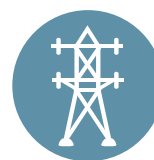




# EASTBOURNE

## HOUSING DELIVERY TEST

### ACTION PLAN



JUNE 2025

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## I. Introduction

- 1.1 Local planning authorities (LPAs) have a longstanding role in planning for and demonstrating a sufficient supply of housing, as required by the National Planning Policy Framework [NPPF] (December 2024) (paragraph 72).
- 1.2 The Housing Delivery Test (HDT) was introduced in the 2018 version of the NPPF, and is one of Government's initiatives to boost housing growth and seeks to encourage LPAs to have a more proactive role in supporting housing delivery, as well as greater accountability for under-delivery. The HDT measures the number of homes required over a three-year period against the number of homes that were delivered, and calculates the result as a percentage.
- 1.3 The HDT results for 2018 (first year) were published in February 2019. These were supported by the publication of the Housing Delivery Test: Measurement Rule Book (July 2018) and Housing Delivery Test: 2018 Measurement Technical note (February 2019). The most recent HDT measurements for 2023 were published in December 2024.
- 1.4 The NPPF (paragraph 79) states that, where the Housing Delivery Test results show that delivery has fallen below 95% of the local planning authority's housing requirement over the previous three years, the authority should prepare an action plan in line with national planning guidance, to assess the causes of under delivery and identify actions to increase delivery in future years.
- 1.5 Eastbourne Borough Council (the Council) first published a Housing Delivery Test Action Plan in August 2019. The Action Plan provides an overview of housing delivery in the borough and identifies actions to assist in increasing housing delivery within the borough. It also includes an analysis of recent housing delivery, and potential barriers to delivery.. The actions identified in this document aim to obtain a micro understanding of local issues and help stimulate housing delivery.
- 1.6 This is the sixth iteration of the Eastbourne HDT Action Plan and is prepared following the 2023 HDT result. The HDT Action Plan is a 'live' document and therefore will be updated on at least an annual basis, usually following subsequent HDT result publications.

## 2. Local context

### Eastbourne Local Plan

- 2.1 The Eastbourne Core Strategy Local Plan 2006-2027 [the Core Strategy] (adopted in February 2013), together with the 2003 Eastbourne Borough Plan 'saved' policies (2003), Town Centre Local Plan [TCLP] (2013) and Eastbourne Employment Local Plan [ELLP] (2016), form the local plan for the borough outside of the South Downs National Park. The Core Strategy is the planning framework and contains strategic policies for the borough.
- 2.2 Policy B1 (Spatial Development Strategy and Distribution) of the Core Strategy sets out the development target for Eastbourne; at least 5,022 homes (equivalent to 239 dwellings per annum) over the 21-year period between 2006 and 2027. This is based on 20 years of the South East Plan target of 240 per annum, plus one additional year of 222 per annum as a result of a slight over-delivery in the early years.
- 2.3 The Core Strategy further identifies the level of housing growth anticipated across the Borough's 14 neighbourhoods. Policy B1 states that, as the two 'sustainable centres', the Town Centre and Sovereign Harbour areas are the priority locations for housing growth. Table 1 sets out the distribution of housing delivery across the neighbourhoods.

**Table 1 – Core Strategy Expected housing delivery by neighbourhood (2012-2027)**

Neighbourhood	Identified Net Units	Windfall Net Units	Total Net Units
Town Centre	715	475	1,190
Upperton	245	154	399
Seaside	230	218	448
Old Town	55	46	101
Ocklynge & Rodmill	246	12	258
Roselands & Bridgemere	86	30	116
Hampden Park	75	9	84
Langney	164	14	178
Shinewater & North Langney	69	0	69
Summerdown & Saffrons	4	36	40
Meads	177	181	358
Ratton & Willingdon Village	7	5	12
St Anthony's & Langney Point	20	5	25
Sovereign Harbour	150	0	150
<b>TOTAL (2012-2027)</b>	<b>2,243</b>	<b>1,185</b>	<b>3,428</b>

## Links with other key Council plans and strategies

- 2.4 The importance of delivering housing in the borough is not limited to planning. Other service areas of the Council recognise the local need for housing, the challenges that exist to delivering it and housing's role in achieving overall sustainable communities. As such, the Council has a collective role and responsibility to proactively address this need. Table 2 outlines the existing plans and strategies that the Action Plan should complement.

**Table 2 - Relationship with other Council plans and initiatives**

Document	Description
<b>Eastbourne Core Strategy Local Plan 2006-2027 (2013)</b>	<p>Sets out the framework for delivering housing and growth in the borough, including setting out the level and distribution of housing requirement.</p> <p>The Action Plan supports the Council to achieve the Local Plan's Vision, Strategic Objectives and commitments.</p>
<b>Eastbourne Town Centre Local Plan (2013)</b>	<p>Provides a framework for strengthening the role of the Town Centre and its contribution to the sustainability of the Borough as a whole.</p> <p>The Action Plan supports exploring of a range of development types, including mixed use schemes, to maintain and enhance the Town Centre.</p>
<b>The Corporate Plan 2024-2028 (2024)</b>	<p>Highlights key areas of focus for the Council, including focussing on developing a pipeline of directly delivered homes by the council.</p>
<b>Pride of Place: A Sustainable Community Strategy (2008-2026)</b> <i>Joint strategy produced by the six Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP)</i>	<p>Sets out a long term vision for improving people's quality of life and creating sustainable communities. It demonstrates how local organisations and agencies will work together to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area. The lack of affordable housing is key theme across four of the six LSPs.</p> <p>The Action Plan supports the delivery of affordable housing through a range of mechanisms, including through Council-owned land and development contributions.</p>
<b>Eastbourne Housing Strategy 2020-2024</b>	<p>The Housing Strategy sets the tone and context for further work around its five main housing themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing the supply of new homes;</li> <li>• Promoting access to housing that meets modern standards;</li> <li>• Reducing homelessness;</li> <li>• Successfully managing and maintaining council homes; and</li> <li>• Promoting homes that sustain health &amp; wellbeing.</li> </ul>

### 3. Housing Delivery Test

- 3.1 The HDT is a measurement of the number of homes built against the number of homes required over the previous three-year period, expressed as a percentage:

$$\text{Housing Delivery Test (\%)} = \frac{\text{Total net homes delivered over three year period}}{\text{Total number of homes required over three year period}}$$

