It is a product of design, not a determinant of it. The aim should therefore be not to achieve a given residential density, but to generate a critical mass of people able to support urban services such as public transport, local shops and schools<sup>(21)</sup>. The density of existing development should not dictate that of new housing by stifling change or requiring replication of existing style or form. If done well, imaginative design and layout of new development can lead to a more efficient use of land without compromising the quality of the local environment<sup>(22)</sup>.

**19** Government policy Circulars 01/06 and 04/07<sup>(23)</sup> provide guidance on the planning aspects of finding suitable sites for Gypsies and Travellers, and Travelling Showpeople, and how local authorities should work together undertaking accommodation assessments and finding joint solutions, to achieve that aim. The Government<sup>(24)</sup> concluded a consultation into a draft PPS on planning for traveller sites on 3 August 2011, which will replace the existing policy Circulars, described above, in due course. The proposed legislation seeks to give local planning authorities the freedom and responsibility to determine the right level of traveller site provision in their area in consultation with local communities, while ensuring fairness in the planning system<sup>(25)</sup>.

**20** As a fiscal incentive to encourage local authorities to facilitate housing growth in their areas, the Government introduced the New Homes Bonus in April 2011. This match funds the additional council tax raised for new homes and empty

15 DCLG (2011) PPS3: Housing - paragraphs 36 and 39

16 DCLG (2011) PPS3: Housing - paragraphs 60 and 61

17 DCLG (2011) PPS3: Housing - paragraphs 27 and 30

18 DCLG (2011) PPS3: Housing - paragraph 31

19 DCLG (2011) PPS3: Housing - paragraph 39

20 DETR, 1998

21 Llewelyn-Davies (2007) Urban Design Compendium 1, p46

22 DCLG (2011) PPS3: Housing - paragraph 50

23 ODPM (2006) Circular 01/06 - Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites and DCLG (2007) Circular 04/07 - Planning for Travelling Showpeople

24 DCLG

25 DCLG (2011) Planning for traveller sites: Consultation

properties brought back into use, with an additional amount for affordable homes, for the following six years<sup>(26)</sup>. The scheme is designed to ensure the economic benefits of growth are more visible within a local area by assisting local authorities with issues such as service provision and infrastructure delivery and helping to redress imbalances in the local government finance system<sup>(27)</sup>.

## Regional Policy Context

- 21** The East of England Plan 2001-2021 (expected to be revoked by the Coalition Government in 2012) set a minimum housing target of 10,700 new homes in Basildon between April 2001 and March 2021, inclusive of an indicative allowance for 2,200 houses outside of the Essex Thames Gateway<sup>(28)</sup> (Policy H1) i.e. north of the A127 Arterial Road, encompassing Billericay and Wickford. It states that targets for affordable housing should be set at the local borough level, with an expectation that 35% of approved housing will be affordable<sup>(29)</sup> (Policy H2). The Plan also asserts that local authorities should make provision for sites/pitches to meet the identified needs of Gypsies and Travellers living within or resorting to (i.e. visiting) their area<sup>(30)</sup> (Policy H3).
- 22** The Secretary of State issued final policies on Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople accommodation in the East of England in July 2009<sup>(31)</sup>, resulting from the single issue review of the Regional Spatial Strategy. These advocated a minimum number of 62 additional Gypsy pitches for Basildon Borough during the period 2006 to 2011. Beyond 2011 provision is advocated based on an annual 3% compound increase in residential pitches, with this being achieved through development control decisions and Development Plan Documents. Beyond

2011 provision is also advocated for an annual 1.5% compound increase in Travelling Showpeople plots<sup>(32)</sup>.

- 23** Local authorities have direct responsibility for delivering social care services in England and Essex County Council is responsible for meeting local adult social care needs across the Essex area<sup>(33)</sup>. The County have adopted the 'Extra Care Housing' model<sup>(34)</sup>, where housing is made available for certain elderly, disabled or other persons with particular support needs, and meet specific criteria. Basildon has one extra care housing scheme at Poplar House in Pitsea administered by Sanctuary Housing Association.

## Local Plans, Programmes and Policies

- 24** Local authorities have a vital role in strategic planning and decision making, by developing a strategic approach to housing. Local authorities take the lead in ensuring the right housing is in place to support their vision, in particular by working with partners, including affordable housing providers, to deliver for their areas<sup>(35)</sup>. Other partners that would be involved with housing delivery include the Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership, local land owners, businesses, housing associations and national house building firms amongst others.

