



Housing Development **Strategy**

Foreword

Housing is at the heart of any community. Access to safe, affordable, and good-quality housing is a basic need and fundamental to achieving a high quality of life. The homes we live in shape our daily experiences, influence our physical and mental health, and determine our ability to thrive. Good housing is more than just shelter; it provides stability, a sense of belonging, and the foundation upon which individuals and families build their futures.

A well-functioning housing sector also reduces pressure on other vital services, including the NHS, social care, and criminal justice, by fostering healthier and safer living environments. When people have access to stable, decent housing, they are less likely to experience health issues, social isolation, or the kind of instability that can lead to the need for costly interventions by public services.

Housing is also inextricably linked to broader environmental goals, particularly in relation to climate change. The way homes are built, maintained, and powered plays a critical role in the carbon emissions of any community. This strategy recognises that housing policy must align with our climate commitments, ensuring that homes are not only affordable and accessible but also sustainable.

This strategy was informed by a Task and Finish Group, comprising six Councillors who worked collaboratively to gather evidence, consult with experts, and review best practice. Stakeholders from across the property industry were engaged to provide insights and ensure that the strategy is grounded in the realities of the housing market and reflective of current challenges and opportunities.



Introduction

Having a robust housing strategy is crucial to ensuring that our community's housing needs are met both now and in the future. This strategy sets out clear objectives, targets, and a framework that will guide housing policy and decisions for the next five years. By establishing a comprehensive plan, we aim to address the current housing crisis, improve the quality of life for our residents, and create a sustainable foundation for long-term housing development. The strategy is designed to be adaptable, ensuring it remains relevant in the face of any unforeseen challenges and changes over the coming years.

The need for an effective housing strategy is more pressing than ever due to the ongoing housing crisis. Across the country, many people are unable to access the housing they need, whether they are looking to rent or buy. Rising house prices, increased demand, low wage growth and limited supply have made it increasingly difficult for people, particularly younger generations, to secure a home of their own. This has had widespread social and economic impacts, contributing to inequality and social immobility. Addressing this crisis requires innovative solutions and coordinated efforts from all stakeholders, which this strategy aims to provide.

This housing strategy covers all aspects of the housing sector, including the public and private sectors. By taking a holistic approach, the strategy ensures that no part of the housing market is overlooked and that efforts to improve housing benefit the entire community.

Since the last housing strategy was developed in 2020, there have been significant changes that need to be addressed, including a large increase to the Council's Temporary Accommodation expenditure. The change of government has brought

with it new housing policies and priorities, while the Covid-19 pandemic has fundamentally altered the housing landscape. This strategy responds to those changes, ensuring we are prepared to tackle the housing challenges of the future.

This strategy is designed to serve a wide range of audiences, including residents, local communities, housing providers, developers, and the Council itself. It reflects the needs and aspirations of Rother's residents while also considering the expertise and perspectives of industry stakeholders. The strategy also responds to the regional context in East Sussex and the wider South East of England, drawing on the Council's work leading East Sussex Housing Partnership of the 5 East Sussex Local Authorities.

It is important to note that this housing strategy is distinct from the Council's homelessness strategy, which is being developed separately. While homelessness is a critical issue, it requires its own dedicated focus and set of actions, which will be outlined in a separate document. Together, these strategies will work in tandem to ensure that all housing-related challenges are addressed comprehensively and effectively.

The objectives in the strategy are high level actions and will be backed up by detailed action plans which will be developed in collaboration with our partners. We also recognise that during the lifespan of the strategy that housing policy and the wider housing market will shift – the strategy seeks to put an agile framework in place that will allow the Council to respond to changes in the market and government policy.

Strategy Development

The strategy was developed by a Task and Finish Group, comprising six Councillors who worked collaboratively to gather evidence, consult with experts, and review best practice. Stakeholders from across the property industry were engaged to provide insights and ensure that the strategy is grounded in the realities of the housing market and reflective of current challenges and opportunities.

Evidence gathered and feedback from stakeholders demonstrates that Rother has enormous potential to grow and have a thriving development market. However, the natural constraints including large areas of High Weald National Landscape (HWNL) and lack of infrastructure development has reduced development opportunity for new homes to be built.

We would like to thank the stakeholders for their invaluable contributions to this strategy which provided the Council with a wide variety of perspectives on the current development market and the challenges of delivering more homes.

Contributors



Councillors



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Strategic Context

In this section we set out the **NATIONAL**, **REGIONAL** and **LOCAL** context. Since our last housing strategy, there has been global upheaval and economic change that sets a clear backdrop for the need for a focused and action-led approach to tackling the housing challenges in Rother.

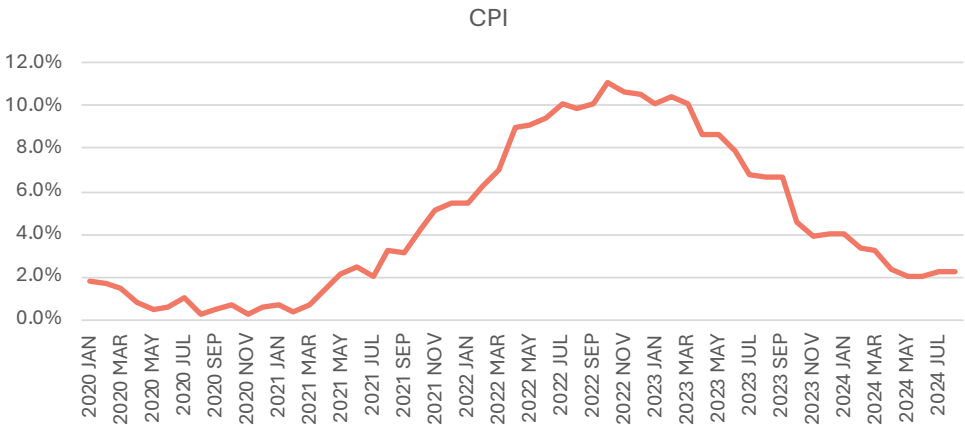
Evidence gathered and feedback from stakeholders demonstrates that Rother has enormous potential to grow and have a thriving development market. Historically however, the natural constraints including large areas of High Weald National Landscape (HWNL) and lack of infrastructure development has reduced development opportunity for new homes to be built.

