



# Thames Gateway South Essex

Sub-Regional Housing Strategy  
2008 - 2011

Executive Summary





## Executive Summary

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Thames Gateway South Essex (TGSE) is part of the wider Thames Gateway, which includes North Kent and East London. It has been identified as the UK Government's top priority for regeneration and growth.

The primary aim of this strategy is to set out the priorities and actions which will accelerate the supply of high quality and sustainable housing to help meet the needs of people living, or aspiring to live, in the Thames Gateway South Essex sub region.

A Strategic Housing Market Assessment has recently been completed in Thames Gateway South Essex and provides much of the evidence base to support this Sub Regional Housing Strategy, other local housing strategies and Local Development Frameworks. It also provides a sound analysis of the current housing market and considers the implications from a policy perspective of a downturn in the property market and its impact on the economy. Importantly, the SHMA looks beyond the immediate economic crisis and seeks to address the housing and economic challenges faced by the Gateway over the next 15-20 years.

The strategy sets out a vision for the sub-region, the key actions that Partners wish to achieve between now and 2011 and the challenges that need to be overcome if the sub region is to achieve its aims.



It looks at the targets, issues, trends and partnership actions arising from:

- Future housing growth to ensure it is sustainable and future proof
- Needs of vulnerable groups living in the sub region
- Future of the current housing stock to ensure it is at a decent standard

This is set within the context of an additional 44,300 new homes planned for South Essex by 2021 and a 5% increase in the population. There has historically been a strong housing market at the macro-level, which has been supported by a sustained period of stability and growth in the national economy, coupled with low interest rates. However, recent quarters have shown the impact of interest rate rises in reducing housing demand and cooling house price inflation. Evidence points to first-time buyers currently holding off from buying property because of market uncertainty supporting demand in the private rented sector.

Nevertheless, the TGSE sub regional housing market still offers housing at a noticeable discount, when compared to other parts of the greater South East region. This makes it attractive to households from outside of the area looking to upgrade; and to first-time buyers priced out of other housing markets (and particularly London).

## Managing Housing Growth

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The challenge for sub regional partners is to manage this growth to ensure it is affordable and accessible to both existing and future residents. Partners are committed to working together to achieve increased housing provision and secure the necessary resources to enable targeted growth across the sub region. We need to match resources to this growth, to tackle both new infrastructure, jobs and housing across all tenures.

Significant regeneration plans are being developed in the sub region by local regeneration partnerships which will contribute to job creation and better quality housing and drive the economy / local housing market. However the performance of the economy and the impact of deprivation are key factors which will shape future regeneration.

Deprivation in the Thames Gateway South Essex sub region is relatively widespread with 15.7% of Local Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in the most deprived areas of the country (bottom 20% of areas nationally). Education, skills and training deprivation is particularly severe, with 35% of LSOAs in the most deprived 20% of areas. The areas where overall deprivation is most severe tend to cluster around the major settlements in the TGSE housing market, particularly Basildon, Southend and Thurrock.



The new Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 makes increasing housing supply a national priority, and sets out key policy and funding parameters.

Climate change is particularly relevant to housing; since around a quarter of the UK's current carbon emissions (around 150 million tonnes of carbon dioxide each year) arise from the way we heat, light and run our homes. Yet we need more homes so it is imperative that they are built in a way that minimises carbon emissions. There is a need to improve the energy efficiency of our existing homes, particularly in the light of the recent increase in fuel prices. We also need to tackle other aspects of sustainability, such as water efficiency and flood risk.

Delivering zero carbon new homes will need a revolution in the way we design and build our homes. It means new skills, supply chains, partnerships and business models, including those for builders, energy suppliers and other stakeholders. We acknowledge the demands this change places on the industry and its partners but we are certain that we can work together to deliver the twin ambitions.

## Key Priority Actions

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- Develop a sub regional Choice Based Lettings scheme.
- Promote opportunities for Key Workers through the HomeBuy initiative.
- Continue to develop a sub regional quality design standard, meeting for example Lifetime Homes, Building For Life and Secure by Design Standards.
- Focus on bringing regeneration, planning and housing together through coordination of activity, maximising funding and sharing best practice.
- Develop the green agenda through the provision of training and advice, maximising grant opportunities to deliver low carbon schemes.



## Meeting Needs of Vulnerable Groups

In contrast to the managing future growth priority, this relates directly to the need of the existing population in South Essex and concerns the mixture of housing types and tenures. A key emphasis should be on prevention by addressing the underlying causes of homelessness.