### Basildon Strategic Improvement Plan 2010-2013

- 25** Key themes of this Plan are to renew housing estates at Five Links and Craylands to create sustainable communities, improve the percentage of Council housing stock meeting the Decent

26 DCLG (2011) The New Homes Bonus  
 27 DCLG (2011) The New Homes Bonus: final scheme design, paragraphs 2-4  
 28 GO-East (2008) East of England Plan: The Revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England, p30  
 29 GO-East (2008) East of England Plan: The Revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England, p33  
 30 GO-East (2008) East of England Plan: The Revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England, p33  
 31 GO-East (2009) Accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople in the East of England - A Revision to the RSS for the East of England,  
 32 GO-East (2009) Accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople in the East of England - A Revision to the RSS for the East of England, Policy H3, Pages 4 and 5 and Policy H4, Page 7  
 33 Essex County Council (2008) Putting People First: Support Planning and Review Policy  
 34 Essex County Council (2009) Extra Care Housing Information Sheet  
 35 DCLG (2006) Delivering Affordable Housing

Homes Standard and maintain vibrant town centres through the provision of new homes and other services<sup>(36)</sup>.

### Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) Update Report, May 2010

- 26 This update to the SHMA 2008<sup>(37)</sup>, provides a detailed market analysis of housing demand and housing need for the sub-region, which also covers the neighbouring districts/boroughs of Southend-on-Sea, Rochford, Castle Point and Thurrock. The larger urban areas of Basildon, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock, together, make up the main housing sub-market, whilst Billericay and Wickford fall within areas of overlap with surrounding housing markets. The relationship between the three primary urban areas and the smaller settlements and rural areas provide a different and to some degree complementary housing role, accommodation choice and quality of place offer<sup>(38)</sup>.
- 27 The Market Assessment identifies that the housing offer in Basildon New Town is narrow with an over emphasis upon 3 bedroom terraced housing, whilst across the sub-region, the flatted and urban living offer to appeal to younger households is stated as being under-developed.
- 28 According to the SHMA, underlying demographic dynamics continue to show a strong inward migration pattern, with London exerting a strong influence, both in terms of employment opportunity and movement of households into the sub-region. This can be explained by the relatively low house prices in Thames Gateway South Essex within a regional context, which supports the movement of both first-time buyers and households looking to step onto the housing ladder.
- 29 Whilst there remains a strong working age population (19-64 years) in the sub-region, the SHMA acknowledges that the population is also ageing with implications

for housing demand and strong expected growth in single person or older households. This may support demand for appropriate smaller housing which allows households to downsize or tenure models which support the release of equity. A declining age 20-34 cohort, according to current trends, may influence rates of new household formation.

### Basildon Local Plan Saved Policies 2007

- 30 The Basildon District Local Plan Saved Policies<sup>(39)</sup> includes a number of housing policies and land allocations for housing development or reserved for potential housing development. Of the sites allocated for residential development, all have been commenced or constructed with the exception of one site in Pound Lane, Laindon (which forms part of a larger Government - Homes and Community Agency - owned site). Two areas of land are safeguarded to meet long-term housing needs beyond 2001 at Barn Hall, Wickford and North of Dry Street, Basildon<sup>(40)</sup> (Policy BAS S3). Development of part of the Barn Hall site was allowed on appeal by the Secretary of State in 2008. A second section of the Barn Hall site was the subject of a further application for development in 2012.
- 31 Saved Policy BAS S5<sup>(41)</sup> (Affordable Housing) of the document requires the local authority to seek an appropriate provision of affordable housing on suitable sites. In February 2008 the Council adopted an Interim Planning Obligations Strategy<sup>(42)</sup> (to update this policy), which requires affordable housing to be provided on sites of more than 10 dwellings. It states that the level of provision should normally be on the basis that 30% of the units on the site should be made available as affordable housing. The exception being that within Basildon and Wickford town centres only 10% of the required affordable housing should be provided on site with the balance of the 30% being either provided off-site, or provided in the form

36 Basildon Council (2010) Strategic Improvement Plan 2010-2013

37 GVA Grimley (2008) Thames Gateway South Essex Strategic Housing Market Assessment

38 GVA Grimley (2010) Thames Gateway South Essex Strategic Housing Market Assessment (TGSE SHMA): Update Report

39 Basildon Council (2007) Basildon District Local Plan Saved Policies document

40 Basildon Council (2007) Basildon District Local Plan Saved Policies document, p17

41 Basildon Council (2007) Basildon District Local Plan Saved Policies document, p18-19

42 Basildon Council (2008) Interim Planning Obligations Strategy

of a commuted sum, to enable the provision of affordable housing elsewhere in the Borough.

