

Housing Strategy 2015-20

PROGRESS REPORT MARCH 2017

This report provides an update on progress against the aims of the Housing Strategy 2015-20.

For accompanying statistics, please see the statistical update 2015-16.

2016-17 statistics will be published after April 2017.

Aim 1. Increase the delivery of affordable housing.

1.1

Maximise opportunities for affordable housing development across the borough. Undertake viability assessments where the full policy requirement for affordable housing is not offered by developers, and ensure that viability challenges are met robustly through expert scrutiny and the percentage of affordable housing on site is maximised in all cases

Responsibility - Housing Development, Planning, Economic Development

Target Date - Ongoing

Outcomes - Increased supply of affordable housing.

Progress - 303 affordable units have been granted planning permission on qualifying sites. All sites granted permission except one have delivered the full affordable housing percentage. Viability challenges are being met robustly, but in some cases affordable housing may be reduced to accommodate other commercial benefits.

Planning officers have received training on affordable housing requirements via S106, and Councillors and Planning officers have attended a workshop on viability assessment.

The Methodist Church site on Woodbridge Road has made a financial payment and discussions are ongoing regarding the Guildford Station re-development. The Stag Hill Cathedral site also proposed reduced affordable housing due to viability, and a clawback/overage provision was negotiated, however the scheme has since been refused permission so there is no need to implement this for the time being.

Overall provision of affordable housing may be reduced by government policy that prioritises starter homes. We await further policy details from the Government

1.2

Build or acquire at least 150 new council homes within the life of this strategy, 80 of which will be completed by 2016

Responsibility - Housing Development, Planning, Economic Development

Target Date - 2016-2020

Outcomes - Increased supply of Council homes for rent

Progress - 65 affordable rent units completed with 12 more to be confirmed in June. Planning permission has also been granted for 103 affordable rented homes by 2020 with several other sites in pre-planning stages. We are currently on track to exceed the targets initially set out in this strategy

1.3

Build or acquire at least 150 new council homes within the life of this strategy, 80 of which will be completed by 2016

Responsibility - Housing Development, Planning, Economic Development

Target Date - 2016-2020

Outcomes - Increased supply of Council homes for rent

Progress - 65 affordable rent units completed with 12 more to be confirmed in June.

Planning permission has also been granted for 103 affordable rented homes by 2020 with several other sites in pre-planning stages.

We are currently on track to exceed the targets initially set out in this strategy.

1.4

Review our assets and land holdings to identify potential for further housing development

Responsibility - Housing Development, Planning, Economic Development

Target Date - Ongoing

Outcomes - Review completed and sites or buildings that are suitable for conversion identified with plans to bring these forward.

Progress - A periodic review of this is ongoing, phase one has been completed and phase two is currently ongoing with several sites in the pipeline.

1.5

Work with housing providers to deliver new affordable homes across the borough.

Responsibility - Housing Development, Planning, Economic Development

Target Date - Ongoing

Outcomes - Increased supply of Registered Provider affordable homes for rent and through immediate tenures

Progress - We continue to work with housing associations to deliver affordable homes.

Housing association partners are on track to deliver between 200 and 300 new homes in the life of this strategy. However, they are consistently finding it harder to progress land led schemes.

1.6

Support the delivery of affordable housing on rural exception sites where there is evidence of such a need.

Responsibility - Housing Development, Planning

Target Date - Ongoing

Outcomes - Increase the amount of affordable housing in the rural areas, helping to maintain the viability of villages in the Borough.

Progress - Two rural exception sites have been delivered containing a combined 303 units. Two other smaller sites have been identified that may bring forward rural exception housing. We are submitting a bid for government funding to establish community groups in the borough who may be able to take advantage of forthcoming funding streams for community build projects.

1.7

Promote the provision of a range of affordable housing types and tenures of which at least 70 per cent are for rent on all developments.

Responsibility - Housing Development, Planning

Target Date - Ongoing

Outcomes - Rented housing is prioritised and housing needs are met for the full range of applicants on our housing register.

