

# The Barking Town Centre Housing Strategy

## Introduction

Barking Town Centre is at the centre of a new vision to create a vibrant balanced and sustainable communities in the Thames Gateway. The ideal is to refresh the image of Barking from a low level demand area into a mixed income economy with higher density housing, which in turn will create a critical mass of residents who will support quality services. Developing that level of neighbourhood renewal requires the creation of a choice of homes, reinvigorating our retail capacity and regenerating local services.

Barking has a challenging profile. It is at the heart of East London, is a major transport centre minutes from the City and is pivotal to the wider regeneration ambitions of the London Thames Gateway Urban Development Corporation. Equally it has an increasing need from a growing ethnic minority community, high levels of urban deprivation and a lack of quality affordable housing.

To attract people who want to live and work here, Barking must offer a high quality level of urban renaissance. This must encompass a renewed public realm, a quality riverside environment, improved public transport facilities which in turn will be a catalyst to diversifying the choice in housing type and tenure, retail and facilities.

Central and Regional Government strategies like the Communities Plan and the London Plan, coupled with academic reports such as the 2003 London School of Economics Thames Gateway Housing Framework and the 2004 Barker Review into Housing Supply & Demand have pointed to a common goal of mixed communities alongside quality local services in achieving community renewal.

The creation of the Barking Town Centre Strategic Partnership (including the Borough, the Greater London Authority, London Development Agency, the Housing Corporation and English Partnerships) and the East Sergison Bates Framework Plan has led to the development of a delivery action plan.

Encompassing the Town Centre and the river edge of The Roding, the Framework Plan sought to build on the aim of working from existing centres to create mixed communities, reversing the decline in social cohesion and producing higher quality homes of better design. By supporting existing street patterns and enhancing the current urban network with additional investment, we can increase current densities and reach our aim of creating a;

*'lively urban mixed use town centre, incorporating housing, leisure, employment and retail use with a quality transport hub'.*

The Framework Plan estimates that over 4,000 new homes can be provided within the town centre, creating a balanced community and creating a distinctive character for the area. The Framework Plan has been endorsed by the Council as the means for going forward with the regeneration of the Town Centre and has been turned into an Interim Planning Guidance.

### **The role of this Strategy**

This document maps out the role of housing in the regeneration of the Town Centre, ensuring that the key areas are considered in any new development or Estate renewal project and should be read in conjunction with the Barking Town Centre Interim Planning Guidance. The key areas for this strategy are;

- To ensure that all new development and estate renewal contributes to the aim of Decent Homes and links with the work of Housing Futures.
- Delivery of 4000 net new homes in Barking Town Centre
- To achieve a more sustainable balance of tenures across the Town Centre retaining current levels of affordable rented property
- To encourage new developments to reach high environmental standards to contribute to the sustainability agenda
- To make high impact and visible improvements across all areas of each estate
- To accommodate the growing diversity in housing need with a greater variety of housing choice both in terms of tenure, size and type
- Introduce a greater mix of tenure, in order to achieve the balance between rented and private ownership
- To ensure that all Barking's housing, new and existing achieves a balance of meeting existing need and aspirations.
- Increase the general housing densities maximise the Town Centre location within easy access of public transport
- To ensure that the highest quality urban design standards are incorporated into all new forms of housing
- Integrate the redevelopment with the rest of the Town Centre
- Ensuring that the needs of all groups including BME, older people, young people and key workers are considered in all new housing provision.

This Strategy will equip developers, investors and registered social landlords with an understanding of the needs and justifications behind creating a balanced sustainable community in Barking, demonstrating how our Borough's Housing Strategy and corporate plans interlink with those of our partner agencies to deliver housing regeneration in the wider neighbourhood renewal programme.

In order to give background and context to this, this Strategy will cover briefly the issues that directly affect delivery and give where possible an indication of the Council's specific requirements. Each individual scheme will be subject to negotiation and exact mixes of tenure and types of homes will depend on the

contribution made to the regeneration of Barking Town Centre. The areas covered are;

- How housing in the Town Centre has developed up to present day
- Decent Homes - the investment in our own housing stock
- The current information about need and the housing market and the aims of the current Housing Strategy
- The London Thames Gateway UDC
- The Barking Town Centre Interim Planning Guidance
- The required levels of affordable housing and the requirements of larger developments to achieve London Plan Targets
- Supported Housing, BME, older people and key worker strategies
- Physical and Social Infrastructure
- How the regeneration of estates and redevelopment effects the existing residents
- The Framework Plan, Urban Design and environmental sustainability
- The Delivery of the proposed 4000 net new homes in the Town Centre
- Levels of proposed development and how this may exceed the 4000 Framework plan figure

Appendix 1 contains information about all of the current or proposed housing projects, this information is given as a guide to highlight the scale and opportunities in the Town Centre. Appendix 2 contains a map of these sites.