## Borough Profile

**32** Basildon is the second largest borough in Essex by population (172,600 <sup>(43)</sup>). The largest town, Basildon, was designated a new town in 1949 to cope with the growing population of East London and was formed from the smaller settlements of Laindon, Langdon Hills, Pitsea and Vange. By contrast, Billericay is a semi-rural town with combinations of an historic and modern feel. Wickford has expanded rapidly in recent years with thousands of new homes built in the Wick and Shotgate, accounting for a third of homes in the town. Basildon town lies within the Thames Gateway Region and is a priority area for regeneration, particularly with regard to the renewal of its original experimentally designed housing stock. A small proportion of the housing stock exists within rural plotland areas of the Borough, developed in the first half of the 20th Century. Some 70% of the borough is rural; the majority of which is Green Belt, limiting the opportunities for future housing growth.

## Development History

**33** Most of the current housing stock in the borough was constructed after 1950. The few historic dwelling houses that survive in the borough date from the late to post medieval period (C. 1500 to 1900) largely in the form of isolated farmsteads or converted premises in Billericay High Street. The completion of the railways in the late 19th Century laid the foundations for the modern development of the borough. With the agricultural depression at the beginning of the 20th Century many semi-derelict farms were bought up at rock-bottom prices and split into plots for sale, often to people seeking to escape the slums of London. Plot-land development took place in an ad-hoc unregulated manner mostly in the period between the First and Second World Wars and mainly in the form of small shacks or bungalows, few of which remain in their original state. The most significant house

building in the Borough took place following the 2nd World War with Basildon, the largest of the Mark 1 New Towns, created to absorb the expanding population of London. In 1949 the designated New Town area incorporated some 8,700 dwellings, of which 5,500 were considered to be substandard accommodation <sup>(44)</sup>. The towns of Wickford and Billericay also expanded significantly in the post war period, with additional residential infilling taking place in Ramsden Bellhouse, Crays Hill, along Noak Hill Road and in Bowers Gifford during this time. Large market led residential estates continued to develop with the creation of estates such as Queens Park, Billericay and Noak Bridge, Basildon in the 1980's, Steeple View and Great Berry, Laindon in the 1990's and The Wick, Wickford in the 1990's to the present day. This century has seen much new housing as part of estate renewal schemes and the creation of new apartments in the main town centres as part of town centre regeneration.

## Housing completions

**34** Between 2001 and 2011 there were 2,839 housing completions in Basildon Borough, representing 284 completions per annum. As stated, the adopted East of England Plan set a minimum target for Basildon of 10,700 new residential units between 2001-2021, representing 535 completions per annum. Annual completions therefore fell short of the regional target during this period. The beginning of the economic downturn and a reduction in the supply of available land may have contributed to this situation. In recent years, completions have increased and demolitions reduced, with nearly 500 completions per annum in 2008/09 and 2009/10. There were 172 net dwelling completions during the 2010/11 period. <sup>(45)</sup>

## Housing stock and demand

**35** The majority of existing housing stock in the Borough is 2-3 bedroom, with a significant under-supply of 1 and 4+ bedroom properties. Housing completions since 2001, have in the main been 1 and 2 bed properties. Whilst this has gone

43 ONS 2007 Mid Year Estimates

44 Essex County Council (2011) Basildon Borough Historic Environment Characterisation

45 Basildon Borough Housing Trajectory 2011

some way to increasing the stock of smaller properties, this has not contributed to increasing the number of larger properties. The TGSE SHMA 2008 identifies that for those households in need in Basildon the greatest pressures are for four bedroom properties. Some 24% of households on the Council's 2002 Housing Needs Survey required 4 or more bedroom properties. The indication was of demand for larger family housing from existing households looking to 'trade-up' which was poorly met at that time<sup>(46)</sup>. This position is further supported by the 2008 SHMA which identifies that in Basildon the greatest pressures are for four bedroom properties<sup>(47)</sup>. More recently some 5% of households on the Council's 2011 Housing Waiting List are looking to move to a 4 or more bedroom property. It is likely that a higher proportion of smaller properties will be required for Intermediate Housing tenures as these are likely to comprise much of the demand from newly forming households<sup>(48)</sup>. The Council's housing waiting list had some 3,007 households on it at 1 April 2011 (Not including households looking for transfers). This marks a decline on both the 2009 and 2010 housing waiting list figures.