- 3.2 The NPPF paragraph 79 sets out certain ‘actions’ that must be implemented depending on the HDT result:
- a) Less than 95%: an LPA should produce an Action Plan to assess the causes of under-delivery and identify actions to increase delivery in future years;
  - b) Less than 85%: a 20% buffer should be applied to the five-year housing land supply calculation, as well as an Action Plan prepared;
  - c) Less than 75%: Policies are considered out of date and the presumption of favour of sustainable development applies to decision-taking, in addition to the requirements for a 20% buffer and an action plan.
- 3.3 The Housing Delivery Test Measurement Technical note identifies that the local housing need as calculated by the standard method is used for years where the local plan is more than 5 years old. In Eastbourne’s case, the fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Core Strategy was in the 2017/18 year so the HDT requirement is entirely based on local housing need as calculated by the standard method.
- 3.4 However, the HDT Measurement Technical note confirms that, due to the unprecedented national lockdown from March 2020, the requirement in years 2019/20 and 2020/21 was adjusted to reflect the temporary disruption to local authority planning services and the construction sector. The ‘homes required’ for the 2020/21 year was reduced by four months.
- 3.5 This means that the 2020/21 housing requirement was reduced to 449 and for the following two years the requirement was the full local housing need as calculated by the standard method. This resulted in a total three-year requirement of 1,880 homes for the years between 2020 and 2023 as set out in Table 3 below.
- 3.6 Housing delivery over the three-year period between 2020 and 2023 amounted to 535 homes. This equates to 28% of the number of homes required by the HDT. The implication of a HDT result of 28% is that the presumption in favour of sustainable development should be applied. In addition, the local planning authority should prepare an Action Plan, and add a 20% buffer to the 5-year housing land supply calculation.
- 3.7 Table 3 identifies the details of the HDT, including number of homes required and the number of homes delivered for each year.

Table 3 - Housing Delivery Test 2023

Number of homes required				Number of homes delivered				HDT: 2023 measurement
2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	TOTAL	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	TOTAL	
449	693	738	1880	243	127	165	535	28%



## 4. Housing Delivery in Eastbourne

- 4.1 The Council monitors planning applications throughout the year, including six-monthly site visits to establish progress on site and engagement with developers where necessary to understand delivery rates and completion targets. The data collected on housing approvals and completions feeds into the Council's Authority Monitoring Report (AMR)<sup>1</sup> which is published on an annual basis.
- 4.3 This section looks at the Council's past housing delivery performance, the extent to which permissions for development are granted, and the average timescales for housing development to commence and complete.

### Completions

- 4.4 Since the start of the Core Strategy plan period in 2006, a total of 3,902 net additional dwellings have been delivered in Eastbourne up to the end of the 2024/25 year (this is the most upto date for which data is available). This is against a cumulative annual target of 4,560 over the same period. Therefore, as at the end of 2024/2025, the cumulative housing delivery is 658 dwellings below the Core Strategy target.
- 4.5 On average, 205 units have been delivered per year since the start of the plan period; however this is influenced by high levels of housing delivery in the early years of the plan period and masks the significant under-delivery in recent years (Figure 1). Housing delivery has exceeded the Core Strategy target just twice in since the UK recession in 2009, including in the 2023/24 year.
- 4.6 Figure 1 shows that completions within the Borough have fluctuated, with this trend expected to continue. The delivery of new homes reduced significantly following the recession in around 2010, with a low of 121 net additional homes delivered in 2010/11. Since then, annual delivery has fluctuated, reaching a high of 254 new homes in the most recent 2023/24 year. However this has been followed by a significantly lower delivery in 2024/25. In the last five years, 870 new homes have been built at an average of 175 homes per year – 65 homes per year less than the Core Strategy target. This is despite the Core Strategy reaching the fifth anniversary of adoption in 2018, resulting in the absence of a five-year housing land supply and the application of the NPPF's presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- 4.7 Housing delivery in Eastbourne is reliant on small sites, with large sites being very limited in the borough. The 3,902 homes delivered since 2006 were across 837 sites, with 646 sites (77%) delivering less than five units each. A further 110 sites accommodated between five and nine units, which means that over 90% of development sites were 'minor' development, delivering less than 10 new homes. Only 81 sites delivered 10 or more homes, 63 of which

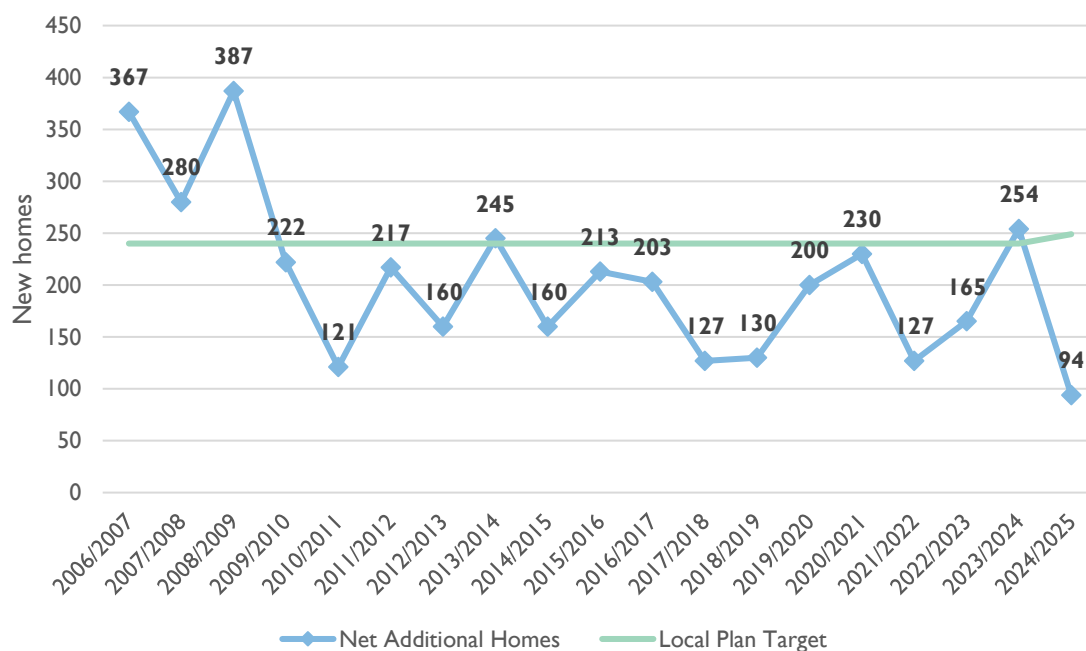
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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/article/1660/Authority-Monitoring-Report>