### **The History**

Barking was formerly at the centre of London's fishing industry and its Victorian cottages and back-to-back Edwardian terraces were considered so poor in condition that by the 1960's vast areas of this type of housing, that lacked bathrooms and inside toilets had been demolished.

The clearance of housing on the area now known as the Gascoigne estate and the demolition of terraced industries in Harts Lane and the area around the Station made way for the construction of 6,000 dwellings including the high-rise Lintons, Cleveland's, Bloomfields and Wakerings and Gascoigne Estate. In addition many low rise flats were also completed in these areas and Harts Lane and Whiting Ave.

Forty years ago the modern construction method was large system panel blocks, the high rise blocks within the town centre built using this construction method have suffered the same physical the environmental issues as those across the whole country.

More in depth condition information about these blocks, across the whole borough, has been commissioned as part of the Housing Futures Project as their ultimate fate is directly linked to their ability to meet the requirements of the

Decent Homes Standard at a cost that represents value in terms of the life of the building and the quality of the environment for the residents. Many of the concerns that the residents of high rise homes have are not directly linked to the condition of their homes but are about the security, cleaning, lack of private space and general environment.

Barking Town Centre has over 70% housing still in Council ownership, this is predominantly in the large Estates, other private housing is mainly 2 or 3 bed roomed Edwardian terraces, 1930's built 3 bed roomed houses in the area adjacent to Barking Park and modern 1 and 2 bed roomed flats.

Barking has very few larger properties at the higher end of the market, and very few larger homes in any tenure type, this is an issue for larger families or people seeking to buy at the higher end of the market.

### **Meeting the Decent Homes Standard**

Meeting the Decent Homes Standard and the regeneration aims are clearly linked. As we explore the options available to achieve Decent Homes, all existing and new developments must incorporate the criteria of the current minimum standard for housing which requires that homes, be in a reasonable state of repair; have reasonably modern facilities and a reasonable degree of thermal comfort. Currently, the Borough has lowered the number of council homes failing to meet the decency standard to 49%. However, the previously mentioned issues for high rise homes are to be addressed.

The Housing Futures project is working in close consultation with the residents on looking at the options for all the Council owned homes, the project has already highlighted that "local solutions" in addition to those stated by Central Government will be needed in some areas. This will include several Estates in Barking Town Centre, as a direct result of this the Council will be seeking a range of Partners from the Developer, Finance and Registered Social Landlord sectors to work with the Barking Town Centre Partnership to deliver renewal and regeneration across these areas.

### **The Housing Strategy 2003/6 - Housing Need and Market**

The Borough's 2003-2006 Housing Strategy aspires to a;

*'decent home and living environment for everyone, supporting the Borough's economic and social regeneration' by developing strategic partnering to create balanced and sustainable communities whilst improving housing conditions.*

In context the Strategy identifies that more than 9,000 households in the

Borough are in need and an equivalent of more than 390 new affordable homes will have to be built each year by 2006, if Barking & Dagenham is to meet its housing need. Housing need in Barking has focused upon the shortage of 1-bed and larger sized family homes, the predicted increase in the BME population tends to reinforce this need. The two wards which constitute Barking Town Centre are within the top 10% of most deprived in England, this again demonstrates that there will be a strong need for affordable homes.

The key issue for all development projects in the Town Centre is balancing the known levels of need for all forms of affordable housing with the task of creating more balanced developments that give true housing choice. The Borough is currently guided by the following;

Borough Policy On sites with a capacity for 15 or more homes	35% affordable tenure including up to 25% being allocated to key workers and a split of 60% socially rented and 40% intermediate tenure (Shared Ownership etc)
GLA London Plan across the Borough	50% affordable tenure with 70% being for social rent and 30% intermediate tenure
All sites (from Housing Strategy 2003-6)	30% of all homes to be family sized and 50% for single persons

The Mayor's London Plan has a significant influence on development in Barking, it identifies East London as a priority area for regeneration with a specific objective in encouraging intensification and growth in areas of need and opportunity, particularly around existing transport nodes. The East London Affordable Housing Investment Framework Programme was drawn up to crystallize the Plan's objectives and estimated that East London should accommodate a minimum of 30% of total new London homes up to 2016.