Progress - The Planning and Infrastructure SPD has been revised, setting out our policy on tenure mix, which is as follows:

GBC AFFORDABLE HOUSING POLICY

Please consult Housing Advice Services on any applications which meet these criteria

CURRENT POLICY (Local Plan 2003, H11 and Planning contributions SPD updated 2016)

- Sites of 15+ homes or 0.5+ hectares (or 10+ homes and 0.4ha in rural areas) must provide at least 35% affordable housing
- Of which
 - 60% Affordable Rent (Rents no higher than LHA)
 - 40% Intermediate tenures e.g. shared ownership

We are awaiting clarification from the Government on starter homes. The affordable housing policy in the new Local Plan is as follows:

GBC AFFORDABLE HOUSING POLICY

Please consult Housing Advice Services on any applications which meet these criteria

NEW LOCAL PLAN

- Developments providing five or more homes, or sites of 0.17 ha must provide **at least 40%** affordable housing (however Govt has introduced rule that sites of under 11 homes will not provide affordable)
- Of which
 - 70% Affordable Rent (Rents no higher than LHA)
 - 30% Intermediate tenures e.g. shared ownership

1.8

Ensure the mix of new affordable homes on any development is appropriate for the proposed locality taking into account of the existing supply and local need

Responsibility - Housing Development, Planning

Target Date - Ongoing

Outcomes - Negotiations with developers are influenced by available evidence on local needs.

Progress - We encourage developers to work with us at an early stage and most do. Where developers have put forward an unsuitable mix we have successfully challenged where possible

1.9

Ensure that all new affordable homes are high quality with good standards of design, construction and sustainability

Responsibility - Housing Development, Planning

Target Date - Ongoing

Outcomes - Good quality housing

Progress - In this regard we are looking to reduce fuel poverty. Renewable energy is a good way of doing this i.e. providing energy at no cost at the point of use. They should be sustainable but we would like to see low energy consuming and if possible focusing on consuming renewable energy.

In terms of our own developments, we have agreed standards that are above minimum building regulations.

1.10

Seek to maximise the resources available for new affordable homes through the HCA and other funding.

Responsibility - Housing Development

Target Date - Ongoing

Outcomes - Local taxpayers' money goes further and an ongoing development programme for affordable home is viable

Progress - While grant was available we were allocated over £1 million of funding. Alongside this, we were also granted £500,000 in funding for the provision of gypsy and traveller pitches.

The government has channelled all funding away from rented housing and into ownership projects. We are not currently providing shared ownership so all current schemes are being funded using Council reserves and receipts from the past sale of homes via the Right to Buy. (The Council has no choice but to sell homes to tenants who wish to exercise their Right to Buy, providing the tenants meet criteria set by the Government).

We have agreed a loan via the Homes and Communities Agency due to the designation of the Slyfield Area Regeneration Project being designated as a government 'Housing Zone'.

1.11

Identify further Council-owned land for traveller pitch provision, and prepare a planning application.

Responsibility - tbc

Target Date - By 2016

Outcomes - tbc

Progress - We have planning permission and are looking to begin building in March 2017. Having delivered five pitches in Ash we have gained planning permission for six more pitches in Effingham.

Aim 2. Make best use of existing homes and improve housing conditions in the Borough

2.1

Bring 75 empty homes back into use in the borough over the life of the strategy.

Responsibility - Private Sector Services

Target Date - 2020

Outcomes - Fewer long-term empty properties

Progress - We have brought 14 homes back in to use following Council intervention. The number of long-term empty homes reduced from 387 to 369 between October 2014 and October 2015.

2.2

Improve the worst housing conditions in the private sector.

Responsibility - Private Sector Services

Target Date - Ongoing

Outcomes - Better quality of housing in the private sector

Progress - Policies have been adopted by the Council for a Home Improvement policy to assist homeowners to repair, improve or adapt their properties. In the capital programme £550,000 on average has been made available each year and resources are targeted at low-income households living in the worst properties. Our Care and Repair service, which comprises a team of caseworkers, surveyors and handyperson, assist approximately 1500 clients each year.

Our enforcement team investigates and resolves 220 housing complaints from private tenants each year.

