

Report to:	Cabinet
Date:	26 September 2024
Title:	New Homes Principles (Building Better Council Housing)
Report of:	Ian Fitzpatrick, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Regeneration and Planning
Cabinet member:	Councillor Zoe Nicholson, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance, Assets and Community Wealth Building
Ward(s):	All
Purpose of report:	To implement New Homes Principles underpinning the council's housing delivery programme.
Decision type:	Non-key
Officer recommendation(s):	To approve and adopt the New Homes Principles.
Reasons for recommendations:	To create a framework that supports in the design and delivery of new council housing.
Contact Officer(s):	Name: Nathan Haffenden Post title: Assistant Director – Property and Development E-mail: Nathan.haffenden@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk Telephone number: 01323 436422

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report introduces the Lewes District Council (LDC) New Homes Principles.
- 1.2 The New Homes Principles have been developed in partnership with the Tenants of Lewes District (TOLD), underpinning the Housing Delivery Programme 2024-2028 to ensure we are 'building better council housing'.

2 Background

- 2.1 Since 2019, the council has completed and developed a growing pipeline of new homes across the district to meet a range of local needs and in the context of key objectives to build quality, sustainable, and truly affordable housing. This is at a time when less than 25% of local authorities in the UK have built any council housing in the last 10 years.
- 2.2 In March 2024, an update on the housing delivery programme was presented to Cabinet including approvals for new schemes, such as the brownfield-focused Garage Infills Programme (Phase 1). Also included was a proposal to develop

guiding principles to ensure that the programme continues to achieve corporate objectives and set against core values:

- **Accountability**– the council will make ethical, transparent, and well-intentioned decisions in relation to the use of land, specifically targeting brownfield sites, and with consideration of corporate climate change objectives.
- **Accessibility** – the pipeline will reflect the different needs of our residents and those on the council’s housing waiting list, taking into consideration factors such as location, individual design needs, adaptations, and the importance of community.
- **Affordability** – all new council homes will be affordable to live in, taking into consideration household running costs as well as rent levels.

2.3 In addition, the March 2024 report summarised several priorities in the context of the current financial challenges and budget pressures including matters such as build quality, rent levels, financial viability, protecting affordable housing planning allocations, and driving future policy / standards.

2.4 As such, in partnership with TOLD, the New Homes Principles have been developed for consideration and approval.

3 New Homes Principles

3.1 The principles provide a framework to support in the design and delivery of the housing delivery programme - creating a clear and strong set of standards to ‘raise the bar’ and make people proud to live in the district, building upon the objectives of the Reimagining Lewes District Corporate Plan.

3.2 In addition, the principles will contribute to the strategic brief for the project manager and design team, acting as an introduction to the council’s more detailed Employer’s Requirements. The principles will apply to all new homes directly built by the council reflecting both industry standards and best practice within the sector.

3.3 The principles focus on 5 key areas as follows:

- **Principle 1:** Creating places, communities, and homes that our residents need
- **Principle 2:** Building quality and healthy homes
- **Principle 3:** Maximising social value in housing development to benefit local people
- **Principle 4:** Reducing environmental impact and making homes more affordable
- **Principle 5:** Optimising location, sustainable transport, and connectivity

3.4 The New Homes Principles will underpin all directly delivered, new build council housing and support in future decision-making for development schemes.

3.5 A full copy of the New Homes Principles is enclosed within Appendix 1.

4 Consultation

- 4.1 The New Homes Principles were developed in partnership with TOLD, ensuring tenants remain at the core of all homes built by the council. This was a collaborative and iterative process, which included workshopping the priorities and principles that form part of the final document enclosed.
- 4.2 Alongside, the principles were developed internally with input from multiple departments, such as Homes First, and also with Lead Cabinet Members.

5 Corporate plan and council policies

- 5.1 The principles have been established to directly meet the objectives of the Corporate Plan to deliver homes, specifically:
- Delivering 200 additional council houses
 - Directly deliver more council housing for rent
 - More sustainable and energy efficient homes across the district
 - Accessible housing for those with additional support needs
- 5.2 The New Homes Principles align with other relevant council policies including the Community Wealth Building Strategy, Reimagining Lewes District Action Plan, and the Climate and Nature Strategy 2024.

6 Financial appraisal

- 6.1 There are no specific financial implications to consider as part of this report. The Housing Delivery Programme 2024-2028 continues to be managed in accordance with the current 30-Year Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan, Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP), and approved Capital Programme.
- 6.2 The principles will help the council to ensure new homes remain truly affordable through quality and highly sustainable design, capturing the true household cost of rents and bills, passing on any savings / efficiencies directly to the tenants.

7 Legal implications

- 7.1 There are no specific legal implications to consider as part of this report. The principles reflect all relevant legal and regulatory standards and have been designed to reflect any future changes within the industry as they arise.

8 Risk management implications

- 8.1 The New Homes Principles will continue to ensure the development of compliant and high-quality council housing, reducing any inconsistency risk in the programme by creating a framework that supports the design, procurement, and delivery processes.

9 Equality analysis

- 9.1 The overall impact on residents with protected characteristics is a positive one. The New Homes Principles will shape and inform how new build council housing is delivered in the future to ensure that we are building quality, sustainable, and affordable homes, to meet a range of local needs including increased accessible and adapted properties.
- 9.2 A full analysis will be undertaken for each new housing development project within the programme as they are presented to Cabinet for approval.

10 Environmental sustainability implications

- 10.1 The New Homes Principles will help the council to meet its sustainability, climate change, and carbon reduction targets in housing development including maximising brownfield sites, building 'fabric first', and adhering to Healthy Homes.
- 10.2 In addition:
- Increasing biodiversity on all new housing developments.
 - Promoting the use of Modern Methods of Construction (MMC).
 - Consciously and intentionally selecting building materials to create climate resilient homes.
 - Prioritising the installation of appropriate renewable technologies that minimise energy bills to our residents whilst reducing carbon outputs.

11 Contribution to Community Wealth Building

- 11.1 The principles also directly contribute to the Community Wealth Building Strategy, particularly *Principle 3: Maximising social value in housing development to benefit local people*, with a few key extracts as follows:
- Continuing to adopt the council's Social Value Charter to sustainably procure works and services.
 - Developing local markets and supply chains - retaining wealth within the district.
 - Increasing education and learning benefits – creating enhanced options for new skills development and employment opportunities.
 - Promoting new community-led design and housing opportunities.

12 Appendices

- **Appendix 1** – New Homes Principles

13 Background papers

The background papers used in compiling this report were as follows:

- [Housing Development and Property Update – 14th March 2024](#)