#### Development on Previously Developed Land

**36** In 2010, 84.55% of houses were built on Previously Developed Land in Basildon Borough; above the national 60% target in place at the time. This can partly be attributed to town centre regeneration initiatives and large estate renewal schemes moving from the planning to the construction stage.

#### Affordable Housing Delivery

**37** The delivery of Affordable Housing completions has increased since adoption of the Council's Interim Planning Obligations Strategy in February 2008. The TGSE SHMA 2010 Update Report supports a 35% ratio of housing being affordable<sup>(49)</sup> (The RSS, which is likely to

be revoked in 2012, advocates the same ratio). In 2008/09, 44.9% of housing completions were affordable and in 2009/10, 35.5% of completions were affordable. This exceeds the policy requirement and can be attributed to a higher number of housing association developments and estate renewal schemes being realised, together with a lower proportion of market property completions during these periods.

#### Gypsies and Travellers

**38** Along with other local authorities, Basildon Borough undertakes bi-annual Gypsy and Traveller monitoring counts, to provide local data on the number of caravans and the seasonal movement of caravans within their area. Such monitoring is a vital tool in identifying need for site provision and tackling unauthorised encampments and developments<sup>(50)</sup>. As of January 2011, there were 113 authorised pitches for Gypsies and Travellers in Basildon Borough across 35 sites, on which 177 caravans were stationed. This equates to an average of just over 3 pitches per site and represents the largest number of caravans on authorised pitches in Essex. However, there were also some 189 caravans on 70 unauthorised pitches within 25 sites, as of January 2011. Between 1990 and 2011 the number of authorised caravans in the Borough rose by 378%, whilst the number of unauthorised caravans in the Borough rose by 491% of over the same period<sup>(51)</sup>. Winter monitoring of the small numbers of Travelling Showpeople that reside in the borough is also undertaken.

#### Housing Market

**39** House prices in South Essex have been more resilient in the face of a national fall in prices<sup>(52)</sup>. This may be due in part to the sub-region's close proximity to London, good transportation links and access to the countryside, making the area an

46 Basildon Council Housing Needs Survey 2002, quoted in Strategic Housing Review, (2007), GVA Grimley for Basildon Renaissance Partnership, paragraph 2.13  
 47 TGSE SMA 2008, paragraph 11.68, p213  
 48 TGSE SHMA Update Report 2010  
 49 TGSE SHMA 2010 Update report, p59  
 50 DCLG (2011) Statistical Release - Gypsy and Traveller caravan count - January 2011  
 51 Gypsy and Traveller Monitoring Report, Relating to date from January 2011, Basildon Borough Council  
 52 TGSE Housing Market Trends Quarterly Report January 2011, p6.

attractive place to live for existing and prospective residents and an attractive place for residential developers to invest.

## State of the Economy

40 In the short term at least, economic uncertainty both at home and in the Eurozone may dent consumer confidence, leading to a possible new phase of re-pricing across the housing market.<sup>(53)</sup> Delivering financially viable high quality housing schemes during times of market volatility will pose an additional challenge.

## Ageing population and Lifetime Homes

41 The population of the UK is ageing. Perhaps most importantly for the planning of future services for older people in the Borough is that the very large population growth (about 60%) that accompanied the Basildon New Town development of the 1950's is now, 50 years later, appearing as a much higher demographic than the national increase in the older population<sup>(54)</sup>. This will place a growing pressure on the provision of suitable and accessible housing accommodation in the Borough. With longer life expectancy and an ageing population, there is a need to ensure homes are designed to meet the needs of residents now and in the future, with adequate consideration given to the type of accommodation and supporting infrastructure services they may require.

## Specialist Housing

42 A strong and sustainable community needs to embrace all its members including those who are older or vulnerable, and address not only their specialist housing needs but also encourage self-determination and support a good quality of life<sup>(55)</sup>. The diverse needs of these groups can be met in a variety of settings, such as shared specialist supported housing, hostels, extra care housing, domestic violence refuges and care settings, as well as through "floating" support in general needs housing.

