

# Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2021-2026

## Strategy Overview



# Foreword

Tackling the housing crisis remains one of the most urgent priorities for the Royal Borough of Greenwich. We believe that housing is not just about having a roof over your head, but that everyone deserves a home which is affordable, safe, secure and comfortable.

Although we continue to face challenges with budget cuts, we are proud of what we have accomplished over the past few years. From working collaboratively with local organisations to find innovative solutions to prevent homelessness, to launching our housing scheme, Greenwich Builds, which aims to build 750 new council homes by 2024. The success of these programmes is something we will continue to build upon in our new strategy.

But there is more work to be done. Like every other borough in London, we are facing an unprecedented housing crisis. While the cost of living has increased, people's incomes have not kept pace. Too many people in Royal Greenwich are struggling to afford decent, stable housing and this is something we must fix urgently.

The COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated the housing crisis and put a huge amount of pressure on our teams and services, not to mention the devastating impact it's had on so many people in our borough, and across the country.

The pandemic has also disproportionately affected some of the most vulnerable people in our society, and highlighted inequalities that are simply not acceptable. Our plans must drive positive change for everyone and truly reflect the diversity that makes our borough such a great place to live, while continuing to promote equality and fighting injustice.

That is why we have developed our new housing and homelessness strategy 2021-2026. This document details our vision and plans for the next five years, ensuring we affect real change for the residents of our borough.

We remain committed to doing all we can to solve the housing crisis in Royal Greenwich. But if we are going to achieve long-term success, there need to be fundamental changes to national housing policy. We will continue to apply pressure to the UK Government on issues including renter's rights, more genuinely affordable social housing programmes, and climate change.

It is our residents, and the diverse and vibrant communities in which we live, that make our borough such a wonderful place to be. We want our strategy and our plans to reflect this, putting people at the heart of our decision-making. Your input and feedback on our strategy is vital for shaping the future of housing in Royal Greenwich. Thank you.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anthony Okereke'.

**Cllr Anthony Okereke**  
Cabinet Member for Housing

# Introduction

## The Five Strands

There are five strands of our strategy. These are key to tackling the competing housing pressures in the borough and improving housing for all our residents. They are:

**1** Ensuring the supply of high-quality homes

**2** Tackling homelessness and ending rough sleeping

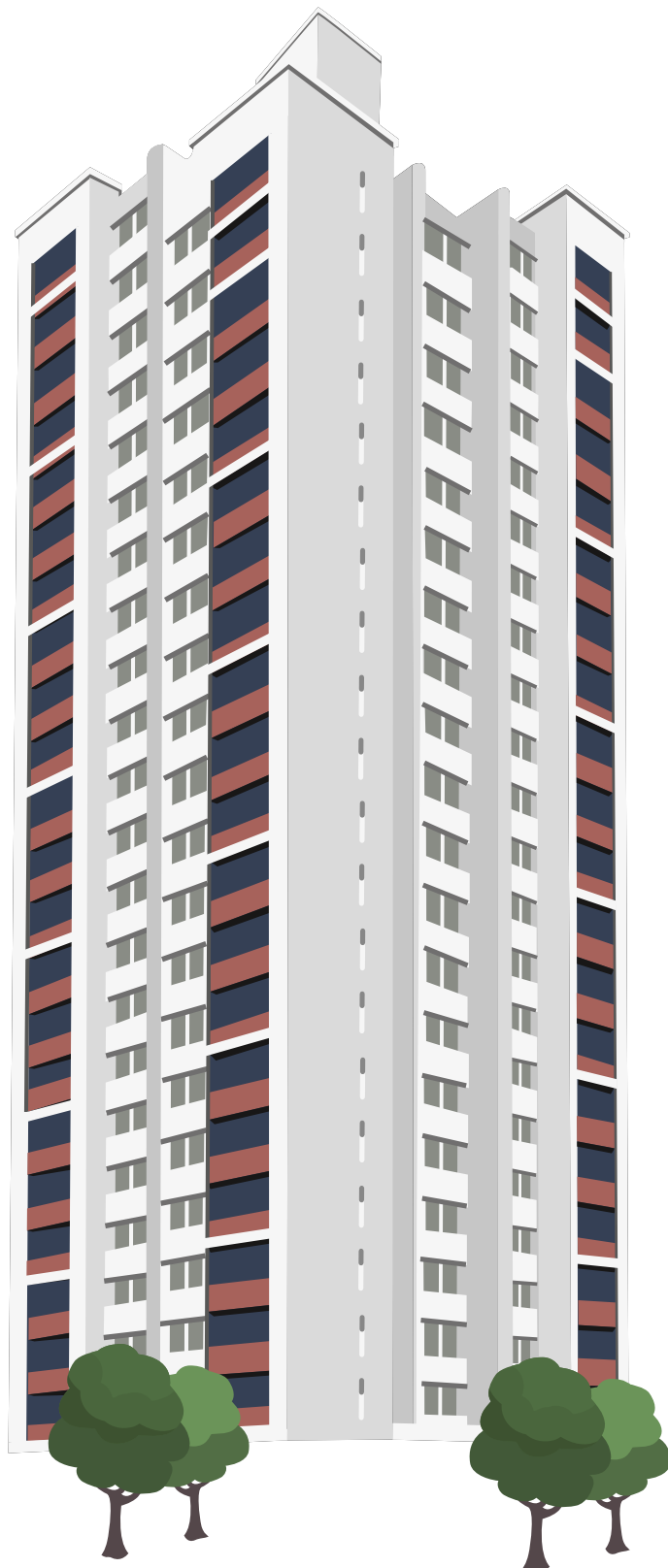
**3** Support for specific housing needs