National

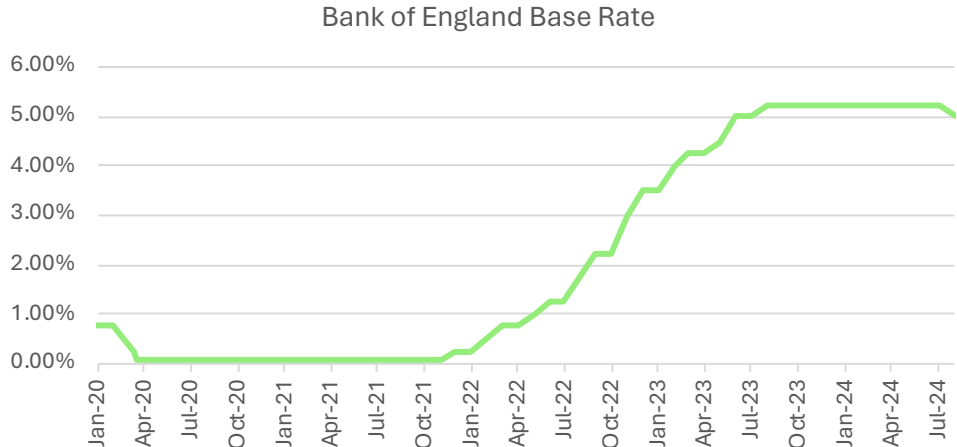
After a couple of years of slow growth and limited demand, the outlook for the residential housing market is optimistic as we head into 2025.

Following a peak in the property market in 2021 where the number of housing transactions nationally reached over 1.5 million for the first time since 2008, house price growth slowed nationally. Abnormally high levels of inflation, caused by supply chain issues pushing food prices upwards and high energy prices following the war in Ukraine, led to increased interest rates as the Bank of England tried to bring inflation in line with their 2% target.

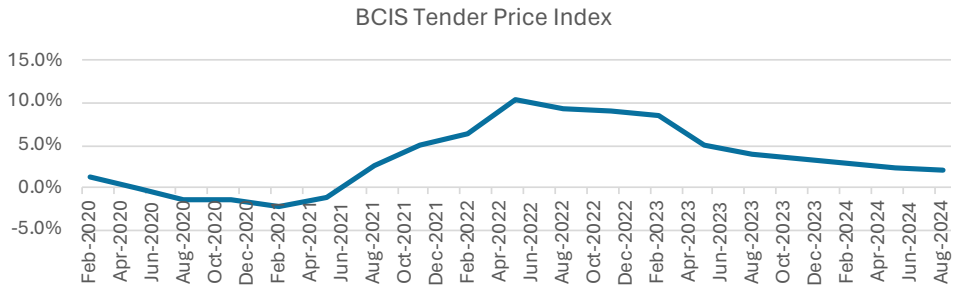
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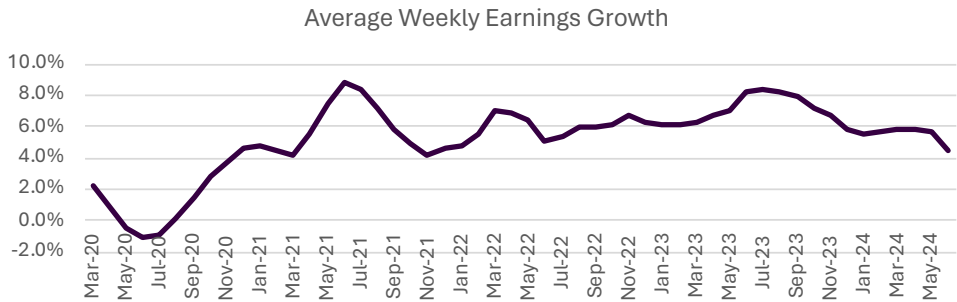
Bank of England Base Rate



BCIS Tender Price Index



Average Weekly Earnings Growth

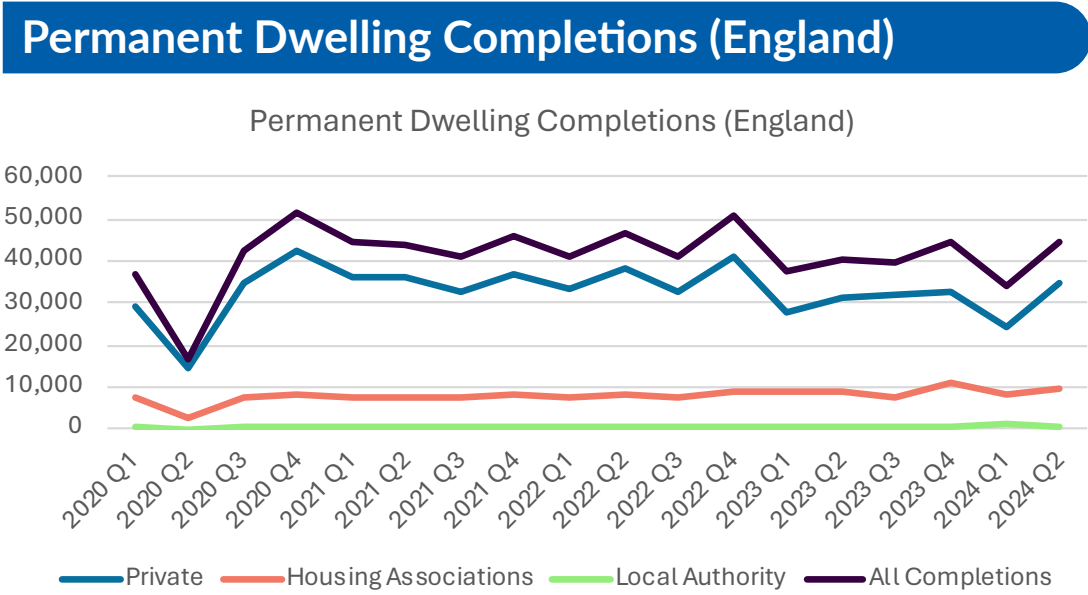


As mortgage rates and borrowing costs increased sharply, development also slowed, with insolvencies within construction companies high and mergers between developers continuing to occur. In the year to 31 March 2024, new build dwelling starts in England were estimated to be 134,780, a 22% decrease when compared to the year to 31 March 2023. Tender prices also increased in an effort to pass on increased costs, including high labour cost inflation, as shown in the below graphs.

In 2024 housing market, sales market activity is stronger than in 2023, supported by rising consumer confidence. This is shown by an increase in buyer demand, sales agreed and number of available listings. Despite this, growth is still weak – over the first 7 months of 2024, house prices have risen by 1.4%.