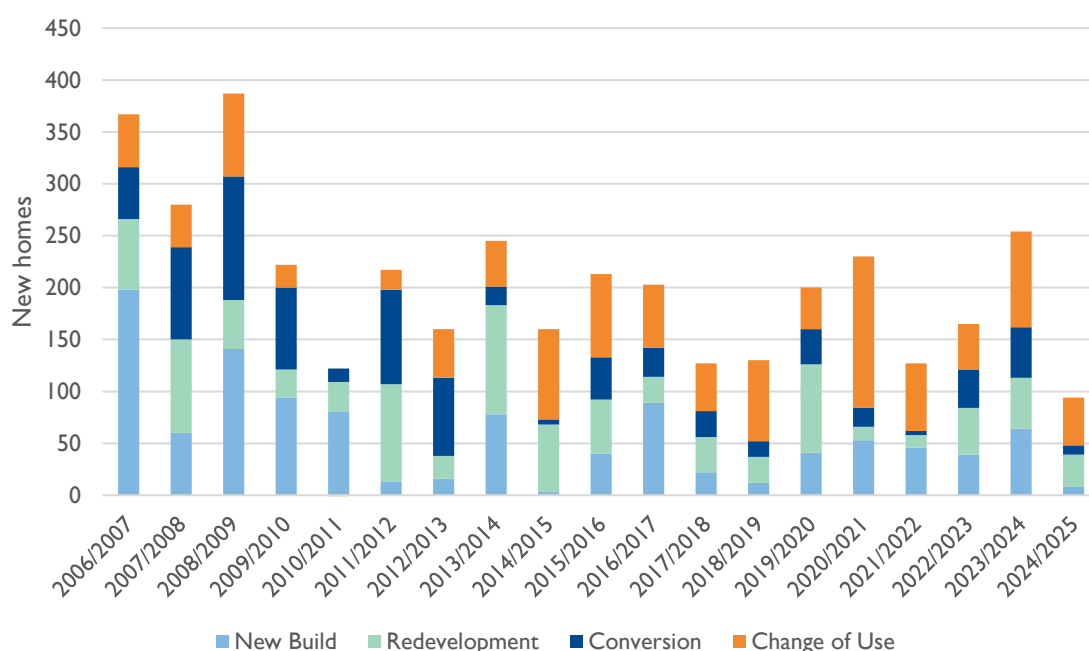
were between 10 and 24 units. Just four were large sites that delivered in excess of 100 homes.

**Figure 1 - Annual Housing Delivery between 2006 and 2025**



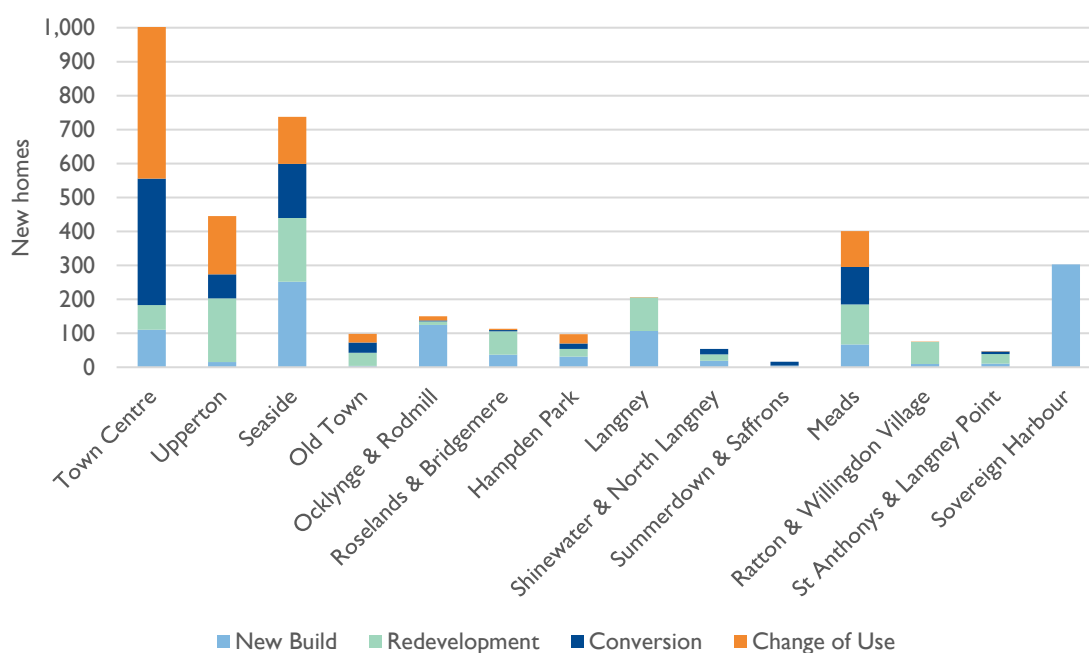
- 4.8 In the three years assessed as part of the HDT 2023, a total of 535 homes were delivered, consisting of 243 in 2020/21, 127 in 2021/22 and 165 in 2022/23. These homes were delivered across 111 sites, the majority of which were small sites of less than five units (91 sites | 77%). A further 15 sites delivered between five and 9 units, and 12 sites delivered between 10 and 24 units. The largest site was for 51 homes.
- 4.9 Housing completions in the Borough have been delivered via a range of development types. Over the plan period, 'New build' schemes have contributed the highest number of homes (28%); however Figure 2 shows that the majority of these have been delivered early in the plan period, due to the completion of final phases of development at Sovereign Harbour, and on the completion of two large sites in 2013/14. Changes of Use have contributed 27%, whilst Redevelopments accounted for 22% and Conversions for 20%.
- 4.10 Over the last ten years since 2014 there has been a strong trend towards changes of use, which has delivered 43% of homes over this period at an average of 74 homes per year. This trend has been particularly influenced by the changes to Permitted Development rights that have allowed offices to be converted to residential without the need for planning permission.