**4** Safe and sustainable homes for all

**5** Building resilient and vibrant communities and neighbourhoods

Safe, secure and affordable homes have a direct impact on people's health and happiness. Having a secure home is as important as health and education. It helps people gain employment, access health services, and provides a stable environment for children to grow up in.

That's why we are launching our new Housing and Homelessness Strategy, so we can make sure that all our residents in the Royal Borough of Greenwich are able to access safe, high-quality and affordable housing.



This document sets out overarching principles and key aims for our housing and homelessness services over the next five years. It is divided into five key strands and we will develop a separate document for each strand to help us achieve our vision.

Our strategy needs to cater to the diversity of our borough; whether that is older people, people from minority ethnic backgrounds, extended families, single people or those with disabilities and specialist needs.

By focussing on the five strands one at a time, we will be able to engage with residents in a meaningful way, gain a deeper understanding of your experiences, the

challenges you face in terms of housing, and develop plans and actions which keep local people at the heart of what we do next.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we live, and as a local authority it has changed the way we deliver our services. In light of the pandemic and the uncertainty it brings, we want to make sure that we can respond to challenges quickly and adapt our housing plans to the ever-changing environment

We have established four clear principles that will underpin our strategy and which we will use to approach any challenges that arise over the next five years:



- **Resident focus:**

Every commitment and action we take to tackle housing issues in the borough will be built around the needs of our residents. Residents should be fully involved in shaping the future of housing in the borough.



- **Evidence-based decision-making:**

This means that we will use evidence and data to inform our decisions, while using tried and tested programmes that are proven to work.



- **Partnership-working:**

The only way to address the complex challenges facing the housing and homelessness sector as a whole, is to work directly with experienced partners and other private housing providers.



- **Digital transformation:**

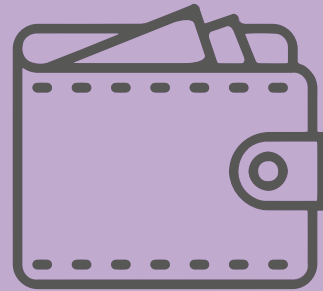
Delivering on the Council's Digital Strategy will be key to help us design inclusive digital tools that improve how residents use our services while helping our staff to do their jobs more effectively.

# Housing need in Royal Greenwich



**3,140**

households on the priority waiting list for council homes



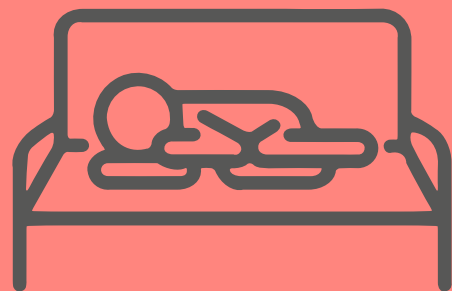
**£30,778**

average household income, the 6th lowest in London



**£397,000**

average property price, 13x higher than median wage



**133**

people sleeping rough during 2019/20



# Glossary

## Intermediate housing

means homes for sale and rent provided at a cost above social rent but below market levels. These can include shared equity (shared ownership and equity loans), other low cost homes for sale and intermediate rent.

## Extra care housing

is a type of 'housing with care' which means you retain independence while you're assisted with tasks such as washing, dressing, going to the toilet or taking medication.

## Lifetime Homes Standards

These are a set of criteria which homes should meet in order to be fully accessible and adaptable to suit the needs and lives of older people or people with disabilities.



## Social Housing White Paper

This is a proposal which sets out actions the government will take to ensure that residents in social housing are safe, listened to, live in good quality homes, and are able to easily make a complaint when things go wrong.

## Mixed-use neighbourhoods

In a mixed-use neighborhood, housing and residential areas are mixed in with restaurants, cafes, dry cleaners, supermarkets, corner shops, etc. – businesses that serve local people and support the daily needs of residents.



# Ensuring the supply of high-quality homes



### Our Commitments

- Secure the delivery of Council housing and affordable rented homes for those in most need.
- Ensure that intermediate housing is accessible to those who want it.
- Use our partnerships with housing providers and influence private developers to maximise affordable housing development in the borough.

To tackle housing demand pressure in the borough we will maximise the number of high-quality and affordable homes for all our residents, catering for people on a range of incomes.