The London Plan target of 50% affordable housing on all new schemes across the Borough needs to be balanced against current levels of affordable/Council owned homes in the development area. The GLA have acknowledged in their latest affordable housing SPG that the 70:30 split between social rented and intermediate affordable housing needs to be applied with flexibility in areas with higher than average existing levels of social housing.

On all schemes for affordable housing in receipt of Approved Development Programme funding via the Housing Corporation a number of these homes will be subject to the pooling arrangements for sub-regional nominations.

The Borough now has a Preferred Partners Protocol in place these RSL's responded to the Council's brief and were selected to work in partnership with the Council, other agencies and local residents in delivering affordable housing

and supporting wider regeneration initiatives. Our chosen partners are;

- Hanover Housing Association
- London & Quadrant Housing Group
- East Homes (including East Choice )
- Anglia Housing Group (including Stort Valley Housing Association, Blackwater Charitable Trust, Barking & Dagenham Housing Association)
- Presentation Housing Association
- Ujima Housing Association
- Metropolitan Housing Trust
- Look Ahead Housing & Care Limited
- Southern Housing Group

The Sustainable Communities for London Plan seeks to create a prosperous neighbourhood, with decent homes for sale or rent at a price people can afford. The document pushes for more affordable homes to cope with the capital's growing population, tackle homelessness and house workers involved in the delivery of key public services whilst the 2003 London Housing Strategy sets out similar aspirational objectives, emphasising the modernisation of the private rented sector and ensuring homes meet the Decent Homes Standard by 2010.

The Council does not want to replicate what already exists in Barking. Development needs to show innovative urban design, drawing away from a predominant base of social housing to a balanced neighbourhood of shared community and renewed housing markets.

### **The Local Housing Market**

Land Registry data shows that nationally between Q2 1999 and Q2 2004, average property prices in England and Wales rose by 92.0%. For Greater London the increase was 99.3% and 138.5% for LBBD.

<b>Land Registry average prices (2<sup>nd</sup> quarter 2004)</b>		
Area	Average price	As % of E & W
England & Wales	£176,365	100.0%
Greater London	£288,431	163.5%
Barking & Dagenham	£161,111	91.4%

General consensus amongst Estate Agents is that sale prices for housing in the Borough are beginning to stabilise after rises of recent years. One key factor mentioned in determining popularity of areas was transport links. Central Barking and Dagenham Heathway were mentioned as popular, whilst areas with poorer transport links, e.g. Thames View Estate were considered less popular. Average newbuild prices are well above the Borough's average market prices.

Estate agent survey suggested that min. prices in the Borough range from £101,000 to £208,500 depending on property size, and min. rents ranged from £495 to £875 per month depending on property size.

### **Interim Planning Guidance - Barking Town Centre**

The Council's Interim Planning Guidance (IPG) bridges changes to policy regarding Barking Town Centre since the 1995 Unitary Development Plan was written, reflecting new Borough, London sub regional and national changes.

As stated this Strategy and the IPG should be read in conjunction, the following are key areas within the IPG and assist in the delivery of the aims of both this Strategy and the full Borough Housing Strategy.

It supports the provision of family accommodation located at ground floor level with direct access to private garden space and a proportion of units with four or more bedrooms suitable for larger sized families.

The Council plans 35% 1-beds, 35% 2-beds, 20% 3-beds and 10% 4-beds, although this will not be expected to be the formula for each specific site.

All new dwellings should be designed to meet internal Lifetime Homes standards, whilst we employ an element of flexibility with regard to external criteria.

10% of new homes should be easily adaptable for wheelchair users; new residential design should assess impact on surrounding environment.

All dwellings should have access to useable space such as a conventional garden, roof top garden, courtyard or large balcony.

All developments should achieve "secured by design" standards

Developments with the capacity of 15 or more dwellings will be expected to contribute 35% of the units to affordable housing provision.

All schemes should apply the densities in the London Plan

### **The London Thames Gateway UDC**

The establishment of the London Thames Gateway Urban Development Corporation adds another pivotal structure in directing reinvestment, regeneration and densification into Barking, revolving around increasing private

housing, intermediate and low cost affordable housing.