Figure 2 - Completions by Development Type between 2006 and 2025



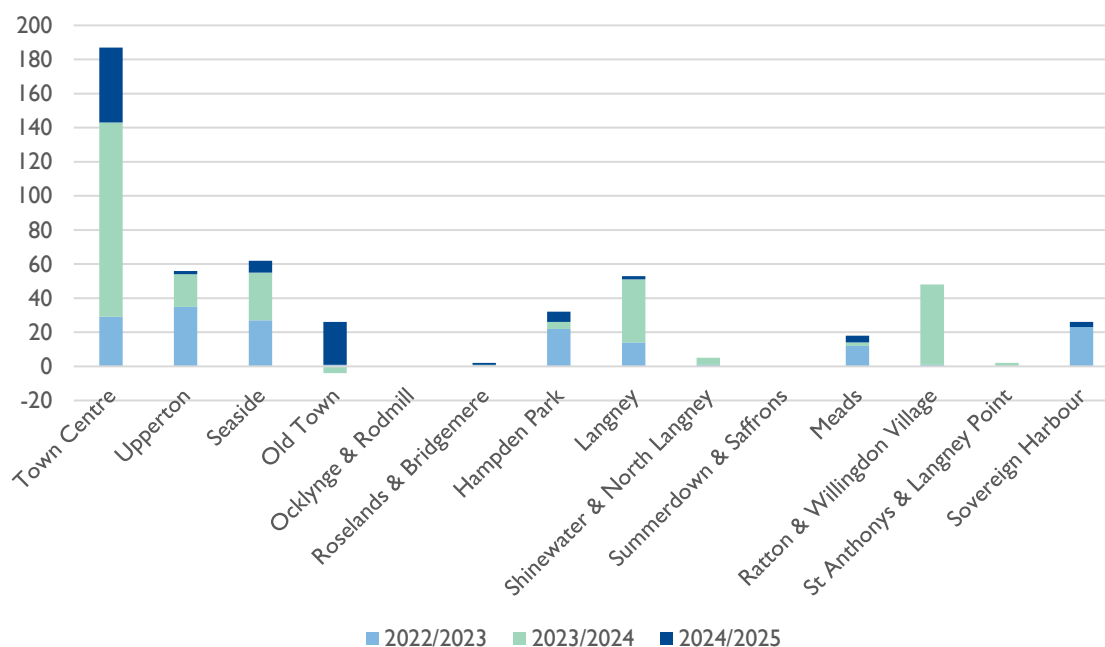
4.11 As shown in Figure 3, the Town Centre neighbourhood has delivered the highest number of new homes since 2006 (1,160 net additional units), with the majority of these (84%) coming through Changes of Use and Conversion. The Town Centre has delivered a consistent number of homes every year, with an average of 64 net additional dwellings per year between 2006 and 2025. It also highlights that the Town Centre is achieving its role as a priority growth area as envisaged by the Core Strategy.

Figure 3 – Total Number of Net Additional Dwellings by Development Type and Neighbourhood between 2006 and 2025



- 4.12 Figure 4 shows that over the last three years the two neighbourhoods of the Town Centre and Seaside have delivered the highest number of housing completions, followed by Upperton.

**Figure 4 – HDT Completions by Neighbourhood**



### Permissions for new homes

- 4.12 Since the start of the Core Strategy plan period (2006), the Council has granted permissions for a net addition of 5,252 dwellings on 1,096 sites, at an average of 292 dwellings per year. Table 4 shows the number of new homes granted permission and the number of sites per year.

**Table 4 - Numbers of new homes granted permission per year**

Year	Net additional units granted permission	Number of sites
2006/07	460	85
2007/08	260	52
2008/09	232	75
2009/10	548	82
2010/11	296	42
2011/12	162	41
2012/13	251	59
2013/14	196	61
2014/15	375	69
2015/16	241	63

Year	Net additional units granted permission	Number of sites
2016/17	297	77
2017/18	361	69
2018/19	193	64
2019/20	348	63
2020/21	307	52
2021/22	289	49
2022/23	276	50
2023/24	160	43
2024/25	269	37
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5,521</b>	<b>1,133</b>

- 4.13 Of these 1,133 sites, 69% would accommodate less than five homes, and 82% would be non-major development. 100 sites would accommodate ten or more homes, with just four sites taking 100 homes or more.

#### Permission to Commencement

- 4.14 Of sites that have been developed since 2006, it has taken an average of 13.9 months between a development being granted planning permission and development starting on site, across all sizes of site. The average time for construction to start is fairly consistent for all sites with less than 25 dwellings being between 12 and 15 months; however for sites with more than 25 dwellings, the average increases to 27 months.
- 4.15 However, 17% took more than 36 months before development started on site. The longest time between the original planning permission being granted and development commencing was 123 months (just over 10 years).

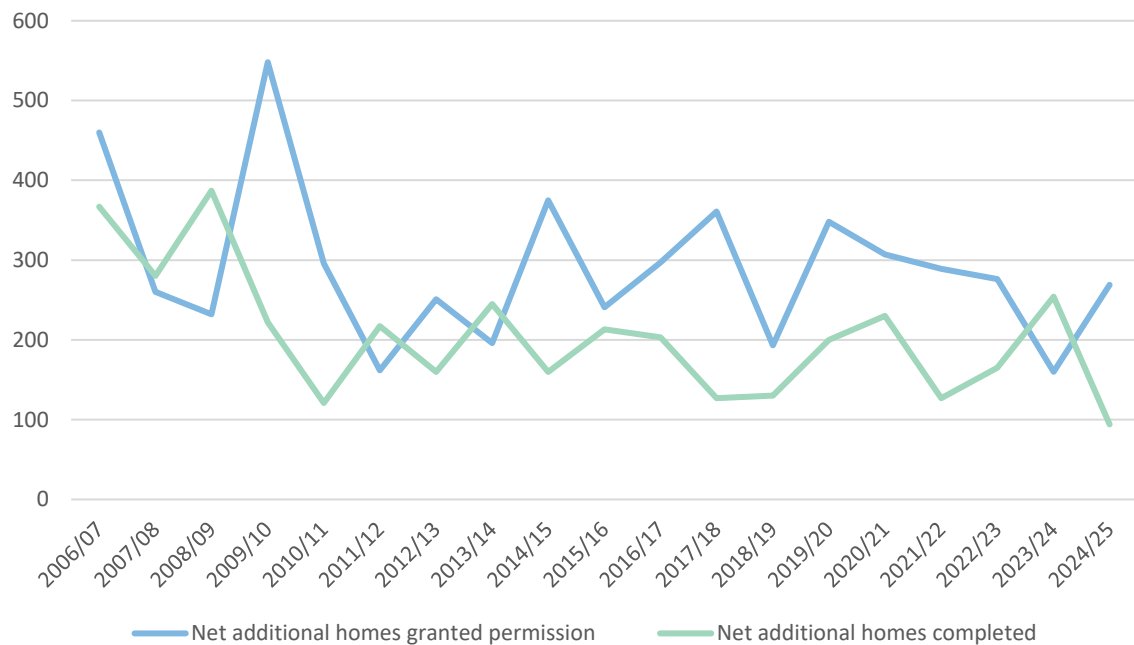
#### Commencement to Completion

- 4.16 The size of the development does have a significant impact on the average time it takes for a development to be built out. Small sites of less than five units take an average of 5.8 months to complete, increasing to 8.6 months for developments of between five and nine units, and 12.5 months for developments of between 10 and 24 units. Developments of 50 to 99 units have taken an average of 19.2 months to build out, whilst the average build-out time for developments with over 100 units has been 38 months.
- 4.17 17% took more than a year to build out, including all of the developments over 25 units. Of these 99 sites, 51 sites were for less than five units, which equates to 12% of the total number of sites of less than five units.