2.3

Work with private landlords to ensure the sector meets local needs and demand.

Responsibility - Private Sector Services, Housing Advice

Target Date - Ongoing

Outcomes - Continued good relationships with landlords, maintaining access to the private rented sector for low income households

Progress - We launched an Accreditation scheme for landlords and letting agents in May 2015. We have supported local landlord forums and network meetings and organised training for landlords on relevant tenancy subjects. Our website has been updated to provide information on licensing, health and safety rating system. We have met with major stakeholders including landlord organisations, letting agents, ACM and Surrey University on a number of occasions to promote joint working and a robust and sustainable private rented sector.

2.4

Support the landlords' forum.

Responsibility - Private Sector Services, Housing Advice

Target Date - Ongoing

Outcomes - Landlords are aware of their rights and responsibilities, and continue to provide good quality rented housing

Progress - We host the National Landlord Association's quarterly meetings. We hold regular network meetings with landlords and letting agents on various topics i.e. new legislation, tenancy deposits.

2.5

Promote accreditation for private sector landlords.

Responsibility - Private Sector Services

Target Date - Ongoing

Outcomes - Scheme in place

Progress - The Mayor of Guildford launched the Guildford Lettings and Accreditation scheme in May 2015. Since this time over 100 landlords have become accredited and we expect this to double over the next 12 months. Guildford Borough Council jointly supports the scheme along with the University of Surrey and the Academy of Contemporary Music.

2.6

Licence HMOs and Caravan Sites

Responsibility - tbc

Target Date - Ongoing

Outcomes - Licencing function successfully delivered

Progress - There are 140 licensed Houses in Multiple Occupation and 36 licenced caravan sites that are known as meeting the current standards. HMOs are inspected following a renewal or a new licence application. The caravan sites are inspected periodically in line with our risk rated criteria. Enforcement notices served and licence conditions implemented to improve standards within HMOs and on caravan sites.

2.7

Deliver an outgoing programme of improvement to Council homes and achieve 99 per cent decent home within life of strategy.

Responsibility - Housing Management

Target Date - 2020

Outcomes - Good quality homes for tenants, and proper management and maintenance of public assets

Progress - Over £600,000 has been spent in 2015-16 to meet the needs of over 220 tenants needing disabled adaptations.

2.8

Tackle fuel poverty and reduce carbon emissions through energy efficiency measures in homes of all tenures.

Responsibility - Housing Management, Private Sector Services, Action Surrey

Target Date - Ongoing

Outcomes - Fuel costs reduced for residents. Reduction in carbon emissions

Progress - In addition to the Councils own grant programme we have worked with Action Surrey to deliver the Streets Ahead programme. This programme aims to deliver energy saving measures across the county. In Guildford 55 homes have been insulated at a cost of £22,000 achieving a carbon saving of 45 tonnes.

Every two years we report in detail on our actions to reduce domestic energy use. The HECA strategy summarises our activity up to March 2015: Click [here](#) or follow this link

https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.guildford.gov.uk/media/14357/HECA-report-energy-efficiency-/pdf/Guildford_Borough_Council_HECA_further_report&sa=U&ved=0ahUKEwia-L6r1ZTSAhWCzhoKHVh_CpEQFggJMAI&client=internal-uds-cse&usq=AFQjCNGhbk9_b89usk0BtBJFXMSr6Gjpw

The next report should be published in April 2017.

2.9

Review existing empty homes publicity material and fact sheet. Set up regular mail outs to owners.

Responsibility - Private Sector Services

Target Date - March 2015

Outcomes - Empty properties identified and brought back in to use

Progress - Information on empty properties is published on our website. Alongside this an annual mailing is sent to owners of empty properties with their council tax bills.

2.10

Extend, improve and maintain Empty Homes database. Transfer data on to Tascomi and set up reporting mechanisms. Assess opportunities to improve data sharing across different systems.

Responsibility - Private Sector Services

Target Data - March 2015- October 2015

Outcomes - Empty properties identified and brought back into use

Progress - We have established a regular reporting system to extract appropriate data every month from the council tax database. Active cases are logged on our current system until the new database is fully implemented in the next 6 months.