Strategically this involves the need for upfront investment in infrastructure focusing on social provision, regeneration and job growth.

The UDC will become the local planning authority for major strategic applications. Currently they are putting together a regeneration framework and vision what will set their agenda.

### **High Quality Urban Design and Environmental Sustainability**

The wider context of regeneration was developed by the East/Sergison Bates Framework Plan creating distinctive quarters linked to activities other than sole use for residence or retail. The plan also crafts housing and retail regeneration around the Roding Valley as part of a river edge scheme that connects the River and it's edges to the activities and major new development in the town centre.

The Borough envisages new development to intensify the urban nature of the town centre with a mix of use within the High Street Network. Homes above shops are encouraged to inject residential balance to the retail sector.

The Framework Plan impresses upon the fact that development creating a 'compact city' must be achieved with higher densities around public transport nodes. High density development is supported around the Station Quarter, the High Street and the River Roding.

The substantial regeneration planned for the borough provides an excellent opportunity for improving the average energy performance of the borough's housing through building all new housing to a very high energy efficiency standard. It is also an opportunity to build best practice low carbon, and even zero carbon, homes that set the standard for the future and illustrate what sustainable homes look like. Over twenty thousand new homes will be built over the next 20 years and unless these incorporate low carbon features such as CHP and renewable energy the Borough will struggle to reach its energy targets.

### **Supported Housing**

The agenda to give greater independence to those residents who have support needs continues to be applied by the Borough and the role of housing has been underpinned in the Draft Supporting People Strategy to provide quality homes accessible to all sections of the community.

Maintaining stability in the supported housing sector is crucial. The Housing Needs Survey stated that some 18% of households contained people with a special need, equating to 13,000 residents.



The strategic aim complements the Barking Town Framework Plan in developing a supported housing sector as part of the mixed community creating suitable housing for the elderly residents, people with mental health needs, learning disabilities, vulnerable young people and victims of domestic violence.

The Council has highlighted the shortage of supported housing for all needs to the ODPM and given its concerns about a lack of new provision given the likely growth in population across the Borough. We are hopeful that this will result in more revenue funding becoming available via Supporting People and are keen to continue to plan for this provision. We will be seeking different forms of supported housing in the future on a variety of different sites.

### **BME Housing Strategy**

Barking Town Centre's wards comprise the highest BME communities in the Borough, with Abbey having 46% and Gascoigne 32%, amounting to almost 8,000 people. The population is expected to rise overall across the Borough from 19% to 25% by 2020, with higher proportions living in Barking due to its proximity to Cultural activities and places of worship.

The BME Strategy is driven by the requirements in the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 to promote race equality and eliminate racial discrimination, aiming to achieve improvements to the socio-economic well-being of the BME community, particularly in establishing the level of housing need.

The Draft Supporting People Strategy and the 2002 Housing Needs Survey, suggest that the BME community are more likely than most to be living in unsuitable housing. Asian and Chinese households have been identified as being the most vulnerable with 55% being considered as special needs households. The need for larger good condition properties and for family-sized accommodation is indicative of the kind of homes we desire in Barking.

As part of the mixed communities regeneration initiative, future planning of BME housing, needs to address options to encourage the communities to participate in shared ownership and including the provision of larger family homes on appropriate schemes.

### **Key Worker Strategy**

The Borough has been actively involved in the development of the East London Sub-regional Key Worker Housing Strategy its aim is to promote ways of providing housing to recruit and retain key public sector workers and associated essential staff who live in the area, but earn too little to be able to afford a home of their own.

The retention and attraction of such staff in the area is instrumental to regeneration in Barking and in promoting mixed and balanced communities,

shoring up quality key services and amenities.

Under the Housing Corporation's guidelines the East London Sub-region tendered for a RSL Zoning Agent and Metropolitan Homes Ownership won the bid to liaise, lead and market key worker homes in the region. The primary purpose of this is to map out key worker need and work with other providers to deliver low cost home ownership products.

The Government's Keep London Working scheme with a £4.5m budget is to tackle the shortage in the capital and under this programme four products will be available within the Barking area, including Key worker Homebuy, London Challenge Teacher Key worker Homebuy, Key worker Shared Ownership and Key Worker Intermediate renting, so as to retain critical support services in the area and creating incentives for developers to build more high-density homes near public transport links.