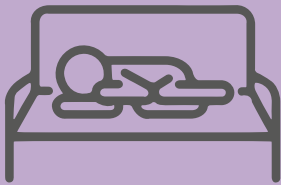
We will do this by continuing to invest in the pace and scale of our own ambitious Council home building programme, Greenwich Builds, the first phase of which will build over 750 new council homes by 2024. Some of these are already complete and most are due to be finished by the end of 2022. All new homes will comply with our commitments to carbon neutrality and building safety standards. We will outline our

future plans for sustaining this level of social housebuilding in the coming years.

Despite our new builds programme, many residents will be unable to obtain social housing due to the size of the waiting list and are unlikely be able to purchase a home without assistance due to the cost. To tackle this, we need to understand the different experiences of our residents and will then be able to change our services to address their priorities. Working in partnership with other registered housing providers and influencing private developers will be key to delivering the homes that we need in the borough.



# Tackling homelessness and ending rough sleeping



### Our Commitments

- Deliver a person-centred approach to preventing homelessness.
- End rough sleeping by 2024 by implementing the government's Rough Sleeping Strategy.
- Reduce the number of households living in temporary accommodation and improve standards in the sector as a whole.
- Improve the quality of housing in the private rented sector.

Homelessness is devastating for the people who experience it and often has knock-on effects for people's jobs, education, health and personal relationships. We will do everything we can to reduce homelessness and end rough sleeping through early intervention programmes, easily accessible advice, strong partnership working with experienced local organisations and charities and through finding innovative, alternative solutions to prevent homelessness.

Our services will be designed and delivered with the rights, needs and experiences of Royal Greenwich residents at the centre. We believe that this person-centred approach will improve our ability to prevent

homelessness and help people to stay in stable accommodation. This will also help us to reduce the number of people in temporary accommodation and help them move into more settled housing.

Preventing homelessness will also help us to reduce the number of new people sleeping rough on the streets. To help those who are already street homeless, we will expand our services to meet demand and ensure that there is enough safe emergency accommodation to help people off the streets. In line with the government's Rough Sleeping Strategy, we aim to end rough sleeping in the Royal Borough of Greenwich by 2024.





# Support for specific housing needs



### Our Commitments

- Equal access to housing services
- Supporting and sustaining people to live independently
- Suitable and specific accommodation

We want to ensure that residents have equal access to appropriate long-term homes, that our housing services are inclusive and no one is left behind. We aim to deliver services that are compassionate and built on an understanding of residents' experiences. All residents should be treated with respect and dignity.

We want to make sure that our residents have the necessary information, advice and support to live independently in your homes for as long as possible. We aim to ensure that specialist housing is available to those in need, such as extra care housing.

We want new homes built in Royal Greenwich to demonstrate inclusive design elements, lifetime home standards, dementia-friendly layouts and wheelchair accessibility.

To address the challenges for people with specific housing needs, we will seek feedback from these residents and incorporate lived experiences into our plans.

All Council services will work in partnership with registered providers, private landlords, health and social care providers and employment support services.



# Safe and sustainable homes for all



### Our Commitments

- Ensure our Council homes are safe and have modern facilities.
- Make sure safety standards are met in privately owned and rented homes.
- Improve the energy efficiency in homes owned by the Royal Borough of Greenwich.
- Tackle climate change by supporting carbon reduction and improved energy efficiency in all homes in Royal Greenwich.

Safe and sustainable housing supports good physical and mental health, and has been proven to reduce fuel poverty, carbon emissions and hospital admissions, and helps people live independently for longer. This strand is underpinned and informed by the Grenfell Tower Inquiry, the Social Housing White Paper, the review of building safety standards and the evolving green agenda, including the Council's own Carbon Reduction Plan.

As a landlord to around 20,000 households, we will improve building safety, champion the voice of residents, and empower our tenants and

leaseholders. We will also use our role as a partner of many housing providers to make sure the new building safety standards are implemented across Royal Greenwich, not just in the housing that we own.

To tackle climate change and fuel poverty, improve sustainability and reduce carbon emissions, we will support Council tenants and improve energy efficiency in the private rented sector. We will support tenants through our capital programme, including insulating walls, roofs and floors and upgrading windows and doors.



# Building resilient and vibrant communities and neighbourhoods

## Our Commitments



- Ensure that residents have a voice and are empowered and supported to help shape their local environment.
- Improve the safety and security of our neighbourhoods.
- Prioritise the design of mixed-use, high-quality neighbourhoods.
- Improve digital connectivity in homes across Royal Greenwich.

A good place to live is about more than just having a good home. It is about your local environment, safety, being able to use local amenities, and a sense of attachment to your neighbourhood. We aim to not only improve people's homes and the services you receive from the Council, but also ask what we can do to improve the area in which you live. We aim to create local neighbourhoods that are vibrant, sustainable and resilient and which meet the aspirations of our residents today and in the future.

This strand is a significant ambition, and one which goes beyond the responsibilities of any single Council department. We will work closely with colleagues across every department, as well as community groups and local organisations to ensure we can adapt and respond effectively to the challenges and opportunities we face as a borough.

We will also work with residents to understand and respond to your priorities and needs for housing. Above all, our plans require long-term vision, commitment, and investment.