2.11

Review policies in respect of enforced sales and compulsory purchase.

Responsibility - Private Sector Services

Target Data - March 2015

Outcomes - Empty properties brought back into use

Progress - The Empty Homes working group meet at regular intervals to oversee the empty homes strategy. The compulsory purchase option has been appraised in respect of several specific properties and has been dismissed in favour of other options. The enforced sale option has yet to be fully appraised but remains an option for any suitable properties.

2.12

Target long-term empty properties where owners have been unwilling to co-operate in bringing the property back into use. Take the appropriate enforcement action including where suitable EDMOs and commence action in line with policy/procedures.

Responsibility - Private Sector Services

Target Date - Ongoing

Outcomes - Empty properties identified and brought back into use

Progress - Monthly lists of empty properties are obtained from Council Tax records. These are monitored regularly and the reason for vacancy ascertained. Appropriate action is taken from the range of tools available. 120 long-term properties have been identified which have been empty for between 2 and more than 10 years.

2.13

Liaise with property owners to minimise number of properties that go on to the long-term empty homes list.

Responsibility - Private Sector Services

Target Date - Ongoing

Outcomes - Number of empty homes reduced (with consequent increase in New Homes Bonus)

Progress - Our efforts have been directed at properties that are empty and limited action has been taken to prevent vacancy other than providing bespoke advice to enquiries.

2.14

Progress partnership working with other Surrey Authorities and agencies and identify areas for which common approaches/procedures can be developed drawing upon the different areas of expertise available amongst SHIP members.

Responsibility - Private Sector Service, Action Surrey

Target Date - Ongoing

Outcomes - Coordinate partnership working to achieve coordination and economies

Progress - The Surrey and Hampshire Partnership has now ceased since the projects within the scheme have been delivered or put in place. There were three elements of the project: empty homes, home loans and energy efficiency. Action Surrey is now providing the overall administration of energy loans and energy efficiency. Action Surrey is now providing the overall administration of energy efficiency projects. The Homes Loans scheme continues to be provided by Parity Trust formerly South Coast Money Line.

2.15

Continue to establish Internal Focus Group to develop enforcement work.

Responsibility - Private Sector Services

Target Date - Ongoing

Outcomes - Coordinate activity across the Council

Progress - The PRS team has been co-ordinating efforts across the Council. For example, a recent case involved Planning enforcement, Environmental Health, Legal Services and Housing Advice Services.

2.16

Provide grant assistance to owners of empty properties where tenancies are offered with nomination rights and LHA rents.

Responsibility - Private Sector Services

Target Date - Ongoing

Outcomes - Empty properties brought back into use

Progress - One element of the Home Improvement policy provides grants to renovate empty properties. Two three bedroomed dwellings have been brought back in to use and are currently providing affordable housing.

2.17

Complete and report on the BASE project in conjunction with South Coast Money Line for owners.

Responsibility - Private Sector Services

Target Date - Ongoing

Outcomes - tbc

Progress - The BASE project was successfully completed and 23 units were brought in to use across the partnership area. Two of these were in Guildford.

2.18

Make available a loan facility in conjunction with South Coast Money Line for owners.

Responsibility - Private Sector Services

Target Date - Ongoing

Outcomes - Residents are able to access affordable loans from a reasonable provider

Progress - South Coast Money Line have changed their name to Parity Trust but continue to offer subsidised loans to Guildford residents who cannot fund necessary repairs or improvements to their homes through other routes. Four loans have been given in the last two years.

2.19

Monitor and publish annual performance targets.

Responsibility - Private Sector Services

Target Date - Ongoing

Outcomes - Information published

Progress - Annual reports are made to Government and to the Council on the private sector housing activity.

Aim 3. Social and Economic Wellbeing

3.1

Support the implementation of the homelessness strategy.