Whilst homelessness, as determined by the number of people registering with local authorities, is going down, this is largely due to the preventative measures being introduced. The current downturn in the housing market combined with the "credit crunch" is likely to increase the number of homeless applicants registering with local authorities. This is supported by anecdotal evidence, which suggests that re-possession notices are on the increase.

Further pressure will come from a forecasted growth of 8% in the number of households in the TGSE Housing Market in the next ten years and 16.4% by 2026. This will be from a combination of newly forming households and from changing family patterns, for example, following relationship breakdowns.

A substantial and growing proportion of the population needs housing support as the proportion of elderly people increase in the sub region. Revenue funding needs to be strategically targeted to help provide this through a range of services branded under the name of Supporting People (SP). Where future provision needs capital investment in new schemes, this will be a strategic objective for use of the Single Regional Housing Programme (SRHP).



The Supporting People Programme is committed to ensuring that vulnerable people have the opportunity to live more independently. It promotes housing related services which are cost effective, reliable and which complement existing services and support independence.

A key principle of regeneration is the need to promote community cohesion and social inclusion across the sub region. All communities must be able to access housing, housing services and support. They should also benefit fairly from each of the regional investment themes. This may not always be the case for Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities. There may be linguistic, cultural or other factors, which mean specialist schemes, are needed.

The sub region is also committed to ensuring provision of appropriate Gypsy and Traveller sites where there is an identified and established need, and working in partnership to tackle homelessness and social exclusion among this group.

## Key Priority Actions

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- Help households obtain and sustain private tenancies working in partnership with the private rented sector.
- Improve partnership working between local authorities and other key stakeholders to ensure best use of resources, supported by effective referral processes for all supported housing.
- Quantify the need for different types of supported housing and housing support for a range of client groups, in partnership with Supporting People administering authorities, social care and health agencies.
- Integrate schemes into the sub-region's pipeline and consider if services can be provided across boundaries.
- Engage with BME communities to identify housing and support needs and take action to ensure these are met through working with communities and partner agencies.
- Work with planners and other partners to review the Regional Planning Policy in respect of the provision of Gypsies and Travellers sites in the sub region (when adopted) and the recommendations of sub regional research into their housing needs.



## Investing in the Housing Stock

Whilst new investment and the challenge to increase the supply of homes are key priorities for the region and the sub region, we need to balance this work with investment in existing homes and communities.

The strategy has identified the following key areas for action:

- Decent Homes activity
- Energy efficiency of our housing stock
- Independent living
- Empty homes activity
- Landlord accreditation
- The Private Rented Sector

The sub regional focus continues to prioritise private sector vulnerable households. This Strategy supports the National target to increase the proportion of vulnerable households living in decent homes. It is estimated that in excess of 30% of vulnerable households are living in non decent homes in the sub region.

Fuel poverty is being tackled across the sub region, hand in hand with improving energy efficiency and securing affordable warmth. Focus is principally on installing insulation measures and heating systems for residents who have been assessed as 'fuel poor'. Issues affecting vulnerable groups and in particular older people, are supported by the Government's new National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society (Dec 2007). This sets out the challenges posed by an ageing society where by 2026 it is projected that older people will account for almost half (48 per cent) of the increase in the total number of households. It acknowledges that today, most of our homes and communities are not designed to meet people's changing needs as they



grow older. Older people's housing options are too often limited to care homes or sheltered housing. The Challenge for this Strategy is to begin planning for this change.

Home Improvement Agencies (HIAs) help homeowners and private sector tenants who are older or disabled to remain in their own home, living independently, in safety and comfort. All partners in TGSE remain committed to the principal of the HIA and have local agencies in place. Future discussions will explore the potential benefit of a joint HIA.

Bringing empty homes back into use contributing to the supply of affordable housing is also a priority in the sub region. There were a total of 8,627 vacant dwellings across the TGSE sub-regional housing market as at April 2006. Across the TGSE area more private sector dwellings were vacant (7831), compared to public sector dwellings (796).

The private rented sector contributes to the supply of housing and meets a range of housing needs. As ease of access to owner occupation and social housing/renting has reduced over the years, the role of the private rented sector in providing accommodation to many household is now widely recognised and valued. For the sub-regional authorities it has been a major contributor to the resolution of homelessness.

Private rented housing needs to be considered separately from the rest of the private housing sector because its role, management, and impact on the housing market and economy is different from owner occupied housing. The way in which regulatory agencies interact with the sector can influence the quality of housing provided.