Inflation of UK rents slowed to 5.4% in September 2024, the lowest for almost 3 years. However, competition remains high, with 21 households chasing every rental home (more than triple the pre-pandemic average of six). This is largely due to an increase in affordability issues with regards to mortgage payments and high earnings to house price ratios. As more households continue to rent, demand has increased, which has coincided with a decrease in listings and availability. The supply of homes for rent nationally is down 24% vs the pre-pandemic average.

The average house price in the UK is £266,400 as of July 2024.



For developers, new building regulations and building safety regulatory requirements have resulted in additional administration and costs, whilst the expectation for housing stock to become net zero carbon has also never been higher. A number of Registered Providers (RPs) have announced plans to move away from developing new affordable homes towards improvements of their existing stock. Although the number of permanent dwelling completions have not drastically altered since 2020, the number of completions by local authorities and housing associations as a percentage of all completions remains very low, well below the required amount for social housing.

Recently proposed changes to the structure of Local Government will affect Rother District, neighbouring Districts and East Sussex County Council but will present further opportunities to expedite the delivery of new homes and associated infrastructure. Rother will work with other Districts and the County to ensure that changes have a positive impact on local residents and businesses as there is clearly a huge need for new housing delivery, particularly affordable housing. Rother will do its part to help the Government deliver 1.5m new homes for the country.

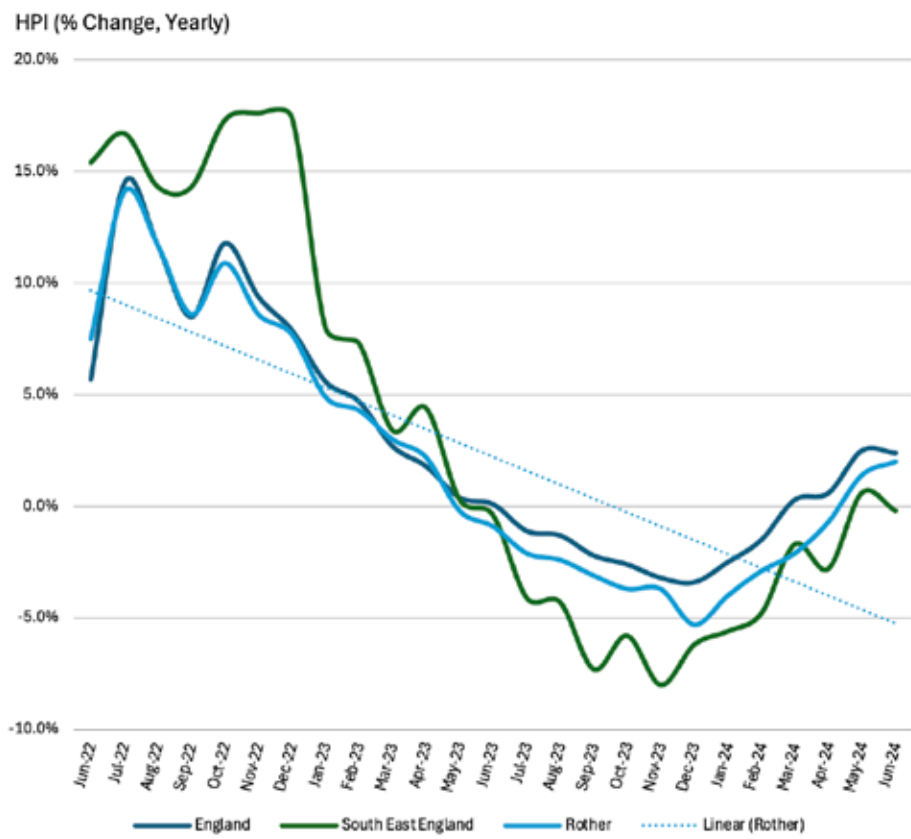
Regional

According to the latest census data, population growth in Rother was 2.8% in the decade to 2021. Although nearby areas like Ashford and Wealden have seen significantly larger increases of 12.5% and 7.5% respectively, Rother’s growth is marginally bigger than that seen in Hastings (0.9%) and Tunbridge Wells (0.2%). The total growth for the South East from 2011 to 2021 was 7.5%.

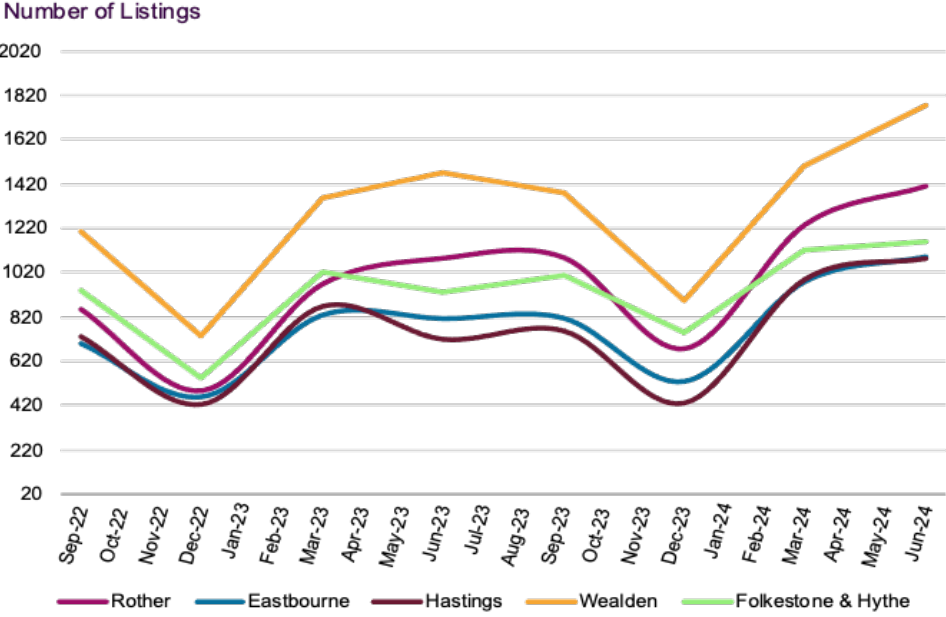
The House Price Index is a national statistic, published to track the change in residential prices over a period of time. As mentioned earlier, sales prices, following months of decline both in Rother and nationally, appear to be recovering in 2024. That said, the South East growth turned negative and declined by 0.7% in July 2024, demonstrating that growth is still sensitive to economic pressures and that the current climate remains difficult.

