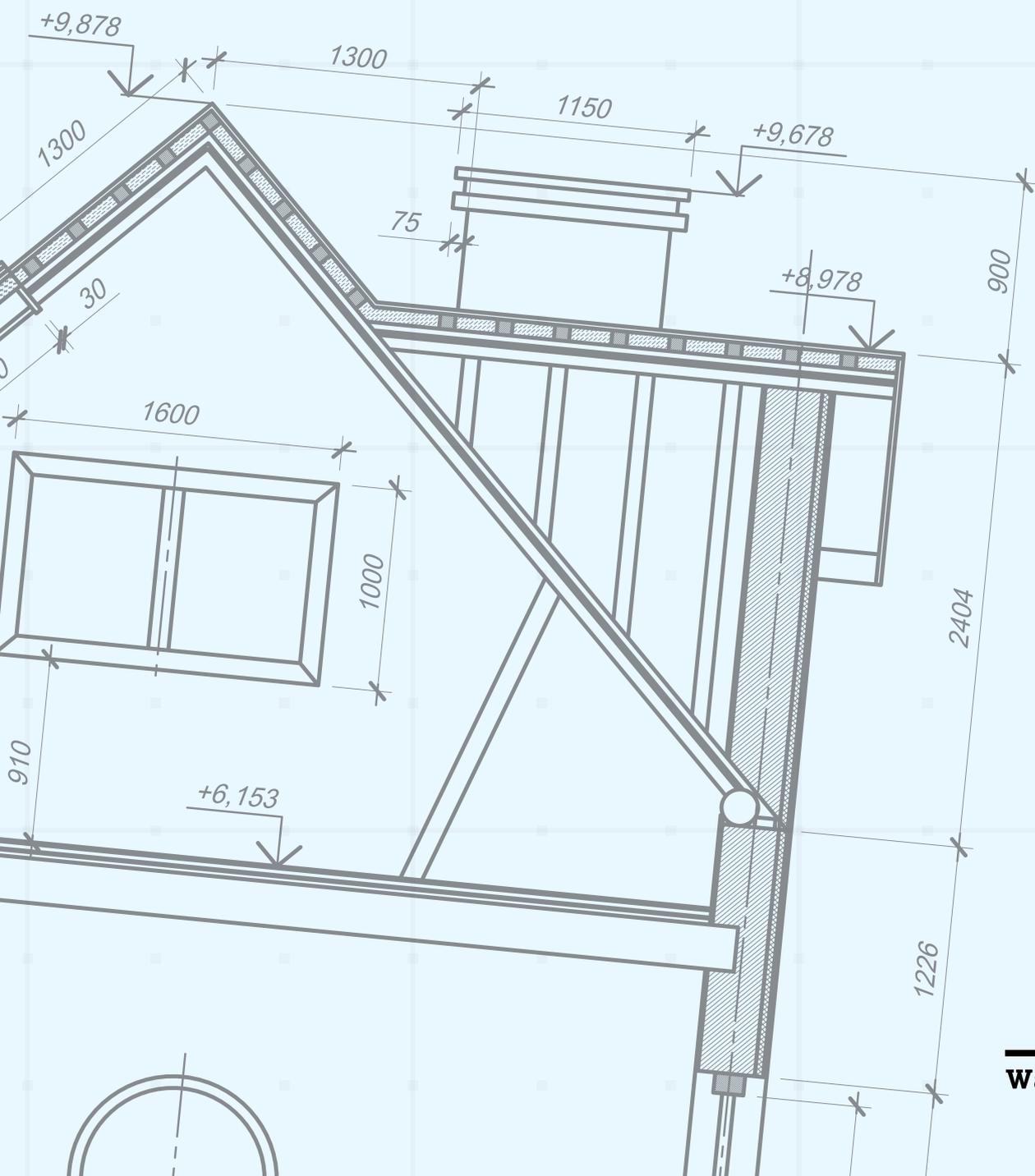


# Older People's Housing Strategy: Summary



# Foreword

Older people in Waltham Forest are a valuable part of our community and are as diverse and unique as the wider population as a whole. Like everyone, they want choices over where they live and how they live, but these choices are often far more limited for them than for younger people.

Making sure that there is housing that is suitable for older people in both the private and public sector is important for several reasons.

## *Housing that meets older people's needs increases health and wellbeing*

Well designed and energy efficient older people's housing helps to reduce falls and reduces the likelihood of infections and illnesses. Living in communities with friends and good social networks means that older people can maintain independence for longer and are less likely to feel lonely and suffer from depression.

## *Housing that meets older people's needs makes good economic sense for the Council and other service providers*

Improved health and wellbeing means fewer hospital admissions, less dependency on care and support with less pressure on the council's health and care costs.

## *Housing that meets older people's needs means that scarce housing resources are used more effectively*

Many older people in the borough are trapped in homes that are too large and unmanageable for them while younger residents have to move out of the borough because of the lack of availability of larger family homes.

The Council's Older People's Housing strategy sets out the steps that we will take to deliver more homes in Waltham Forest that are suitable for older people and improve the specialist older persons' housing that we already have. It also sets out how teams within the Council will work in partnership to improve the way that services are delivered to older people.