Responsibility - Housing Development

Target Date - 2018

Outcomes - Fewer households become homeless. Cost of emergency accommodation is reduced

Progress - Our Homelessness Strategy provides the direction for our services until 2018. We are successfully progressing our action plans, and officers are working with more customers but the risk of homelessness in the borough continues to grow. Welfare reform continues to present major risks but a proactive programme, particularly to address the lowered benefit cap from November 2016 has assisted many Council and private rented tenants. Our Homeless Outreach Support Team continues to tackle single people at immediate risk of homelessness or rough sleeping. Pressure on Bed & Breakfast and temporary accommodation while manageable shows signs of increase into 2017.

3.2

Provide guidance on affordability of rents within the borough and seek to achieve the lowest rents viable.

Responsibility - Housing Development

Target Date - Ongoing

Outcomes - Affordable Rents are set at a level which is affordable to households on low incomes

Progress - This has been included in the update of the Planning and Infrastructure SPD. Affordable Rents are required to fall within Local Housing Allowance limits in the borough (see the update for action 1.6).

3.3

Ensure that new housing developments incorporate specialist housing where appropriate and that an overall target of 10 per cent of new affordable homes are for those in need of specialist housing.

Responsibility - Housing Development, Housing Advice, Planning

Target Date - Ongoing

Outcomes - The mix of new housing provided caters for identified needs

Progress - Several fully wheelchair accessible homes have been secured on S106 sites. Alongside this, the disability panel meets regularly to discuss the type and size of accommodation required. We also work with Surrey County Council on the assessment of needs for supported and other forms of specialist housing.

With regard to our own sites, we have secured planning permission for nine wheelchair accessible flats.

3.4

Work with partners to increase provision of suitable homes for young people aged 16-25 people with learning disabilities those with complex needs those that need supported accommodation.

Responsibility - Housing Development, Housing Advice

Target Date - Ongoing

Outcomes - tbc

Progress - Included here is a list of the sites and in some cases the number of units that we have set aside for 16-25 supported housing:

- YMCA, Midway House.
- Ladymead, four flats for Surrey County Council clients with learning disabilities.
- Ann Allen House, Four flats allocated for move on clients from supported housing.
- Scrapyard, Worplesdon.

Affordable provision on the proposed scheme in Worplesdon regarding accommodation for autistic clients has been recommended for approval by planning officers.

3.5

Promote the delivery of well-designed, flexible homes across all developments, to ensure that the requirements of future households can be met—for example the inclusion of level access thresholds to homes to allow easy adaptation if an occupant becomes disabled.

Responsibility - Housing Development, Housing Advice

Target Date - Ongoing

Outcomes - tbc

Progress - We continue to work with partners and within our own programme to provide a proportion of homes as Lifetime Homes where appropriate, and to ensure that where a need is identified, larger developments provide a proportion of fully wheelchair adaptable properties.

3.6

Work with partners to ensure an integrated approach towards providing housing care and support to vulnerable groups and people with specialist housing needs.

Responsibility - Housing Development, Housing Advice

Target Date - Ongoing

Outcomes - tbc

Progress - Our Supported Housing Service provides 46 units of accommodation. The properties are allocated to vulnerable adults between 18 and 65 who need low to moderate support to live independently. Feedback is that this empowerment helps their recovery and maintains their stability. We also work with partners to offer floating tenancy support, and through our Homeless and Outreach Support Team we assist some of the most vulnerable groups rough sleeping.

3.7

Promote independent living through the provision of information, disabled facilities grants discretionary loans and adaptations to council homes.

Responsibility - Housing Development, Housing Advice

Target Date - Ongoing

Outcomes - Support individuals to live independently

Progress - In 2015-16 we received 560 enquires from residents seeking adaptations to their homes in both the public and private sectors. We carried out 360 assessments and adapted 220 properties in the public sector and completed 65 Disabled Facilities. The handy person carried out 1200 jobs for elderly or disabled residents.

3.8

Support the implementation of the later Life Strategy and ensure that older people have choice and a range of housing options that meet their needs and promotes independence.

Responsibility - Housing Development, Housing Advice

Target Date - Ongoing

Outcomes - tbc

Progress - Progress update to follow.

3.9

Increase supply of pitches for travellers.

