

Five challenges for our Housing Strategy 2025-2030

Proud of Ipswich; ensuring access to good quality affordable homes

Our Corporate Strategy and commitment to housing

The Ipswich Borough Council corporate strategy: 'Proud of Ipswich' outlines the Council's five priorities. These describe how we will work to achieve our ambition to "champion our community and revitalise our town" and have shaped the Housing Strategy and its priorities. The five priorities of the housing strategy set out how we will ensure access to good quality affordable homes we are proud of.

The Housing Strategy guides the work of the Tenancy Services, Public Protection, Housing Advice, Planning and Maintenance and Contracts teams. These teams have responsibility for; Council tenancies, environmental health, the social housing register (Gateway to Homechoice) and homelessness and rough sleeping.

A key theme throughout this strategy, as with the Corporate Strategy, is the need to use data and technology to deliver successful, accessible, and cost-effective services.

Our housing strategy priorities

There are five key priorities for the Housing Strategy that describe how we will meet the housing needs of the residents of Ipswich and of new legislation. We want to provide high quality and sustainable housing that is essential for health and wellbeing. Over the course of the strategy, we will work with our residents and our partners to build new affordable housing, improve standards across all housing tenures and to provide suitable housing options for residents at all stages of life.

Our priorities

1. Ensure housing of all types and tenures is available to meet housing need.
2. Improve the quality and standard of all housing.
3. Be an excellent landlord to our tenants.
4. Support households to maintain access to accommodation.
5. Ensure older persons have access to housing and services that meets their needs.

Ensure housing of all types and tenures is available to meet housing need.

Our vision

We want to ensure that residents of Ipswich have access to good quality housing that they can afford to live in. We will build new Council housing as well as encouraging home builders to build more housing that meets the needs of our residents. We will continue to work to bring empty homes back into use.

We will continue to work to provide housing that is in line with the Local Plan, which addresses the housing needs of the area and our residents. We are doing this in several ways; by building new Council houses, working to attract high quality house builders, operating the Council house buy back scheme, returning empty homes to use and offering the tenant incentive scheme to support Council tenants to downsize. We also operate the social housing register (Gateway to Homechoice) based on assessed housing need. Additionally, due to high demand for social housing, our private lettings team (Ipswich LET) continue to develop schemes to assist residents to secure privately rented housing.

To achieve this, we will.

Aim 1 - Use data and effective planning to ensure the delivery of high-quality affordable housing that our residents need.

Aim 2 - Explore resolutions for challenging development sites (eg; due to archaeology or flood risk) so that land to be built upon.

Aim 3 - Facilitate the availability of high-quality housing to meet the needs and budgets of current and future residents.

Aim 4 - Continue to enforce standards for private rented accommodation.

Improve the quality and standard of all housing.

Our vision

We will continue to work to improve housing standards and access to decent and safe housing for our residents. We will make sure that new housing is provided on good quality developments and is environmentally sustainable. We will engage with our tenants and use their feedback to shape our delivery of high quality of housing. Through partnership working and the use of our legal powers we will ensure the provision of good quality private rented accommodation.

To achieve our vision we are working with our partners including housing associations and landlords through our Private Sector Housing team. We can assist residents to source funding to make homes more energy efficient with measures such as heat pumps and insulation. We must carry out our duties in line with legislation that has been introduced.

- The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 was introduced by the government to improve standards within the social housing sector.
- The Building Safety Act 2022 was introduced to give residents and homeowners more rights and protections to ensure their homes are safe.
- The governments Climate Change Strategy (2024) sets out its commitment to reaching net zero on emissions by 2050.

To achieve this, we will.

Aim 1 - Ensure every private rented home is decent and safe, using our enforcement powers where necessary, and with our partners encourage landlords to take steps to improve energy efficiency.

Aim 2 - Work with everyone building homes in Ipswich to support the delivery of good quality environmentally sustainable housing.

Aim 3 - Tackle the building safety crisis, alongside our partners, ensuring building regulations are met, particularly in relation to flats.

Aim 4 - Improve the quality and decency of Council homes and neighbourhoods.

Be an excellent landlord to our tenants.