## Issues & Opportunities

43 *The relevant housing issues are:*

- **Protecting the Natural Environment** - Future development must improve quality of life without compromising the natural environment, and the necessary infrastructure must be in place in order to ensure the development is sustainable. Previously developed land should be used efficiently and effectively to achieve these aims.
- **Restricted Housing Tenure** - The Borough has a high proportion of terraced property and estates developed using experimental building techniques during the creation of the New Town. The delivery of quality housing and estate renewal schemes is therefore vital to ensure the right balance of housing type and tenure is provided to meet the current and future needs of residents.
- **Affordability** - Recent economic trends have meant that affordability remains a significant barrier particularly for first time buyers and young households wanting to get a step on the housing ladder. Lack of affordable housing remains a particular issue across the sub region, where for example 44.85% or 24,016 households cannot afford to purchase a flat or maisonette as a first time buyer on a mortgage at 3.0 times their income<sup>(56)</sup>.
- **Housing need** - Despite a reduction in the number of people on the Council's housing waiting list in recent years, the build rate of new affordable housing continues to be outpaced by the demand for social housing; with around 3,007 households waiting for social housing as at 1 April 2011. In Basildon the greatest pressures are for four bedroom properties. The

53 TGSE Housing Market Trends Quarterly Report October 2011. p2.

54 Homes for Older People - Accommodation Strategy for Older People in Essex 2007-2009, p 25

55 HCA: Specialist Housing, HAPPI: Housing Our Ageing Population

56 TGSE Housing Market Trends Quarterly Report October 2010, p9

local authority already has a large supply of 3-bed terraced homes in the New Town.

- **Non-Decent Homes** - Reducing the number of people living in 'non-decent' housing is a key issue for the Borough<sup>(57)</sup>. Improving old housing stock will bring with it benefits of improving a persons environment, which can contribute to improving their health and well-being, as well as potentially reducing crime and poverty.

44 The relevant housing opportunities are:

- **Priority Area for Growth** - The borough is a national priority area for economic and regeneration growth, with Basildon recognised as a key centre for development and change within the Thames Gateway Sub Region<sup>(58)</sup>. This will bring with it housing development opportunities.
- **Town Centre Regeneration** - This is a top priority because of the commercial and cultural opportunities they can bring to the area. Town Centres are the most visited places and act as gateways providing a hub for employment, leisure, civic and community facilities. Their regeneration, incorporating high quality residential schemes as part of the mix of uses, will help to sustain the Town Centres, revitalise the Borough and benefit local communities. Town Centre regeneration has the potential to provide high quality urban living housing which will help to develop this particular offer to younger households and broaden the housing mix, as advocated in the SHMA.
- **Estate Renewal** - The regeneration of the borough's ageing housing estates brings with them opportunities to address tenure and housing mix mis-matches, as well as enable improvements in the design quality and energy efficiency of the

housing stock. These in turn will improve the quality of life for residents.

### Drivers for Change

45 Using the established evidence base, highlighted issues and identified potential opportunities, the following sets out the drivers for change which need to be addressed for the long term benefit of providing housing for all:

- **Housing Delivery**
- **High Quality Design**
- **Homes for All**

### Housing Delivery

46 Local Planning Authorities must set a target for new housing development to meet current and future levels of need and demand<sup>(59)</sup>. The Council will therefore need to facilitate the provision of additional homes between 2011 and 2031 to meet the needs of a rising population and an increased rate of household formation. As part of this the local authority has a key strategic and enabling role in the provision of affordable housing, both as part of major housing schemes and in their own right, ensuring that the size of the site (as well as the number of units) is taken into account and an appropriate mix of social and intermediate housing is provided, through viability testing. Sufficient housing sites and numbers need identifying to meet the housing need. The Government's current five year rolling housing land supply requirement is likely to rise by a further 20% to ensure greater competition and choice. The supply of developable land outside of the urban areas is particularly constrained by Green Belt designation. Allocated Residential Development sites identified in the Basildon Local Plan 1998, have now largely been developed, and development has also been permitted on part of two Areas of Special Reserve. Outside of town centre regeneration initiatives and housing renewal areas, the provision of suitable developable land in appropriate locations, to address housing need, particularly for