## Key Priority Actions

- Bid for regional monies to ensure a continued programme of private sector renewal works over 2009-11, targeting vulnerable private households and monitor progress.
- Address fuel poverty across the sub region, hand in hand with improving energy efficiency and securing affordable warmth.
- Make better use of private sector homes by bringing empty homes back into use as affordable accommodation.
- Monitor demographic trends for older people and prioritise adaptations, home safety and repairs to property in accordance with need.
- Explore options for sub regional leasing schemes to assist with homelessness.
- Develop a landlord accreditation scheme.
- To ensure the resources and the work of the private housing services are linked into Local Authorities' area-based regeneration programmes.



## Delivering the Strategy

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The Strategy will be delivered through the Thames Gateway South Essex Sub Regional Housing Group comprising representatives from the five local authorities and five key housing associations in the area.

Key actions from the Strategy have been incorporated into an Action Plan (see attached), which sets out the key deliverables, anticipated outcomes and lead partner(s). A full time Strategy Coordinator has been employed by the Housing Group to develop sub regional initiatives, oversee and monitor progress against the Strategy, and act as the point of contact for all information.

A framework for monitoring and review will be established, which sets out a range of indicators to be monitored. This will enable the TGSE Sub Regional Housing Group to capture the overall impact of the collective priorities and evaluate them, both to measure success and to inform the continuing development and refinement of the Strategy in latter years.





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## Appendix 4 Action Plan

Priority Area	Action
<b>Future Growth</b>	
<b>New homes</b>	
<b>Develop a sub regional Choice Based Lettings scheme to cover all affordable rented stock by 2010.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint working group established with CLG funding</li> <li>• Agree joint protocols</li> <li>• Assess feasibility and cost of creating a "bolt on" service to cover the whole sub region</li> <li>• Secure partnership agreement to a CBL service across the sub region</li> </ul>
<b>Promote opportunities for Key Workers through HomeBuy initiative.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeting employers and potential key workers</li> <li>• Facilitate Homebuy events to promote new product</li> <li>• Share best practice being developed by LAs and other partners.</li> </ul>
<b>Continue to develop a sub regional quality design standard, meeting for example Lifetime Homes, Building For Life and Secure by Design Standards.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement and monitor quality design standards across the sub region through the CABE Compact in Thames Gateway</li> <li>• Build on previous design training events in the sub region</li> </ul>

Target	Lead Partner	Timetable
20 number of Local Authority Lettings to be made available sub regionally	Housing Strategy Group through CBL Sub Group	March 2011
3 Homebuy events to be held in the sub region to maximise take up	Moat Housing Association Ltd	Ongoing
3 design training events to be held in the sub region to improve the skills of planning, regeneration, housing professionals	Housing Strategy Group with CABE and Regeneration Partnerships	Ongoing

## Appendix 4 Action Plan (contd)

Priority Area	Action
<b>Regeneration</b>	
Focus on bringing regeneration, planning and housing together through coordination of activity, maximising funding and sharing of best practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint commissioning of research and activity</li> <li>• Support the development of strategic sites for both housing and employment</li> </ul>
<b>Greener Homes</b>	
Develop the green agenda through the provision of training and advice, maximising grant opportunities to deliver low carbon schemes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share best practice when developing low carbon schemes by develop training programme and advice networks</li> <li>• Deliver an energy efficiency project in private homes (subject to funding)</li> </ul>

Target	Lead Partner	Timetable
Maintain 5 year supply of housing sites for each local authority  Monitor progress of LAA Targets for Essex, Southend and Thurrock relevant to future housing growth (NI 141, 154, 155, 156 and 258)	Housing Strategy Group and Regeneration Partnerships	Ongoing
25% reduction in CO <sub>2</sub> emissions by 2010  Develop 3 exemplar new build schemes in the sub region	Housing Strategy Group and Regeneration Partnerships	March 2010

## Appendix 4 Action Plan (contd)

Priority Area	Action
<b>Vulnerable Groups</b>	
<b>Homelessness</b>	
Help households obtain and sustain private tenancies working in partnership with the private rented sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop rent deposit and rent in advance schemes</li> <li>• Develop an Accredited Landlord Scheme</li> <li>• Monitor number of homeless applicants registering in the sub region</li> </ul>
<b>Supporting People</b>	
Improve partnership working between local authorities and other key stakeholders to ensure best use of resources, supported by effective referral processes for all Supported Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with partners to ensure appropriate accommodation is provided to support the needs of vulnerable groups</li> <li>• Quantify the needs of different supported housing and housing support for a range of client groups</li> <li>• Share best practice and innovative working around homelessness prevention</li> <li>• Explore and develop funding opportunities sub regionally</li> </ul>

