

Bury Housing Strategy 2021-25 Executive Summary

Section 1: Housing for Bury 2020: Let's do it

The Council, partners and residents are working through a collaborative process, to develop a ten year vision and strategy for Bury, integrating public services with new neighbourhood-based hubs and team working. You can find details of that particular consultation here:

www.onecommunitybury.co.uk/bury-2030

Housing affects many parts of our lives. The COVID-19 lockdown periods have brought home how important it is to have a healthy, suitable and secure home and spaces between our homes to enjoy each other's company. Housing also presents an opportunity to reimagine our high streets in the light of unprecedented changes to our retail activity, and to make our town centres and neighbourhoods work in a different way for residents. New house building and making a wholesale shift to carbon neutral could also play a big role in shoring up Bury's local economy.

The decisions we make about housing impact on all five of the themes in our Bury 2030 Vision: Healthy People, Thriving Green Spaces, Co-Designed Ideas, Future-Proofed Infrastructure and Inclusive Business Growth. This Housing Strategy sets out how the Council and partners will work, over the period 2021-25 to support our emerging *Bury 2030 Vision; Let's do it!*

Outcomes sought from this housing strategy

- More homes in the borough;
- Increased affordable housing supply – through new build, leasing and acquisition;
- A more dynamic housing market enabling more people to access a suitable home;
- Good quality, healthy homes and places;
- Support that enables people to live well in the community;
- Intelligent, evidence-driven, targeted investment to improve health through housing;
- Towards a township housing strategy, for each town centre and neighbourhoods;
- To eliminate rough sleeping by 2025;
- Rapid movement towards low carbon housing.

Section 2: New homes for Bury

By 2030, there will be 5,109 new households living in Bury. This is not spread evenly across age groups. The projections show a decline in the number of working age residents and a very large increase in households over the age of 65.

We need to take radical action now to retain and attract working age residents, to drive a better balance between our younger and older populations and to help our economic recovery following COVID-19. We need the right homes at the right level of affordability both to retain

those who commute out for work and to meet the needs of residents working locally; both will help to stabilise spending and support recovery of our local economy.

The number of new homes we are aiming for in Bury is 451 per annum up to 2037. Our recent Housing Needs Assessment tells us a lot about what people want and need from their housing across the life course and we are aiming to understand even more, looking at six stages of life:

- *Bury's young residents seeking independence (16-25);*
- *Bury's young professionals (26-39);*
- *People looking to settle in Bury (26-45);*
- *Bury's maturing families (35-59);*
- *Bury's active older people (60-74);*
- *Bury's more frail older people (75 and over).*

We also want to understand more about what specialist homes and neighbourhoods might be required to meet particular needs for specialist homes and/or support.

The Council is looking at a range of ways to increase the influence it has over what homes are built where, including by private developers. To support this, we will develop a series of 'housing propositions', one for each township, that set out the size, type, affordability and tenure of new homes, as well as features of specialist homes – and how many of each – that are required to balance up and provide the right mix of homes in each place. We are also looking at ways of making it viable to develop the right mix of homes on every site.

Section 3: Action on Bury's existing homes

We are taking steps to bring our Asset Management Strategy for Council homes (managed by Six Town Housing) into line with our ambitions for carbon-neutral homes. We will also look for opportunities for joint investment in low carbon measures with the 4,000 private owners of leasehold properties on our estates.

Six Town Housing is putting in place measures in response to recommendations from the Grenfell Inquiry and for measures to provide greater redress including a review of its tenant scrutiny arrangements.

To improve residents' experience of private renting, the Council is driving high property and management standards through support for landlords that do a good job at the same time as proactively enforcing against sub-standard practices and properties. Specific measures we are looking at include accreditation through the GM Good Landlord Scheme, ethical and sustainable private lettings, enforcement against landlords and agents who have evaded HMO Licensing, enforcement action against poor management and property conditions. We will soon publish an updated Empty Homes Strategy that will detail a mix of methods including refurbishing long-term empty homes and letting through the Ethical Lettings Scheme.

We are also reviewing how we support older people and people with disabilities to adapt their homes so that they are safe, support mobility, and enable people to live well in their homes for as long as possible.

Section 4. Enabling sustainable access to a suitable home

We want to create a more dynamic housing market where people are better able to access a home that suits them at different stages of life, in whichever tenure they want, in a location they like at a price they can afford. This includes a review of low-cost home ownership options, a streamlined process for re-letting Council properties and support access to tenancies in good quality private rental homes.

We want to help more older people with the process of choosing a suitable home for their old age – including the emotional aspects of decision-making and the practice aspects of moving home – whether they are tenants or homeowners.

The Council is considering how it might support access to a range of options for sharing, including Shared lives plus, Homeshare, supported lodgings, Cohousing, Co-living or Cooperative housing schemes and Tenant Management Organisations.

To underpin better access to a range of options, we will undertake a thorough review of our allocations processes to achieve three aims:

- Enable people to gain access to a home they want and that suits them;
- Meet needs for permanent settled accommodation;
- Support sustainable communities;
- Better matching of adapted properties with occupants in need of an adapted home.

Section 5. Supporting people to live well in the community

Some of our residents require additional support to live well in the community or to turn their lives around. Specialised supported accommodation has its place, but most people who need support prefer to live in an ordinary house in an ordinary street. We want to support people to live in independent accommodation wherever possible and to help people to move into their own home with their own tenancy when they are ready to do so.