## Permitted sites not built out

4.18 Figure 5 shows the number of newly permitted dwellings per year compared to the number of units built.

**Figure 5 - Permissions per year compared to completions between 2006 and 2025**



4.19 When compared against the number of homes that have been delivered over the same period, it suggests that around 28% of permitted homes have not been built out.

## 5. Five Year Housing Land Supply

- 5.1 Paragraph 74 of the NPPF requires LPAs to identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years' worth of housing against their housing requirement.
- 5.2 One of the implications of a HDT measurement below 85% is that a 20% buffer (equivalent to an additional year's housing need) should be added to the five-year housing land supply calculation, instead of a 5% buffer required by the NPPF. However, due to persistent under-delivery of housing over recent years, the Council had already been adding the 20% buffer onto the five-year housing land supply calculation.
- 5.3 At April 2025, the Eastbourne housing land supply stood at 1,229 homes. As the Core Strategy is more than five years old, this means that the land supply should be assessed against the local housing need, as calculated by the standard method in accordance with the NPPF. The local housing need as of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 is 710 homes per year.
- 5.4 Therefore, as of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025, the Council could only demonstrate a 1.4-year supply of housing land. This means that the NPPF's presumption in favour of sustainable development applies in Eastbourne.

## 6. Planning Performance

- 6.1 This section investigates the performance of the Council's planning service in order to identify any issues in performance that may be influencing the low levels of housing delivery in Eastbourne.

### Development Management

- 6.2 Government have set national performance criteria on speed and quality against which all Councils are judged. Persistent failure to perform against these targets runs the risk of the Council being designated as 'Non- Performing', and special measures could follow and would be initiated by Central Government.
- 6.3 The assessment of the 'special measure' threshold has two limbs to it and reviews the Council's performance for a specified period. The targets for speed are 60% of 'major' applications to be determined within 13 weeks and for 70% of 'minor' and 'other' applications to be determined within 8 weeks, assessed over a 12-month period.
- 6.4 In the 12 months to the end of December 2024 the Council determined 89% of major development decisions and 75% of non-major (inc. Other) development decisions within these set timescales or by extension. Therefore, the Council has exceeded the performance criteria for speed.
- 6.5 The targets for quality are less than 10% of decisions for major and non-major applications being overturned on appeal, based upon a two-year rolling government data period. In the latest available national statistics<sup>2</sup>, the Council had one major development refusal overturned at appeal (representing 4.5%), and 5 non-major applications (representing 0.8%) overturned at appeal. For both of these quality criteria the Council has exceeded the performance criteria. It remains important, however, that all the applications are monitored by senior officers to ensure that decisions are made in accordance with national advice and the development plan, and also that decisions are made in a timely fashion.
- 6.7 **It** is considered that in granting planning permission for over 90% of all applications received that the planning services of Eastbourne Borough Council have supported the development industry and helped to meet the aspirations of the applicants. Only where there are substantive material planning considerations is an application refused.
- 6.8 Since 2017 the percentage of applications determined at delegated level has significantly increased, which is reflective of the changes made to the Council's scheme of delegation at this time. This has assisted applicants in getting quicker decisions on their applications.

Table 5 identifies the volume of planning applications determined over recent years. It shows a consistent level of decisions made over the period.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-planning-application-statistics> (Live tables 151, 153, P152a and P154)



- 6.7 It is considered that in granting planning permission for over 90% of all applications received that the planning services of Eastbourne Borough Council have supported the development industry and helped to meet the aspirations of the applicants. Only where there are substantive material planning considerations is an application refused.
- 6.8 Since 2017 the percentage of applications determined at delegated level has significantly increased, which is reflective of the changes made to the Council's scheme of delegation at this time. This has assisted applicants in getting quicker decisions on their applications.

Table 5 - Decisions made on planning applications

Decisions	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Average
<b>All Decisions</b>	545	569	598	531	499	475	442	601	433	400	<b>509</b>
<b>Delegated</b>	472 (87%)	505 (89%)	559 (93%)	478 (90%)	478 (96%)	450 (95%)	432 (98%)	575 (96%)	420 (97%)	386 (96%)	<b>94%</b>
<b>Granted</b>	488 (90%)	515 (91%)	544 (91%)	487 (92%)	426 (85%)	429 (90%)	401 (91%)	552 (92%)	413 (95%)	374 (93%)	<b>91%</b>
<b>Refused</b>	57 (10%)	54 (10%)	54 (9%)	49 (9%)	73 (15%)	46 (10%)	41 (9%)	49 (8%)	20 (5%)	26 (7%)	<b>9%</b>

- 6.9 In addition to the formal applications received, the Council offers a paid for pre application advice service. Table 6 indicates the numbers of pre-application enquiries received by the Council over recent years.

Table 6 - Pre-application advice issued

Pre-Application Advice	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
<b>Householder</b>	229	96	134	91	129	126	77	46	19
<b>Medium</b>	147	102	67	14	19	12	25	36	27
<b>Major</b>	18	17	12	8	6	2	1	2	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>49</b>

- 6.10 Prior to April 2017, the pre-application service was free; therefore, we have seen a drop in pre-application requests since the introduction of the fee, especially in the Householder category. This amount of pre-application advice again shows support for the development industry in terms of trying to advise applicants on how schemes could be amended to make them more acceptable and more likely to be granted permission.

### Planning Policy

- 6.11 The Core Strategy was adopted in February 2013, which meant that its 5-year anniversary was in 2018. The status of the Core Strategy and progress against the LDS is monitored on

an annual basis through the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR). A review of the Core Strategy has determined that the Core Strategy cannot be considered to be up to date. There are a number of reasons for this:

- Housing delivery over the plan period has been lower than the amount required by the Core Strategy
- Housing need has increased significantly since 2013
- A five-year housing land supply cannot be demonstrated.
- It is more than 5 years old

6.12 The Eastbourne Local Development Scheme (LDS) 2025-2028 was adopted in March 2025. It identifies a timetable for the production of a new Local Plan for Eastbourne, covering the plan period 2022 to 2042, which will contain both strategic and non-strategic policies that will, once adopted, superseded all current planning policies for the Borough.

6.13 A Regulation 18 'Growth Strategy' consultation was held between November 2022 and January 2023.

6.14 A Land Availability Assessment [LAA] was published alongside the Growth Strategy consultation in 2022, showing a potential housing capacity of 320 homes per year over the plan period.

6.15 In December 2024, the Council published an update to the Brownfield Land Register<sup>3</sup>, as required by legislation. The purpose of the Brownfield Land Register is to provide up-to-date, publicly available information on brownfield land (previously developed sites) that are suitable for housing. The intention is that it will provide certainty to developers and communities, encourage investment in local areas, and bring forward derelict and underused land for new homes.