In June 2024, the number of residential listings in Rother reached its highest point across the last two years, with circa. 1400 properties on the market. This trend was replicated across adjacent boroughs and suggests activity is beginning to pick up within the sector.

HPI (% Change, Yearly)



Number of Listings






79.3% EMPLOYMENT RATE in the South East vs a national average of 76.0%



The **median income** in the South East in 2023 was **£31,100**. This was higher than the national average of £29,669.



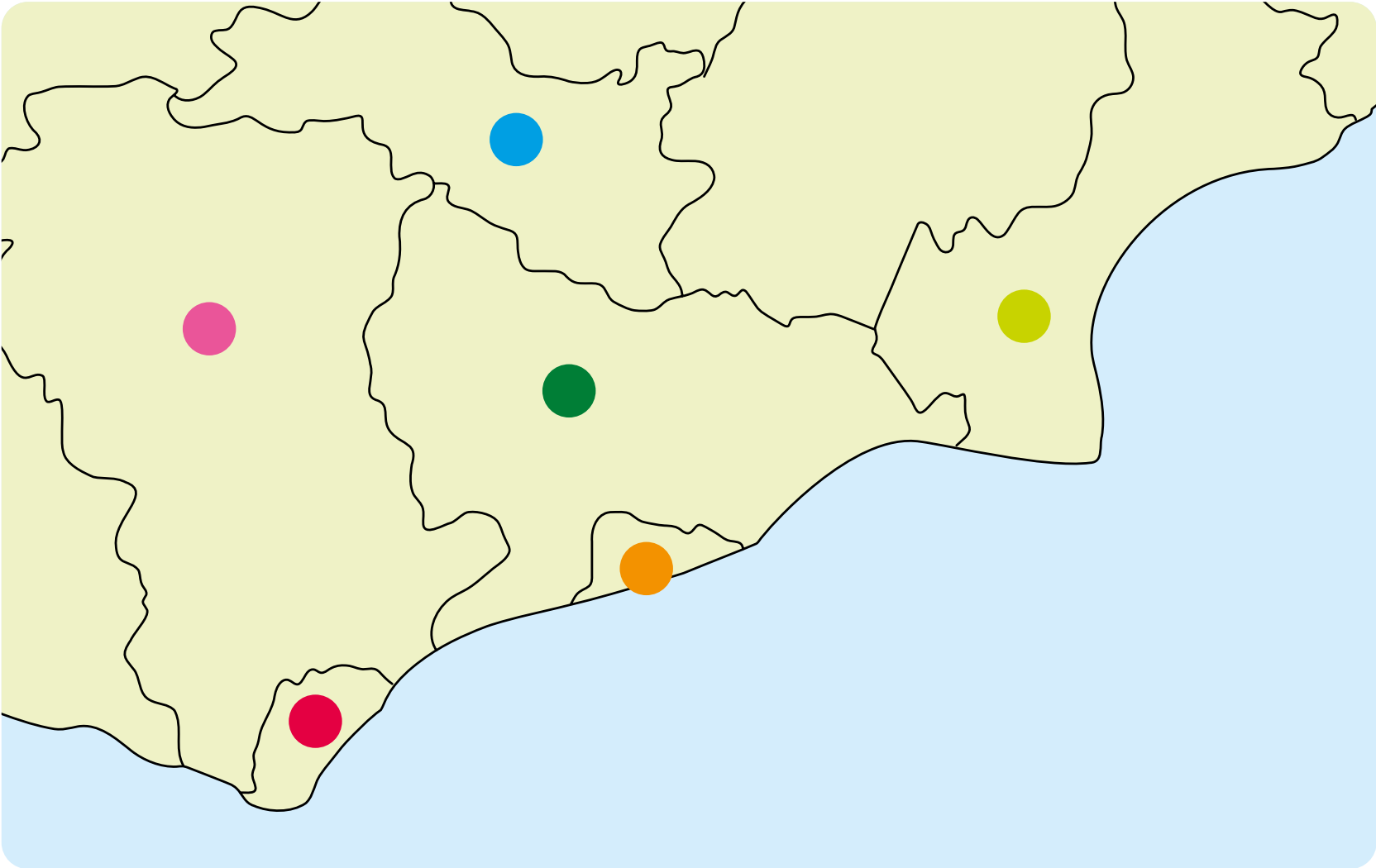
18% INCREASE in house prices in the South East between January 2020 and July 2024.



Census data for 2021 puts the South East as the most populous region in the UK, with **9,280,210 INHABITANTS**.



Regional



Sources
2024 average house price
2023 average gross weekly pay
2019 Census average age
2023-24 dwellings completed
2022-2023 Local Authority Data

Rother			Eastbourne	
Average House Price	£364,519		Average House Price	£297,000
Average Income	£33,995		Average Income	£33,934
Population	94,862		Population	103,796
Average Age	53.1		Average Age	45
New Private Homes	80		New Private Homes	90
New Affordable Homes	60		New Affordable Homes	0
Housing Waitlist	1,400		Housing Waitlist	732
Wealden			Hastings	
Average House Price	£402,108		Average House Price	£264,427
Average Income	£32,144		Average Income	£27,019
Population	164,653		Population	90,817
Average Age	49		Average Age	43.5
New Private Homes	550		New Private Homes	50
New Affordable Homes	240		New Affordable Homes	20
Housing Waitlist	743		Housing Waitlist	1,472
Tunbridge Wells			Folkestone & Hythe	
Average House Price	£427,807		Average House Price	£316,206
Average Income	£45,688		Average Income	£31,553
Population	117,020		Population	110,995
Average Age	43.2		Average Age	47.3
New Private Homes	340		New Private Homes	350
New Affordable Homes	80		New Affordable Homes	60
Housing Waitlist	828		Housing Waitlist	1,686

Local

Rother is located on the southeast coast of England, within the county of East Sussex. It borders Kent to the north and east, Wealden district to the west and surrounds the borough of Hastings to the south.



Current Population:

93,100



The High Weald National Landscape (an 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty')

COVERS 83% OF THE DISTRICT



73%

of households own their own home, higher than the East Sussex average. 16% private rent. 11% social rent

The median age in the district is



53

higher than average in comparison to England and the South East.



OVER 50%

of Rother's towns and villages are classified as **RURAL OR FRINGE**, the highest in the East Sussex.

