

Draft ECC Housing Strategy update January 2021

Place Services and Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee January 21st 2021



Essex County Council

Purpose of presentation

- To provide an update to the Committee on progress to develop an ECC Housing Strategy

Slides 3 - 4 Background and context

Slides 5 - 8 Summary of engagement and consultation responses – *text in blue shows response/proposed changes to be made*

Slides 9 - 11 Proposed strategic goals and outcomes from the strategy – *draft actions being considered are included as blue text*

Slide 12 Proposed next steps

- Work to refine the strategy and action plan is ongoing and will be informed by comments received at the session on 21st January
- The wording of the goals/outcomes (slides 9-11) is subject to change with a view to simplifying and improving readability in advance of publication
- A copy of the consultation version of the strategy has been shared for information.

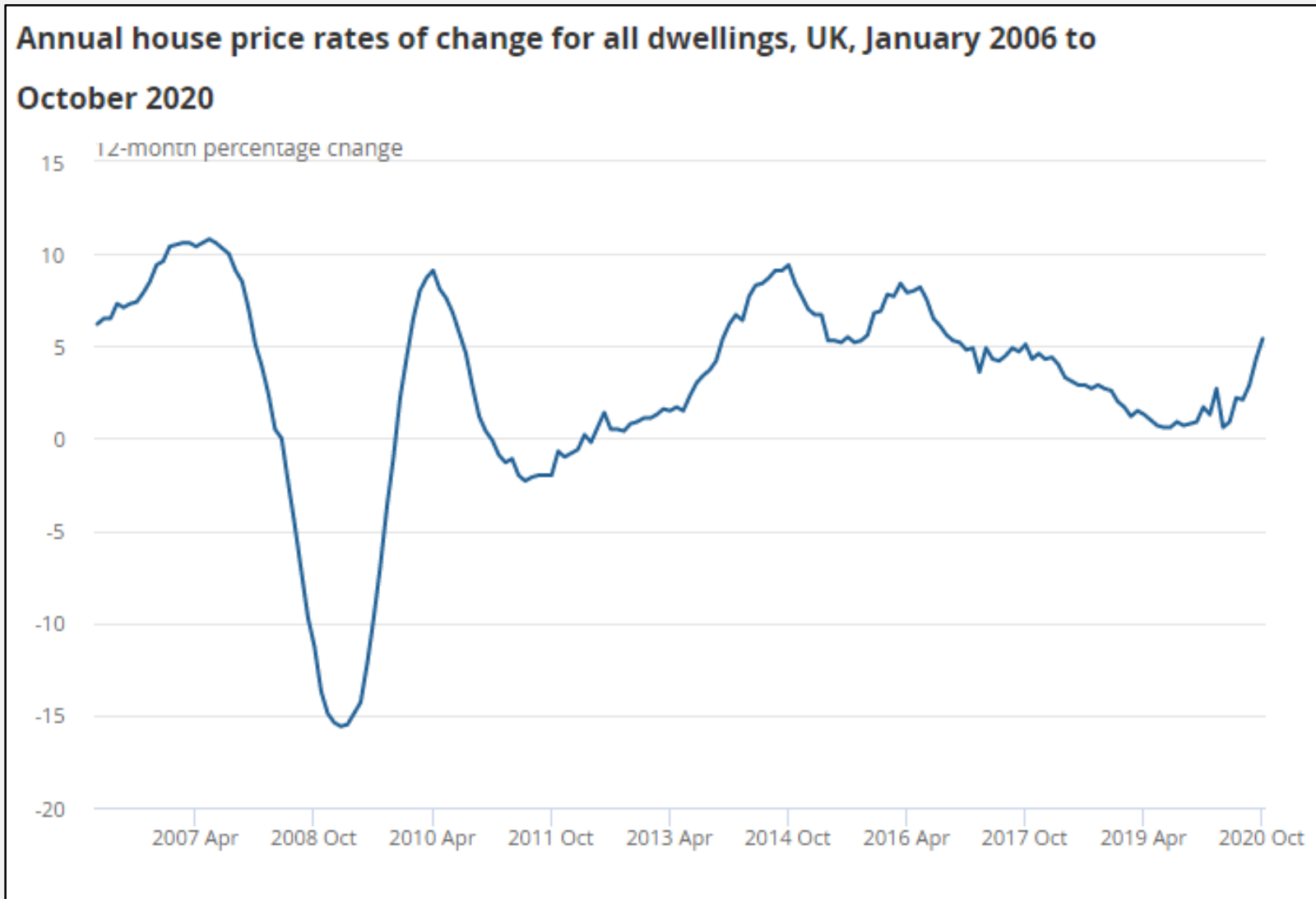
Context

- The draft ECC Housing Strategy was presented to the Committee on 23rd January 2020
- A revised consultation document setting out the proposed focus, goals and high-level actions of the strategy was subject to a 12 week public consultation from 3rd March 2020. The document set out three Strategic Goals:
 - **Growing Essex while protecting the best of the county;**
 - **Enabling people to live independently throughout their life;**
 - **Supporting people to have a stable home**
- We have and continue to engage directly with key partners from Essex Borough, City and District councils, Housing Associations and Developers
- Following a short pause during the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic the strategy has been updated in line with the outcomes of the consultation

Housing through the pandemic

- Local Housing Authorities in Essex moved around 200 rough sleepers into accommodation working in close collaboration with partners, including ECC, Police, Health and voluntary sectors to provide necessary support
- Temporary ban on evictions and mortgage holidays
- 2019-20 saw highest number of affordable housing completions in Essex since 1995. New build crashed in lockdown then sprang back in summer 2020.
- Housebuilding will play an important part of post-COVID economic recovery work in Essex with research suggesting each new home built supports over 3 jobs
- The housing market has defied economic gloom during the pandemic so far, but many uncertainties in 2021:
 - Economic outlook;
 - When will COVID restrictions end?;
 - Working practice and lifestyle changes;
 - Changes to Help to Buy and end of Stamp duty holiday;
 - Planning reforms; and
 - Investments in improved energy performance, accessibility and fire safety.