6.16 The 2024 Brownfield Land Register contains 115 sites that meet the criteria for inclusion. The 115 sites have sufficient capacity to accommodate 2,419 new dwelling units. Of these 115 sites, 84 sites have already been granted planning permission (73% of the total sites), equating to 1348 units (56% of the total units). There are two sites on the Register that are allocated in a local plan, both of which are in the town centre.

### Council Plans and Initiatives

6.17 Table 7 outlines the key areas of work that the Council is involved in and its role in supporting housing delivery within the borough.

**Table 7 - Council mechanisms to support housing delivery**

Current Position and housing delivery mechanisms
Adopted <b>Eastbourne Core Strategy Local Plan</b> identifies the overall level of housing growth over the Plan period; 5,022 net dwellings. This growth is distributed to the 14 neighbourhood areas of the borough.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/article/1661/Brownfield-Land-Register>

<https://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/eastbourne-core-strategy>

The Council is committed to **updating its Local Plan**. It will contain both strategic and non-strategic policies and will cover the period between 2022 and 2042. Public consultation on Regulation 18 (Issues & Options stage) was undertaken in November 2019, and further consultation on a potential 'Growth Strategy' was carried out between Nov 2022 and January 2023.

<https://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/local-development-scheme>

Established a **Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Register** to record the interest of people wanting to build their own home within the borough outside the SDNP. The criteria for the register has recently been amended to introduce a Part 1 and Part 2 to the register.

<https://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/self-build-and-custom-housebuilding-register>

The Council maintains a **Brownfield Land Register** containing sites that are appropriate for residential development. The Register is updated on an annual basis. Future updates will gauge if any sites should be granted 'permission in principle'.

<https://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/Brownfield-Land-Register>

Continue to update the **Land Availability Assessment (LAA)**, a Calls for Sites, to identify further potentially suitable housing sites to be considered for development in the new Local Plan, as well as inclusion in Brownfield Land Register was undertaken between 14 March 2025 and 25<sup>th</sup> April 2025.

<https://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/Land-Availability-Assessment>

In June 2017 Lewes District and Eastbourne Borough Councils set up the development arm of the Council; **Aspiration Homes**. Together with **Eastbourne Housing Investment Company Ltd** the Council has agreed funding to enable investment in commercial and affordable residential accommodation schemes to deliver housing. This includes focussing on land acquisitions that can unlock capacity for new affordable housing delivery.

Identifying financial support to unlock new sites and schemes, such as the Affordable Homes Programme 21-26 allocation and Brownfield Land Release Fund (BLRF).

The Council is using its own land holdings in the town to replace its underused assets with new housing projects.

Recently completed schemes with funding from Homes England and the BLRF:

- 'The Glenn', Southfields Road a development of 19 1- and 2-bedroom flats, including two ground floor fully accessible flats with private gardens, built with a fabric first approach and including green roof, solar panels, and air source heat pump was completed in 2023 on a former council car park.
- Fort Lane, a development of seven 2-bedroom houses, developed with a modular housing framework were completed in 2023.
- Cavalry Crescent as mentioned above, a development of 6 houses and 14 flats, including wheelchair-friendly accommodation completed in 2024.

Other sites:

- Bedfordwell Road has been granted planning permission for 100 new homes and funding secured from Homes England and the Brownfield Land Release Fund.
- Biddenden Close - The Council exchanged contracts with the Eastbourne Community Land Trust (CLT) in February 2022 to bring forward 5 x new affordable homes for the town

- The Former Magistrates Court site has planning permission for the redevelopment of the site for 30 flats.

The Council are carrying out an estate review and working with public sector partners to review land holdings and bring forward any potentially surplus land that could be suitable for residential development.

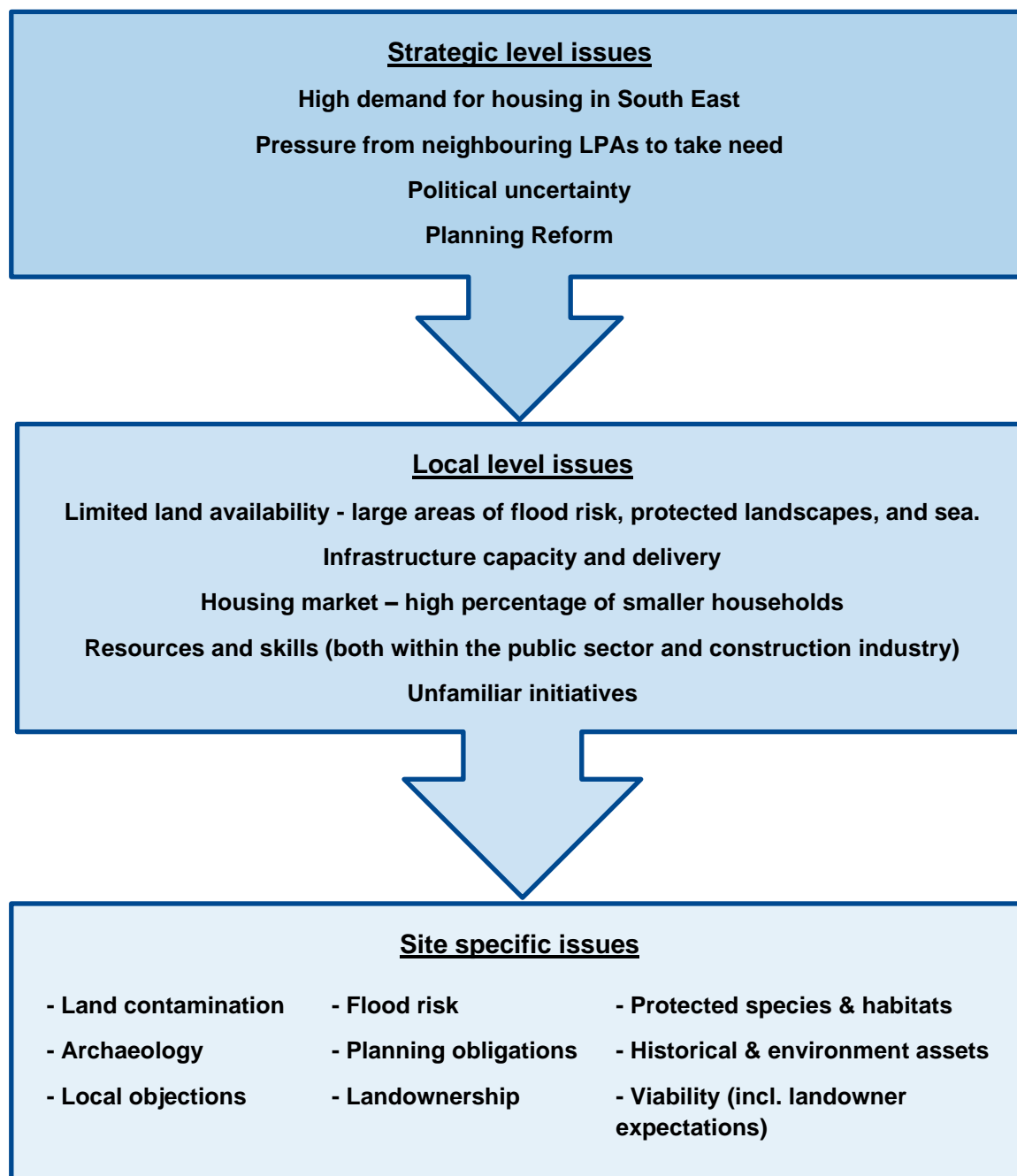
The Council has begun to use off-site modular construction to accelerate time frames for housing delivery on projects.

