

Eastbourne Borough Council - Housing Strategy 2020-2024

Consultation report

March 2020

Background

Eastbourne Borough Council asked members of the public and our statutory and voluntary partners for their views on proposals for a new housing strategy. The consultation exercise, which ran for five weeks, closed on Monday the 17th February 2020. Our current Housing Strategy runs until 2020 and we have been evaluating and assessing how the council can, in the years ahead, help support the housing needs and ambitions of all its local residents.

The draft strategy set out proposals across five key themes, which focused on shaping plans that, over the next five years, will help:

- Increase the supply of new homes.
- Promote quality housing that meets modern standards.
- Reduce homelessness.
- Improve the management and maintenance of council homes.
- Promote the provision of homes and service that sustain health and wellbeing of local residents.

The consultation received over a hundred replies from tenants, local residents and a range of statutory and voluntary partners, who provided responses to the accompanying questionnaire and shared their support, views and concerns about the proposals. This note provides a summary of the responses received and provides feedback on the changes that have been made to the proposals as a result.

What views did respondents express in response to the key questions set out in the survey?

When asked to rank key housing issues facing the town the leading concerns identified were high housing costs and access to affordable housing, reflecting overarching concerns about high house prices and rising rents. Levels of homelessness and a recognition of the need for new homes also featured prominently on the list. The full results are shown in the table 1 below.

Table 1. To what extent do you agree that the following are key housing issues in Eastbourne? Please rank in order of priority from 1: Highest to 8: Lowest.

Item	Total Score ¹	Overall Rank
Housing costs (rents and house prices)	604	1
Access to affordable homes across the town	581	2
Levels of homelessness	514	3
Meeting the need for new homes	472	4
Increasing the housing options available to young people	462	5
Rough sleeping	430	6
Meeting the housing needs of an ageing population	403	7
Reducing the carbon emissions that homes produce	314	8
¹ Score is a weighted calculation. Items ranked first are valued higher than the following ranks, the score is a sum of all weighted rank counts.	answered	105
	skipped	5

The priorities ranked above were reflected in the views provided by respondents on the proposed themes of the new strategy. Improving the quality homes across the town; reducing the impact of homelessness and increasing the supply of new homes led the rankings. That said, all five themes of the strategy received a high level of support. The full results are shown in the table 2 below.

Table 2. To what extent do you agree that the following are correct key themes for the strategy? Please rank in order of priority from 1: Highest to 5: Lowest.

Item	Total Score ¹	Overall Rank
Improving the quality of homes across the town	376	1
Reducing the impact of homelessness	324	2
Increasing the supply of new homes	319	3
Successfully managing and maintaining our Council homes.	283	4
Promoting homes that sustain residents' health and wellbeing	258	5
¹ Score is a weighted calculation. Items ranked first are valued higher than the following ranks, the score is a sum of all weighted rank counts.	answered	104
	skipped	6

When asked to rank the most important issues within each of the themes, building more social housing, bringing empty homes back into use and keeping council homes in a good state of repair were some of the leading things respondents were keen to see addressed. Focussing on activities to prevent homelessness and working closely with our partners to address health and housing were also at the top of respondents' lists.

What were the key themes of the comments made by respondents in response to the proposals?

Respondents provided over 120 additional comments about the proposals, which were summarised and categorised into key themes, to help analyse the key sentiments made. On the whole these reflected the priorities set out in the questions responses above, the most commonly expressed views recognising the need to build more social housing and focus on reducing levels of homelessness.

However, a number of themes resonated more clearly in the comments than in the question responses. These included recognition of; the importance of reducing the contribution that local housing makes to carbon emissions; the need to balance new housing development with investment in public transport and infrastructure; and the value of supporting the needs of young households, older people and those with disabilities. Taking a balanced approach to supporting private sector tenants and landlords and a continued focus on improving the services that Council tenants and leaseholders receive, were also key features of the comments made.

What were the key comments made by statutory and voluntary partners about the proposals?

Responses were received from a range of local agencies, including a number of teams at East Sussex County Council, neighbouring districts and borough, local housing associations and representatives of protected groups. The key themes of the strategy were broadly welcomed, in particular those aspects of the plans that look to actively engage joint approaches, such as the forthcoming review of homelessness strategy, the deployment of recently acquired County wide funding to tackle rough sleeping and the implementation of the newly agreed Supported Accommodation Framework.

Organisations made a broad range of key comments and suggestions targeting their key activities and areas of interest. Amongst these were calls to ensure that the strategy; focussed on meeting the needs of care leavers and households living with complex disabilities; adopted a broad definition of illness and disability that encompassed sensory and wellbeing needs, as well as mobility issues; and continued to support the expansion of housing advice and youth homelessness services.

What changes have been made to the proposals?

A number of key changes have been made to reflect views received during the consultation. These include:

- Broadening the definition of disability, to make specific reference to households living with age related disabilities, households containing children with complex needs, those with sensory disabilities and households containing those experiencing long term mental and physical conditions.
- Additional recognition that future provision for older persons should consider a full range of housing models and supporting services, to help meet identified mobility and other age related needs.
- Acknowledging the need to ensure that new housing developments are balanced by the provision of public transport and supporting infrastructure. The key tool for delivering this is the Local Plan.
- Recognising the need to ensure that future housing supply must balance the needs of young people, an ageing population and the needs of those with facing additional barriers to finding housing in the local market.
- Amplifying commitments to support the provision of housing advice and support to young people and care leavers.
- Highlighting the need for plans set out in the strategy to fully align with implementation of the County wide Supported Accommodation framework.

What happens next?

The updated version of the final draft housing strategy will now be considered at EBC Cabinet on the 16th March 2020. This is an open meeting and members of the public and representatives of local organisations will be able to attend to express any further view they have on the final draft of the proposals.

The proposals will be updated to reflect any views of Cabinet, in line with recorded minutes and a final version of the strategy will then be produced and published on the council's website.

Work will then commence to implement the plans set out in the strategy, working with our local statutory and voluntary partners to deliver agreed plans across the five key themes. The delivery and impact of our plans will be reviewed after the first year and we will review the objectives to ensure that they reflect the current housing challenges faced by the borough.