57 Draft Basildon Borough Community Strategy 2011-2036 BRP

58 East of England Regional Spatial Strategy 2008

59 PPS3: Housing (2011) - paragraphs 32-34

market family housing, is limited unless land allocated for alternative uses is examined and more efficient use of existing developed land is explored. Several areas of land within the urban areas of the Borough are allocated for alternative uses, such as for Employment, Comprehensive Development, Recreation and Leisure or Open Space, which may not be being used to their optimum. In such instances the Council may wish to review their land use allocation to consider whether these sites could contribute towards the Borough's housing provision. Utilising the Community Infrastructure Levy and New Homes Bonus will be a way of levering in additional funding for the required infrastructure necessary to support housing development schemes.

## High Quality Design

- 47 Good design is fundamental to the development of high quality new housing, which contributes to the creation of sustainable, mixed communities<sup>(60)</sup>. The regeneration of the Borough's Town Centres will provide a range of benefits including high quality new homes. The provision of new homes either as part of mixed use schemes or stand alone flatted and urban living offers within Town Centres, will help to revitalise them and sustain them in the longer term. This will help to address housing need and improve housing quality and choice. Renewing and replacing ageing housing estates across the Borough with modern high quality homes, particularly in the New Town, will transform these often deprived neighbourhoods, improving the quality of life for our residents, in particular for children, young people, older people and those who suffer the effects of poverty.
- 48 The Government aspiration is that all new housing (inclusive of market demand housing) will be built to these Lifetime Homes Standards by 2013<sup>(61)</sup>. Lifetime Homes are ordinary homes that incorporate particular design criteria that can be universally applied to new homes at minimal cost, to provide comfort, convenience and support the changing

needs of individuals and families at different stages of their life. The DCLG advise that it is critically important to consider and plan for appropriate levels of provision of wheelchair standard housing<sup>(62)</sup>.

- 49 The Essex Planning Officers Association advise that all new housing developments shall be designed so as to allow the maximum flexibility for future alterations and extensions to meet potential needs of future occupiers. All new housing developments should seek to meet the Lifetime Homes Standard with a minimum of 3% of new dwellings on developments of 30 dwellings or more built to full wheelchair standards.<sup>(63)</sup>

## Homes for All

- 50 A key challenge is to find the most sustainable locations to provide for the required level of housing, while keeping impacts on the natural and existing built environment to a minimum. Demographic changes are resulting in increasing numbers of elderly and single people in need of different types of accommodation. There is a shortage of affordable and special needs housing particularly for an ageing population. There is also a need to provide additional accommodation for travellers and gypsies as currently enforcement action is often needed to deal with unauthorised encampments.
- 51 Over the last fifty years, birth rates have been falling and life expectancy rising. These two factors, combined with more general social trends of improving health and standards of living, together with the higher ageing demographic of Basildon New Town, mean that older people will continue to make up an increasingly large percentage of the Borough's population. Providing a greater number of suitable homes in Basildon that meet older people's needs and aspirations will promote longer and healthier lives. Redressing the high proportion of terraced 3 bedroom housing and ageing experimental housing estates within Basildon New Town will help to re-balance the housing market. The

60 DCLG (2005) PPS3: Housing, P8

61 DCLG, (2008) Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods - A National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society, p 87

62 DCLG, (2008) Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods - A National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society, p 92

63 EPOA Guidance Note on Lifetimes Homes Standard (2008) - Policy DC36, Appendix 1 and p 2

delivery of quality housing in a mix of dwelling types and tenures, and as part of estate renewal schemes, is therefore vital to ensure the right balance of housing is provided to meet the current and future needs of all residents and provide housing choice. Greater emphasis should therefore be placed on constructing four or more bedroom *aspirational* properties in appropriate locations and smaller properties, as part of town centre regeneration schemes to support urban living for younger households or to support older people downsizing.

- 52 Basildon has a disproportionately high number of unauthorised Gypsy and Traveller pitches compared to other authorities in Essex. The local authority will need to take a carefully considered approach, carrying out effective but fair enforcement of its planning policies and work to develop new authorised sites in appropriate locations as part of broader housing mixes and where these do not compromise the integrity of the Green Belt.
- 53 The accommodation needs of travelling show people should also be considered as part of the broader housing mix, in areas where housing growth will be considered.





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