The **Local Plan Steering Group** is formed of five Councillors. It provides direction and authorisation for actions and approaches to a variety of Planning Policy projects helping to avoid unnecessary delays to projects that may or may not need going to Cabinet.

## 7. Key Challenges

- 7.1 This section explores the challenges facing key stakeholders in bringing forward residential developments in the borough. Figure 6 highlights the different layers of challenges to housing delivery relevant to the borough.

Figure 6 - Layers of challenges to housing delivery



- 7.2 As part of the investigation into key challenges, the Council has engaged with 'Developers East Sussex', which is a forum of developers and local authorities that take an active role in the delivery of quality sustainable development in East Sussex, in order to try to understand the reasons for lack of delivery of housing in Eastbourne.

- 7.3 In addition to the nation-wide issues facing the construction industry such as uncertainties surrounding Brexit and a construction skills shortage, it is understood from discussions with local developers and stakeholders involved in the development industry that there are local factors that may help to explain relatively low levels of housing delivery.

### Planning Service

- 7.4 It is not considered that the performance of the Council's planning service is having any significant adverse impact on the rate of delivery of housing. The Council are generally processing applications in a timely manner and granting permissions on over 90% of applications with refusals only where there are substantive material planning considerations to justify this. The high rate of approvals, along with the number of pre-application advice responses provided to potential applicants, shows that the Council is helping to support the development industry in delivering housing.
- 7.5 It is accepted that the Council does not currently have an up-to-date Local Plan; however progress is being made on preparing a new plan. The fact that the Council cannot demonstrate a five-year housing land supply means that the NPPF's presumption in favour of sustainable development applies in Eastbourne, but this has not had any significant impact on the number of homes being delivered. This suggests that the reasons for low levels of housing delivery in Eastbourne are more likely to lie outside of the planning system.

### Development constraints and land availability

- 7.6 Eastbourne's Local Housing Need, calculated through the standard methodology, currently amounts to **710 net additional homes per annum**. This is significantly more than the housing target in the Core Strategy, which itself has not been achieved for a number of years despite the fact that the presumption in favour of sustainable development has been applicable.
- 7.7 Eastbourne has a number of geographic constraints to development, including the South Downs National Park to the west, the English Channel to the south, and a tightly drawn administrative boundary with Wealden District to the north and east. A significant proportion of the town is within an area of flood risk, particularly Eastbourne Park in the centre of the town, the majority of which is functional floodplain and therefore not suitable for development.
- 7.8 As such, a local housing need of 710 net additional homes per annum is unachievable within the Borough, but due to the Core Strategy being more than 5 years old, this local housing need is used to calculate the five year housing land supply and has a strong influence on the result of the Housing Delivery Test.

### Development Finance

- 7.9 As identified earlier in this report, the majority of development sites in Eastbourne are small sites that can provide less than five units. There are very few large sites, which means that

large volume housebuilders who operate on a national scale are not attracted into the Borough. The scale of the sites means that delivery is reliant on local builders and small development companies, who have different business models to larger developers.

- 7.10 The small scale of development, and the lower margins associated with this, mean that the cost of development finance takes up a larger proportion of the developers return. Therefore they are less willing to borrow in order to fund development and are reliant on re-investing returns from other development in order to start the development on their next site.
- 7.11 If a developer had needed to borrow to purchase the site, they are more likely to build it out faster in order to minimise finance costs. However, if a developer has not had to borrow in order to buy the land, they are more willing to delay the development of the site until it is more advantageous for them to do so.

### Local construction skills

- 7.12 The problem is exacerbated by the fall in the number of local builders operating over recent years. During the period of economic decline between 2009 and 2011, employment in the construction industry fell as skilled tradespeople left the industry. The impact of this fell most heavily on small and medium-sized enterprises (SME). Data from the Business Register and Employment Survey (December 2017) shows that the number of business in East Sussex that specialise in the development of building projects has fallen by 11% since 2010.
- 7.13 This means that there are fewer local builders and developers operating in the local area at a scale that is appropriate to deliver the type of sites in Eastbourne. A fall in the number of local builders and developers during economic uncertainties could help to explain the low rate of housing delivery since the recession.
- 7.14 In addition, the number of people completing construction-related apprenticeships has fallen heavily, reducing new entrants to the industry. The number of starts in 'construction, planning and built environment' subject area' courses in East Sussex has been steadily decreasing from 2,020 in 2011/12 to a low of 1,320 in 2016/17. This suggests that the lack of developers who operate at a level appropriate for sites in Eastbourne is going to be an on-going problem.

### Viability

- 7.15 In addition to the small scale of the development sites in Eastbourne, the majority of sites are also on previously developed land. This has implications on the viability of development due to the higher existing use values, more expensive remediation and greater difficulties in design and construction compared to larger, undeveloped sites.
- 7.16 The viability issues in Eastbourne are further evidenced by the fact that the Eastbourne Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule puts a charge of £75.19<sup>4</sup> per sqm

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/article/1669/Community-Infrastructure-Levy-charging-schedule-and-related-policies>



on residential houses (apartments are not viable for a CIL charge). However, it should be noted that just the other side of the administrative boundary in Wealden District, the CIL charge is £214.73 per sqm<sup>5</sup>.

- 7.17 The impact of having a zero rate for CIL for apartment development in Eastbourne has meant that over 70% of homes delivered since CIL was adopted have been in the form of flats. The lack of variety in the types of homes that are being delivered reduces the absorption rates and reduces the pool of people looking to buy a new home in Eastbourne, which subsequently impacts on the returns for the developer and makes development less attractive.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.wealden.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-advice/community-infrastructure-levy/paying-cil/>

## 8. Actions

- 8.1 This section highlights what mechanisms the Council already has in place to support and increase housing delivery, as well as what actions are required to continue this work. The Action Plan aims to identify where there may be opportunities to strengthen and/ or improve across the Council.