Responsibility - Housing Development, Planning

Target Date - Ongoing

Outcomes - Travellers' housing situation is resolved. Reduction in unauthorised encampments and associated costs

Progress - We undertook a renewed Traveller Accommodation Assessment in February/March 2017, which will report soon and will update our understanding of the provision required. There is also within the local plan timelines consideration of possibly making current temporary permissions permanent.

3.10

Investigate the use of combined heat and power in all high-density new build schemes.

Responsibility - Housing Development

Target Date - Ongoing

Outcomes - tbc

Progress - As part of the design development process our designers, WYG, have explored various options to deliver heat and power to the Guildford Park scheme as efficiently as possible. Current proposals for the residential aspect of the scheme incorporate a gas-fired mini combined heat and power (CHP) system to serve all apartment units and potentially houses also. The designers estimate this could reduce CO2 emissions by up to 28% versus a conventional system. This will be explored in greater detail as the technical design progresses in 2017.

3.11

Review Council design guide for new build housing. Assess cost implications of increased energy efficiency and sustainability measures.

Responsibility - Housing Development

Target Date - 2015

Outcomes - tbc

Progress - We continue to refine our specifications for New Build projects and have included energy efficiency measures in all of our developments.

3.12

Produce an Affordable Warmth strategy and explore options for a county-wide strategy involving local health and well-being boards.

Responsibility - tbc

Target Date - tbc

Outcomes - tbc

Progress - Progress update to follow.

3.13

Educate tenants and landlords on how to ventilate property to avoid damp including work with schools.

Responsibility - tbc

Target Date - tbc

Outcomes - Fewer complaints and interventions concerning condensation related damp

Progress - An information leaflet has been added to the website explaining how to tackle condensation. Accreditation training also includes a section on mould and damp as part of the syllabus.

Additional Projects

This section details any other projects that have been undertaken since the inception of this strategy.

Housing Company

The current housing market is not working for many local people. Guildford, together with London and other parts of the South East, is facing a serious shortage of homes of all tenures and in particular, a shortage of good quality homes which are affordable to those on lower to middle incomes.

In April 2016 the Executive agreed to set up an arms-length housing company to buy properties and let them on the open market as well as carry out regeneration and development. The company, entitled North Downs Housing Limited, will act independently from the Council.

In its initial phase, the company aims to purchase existing properties to provide stable private rented tenure accommodation. It is also intended that the company will provide mixed tenure development. These activities will generate an income return for the Council's General Fund.

So far we are in the process of purchasing 6 properties, with the first due to complete by the end of March 2017.

Modular and Temporary Housing

We are currently undertaking a research task to examine the benefits of temporary modular housing as a solution to the lack of permanent housing in the borough. We are in discussions with a modular housing provider with a view to installing a trial unit on a site in the borough for use as temporary accommodation.

Homelessness Prevention Bid

We received confirmation in December 2016 that our bid for additional funding under the Department of Communities and Local Government Rough Sleeping grant programme had been successful.

This will provide £369,220 over the period from January 2017 to March 2019 to provide additional support to the Rough Sleeping outreach services across Guildford, Waverley and Woking. It will be accessed through the provision of two specialist mental health support workers and two wellbeing workers, to help address the health needs of rough sleepers, single homeless people and those at risk of rough sleeping.

Two of the workers will be based in Guildford with the Homeless Outreach and Support Team (HOST), which is run by Riverside Housing Association, following their successful tender earlier this year. The other two workers will be based with the York Road project in Woking which provides an outreach service for rough sleepers in Woking and Waverley.