3,500

(4%) population increase projected by 2026 vs 2022



RANKED 143rd

out of 316 local authorities in England in terms of income deprivation, with **11% of the population deemed to be income deprived.**



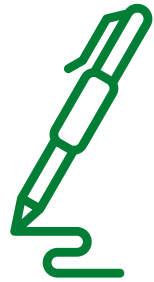
£

£365k

average house price. For first time buyers this is £287,000

94%

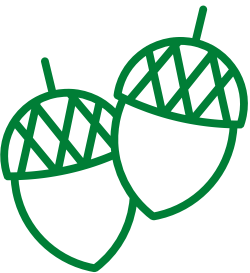
of newly-formed households in Rother are **UNABLE TO AFFORD TO BUY A LOWER QUARTILE VALUE PROPERTY** in the region. (HEDNA, 2024)



44%

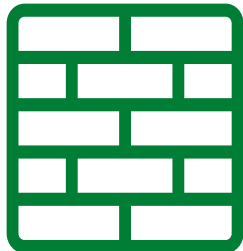
NEWLY-FORMED HOUSEHOLDS

earn less than the threshold required to afford lowest quartile rents in Rother.



3RD LEAST DENSELY POPULATED

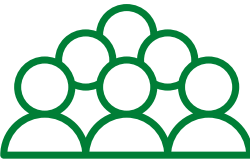
of the South East's 64 local authority areas.



300+

AFFORDABLE HOMES

needed per annum in Rother between 2021 and 2044



1,400

households on the Rother Housing Register (Sussex Homemove) waiting for a property on 1st January 2024. **130 properties** let in 2023.

Strategic Conclusion

It is within this national, regional, and local context that we set out ambitions strategy to address the housing challenges faced across our authority area.

We also set this strategy out at a time of political change, with a new government committed to housing delivery (and affordable housing delivery), planning reform and driving economic improvements.

We acknowledge the context and the challenges ahead and our housing strategy sets out our three core objectives from now until 2030 increase the supply and accelerate the delivery of new homes in the District.



Purpose and Vision

The overarching, purpose of this strategy is for the Council to support the housing requirements of its residents as well as use what resources it can to increase the supply and accelerate the delivery of new homes in the District. Our ambition is to deliver more homes, across a range of tenures for our current and future residents.

The strategy is aligned to Rother's 2024 Climate Strategy, the new Council Plan and will work in tandem with the emerging Homelessness Strategy and Local Plan and the Rother DC Housing Company Business Plan to provide a clear vision for the future of housing in Rother.

[HYPERLINK TO COUNCIL PLAN](#)

With input from our stakeholders, three key themes have been identified to shape the vision of this strategy.

2030 Vision



Increase Supply of New Homes

Key Achievements

Since the publication of the 2020 housing homelessness and rough sleeping strategy the council has made progress in a number of key areas.

- ✓ Purchased over 50 homes for temporary accommodation, alleviating homelessness, and reestablishing the Council as a Registered Provider
- ✓ Rother DC Housing Company (RDCHC) was set up in 2020 and has now started work on the Blackfriars development.
- ✓ 6 families housed through the Afghan Resettlement Scheme.
- ✓ 12 properties purchased for Housing First.
- ✓ Assisted the delivery of the community led housing scheme at Icklesham.
- ✓ CLT support/establishment.
- ✓ Provided 631 Disabled Facilities Grants, totalling £7,587,007
- ✓ Establishing ESHOG subgroups.
- ✓ Completed 493 Health and Safety Rating System inspections.
- ✓ Hosted Housing development events.
- ✓ 830 new homes completed, including 300 affordable homes.

Blackfriars

- Secured infrastructure grant from Homes England and invested £21m into the new road infrastructure project.
- Agreed a loan facility to fund the development of 200 new homes.
- Received reserved matters planning permission for 200 homes.
- Let a new build contract to construct 200 homes at Blackfriars.
- Entered a contract with a preferred Register Provider to pre-sell 130 affordable homes.
- Finalised the transfer of all 7.5 hectares of developable land at Blackfriars between RDC and RDCHC.



Strengths, Challenges & Opportunities

In preparing our strategy, we have reflected on the way we work, our strengths, the challenges we face and the opportunities in front of us.

The strategy was developed by a Task and Finish Group, comprising six Councillors who worked collaboratively to gather evidence, consult with experts, and review best practice.

Stakeholders from across the property industry were engaged to provide insights and ensure that the strategy is grounded in the realities of the housing market and reflective of current challenges and opportunities.

In this section we set out our understanding of how the national, local and regional context constrain and empower us, before setting out our core themes and objectives for our housing strategy.

Strengths

**Good reputation**

Through our Task and Finish Group sessions, we found our stakeholders hold us in high regard.

**Proactive involvement in market**

Since development of the last strategy, our teams have taken a more active approach to working with industry partners.

**Stakeholders**

Our stakeholders are aware of our desire to engage with them and progress our goals.

**Strong Network**

We have a strong a network of Registered Providers, who manage existing social homes and are seeking to develop more.

**Council's Housing Company**

We have established our the Rother District Council Housing Company, which gives us the opportunity to directly deliver new homes.

**Desirable Area**

Despite its constraints Rother is seen as a desirable area to develop homes by market developers and RPs.

**Responsive**

Stakeholders see us as a responsive Council with a clear intent to see more new homes built.

**Support**


We have supported the development of many rural housing sites, working with communities, Housing Enablers and RPs to deliver much needed affordable housing in villages.


**Infrastructure**


Development of new road infrastructure in Bexhill has freed up land in the North and West of the town for the development of new homes.