### *Preparing a new Local Plan*

- 8.2 The Council is preparing a new Local Plan for Eastbourne covering the period from 2022 to 2042. The new Local Plan will contain both strategic and non-strategic policies, and will allocate sites for housing development to provide greater levels of certainty for developers. As part of the process of preparing the Local Plan, the Council are investigating opportunities for releasing larger scale greenfield sites for development, considering how policies can help to increase the variety and type of homes that are being delivered, and also assessing the implications on local plan policies on development viability to ensure that development can come forward in a sustainable manner.

### *Reviewing CIL Charging Schedule*

- 8.3 The Council had previously intended to review the CIL Charging Schedule in order to assess whether or not the current CIL charges are having an impact on viability. However, recent proposals for reforms to the planning system, including the introduction of a new Infrastructure Levy to replace Section 106 developer contributions and CIL has created some uncertainty over the future of the CIL Charging Schedule. This has meant that further work on the CIL Charging Schedule will be delayed until the details of planning reforms in this area are better known.

### *Direct provision of new homes by the Council*

- 8.4 The Council will deliver new affordable and market homes through its local authority companies, Eastbourne Housing Investment Company Ltd, and Aspiration Homes LLP, which is a joint venture with Lewes District Council.
- 8.5 EHICL's programme is advanced and represents a mixed portfolio that helps meet the Council's strategic objectives in a number of ways. Through the financial delegations and established governance arrangements next phase delivery of acquisitions and new developments will further promote place shaping, generate financial returns and enable the Council to more directly meet strategic housing priorities. Some sites have already been delivered and there are a number that are currently under construction or in the pipeline. The Council also continues to work with developers in helping to bring forward the affordable housing elements of their schemes, and where necessary directly investing in affordable housing to help delivery of the whole site.

### *Updating the Land Availability Assessment*

- 8.6 The Council has taken a proactive approach to identifying and assessing potential development sites through the LAA, including undertaking regular ‘calls for sites’ and maintaining regular contact with site proponents to understand site availabilities and barriers to delivery.

### *Updating the Brownfield Land Register*

- 8.7 The Council updates the Brownfield Land Register on an annual basis and ensures that the list of sites and site plans are made publicly available. The Council will also review Part 1 of the Brownfield Land Register to establish if there are any suitable sites for Part 2 of the register that will grant ‘permission in principle’.

### *Maintaining Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Register*

- 8.8 The Council continues to maintain a Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Register on its website, and have undertaken a review of all interested parties who have registered to ensure that they are still actively seeking a plot. The Local Plan will also consider a policy on supporting self-build and custom housebuilding.

### *Investigating funding opportunities*

- 8.9 The Council continue to explore appropriate funding opportunities to help unlock sites with help from the Regeneration and Economic Development Team. As discussed above, the Council has recently received grants from Homes England via the Affordable Homes Programme 21-26 allocation to help the development of sites.

### *Engaging with Developers*

- 8.10 The Council will engage with the development industry through the Developers East Sussex forum in order to understand changes in the local market and reasons for under-delivery of sites. This could result in additional actions being identified through amendments to this action plan.
- 8.11 The Council will also continue involvement with Team East Sussex, which represents East Sussex at the SELEP Board and is involved in various local initiatives which aim to improve construction skills and the supply chain in East Sussex.

### Actions and Timescales

- 8.12 Table 8 outlines the actions to be taken by the Planning Policy, with input from other teams within the Council where relevant. Each action is given a timescale within which the action should be progressed.

Table 8 - Actions to increase housing delivery

Actions	Timescale
<b>Monitoring</b>	
Continue to monitor and analyse policy performance and delivery against Core Strategy Monitoring Framework and publish results in annual Authority Monitoring Report.	Ongoing
<b>Prepare a new Local Plan</b>	
Consult on a 'Growth Strategy' in 2022/23 to ensure that the Council is planning for the appropriate level of housing growth, supported by the required infrastructure.	✓
Work with infrastructure providers to understand requirements for the new plan period	Medium
Investigate opportunities for releasing larger scale greenfield sites for development through Local Plan allocations	Medium
Assess the implications on local plan policies on development viability	Medium
Adopt a new Local Plan with a new, realistic housing target	Medium
<b>Direct provision of new homes through Aspiration Homes &amp; Eastbourne Housing Investment Company Ltd</b>	
Review portfolio of sites and explore opportunities for the Council to feed into and deliver housing through the Brownfield Land Register and Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Register	Ongoing
Planning and Commercial Business teams to engage at early stages of development projects to better understand potential challenges and reduce risk of delay at planning application stage.	Ongoing
<b>Land Availability Assessment</b>	
Undertake regular 'Call for Sites' to identify additional development opportunities	Ongoing
Maintain contact with proponents of existing registered sites to confirm availability and barriers to development	Ongoing
Update LAA on an annual basis	Ongoing
<b>Brownfield Land Register</b>	
Continue to update Register on an annual basis.	Short
Review Part 1 of the Register to establish if there are any suitable sites to grant 'permission in principle'.	Medium
<b>Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Register</b>	
Undertake review of registered interested parties to ensure still actively seeking plot.	Medium
Consider how the local plan can help deliver self-build and custom housebuilding plots	Medium
Identify alternatives to the private sector to help deliver suitable plots.	Medium
<b>Investigate funding opportunities</b>	
Explore appropriate funding opportunities to help unlock sites with help from Regeneration and Economic Development Team.	Ongoing
<b>Engage with Developers</b>	

Actions	Timescale
Attendance at Developers East Sussex forum and discuss constraints to housing delivery with developers	Ongoing
Continue involvement with Team East Sussex and representation in SELEP Board	Ongoing
<b>Encourage opportunities for construction skills training</b>	
Secure local labour agreements on major developments through Local Employment & Training SPD	Ongoing
<b>Local Plan Steering Group</b>	
Continue to involve Group in Policy projects, particularly the preparation of the new Local Plan	Ongoing
Update Local Plan Steering Group on housing delivery on a regular basis	Ongoing

*Short: 0-6 months; Medium: next 2 years; Long: next 5 years.*

## 9. Monitoring

### Next Steps

- 9.1 The Action Plan is a 'live' document and will be monitored on a regular basis alongside the Council's Authority Monitoring Report. The effectiveness of the actions will be reviewed and where necessary revised or new actions introduced.
- 9.2 Feedback and progress on the outcomes of the actions contained within this plan will be outlined in the next Action Plan.