Our vision

We will strive to be an excellent landlord to Council tenants by providing high quality housing and we will empower tenants to shape the delivery of our services. We will continue to develop a range of options to support the housing needs of older persons within our accommodation. We will build new affordable homes when we have the funding available.

All of our properties meet the governments decent homes standard, and we are committed to making sure that our properties are free from damp, mould and disrepair. The government requires that all Council owned properties have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) band C by 2030. We will achieve this by obtaining EPC ratings for all of our properties. We must reduce carbon emissions and energy use by assessing properties and completing “retrofitting” to install new technology. This improves energy efficiency and helps to reduce fuel poverty. We must ensure our properties meet varied needs. We do this by adapting existing properties as well as building new adapted properties for people with disabilities providing lifetime homes. It is important to us that our tenants are involved and empowered to contribute to the development of our services.

To achieve this, we will.

Aim 1 - Regenerate, develop, and evolve our portfolio of homes.

Aim 2 - Decarbonise our homes and achieve the government target for energy efficiency homes by 2030, with a pathway to net zero by 2050.

Aim 3 - Empower tenants to shape the service we provide to them as outlined in our Tenant Engagement Strategy and deliver an excellent customer experience.

Aim 4 - Gather and analyse data on all aspects of tenancy services and asset management to inform service delivery.

Support households to maintain access to accommodation.

Our vision

We will continue to work with our partners to support residents, including vulnerable residents to maintain access to accommodation. We will deliver accessible services and use data and technology to target our resources so that we can best meet resident's needs.

We will continue to use measures to support households experiencing deprivation and hardship by using money advice and hardship funds, such as the local welfare assistance and household support fund which provides an important safety net. We want to continue to provide targeted support for specific groups such as.

- Mental health: the Council commissions a specialist senior mental health practitioner to work as part of the rough sleeper team.
- Domestic abuse: the Council has a specialist domestic abuse link worker who works within the housing options team to support victims of domestic abuse.
- Physical disability: Ipswich Borough Council administer the disabled facility grants (DFG) which can provide for adaptations to enable people with disabilities to safely remain within their homes.
- Young people: the Council has an agreed joint protocol with Suffolk County Council regarding our shared responsibility towards homeless 16- and 17-year-olds. Additionally, as a corporate parent we work in partnership with Suffolk County Council to support vulnerable care leavers.

To achieve this, we will.

Aim 1 - Work closely with our partners within the Suffolk system, to ensure we can deliver high quality accessible services that meet the needs of all residents.

Aim 2 - Work with our partners to support residents, including vulnerable groups to access and maintain suitable accommodation.

Aim 3 - Use internal and external data effectively to address housing need in Ipswich and to ensure we deliver on our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

Ensure older persons have access to housing and services that meets their needs.

Our vision

We want to provide good quality, modern accommodation which supports independent living and offers a positive lifestyle choice, with services that are flexible, adaptable, and tailored to meet the needs of older people, wherever they choose to live.

Ipswich has an ageing population and there are consequently an increasing number of Ipswich residents living in properties that are too large or no longer meet their needs. The Council owns and manages 15 sheltered housing schemes across the borough.

However, the accommodation requirements of older people in later life are changing, with many wanting to live more active and independent lifestyles within more modern and spacious homes. Ipswich Borough Council completed an older person's housing review to evaluate the service we provide to our residents. This includes both sheltered housing and the wider housing services we provide. The findings have been used to inform a new strategic approach to meeting the housing needs of older persons.

We will use technology to make adaptations and modifications to facilitate choice for older people to remain in their home where it is desired and appropriate. In addition, we will develop the business case to provide tailored and flexible options for older persons or encouraging other organisations to provide older people's services.

To achieve this, we will.

Aim 1 - Create a strong brand that residents of Ipswich want and desire.

Aim 2 - Provide accommodation that is of the highest quality, which provides safe, secure, modern facilities.

Aim 3 - Only provide older person housing, in locations, which offer facilities and services that meet a person's needs as they age well.

Aim 4 - Provide fewer older person housing schemes.

Aim 5 - Provide an 'offer' of support to anyone that wants to age well in their own homes.