



2023
2028



Braintree District Council

Healthy Housing Strategy

Annual Report 2023 - 2024

Braintree District Council published its Housing Strategy in March 2023. The strategy covers a five-year period from 2023 to 2028.

The action plan is our living document that supports the overall aims from each of the three priorities of the Healthy Housing Strategy.

Each action has ownership with a lead officer, and the support of a team. Tasks are reviewed and adjusted to track key achievements and completed actions; to keep projects moving forward and to document and monitor progression.

This report focusses on the achievements to date towards the three priorities, where the challenges have been and how we have responded to them and considers the next steps to keep the strategy evolving and sustainable.

The three priority areas of the Healthy Housing Strategy are:

Priority 1

Affordability: Facilitate a consistent programme of good quality homes which best meet the needs of our current and future residents.

Priority 2

Support for specific needs: Enabling housing across the district to meet the needs of all our residents, especially those who are vulnerable.

Priority 3

Access: Improving access to and the quality of existing properties including the Private Rented Sector.

The Healthy Housing strategy recognises that good housing is linked to better health outcomes and its future aims and achievements support Braintree District Councils vision and corporate strategies by linking into their themes and priorities.

Corporate priorities:



People asked for us to:

- Tackle empty homes
 - 80% of the public response rated tackling Empty Homes as a priority.
- Support energy efficiency
 - 77% of those responded respondents rated 'ensuring all new homes emphasise energy efficiency' as important.
- Provide and facilitate more affordable home
 - 59% of respondents regarded 'Working in partnership to deliver new, high quality, affordable homes in the district' as a high priority.
- Investigate opportunities to expand provision for supported housing
 - 66% of respondents felt that 'supporting the ageing population and enabling independent living' should be of high priority.

Better infrastructure

Overpopulation
Empty homes
Energy efficiency
Work with small developers
More parking
Prevent rent increases
Loss of green spaces
Supported housing
More homelessness support
Affordable homes
Unaffordable homes
Resident consultation
Too many new builds
Retrofitting
Social housing issues
Lack of PRS properties

What we did:

- Recruited a dedicated Empty Homes Officer and Private Rented Sector officer to tackle our empty homes within the district
- Recruited a Tenancy Sustainment Officer to support access into the Private Rented Sector (PRS)
- Introduced an incentive scheme to help more people access the PRS. Since the launch in November 2023, 11 households have been supported through the scheme with a further 5 referrals in March 2024.
- Implemented an empty homes policy in January 2024 leading to a 5.7% decrease in vacant properties in the Braintree district since its launch.
- Regular forums and open communication channels with Registered Providers and Private Rented Sector landlords
- Braintree District Council worked with developers to deliver 424 affordable properties in the district, 65.6% of all homes delivered were affordable homes
- To enhance energy efficiency in residential properties throughout the District, collaborative work has been undertaken with the Environmental Health Team who have offered advice and support at the Private Rented Sector and Registered Provider forums.
- Developed a poverty report for the district to identify the areas where the most vulnerable residents are impacted and where resource can be directed.
- Developed a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 - 2029 which focusses on supporting people who may be homeless, or at risk of homelessness in the future, by offering advice and support when they need it the most.
- Reviewed and updated the Healthy Housing Strategy Evidence document to ensure that it reflects the most current data available. This revision will support and inform our service delivery strategies moving forward.
- Developed and implemented the LiveWell Strategy 2024-2029 which acknowledges housing is a key social determinant of health, and links good physical and mental health outcomes with good quality housing. Providing safe, secure places to live and the foundations to thrive.



5.7%

decrease in Empty properties

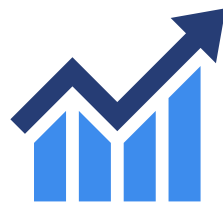
since implementation of the empty homes policy

Challenges:

- **The rising inflation:** Stagnating housing market conditions linked to spiralling mortgage rates and increasing costs of materials are influencing the operating expenses for developers. This could potentially affect the future development of new builds beyond the year 2024, which in turn, could impact affordable housing delivery.
- **Mortgage rate rises:** The national increase in number of reposessions and buy-to-let landlords raising rents to mitigate their increased costs.
- **Impact of the cost of living:** Many households continue to experience difficulty meeting the rising costs of household essentials, creating greater credit and debt reliance.
- **Private Rented Sector:** Private renters are more likely to fall below the poverty line after paying housing costs. This is due to local market rents rising and many properties are increasingly unaffordable for households relying on housing benefits or the housing element of Universal Credit to cover their rent.
- **An uncertain year ahead:** Unknown future policy direction, global influences and cost of living impacts.



**Mortgage
rate rise**



**Rising
inflation**

Our next Steps:

- Braintree District Council is in the process of reviewing its Local Plan where landowners, developers and the public are being invited to suggest how land could be used for either new development or environmental protection to support future growth across the Braintree District up to 2041.
- Further work to be undertaken with Registered Provider's to develop a consistent downsizing plan for those who wish to.
- Continue to engage with social providers and PRS landlords to support residents access to appropriate affordable properties.
- Work with ECC and our partners to focus on the right supported accommodation across the district.
- Implement recommendations from the Temporary Accommodation review
- Deliver and publish our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy 2024 – 2029
- Meet our target of 250 affordable units for 2024 - 2025
- Evaluate the success of the Landlord Incentive Scheme
- Continue to support residents experiencing financial hardship through the cost-of living partnership.
- Conducting a Home's Condition Survey within Braintree District to support the council improving energy efficiency and reducing fuel poverty in the district.