By working together we can help make sure that older people continue to be active and involved members of our fantastic community and enjoy the many things that make Waltham Forest such a great place to live.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Khevyn Limbajee'.

**Councillor Khevyn Limbajee,  
Portfolio Lead Member  
for Housing**



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Angie Bean'.

**Councillor Angie Bean,  
Portfolio Lead Member  
for Adult Services**

# Our vision

Good quality housing that meets everybody's needs is an important part of creating neighbourhoods that are beautiful, prosperous and friendly.

We want to ensure that there are enough suitable homes for older people in Waltham Forest so that they can live fulfilling independent lives for as long as possible, and to make sure we keep our communities healthy and cohesive.

The strategy sets out four priorities to help us meet that goal:

1. We want a **range of good quality, accessible housing options for older people** which help them to live independently for longer.
2. We want **older people to be supported to live independently and in their own home** where that's possible.
3. **We want older people to have the best information possible to help them make choices about their housing.**
4. **We want all of our housing services to focus on the health and wellbeing of our older residents** to help us build a healthy and cohesive community for everyone.

**What do we mean by older people?** We know people have very different views on what they consider to be 'old'. Our strategy covers people at all stages of their later years, from people as young as 50 who may need extra help because of a disability or long term health problem, to frail people in later old age who may no longer be able to live on their own.

## How we prepared the strategy

To prepare the strategy we looked at information about older people and their housing needs in Waltham Forest to consider what was needed for the future. We also looked at what we are being asked to provide for older people by regional and national government. We found that:

- As in the rest of the country, **the population of Waltham Forest is getting older**. In 2011, there were 26,000 people over 65 living in Waltham Forest, but this is predicted to rise by around 10 per cent by 2020.
- **Older people who live in Waltham Forest are a diverse group**, with 27 per cent of older people in Waltham Forest coming from a black or minority ethnic group.
- While most older people in the Borough own their own homes, **there is a shortage of suitable homes for older people to buy**. The London Plan prepared by the Mayor's office has set Waltham Forest a target to enable the delivery of 65 new specialist homes for older people to buy and 25 new homes to part-buy every year between 2015 and 2020.
- When we talked to older people within the borough about what they wanted **we found that some of the most important things for them were to be close to local facilities, to have easy access to local transport and to feel secure in their home**.

More details can be found in the full strategy document.

# Priority 1

We want a **range of good quality, accessible housing options for older people** which help them to live independently for longer.

## ***Why this is important:***

We want all older people to have the opportunity to live in homes that enable them to lead fulfilling and independent lives for as long as possible, whether that means staying in their own home, moving to a specially adapted home with some support, or living in specialist care homes if they can't live on their own.

## ***The situation now:***

- We don't have enough properties with specialist facilities for older people who want to buy their own home. This matters because most older people living in the borough currently own their own homes and are likely to want to continue to do so.
- Some of the Council's specialist homes are not in the condition we would expect; a review we carried out in 2012 found that almost a third of our sheltered homes are not presently suitable for older people and all of them fell short of a 'fit for purpose' standard for sheltered housing.
- We know that many older people in the borough want to downsize to a smaller home, but can find the process too stressful and difficult to deal with.

## ***What we will do:***

- We will review our planning policies to encourage developers to build more homes that are suitable for older people that they can buy or part-buy.
- We will begin a programme to ensure that all of our sheltered housing and care homes meet the standards we expect for our older people. In some cases this may mean moving people into new sheltered or care homes. If this is necessary, we will do this sensitively and always take the needs of older residents into account.
- We will look at how we can support older people who wish to move to smaller homes.



# Priority 2

We want **older people to be supported to live independently and in their own home** where that's possible.

## ***Why this is important:***

We know that most older people in Waltham Forest would like to remain in their own home for as long as possible, but to do this they may need some help. Whether that's through the installation of equipment or adaptations, support in keeping their homes in a good state of repair, help from care and support staff to help with daily needs or advice to help them keep safe and warm, Waltham Forest wants to give the best possible support to our older residents.

## ***The situation now:***

- We've started to use our sheltered schemes as 'hubs' to give wider support to older residents in the area, and we want to build on this.
- Too many older residents in the private sector are still living in homes with poor heating provision, with one in five retired people in non-decent homes. This means that they have to spend more on energy and their health suffers too.

## ***What we will do:***

- We want to make sure that all our housing staff are ready to help older people get the assistance they need to live in their own home, so we will develop a new training programme in supporting older people.
- We will build on the start we've made in using sheltered housing to provide support to older people living in the local area to increase the numbers using these services.
- We will make sure that older people get the support they need to make their home warm and energy efficient:
  - We'll run a campaign to make sure older people are taking up the help that's available with fuel bills and making their homes warmer;
  - We'll use our private rented property licensing service to promote fuel efficiency in housing rented by older people.



# Priority 3

We want older people to have the best information possible to help them make choices about their housing.