### **Estate Renewal Projects and Decant Programme**

Most of the Town Centre homes are on Council estates. The previously mentioned local solutions to meeting the Decent Homes Standard are closely linked to the Estate Renewal projects, a comprehensive approach to regeneration and renewal is needed in these areas, our chosen method to undertake this is a partnership with a range of developers, RSL's and funders.

Estate Regeneration schemes must whilst balancing the need of the existing community, contribute to the aim of changing the balance of tenure and property types, this aim will also assist in making the developments financially viable.

Key to the success of this aim is the way that we re provide the much needed general needs socially rented property across the Town Centre, we have committed to no loss of this tenure across the Town Centre as a whole and know that it is still possible to balance tenure by bringing sustainable levels through in new developments along with the appropriate levels of intermediate tenures and the private sale homes. This does mean that we are losing socially rented on some Estate Regeneration projects and bringing forward new provision on new developments to achieve a neutral effect. However, the overall provision for affordable tenures in total will rise by some 1600 homes.

The key sites delivering housing regeneration in the Town Centre are included in Appendix 1.

To move forward with programmes to regenerate or renew the Town Centre estates a large number of tenants will have to be decanted. To ensure that those who want to return can do so and that temporary moves are kept to a minimum a development phasing plan will link with decant programmes. The overall estimate for demolitions in the Town Centre is likely to be in the region of 2000,

this number is for the life of the programme until 2016 and with the exception of early schemes at the Linton's and London Road North Street will be phased rolling programme decants. An indicative programme is shown below;

<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Decant Programme Dates</b>	<b>Numbers of units</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Clevelands Bloomfields & Wakerings	Completed	118	Completed
London Road North Street	Jan 2005 – April 2006	64	Decant of tenants commenced Jan 2005 into existing stock
Lintons	Jan 2005 – Aug 2006	256	Decant of tenants commenced Jan 2005 into existing stock
Gascoigne	2007/8 - 2016	1500	Phased Decant and rolling programme for tenants to move into new build or have choice to move into existing council stock

More detailed work is necessary to identify likely numbers of decants, a detailed strategy will be needed to ensure that this is planned and managed so as to create as little disruption as possible to the existing community.

The Members and Community have during previous consultation worked up the following development principles as a sound basis for all Estate Renewal and Regeneration projects;

- Community Involvement at all stages.
- Street patterns to be restored removing the 'the estate feel'.
- High quality urban design standards to provide high quality accommodation standards and public realm.
- The correct level of social infrastructure, particularly schools and health facilities.
- Innovative and leading sustainable development outcomes.
- Demonstration of the appropriate level of density taking into consideration policy objectives.
- Delivering sustainable communities through a housing mix of tenures.
- Continue with addressing community safety and Estate Management issues as a priority whilst regeneration plans are made.
- Introduction of some mixed use including compatible employment uses.
- Creation of smaller neighbourhoods.
- Flexible allocations policy's, local lettings and use of phasing to minimise decants and ensure those who want to remain can do so.
- True pepper potting of all tenures throughout the new development areas
- Any refurbished homes to fully meet Decent Homes Standard Plus

## **Physical and Social infrastructure**

The volume of major Town Centre regeneration and redevelopment projects needs to be linked with the provision of both physical and social infrastructure to ensure that the Town Centre does not become a group of new developments that lack the facilities and amenities required by the community. Major work is being undertaken to ensure that the correct level and timing of provision for this infrastructure is in line with development.

## **Delivery of this Strategy**

This Strategy seeks to give a vision for the Housing provision in Barking Town Centre linking with other Borough, sub regional and national strategies policies and plans. The key to its delivery is the wide range of partnerships that will be formed to respond to individual projects many of these are already in place via the Barking Town Centre Strategic Partnership and others will be secured to assist with the delivery of specific projects.

The Matrix shown in Appendix 1 forms the delivery plan for this strategy, and is again given only as a guide based on information available at the present time. In order to turn this proposed level of development into reality the Borough will be looking for partners willing to meet the requirements of this Strategy, and the aforementioned National, Regional and local policies.

The Regeneration Implementation Division and Housing Strategy welcome discussion, views and interest from all sectors on the contents of this Strategy. If you have any comments queries or questions please contact Arabi Iqbal Research and Development Assistant, London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Housing Regeneration 020 8227 5731.