Target	Lead Partner	Timetable
Stabilise the level of households in temporary accommodation  Hold 3 Private Landlord Forums in the sub region	Housing Strategy Group through Homeless and Private Sector Sub Groups	March 2011
Increase the number of vulnerable groups receiving support  Increasing the proportion of the most socially excluded adults back into settled accommodation	Supporting People Services with support of Housing Strategy Group	Ongoing

## Appendix 4 Action Plan (contd)

Priority Area	Action
<b>Vulnerable Groups (contd)</b>	
<b>BME Groups</b>	
Engage with BME communities to identify housing and support needs and take action to ensure these are met through working with communities and partner agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor migration flows and the needs of the BME community in relation to future housing requirements</li> <li>• Support the work of the Essex BME Action Group</li> </ul>
<b>Gypsies &amp; Travellers</b>	
Work with planners and other partners to review the Regional Planning Policy in respect of the provision of Gypsies and Travellers sites in the sub region (when adopted) and the recommendations of sub regional research into their housing needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respond to specific housing needs through provision of specialist services</li> <li>• Share best practice in future planning</li> <li>• Develop a data base of authorised pitches across the sub region</li> </ul>

Target	Lead Partner	Timetable
Reduction in harassment and hate crime	Housing Strategy Group with Essex CC	Ongoing
The target for the sub region will be determined by the outcome of RSS Single Issue Review of Regional Planning Policy in respect of Gypsies and Travellers	TGSE Strategic Housing Group through Essex Planning Officers Association	March 2011

## Appendix 4 Action Plan (contd)

Priority Area	Action
<b>Existing Housing Stock</b>	
<b>Decent homes</b>	
<p>Bid for regional monies to ensure a continued programme of private sector renewal works over 2009-11, targeting vulnerable private households and monitor progress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit proposals to the Regional Housing Pot</li> <li>• Deliver home improvement / renovation project (subject to funding)</li> <li>• Monitor private sector housing stock condition data on a sub regional basis</li> <li>• Monitor progress against the Government's Decent Homes Standard</li> </ul>
<b>Independent Living</b>	
<p>Support older people and prioritise improvements to support their needs (to cover all vulnerable people)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor demographic trends for older people</li> <li>• Prioritise adaptations, home safety and repairs to property in accordance with need</li> </ul>

Target	Lead Partner	Timetable
Ensure at least 70% of vulnerable groups in the private sector live in decent homes by 2010	Housing Strategy Group through Homeless and Private Sector Sub Groups	April 2009 - March 2011
Ensure at least 70% of vulnerable groups in the private sector live in decent homes by 2010	Supporting People Services with support of Housing Strategy Group	Ongoing

## Appendix 4 Action Plan (contd)

Priority Area	Action
<b><u>Existing Housing Stock (contd)</u></b>	
<b>Energy efficient homes</b>	
Address fuel poverty across the sub region, hand in hand with improving energy efficiency and securing affordable warmth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver improved energy efficiency in homes project (subject to funding)</li> </ul>
<b>Empty Homes</b>	
Make better use of private sector homes by bringing empty homes back into use as affordable accommodation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver Empty Property project with a RSL partner (subject to funding)</li> <li>• Use of voluntary or compulsory Empty Dwelling Management Orders</li> </ul>
<b>Private Sector Homes</b>	
To ensure the resources and the work of the private housing services are linked into Local Authorities area-based regeneration programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify local area based regeneration programmes</li> <li>• Engage with Local Regeneration Partnerships on initiatives to meet decent home targets</li> </ul>

Target	Lead Partner	Timetable
Steps to improve residential energy efficiency by at least 20% by 2010	Housing Strategy Group through Private Sector Sub Group	March 2010
Bring 30 empty dwellings back into use by 2011	Housing Strategy Group through Private Sector Sub Group	April 2009 - March 2011
Ensure at least 70% of vulnerable groups in the private sector live in decent homes by 2010	Private Sector Housing Sub Group and Local Regeneration Partnerships	March 2010

## Appendix 4 Action Plan (contd)

Priority Area	Action
<b>Delivery</b>	
Effectively monitor progress against delivery of the Sub Regional Housing Strategy based on the recommendations in the SHMA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a framework for monitoring progress against key indicators and targets set out in the Sub Regional Housing Strategy.</li> <li>• To be developed with proposals to review the SHMA</li> </ul>
Communicate progress against delivery to partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular reports to Sub Regional Meetings</li> <li>• Communication to wider partners via an e-newsletter on a 6-monthly basis</li> </ul>

Target	Lead Partner	Timetable
Monitoring Framework in place by October 2008	Housing Strategy Group	Quarterly from December 2008
4 reports per annum 2 newsletters	Housing Strategy Group	Ongoing





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For further information on the TGSE Housing Strategy, please contact:

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