## ***Why this is important:***

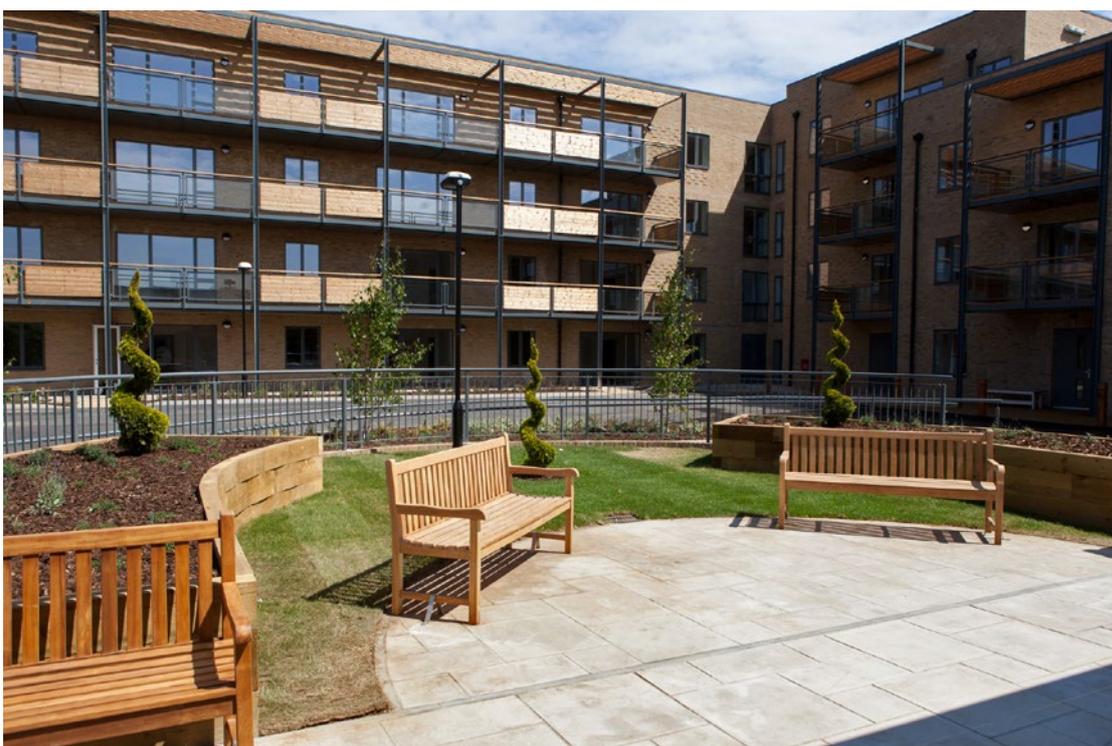
We want older people to feel confident that they have all the information they need to make decisions about their housing, whether that's about considering adapting and staying in their home, what options there are if they want to downsize to smaller accommodation, or whether they need sheltered or extra care accommodation.

## ***The situation now***

- At the moment there is no comprehensive guide setting out the options for older people in relation to their housing. That can leave people feeling confused or overwhelmed by the range of information out there, and make it harder for them to make a choice.
- There's a lack of understanding about what sheltered and extra-care housing is, which can make older people worried about this option.

## ***What we will do:***

- We will develop one comprehensive guide about the housing options available for older people.
- We will publish a web page which brings together this information in one place online.
- We will publicise sheltered housing as a positive choice, and make sure that all our information sets out the benefits it can bring for older people.



# Priority 4

We want all of our housing services to focus on the health and wellbeing of our older residents to build a healthy and cohesive community for everyone.

## ***Why this is important:***

Helping all of our residents enjoy a good quality of life is a priority for Waltham Forest. This can be about helping people to stay healthy, or helping people to continue to be involved in their community. We want to use our housing services to help older people to stay healthy and to lead active and fulfilling lives.

## ***The situation now:***

- The percentage of over 65's who assess their general health as 'not good' in Waltham Forest is higher than in London and in England.
- Older people's wealth of experience and knowledge is sometimes overlooked because mobility or other difficulties make it harder for them to get involved in the life of the community.

## ***What we will do:***

- We will provide improved training for housing staff so that they can help older people to remain healthy, for example through preventing falls.
- We will work with housing providers in the borough to set up a programme of affordable and enjoyable healthy living activities that are easy for older people to access.
- We will look at how housing services can help when older people leave hospital to limit the number of times people have to return after a hospital stay to reduce avoidable readmissions.
- We will consult older people in council homes on how their housing is managed, including those who are housebound.
- We will ensure that all Council owned housing schemes for older people provide computers for residents' use, and consider how we can provide IT training to help older people stay connected.

# Next steps

This strategy will be implemented over five years. But by the end of 2016 we want to:

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- Begin a programme to ensure that all of our sheltered housing and care homes meet the standards we expect for our older people. In some cases this may mean moving people into new sheltered homes. When we do this we will always take the needs of residents into account.
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- Develop one comprehensive guide to the housing options available to older people.
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- Run a campaign to make sure older people take up the help that's available with fuel bills and making their homes warmer.
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- Ensure that all Council owned housing schemes for older people provide computers for residents' use.
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