13


Challenges


- 


Meeting the needs of our residents
This is a core purpose of a local authority, and there are particular challenges posed by housing, such as: **The affordability of homes for our residents** and the cost of living crisis, coupled with the average house price being 10.7 times average income makes housing unaffordable for many residents. **Meeting the needs of the older and younger populations** Rother's fastest growing demographics are under 40s and over 65s.
- 


Challenges of our geography
The majority of the land in our district (over 90%) is designated as either an HWNL or SSSI, which limits land availability. Developers and RPs take a regional view which means we must be proactive in establishing and maintaining a network of willing partners.
- 


The Economy
Specifically the capacity within the construction market and wider development sector, with high costs and high levels of contractor insolvency, to meet our aspirations for more homes.
- 


Limited Land Supply
Our District suffers from a limited land supply, coupled with high values and desirability has led to a proliferation of land speculation, driving up land prices, resulting in fewer affordable homes being delivered.
- 

Public Transport
There is a lack of public transport across the District, this makes it harder to develop new homes with good public transport links outside of a handful of major conurbations.
- 

RP Challenges
Our partner RPs face significant challenges and costs to upgrade their existing homes, reducing the amount they can spend developing new affordable homes.
- 


Construction and Regulations
Construction cost inflation and new building regulations have increased costs and reduced development activity over the past two years.
- 


Climate Change
The Council's Climate Strategy lays out the numerous challenges in achieving its aims, and this strategy recognises those challenges, and also recognises the requirements and standards expected of new homes.
- 


Construction skills shortage
Both the industry and central government has recognised that there is a shortage of skilled construction workers. The average age of construction workers is now over 50 and the rate of retirement is accelerating. Estimates suggest the industry needs to recruit an additional 250,000 staff annually until 2028 to meet UK construction output.
- 


Road Infrastructure
Rother District's road infrastructure is a constraining factor - a number of major improvements to the road network have been delayed or cancelled, including widening of the A259 & A21 and creation of the Bexhill Bypass.


Opportunities


- 


Building a Team
The Council has reestablished its role as an RP and Homes England partner, building a team of experienced housing management professionals with relevant experience, qualifications, policies to manage housing stock to required standards.
- 


Development Team
The Council is establishing a development team with relevant experience to take land to planning approval and the scope to work with partners to build out schemes.
- 


Development Potential
Council land holdings that have potential for residential development.
- 

New Government & New Legislation
The new Labour government is renewing the focus on increasing housebuilding which may give rise to new legislation and potentially new funding streams that would assist Rother and our partners to accelerate the delivery of new homes.
- 

Additional Land
The designation of additional land in North and West Bexhill with potential to deliver thousands of new homes.
- 

Rother District Council Housing Company (RDCHC)
The establishment of RDCHC has given the Council a new route to deliver new homes and to act as a catalyst for development, particularly of affordable housing, in the district.
- 

Willing Partners
Both private and public sector partners have expressed interest in working in partnership with the Council on projects and joint ventures.
- 

Strong Regional Network
we have a strong network of public and private sector partners which we can and will utilise to understand current best practice and promote opportunities in the District.
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A Clear Vision for our District
We will continue to develop a new local plan through 2025, setting our spatial priorities and put us in a strong and clear position to direct the development of new homes in appropriate, sustainable locations. Combined with our Climate Strategy and new Council Plan, we have committed to increasing housing supply.

Theme 1: A thriving local development sector

We will take an active role to create a thriving development programme, delivering more homes for our current and future residents, supporting those delivering housing as well as delivering homes ourselves.

Over the lifetime of this plan, we will continue with our key projects at Blackfriars, the outline planning approval at King Offa as well as work to create a positive environment for increased development activity across the District.



Objective 1

Create a positive environment for development of new homes across the District

ACTIONS

- Support the delivery of a new Local Plan, setting out the vision for the District. Working with RDCHC and internal teams, we will become a District that developers can work with and deliver more homes.
- Proactively engage with local stakeholders, community groups and parish and town councils to understand local needs and priorities for new development, brokering relationships with housing developers and investors.
- Continue to be an active member of Developers East Sussex (DES) using the forum to build relationships, understand the challenges faced by partners and promote the Council's ambitions to deliver more homes.
- We will continue to host sector wide workshops and events, bringing together a diverse range of development stakeholders in the same place to promote understanding between "disparate groups" and create space for new partnerships to be formed.

Objective 2

Improve the number sites being built out

ACTIONS

- Map out sites that have received a planning permission but have not yet been built out to understand the issues and work with those landowners to support them to starting on site.
- Work with planning colleagues to ensure allocated sites are brought forward in order to meet our housing targets.
- Consult with the developers and their advisors to better understand the constraints that have prevented the schemes being constructed.
- Where infrastructure improvements are required but unaffordable for the scheme, we will work with the utilities firms to understand how these could be unlocked to enable delivery.
- Continue to jointly lead the East Sussex Housing Partnership towards greater collaboration between Council areas to identify shared infrastructure priorities and work together to improve local land capacity.

Objective 3

Support local small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to ensure a thriving local development market

ACTIONS

- We will work with colleagues from the Planning Team to maintain an open dialogue with local SME construction firms, contractors, sub-contractors and developers to better understand the barriers to delivery of smaller housing schemes.
- We will jointly establish a network of local SME Contractors and Developers to enable sharing of best practice and promote local firms.
- Work with the network to understand the constraints facing smaller organisations delivering homes within the District.
- Identify where minor infrastructure improvements could unlock new housing opportunities for smaller sites.
- Connect SME developers with potential RP partners to deliver affordable homes on their developments.

Objective 4

Maximise on site delivery of affordable homes across the District

ACTIONS

- Engage early with prospective developers to understand affordable housing proposals for each site comes forward through the pre-app process as well as through established networks and forums.
- Work with RP partners to understand what type, tenure and size of homes meets the needs of their customers across the District and their appetite for development.
- We will seek to provide flexibility, where possible, in the mix of affordable homes to give the best possible chance of affordable homes being delivered on site.
- Work with developers able to bring forward multiple sites, ensuring that policy compliant levels of affordable housing but allowing for some flexibility as to the location of those affordable homes to ensure maximum amount of new affordable homes.
- We will continue to work with partners to lobby government for grant funding to be provided on Section 106 homes in certain circumstances.

Objective 5

Be an active lobbyist to ensure the best outcomes for the District and our residents

ACTIONS

- In partnership with the DES, East Sussex Housing Partnership (ESHP) and neighbouring Authorities, we will lobby government on the important contribution Rother and other districts make to the South East region.
- Identify gaps in funding of key infrastructure projects and work with partners to support asks of government to reduce these gaps.
- Seek to involve partners and residents in achieving our objectives under this theme, through publications, events and subgroups.
- We will work with partners through the East Sussex Housing Officer Group (ESHOG) to lobby regional and national government on key issues preventing the delivery of more homes.

Objective 6

Support rural housing delivery

ACTIONS

- Advocate for the construction of new homes in rural areas by implementing suitable planning policies to promote economic sustainability and viability of these communities.
- Support and facilitate the creation of Neighbourhood Plans.
- Support local communities to conduct detailed Housing Needs Surveys in rural areas to assess the demand for additional housing.
- Collaborate actively with Parish councils and groups of Parish Councils to address local housing needs.
- Review innovation and best practice examples that could accelerate the delivery of new rural housing sites.