Welfare Reform Preventative Work

The Council continues to work proactively to assist those affected by ongoing welfare reform changes. Well ahead of its introduction, different Council teams were contacting those likely to be affected in Council, Housing Association and private rented properties. This early intervention aimed to alert those at risk of being capped, to explain the potential impact and where relevant, direct them to sources of advice and assistance. This work includes partner

organisations such as the Job Centre, Citizen's Advice and the ETHOS employment programme. See below for a few examples of the crucial work that these teams do:

- A dedicated Transfer Officer has been assisting Council tenants who have been under occupying their property to downsize. A large number of these tenants were affected by the introduction of Spare Room Subsidy.
- The reduction to the Benefit Cap in November 2016 has been the most wide-ranging impact. As a result of this Housing Officers working for the Council have been preparing tenants for the impact this legislation will have on the amount of benefits they will receive.
- The introduction of Universal Credit in Guildford has as expected, had minimal initial impact, although as rollout of the full service progresses beyond 2017 the associated workload will escalate greatly.
- We continue to monitor other welfare reform proposals to ensure we are fully prepared to support tenants and claimants in the most effective manner.

Local Plan Update

In a recent press release the Council members made clear the future plans for the implementation of the new Local Plan 2013-2033. Cllr Paul Spooner, Leader of the Council, says: "It's crucial to make sure the plan we submit for inspection tackles local issues as well as balancing community needs across the borough. We have listened to feedback from residents, businesses, community groups and stakeholders and we now need to follow this up with a targeted consultation about specific changes we propose to the latest Draft Local Plan."

We continue to read and consider the many responses to this summer's regulation 19 pre-submission consultation. Just over 6,000 residents, businesses, community groups and other stakeholders responded, 900 fewer than the previous public consultation in 2014. Between them they submitted almost 32,000 comments, a 62% increase compared to last time.

In the next targeted consultation, which we aim to complete by summer 2017, we will only be asking for comments about the proposed changes. All comments received in this summer's regulation 19 pre-submission consultation about any unchanged aspects of the plan will remain valid, and will not be subject to further consultation. We will submit these comments to the independent Planning Inspector and publish them for everyone to read. Responses to next year's targeted regulation 19 consultation about the proposed changes will also be submitted to the Inspector and published.

Starter Homes

The Housing and Planning Act 2016 introduced starter homes, with a requirement for authorities to prioritise this type of affordable housing. Starter homes are defined as new build homes for sale to first time buyers under the age of 40, provided with a minimum of 20 per cent reduction on normal market price. This is subject to a price cap outside London of £250,000 (with the 20% reduction). These starter homes will be able to be sold at market prices after a number of years, details of which will be set out in regulations yet to be released.

The government recently consulted on technical details of the operation of starter homes proposals, and secondary legislation is expected in coming months. The draft proposals suggested a requirement for provision of 20% starter homes on sites of at least 10 homes or 0.5 ha. However, the recent White Paper and other government announcements indicate that the requirement may be a much smaller and subject to the particular needs of the area. We await further detail on this policy.

Alongside this, and to enable this change, the government consulted on fundamental changes to the definition of affordable housing for planning purposes. The proposed new

definition will include starter homes and low cost market homes, and will remove the requirement to secure affordable housing in perpetuity or recycle the subsidy to enable further provision, as starter homes will be allowed to be sold on the open market after a number of years (which the government has yet to specify).

Self-Build

In 2015 the Government rolled out its Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015. The Government is keen to encourage self-build across the country. Our housing needs survey did not identify a desire for self-build in the borough. Given the limited amount of Council land available for housing, we intend to prioritise the provision of affordable homes on our own land, rather than plots for households who can afford to construct a property themselves. We will keep under review Government guidance on self-build and how it should influence our policies.

Housing White Paper

In February 2017 central government released a housing white paper through the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG). This paper addressed some of the key concerns related to housing in both social and private markets.

In the paper the government outline a number of different proposals for local authorities to increase the number of houses available each year. The majority of the proposals revolve around the planning dimension and what we can do to ensure providers abide to the set percentage of affordable housing on new build sites. The paper is also very useful in reiterating some of the key initiatives that councils such as Guildford have already announced in their respective local plans.

Central government has outlined clearly that it wishes local Councils to be at the heart of the solutions to our current housing crisis, but is yet to outline the exact way in which we can do this.

One of the key factors it does outline is the use of completion notices that will require developers to start building within two years rather than three and, hopefully, provide greater transparency from builders about the pace of developments. While these completion notices have been in place since 1968 they have been used fairly infrequently. They also outline the need for Councils to use land more efficiently by building at higher density and taller.