Housing through the pandemic (2)



Source: HM Land Registry, Registers of Scotland, Land and Property Services Northern Ireland, and Office for National Statistics – UK House Price Index

'You Said, We did' (1) Feedback from the Committee in January 2020

- Changes based on feedback from the committee in January 2020 have been incorporated into the strategy :

Partnership working on housing issues essential

- 12 week public consultation, further round of engagement with partners planned ahead of publication. Aiming to co-develop strategy action plans for each Essex district to reflect specific ECC activity in that area

Provision of necessary infrastructure

- Increasing infrastructure investment included as specific outcome in the strategy

Influence of ECC over housing needs

- Using evidence and influence to increase the proportion of accessible new homes built included as a specific outcome in the strategy

Empty Homes and keyworkers

- Work to assess options of how ECC can support Local Housing Authorities to bring empty homes back into use to be included as an action in the strategy. Keyworker homes to be considered alongside plans to support increase affordable housing delivery

'You Said, We did' (2) Public consultation

- The strategy was subject to a 12 week public consultation from 3rd March 2020.
- 36 responses were received:

Seven from housing partners Districts and housing associations

- All partners highlighted the need for close partnership working to realise outcomes including maximising the use of existing fora
- A number of suggestions were made for actions that ECC could take to support housing growth which are considering through development of the action plan
- One housing partner disagreed with the draft strategic goals and actions requesting greater clarity on ECC role and tangible actions to be taken to support delivery of district partners statutory responsibilities

We will continue dialogue with district partners and provide greater clarity on ECC's role and activity through production of the action plan. We aim to co-develop district-level action plans to reflect local context

- The need to reference work on the regeneration of existing housing and infrastructure was raised

Reference to locally-led regeneration activity in which ECC is a partner has been added

'You Said, We did' (3) Public consultation

29 individual responses, 26 respondents suggested changes to the goals and outcomes;

Changes based on feedback

- Highlighting the role that housing and development of new places plays in meeting wider environmental goals around climate change, habitat and biodiversity loss. *A separate outcome on climate change and actions arising from the Essex Climate Action Commission has been added*
- The need to deliver infrastructure alongside housing growth. *Infrastructure is included as a distinct outcome in the strategy with actions to increase investment in infrastructure generated locally and from government*
- The importance of affordable housing to those who cannot access properties to rent, or buy. *We are working with districts to investigate ways to increase affordable housing delivery in Essex*

'You Said, We did' (4) Public consultation

29 individual responses, 13 respondents disagreed with the goals;

Other concerns raised

- 12 respondents from Braintree and Colchester focussed their response on opposition to garden community proposals especially with respect to North Essex. *The concerns are noted, but ECC support delivery of new housing growth which meets garden community principles and as progressed by local planning authorities via Local Plans*
- Concerns from residents over the planned level of housing growth in Essex and whether this was responding to local needs. *ECC will continue to work with Local Planning Authorities to deliver housing targets informed by government methodology on housing needs and as per adopted Local Plans*

Refreshed outcomes – Strategic Goal 1

Growing Essex while protecting the best of the county

- a. **The number of new homes delivered – including affordable homes - meets local needs**
Actions inc: Local Plan support, Essex Housing, Affordable housing project
- b. **Supporting infrastructure is funded and delivered to enable sustainable development of new communities and meet existing communities' needs**
Investment in viability/CIL, HIF delivery, Government bids
- c. **Locally led regeneration schemes deliver economic, social and environmental benefits in key localities (new outcome)**
Partnership projects in Colchester, Clacton, Harlow, Jaywick
- d. **New homes are built and existing homes retrofitted to meet net zero carbon requirements (new outcome)**
Energy efficiency projects, Climate Action Commission actions
- e. **New housing developments create beautiful homes and places helping to meet wider ECC aims (new outcome)**
Essex Green Infrastructure Strategy, Essex Design Guide
- f. **New high-quality homes and places are built across planned new garden communities in Essex**
Dunton Hills, Harlow Gilston, N Chelmsford, Tendring Colchester Borders

Refreshed outcomes – Strategic Goal 2

Enabling people to live independently throughout their life

- a. **Mainstream housing that enables residents to remain in their homes and live independent and healthy lives**

Influencing through planning process, lobbying government

- b. **Access to high quality specialist and supported accommodation for those who require it**

ECC Independent Living programme, evidence on need to market

- c. **Adaptation and digital technologies widely adopted through co-design with residents to support people to live independently and healthily for longer and allow people to remain in their home**

Use of Disabled Facilities Grants, technology pilots

Refreshed outcomes – Strategic Goal 3

Supporting people to find and maintain housing stability

- a. Partnership working to end the need for people to sleep rough in Essex, in line with the government's national ambition**

Joint funding bids, Coordination of housing and support services

- b. Partnership working on homeless prevention and support to minimise the need for temporary accommodation**

Protocols to support joint working, conversation with London Boroughs

Next Steps

- Updating document based on comments from the Committee
- Refinement of strategy and action plan with officers across ECC responsible for delivery (Jan/Feb 21)
- Draft strategy shared with partners for final engagement & feedback (Feb 21)
- Final strategy drafted and presented for sign-off (Feb-Mar 21)

**Once strategy agreed*

- Monitoring of action plan implementation and co-production of district specific action plans (Apr 21-Mar 22)
- Refresh action plan for financial year 2021-22 (Nov 21 – Feb 22)