Objective 7

To assist the delivery of increased housing targets we will support increased density in suitable urban and suburban locations

ACTIONS

- Review of key suburban sites that are yet to be developed and work with partners to increase density where it is appropriate and sustainable.
- Work with willing partners to investigate the potential to increase density on key sites.
- We will work with developers to ensure effective partnerships with RPs to ensure the types of affordable homes developed are suitable and attractive to the RP market.
- Review opportunities for the conversion of commercial buildings, including offices, to sustainable residential developments.



Theme 2: Supporting our communities

We will enhance the quality of our residents' lives through the increased provision of affordable housing and by empowering our communities through engagement and collaborative working.



Objective 1

Involve communities in development decision making

ACTIONS

- Using our values and ROOT (Respect, Openness, Outcomes, Together) approach, we will continuously and actively communicate with our residents and wider community to consult on our new Local Plan and any subsequent policies which emerge from this strategy.
- Work more closely with Town and Parish Councils to find opportunities for community involvement at early stages of the development process, as set out in objective 5.
- Encourage developers and broker introductions to engage with our communities as early as possible in the development process to give residents the opportunity to contribute their views.
- Work with all parties to reduce local objections to new developments via effective communication of the need for new homes and the benefits of new development.

Objective 2

Improving opportunities for residents to get on the housing ladder

ACTIONS

- Continue to review and update our understanding of affordability and tailor our approach to new homes to meet housing needs.
- Consult with our Registered Provider partners to better understand the demand for shared ownership across the district.
- Promote shared ownership as a tenure on appropriate developments to support home ownership and encourage developers to allocate appropriate homes for shared ownership.
- Work with partners to encourage take up of any central government initiatives aimed at first time buyers.

Objective 3

Improve understanding of social housing in the community

ACTIONS

- When consulting, we will with communities to ensure a better understanding of the contributions social housing makes to thriving communities, debunking commonly held misconceptions.
- Ensure transparency of the number, type and tenure of affordable homes being built through consultation and planning. We will do this through publishing data on our website and using statutory consultation process in planning.
- Publish clear information on our website outlining the key aspects of different social housing tenures, eligibility and availability.
- Provide Town and Parish Councils with clear information about the type and tenure of proposed social homes in their areas, so this can be effectively communicated to local residents in a timely manner.

Objective 4

Provide Parish and Town Councils support in delivering new homes where they are needed

ACTIONS

- We recognise that Parish and Town Councils (P&TCs) understand their local communities and will tap into this knowledge through establishing a network / using existing networks more effectively.
- Encourage P&TCs to review land holdings in their areas, identifying sites that might be suitable for new homes.
- Work collaboratively with P&TCs and landowners to bring forward identified sites.
- Identify opportunities for smaller Parishes to work jointly to deliver rural exception sites and community led housing.

Objective 5

Support community led housing schemes

ACTIONS

- Encourage partners to involve local residents, especially those in need of housing, in developing community-driven housing solutions.
- Continue to work closely with our local Rural Housing Enabler, Action in Rural Sussex (AIRS) to understand the opportunities across the District for community led housing.
- Working with experienced partners, we will develop an easily accessible framework for the development of smaller/community led sites. The framework will give smaller Council's guidance about the stages of the development process and how they can be supported to bring forward community led schemes
- Continue to promote best practice and innovation, and share learning across our District and encourage exploration of community led housing where possible.
- Ensure the Council provides support through the process for any community led housing schemes.

Objective 6

Maintain skills locally to support the delivery of new homes

ACTIONS

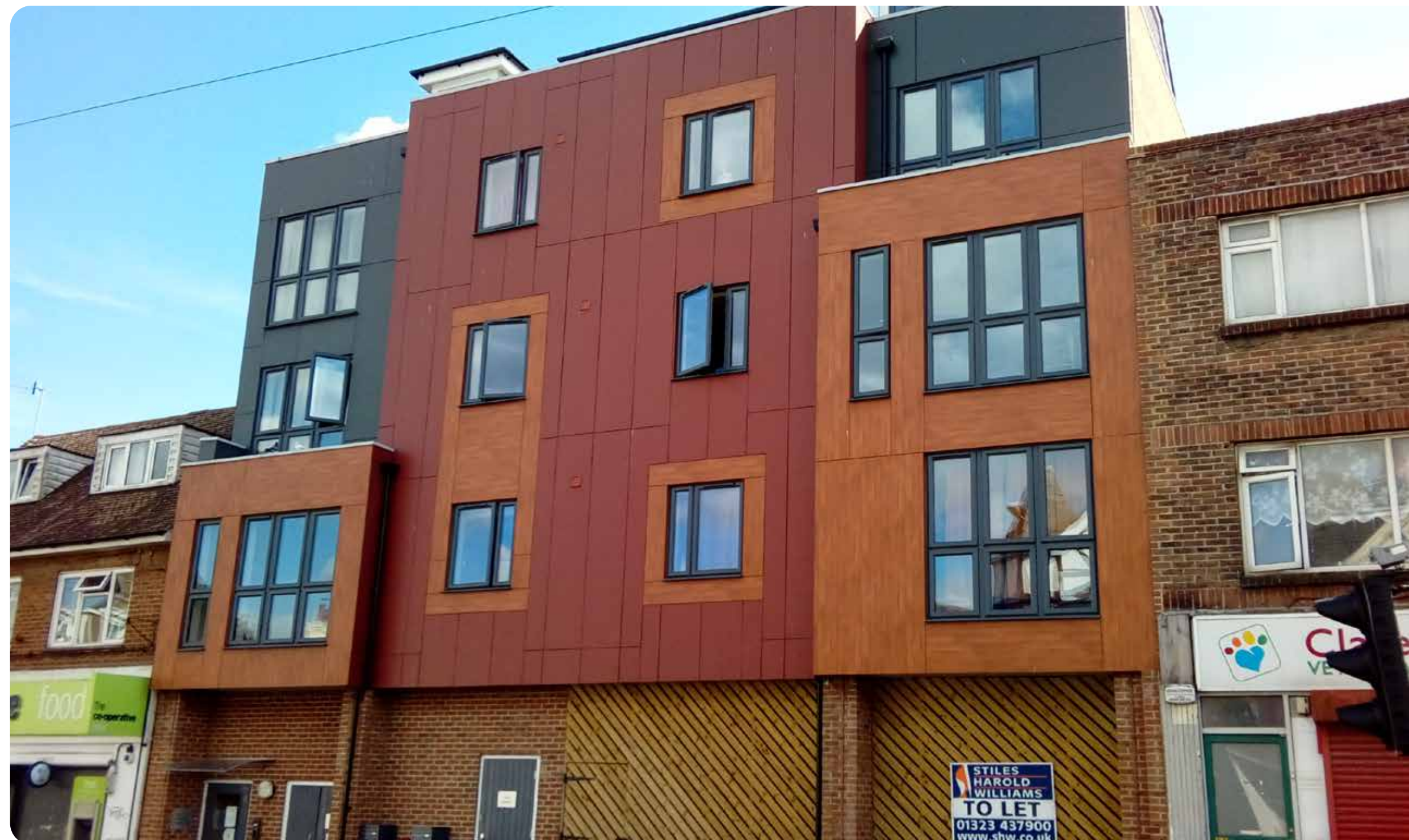
- Work with East Sussex County Council (ESCC) to review the provision of construction related qualifications within the District.
- Work with developers to understand the highest priority gaps in construction skills.
- Work with all partners to provide a wider range of construction qualifications to create a local talent pool of qualified construction professionals to meet existing shortfalls and future needs of the sector.
- Through Section 106 agreements, secure apprenticeships, Employment Skills Plans and work placements for local residents on development projects.
- Work with partners to encourage the use of modern methods of construction and review options to stimulate the development of local supply chains to support new types of construction.