We are intent on finding new ways to support people within their natural communities and through ‘enabling’ forms of support that help people to regain confidence and control over their lives. This includes:

- Informal support and early help through community hubs;
- Natural communities of support, for example through intergenerational, age-friendly ‘village hubs’ and peer-led communities of support;
- Commissioned support to meet particular support needs;

- Dedicated 'enabling' support that helps particular groups such as people with a learning disability or mental health problem to become as independent as possible, over time.

Bury Homelessness Partnership has recently developed a Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan. As we deliver it, we will pay special attention to how many households are made homeless by the ending of a private sector tenancy and will expand tenancy sustainment and landlord liaison support for tenants at risk of eviction in all sectors, as necessary. We are considering whether a 'Mortgage Rescue' scheme might provide a good solution for some households facing repossession.

Bury Council is working with the Government through the Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP) to increase support for people who would not be considered a priority under homeless legislation. We will also continue our partnership with other GM local authorities to support delivery of *A Bed Every Night* and *Housing First* for rough sleepers. We are examining whether there is a need for a Homeless Hub combining self-contained accommodation for single homeless people with a range of on-site support offering the potential for people to make connections.

Section 6 Healthy people, homes and places

This Housing Strategy sets out how we will address health issues that are caused or exacerbated by unhealthy, unsuitable and unstable housing and unhealthy places as part of Bury's health and care transformation programme.

At the individual and household level we will do this through:

- Addressing fuel poverty, by maximising resident's access to ECO-funding available to improve the warmth of their homes;
- Integrating housing into the Bury Neighbourhood Model providing direct access to housing experts who can broker a range of housing solutions for residents of any tenure;
- Targeting resources to the right places in a timely way to prevent people's health and wellbeing from worsening, by generating and combining data on Bury's housing conditions with other health-related data;
- Minimising hospital stays and facilitating safe discharge into secure homes.

At the community and place level we will do this by

- Solving complex community problems through multi-agency working building on the existing work of our Organised Crime Group;
- Developing a 'Bury Checklist' for healthy place-shaping, that is understood and owned by Bury residents and that we use throughout our planning and place-shaping activity;
- Creating Village Hubs: '15 minute neighbourhoods' where the main facilities can be reached within a 15 minute walk and where people can connect and live well;

Section 7: Towards low carbon homes

In 2019 Bury Council declared a climate emergency and set ambitious for housing:

- 100% net zero-carbon new homes by 2028 supporting Greater Manchester’s 5-year Environment Plan;
- 100% carbon neutral existing homes by 2038 supporting Greater Manchester’s 5-year Environment Plan.

Meeting these targets requires some steps to be taken that are not within the Council’s control. Neither the renewable technologies nor the maintenance supply chains are adequately developed, and prices remain high. Achieving our carbon neutral targets across the borough’s 84,000 existing homes by 2038, as well as all new homes built by 2028, will require a dynamic and future-facing approach that assesses, supports production of and embeds new technologies as they emerge.

Our overall approach will be to fast-track our activity on existing Council homes managed by Six Town Housing and any new homes that the Council and/or Six Town Housing will build. We will use our learning to develop our expectations of and support for private developers, landlords and homeowners to take action. We will accelerate capacity and capability by working with a wide variety of other partners to increase our learning and ability. We will maximise community wealth-building by identifying local business opportunities that will arise from the shift to low carbon homes.

Our programme for new build homes involves:

- Working with GMCA to introduce building regulations requiring all new homes built in Greater Manchester to be net carbon-zero, and a commitment by all GM registered housing providers to building all new homes to net zero carbon standards, by 2028;
- Homes built by the Council will incorporate the most up to date low carbon technologies;
- Upskilling the Council’s workforce to enable maintenance and repair of new systems;
- Working with Bury residents to create strong buyer demand for low carbon homes, e.g. publicising low fuel or zero fuel bills;
- Making Council support for private developers conditional on building to new standards.

Our programme for existing homes involves:

- Establishing the carbon status of Bury’s existing housing stock across all tenures;
- Setting a new ‘Bury Eco-Standard’ for carbon neutral homes;
- Deep retrofit pilots in Six Town Housing homes to learn and upskill the workforce;
- Upgrading one or more sheltered housing schemes to learn about scheme-based renewable ‘district’ heating and energy systems;
- Learning from the earlier phases and from other councils that are ahead in retrofitting their housing stock, including the experience of colleagues across Greater Manchester;

- A route map to achieve the Bury Eco-Standard in all 8,000 Council properties managed by Six Town Housing;
- A plan of action with Bury's other RPs to bring their homes up to the Bury Eco-Standard by 2038;
- Influencing private landlords to adopt low carbon technologies;
- Ensuring that any investment the Council or Six Town Housing makes in private housing, e.g. through the Ethical Lettings Scheme, helps to achieve Bury's low carbon goals.

Section 8: How we will implement this strategy

We are in the process of making a radical shift from providing services to residents, to a relationship-based system, through empowered local communities. It is by working with residents, and valuing the skills, strengths and successes of individuals and communities – and not just delivering services to people – that we can tackle some of the great causes of inequality within the Borough and make sure everyone has the best possible life chances.

Guided by the late Victoria Wood born in Prestwich and brought up in Bury, *'Let's do it!'* encapsulates our Strategy. All of 'us' need to be involved in creating change. There is important work we all need to 'Do'; we cannot be passive. We are developing a collective vision 'It' of what the future can look like.