Objective 7

Review specialist housing options

ACTIONS

- Review the need for, location and design of specialist housing, including supported accommodation and older persons schemes.
- Work closely with East Sussex Housing Partnership (ESHP) Public Health team to inform our decision making on matters relating to health and housing.
- Work with social care commissioners to ensure new specialist developments are suitably located, with a level of services that reflect the needs of our communities.
- Explore opportunities to provide small developments of bungalows suitable for older persons.
- Encourage high levels of accessibility across all types of new homes.
- Work with partners to raise awareness of existing developments that include specialist facilities.



Theme 3: An active role in the development of new homes

The Council will play an active role in seeing the change in pace of delivery it wants to see. We will directly intervene in the housing market, bringing sites forward as well as actively lobbying for funding and support (locally, nationally and regionally) to deliver new homes.

Objective 1

Take active role in bringing forward new sites

ACTIONS

- Encourage landowners with sites allocated through the new Local Plan to consult with the Council to ensure that schemes brought forward are viable, sustainable and provide affordable homes on site.
- Use technology to review potential windfall sites that are not allocated through the local plan. Where suitable and sustainable sites are identified, we will engage with landowners to encourage them to bring forward their land for new homes.
- Be an active partner to Parish and Town Councils, assisting them to determine local housing need and reviewing potential development sites.
- Review how we work as a Council with land owners and developers to get the most for our District, supporting them where appropriate to bring forward planning permissions.
- Seek to offer planning and development services to landowners who are interested in bringing their sites forward in partnership with the Council.
- Investigate the number of empty homes in the District and explore opportunities to bring them back into use.
- Review land use in the HWNL to identify locations for sustainable development.

Objective 2

Explore Options to deliver new Council owned affordable housing

ACTIONS

- Work with RDCHC to progress development appraisals as part of their annual business plan and explore opportunities for the Council to fund more developments through its arms-length company.
- Explore Joint Venture (JV) opportunities with private developers and RPs.
- As part of the Council's adopted Strategic Asset Management Plan process, continuously, review our land holding to investigate any opportunities to deliver new homes on Council owned sites.
- Review options for the Council to develop and manage more homes, including the option to reopen a Housing Revenue Account.
- Review options for the Council to purchase and manage section 106 homes that are not purchased by RPs.
- Where feasible, access debt funding to invest in JVs, RDCHC and other new homes.
- Use the East Sussex One Public Estate network to review opportunities to repurpose of surplus public land for housing and regeneration.

Objective 3

Attract grant funding to support and enable more homes

ACTIONS

- Keep abreast of all funding streams available to Local Authorities, Registered Providers and Developers, seeking to maximise funding opportunities for new housing developments.
- Seek to take a lead role in development in order to expedite the delivery of new schemes utilising available funding received.
- Work with private and public sector partners to identify which funding streams can be matched to stalled projects and projects that cannot viably provide on site affordable homes.
- Support partners in asking government and Homes England to provide grants for the development of affordable housing.
- Seek to attract grant funding for infrastructure projects that enable the delivery of new homes, from projects at a local scale (such as utility provisions) to a District scale (such as transport infrastructure).

Objective 4

Use section 106 receipts and off-site contributions to increase the supply of affordable housing

ACTIONS

- Review historical and expected future receipts to determine what funding might be available to support the delivery of affordable homes.
- Identify schemes where the allocation of the capital funding could either unlock a stalled scheme or increase provision of affordable homes on site.
- Work with partners to allocate the funds to increase affordable housing delivery in the District to unlock sites or provide additional affordable homes on allocated sites.

Objective 5

Review opportunities for the development of a new garden village in the District which could help to meet the Council's housing target.

ACTIONS

- Cross departmental working to identify any larger settlements that might be feasible to bring forward with landowners.
- If a suitable area is identified RDC will act as an honest broker bringing together landowners with other stakeholders.
- Work with stakeholders to enable land release through the development of key infrastructure e.g. roads and services.

Objective 6

Proactive approach to infrastructure development

ACTIONS

- We will work with ESCC in their strategic planning role to explore key infrastructure support that could be provided to unlocking sites (such as transport, education, social care and waste disposal), which will, in return, allow an increase in housing delivery

- Working with Members and DES, we will carry out research to understand the obstacles developers and partners encounter in regards to infrastructure. This will include utilities, technology and broadband.
- Lobby regionally for improvements in the approach of utility companies.
- Engage with local utility providers to better understand their long term and seek to influence them to bring forward key projects that unlock development sites for new homes.
- Ensure that appropriate Section 106 contributions are sought from developers to support the development of new schools or expansion of existing facilities.
- Continuously working with planners to ensure the delivery of community and social infrastructure to support our existing and new communities.
- Review the effectiveness of current Community Infrastructure Levy policy and seek to prioritise infrastructure that is critical to the development of new homes.
- Explore options to use the Council's Compulsory Purchase powers to unlock infrastructure and development sites.