

# ***Building a Housing Ladder of Opportunity***

**Hammersmith & Fulham Council**

# **Housing Strategy**

Note: This Housing Strategy will remain a draft document until the 2011 Census data has been published and analysed. For the present, the Council is inviting comment on the 'direction of travel' set out in this document.

## **Introduction**

The over-arching vision of Hammersmith & Fulham's Community Strategy is *creating a borough of opportunity for all*, enabling all local people to have a real stake in the area and share in its growing prosperity. This Strategy centres on the real contribution that housing can make to deliver that vision, providing the catalyst for the borough's regeneration opportunities. Delivering these opportunities will create better places to live; more housing choice; more local employment and training opportunities; improved transport infrastructure; better education opportunities; and better housing and management services for residents.

The central theme of all our future work will be **Building a Housing Ladder of Opportunity**. The Council aims to achieve this in a range of direct ways, such as through the reinvigorated right to buy to council tenants; increasing discount market sale opportunities in new housing developments; promoting shared ownership and other 'First Steps' opportunities. Our broader objective is to treat affordable housing as a valued, integrated and more accessible segment of the housing market, playing a greater part in regenerating local communities and local economies. To achieve this, the Council will:

1. **Deliver Major Economic and Housing Growth** – To be achieved using housing investment acting as a catalyst for wider socio economic change. Hammersmith & Fulham is uniquely positioned to continue that through delivery of its five regeneration opportunity areas, three of which are identified by the Mayor of London as strategic priorities.
2. **Tackle Economic and Social Polarisation** – To be achieved using more imaginative and flexible approaches to estate regeneration; allocations policies prioritising working households; local lettings plans; flexible tenancies; through a strategic housing and health approach which effectively meets the local needs of vulnerable, disabled and elderly residents; and low cost home ownership initiatives
3. **Manage a better, streamlined council housing service** – To be achieved through more effective and efficient housing and leasehold management services with clear, realistic performance targets using other housing management service providers as required.

Core to the success of these three objectives will be increasing the numbers of working households and others who are making a community contribution, such as ex armed services personnel, who can access affordable accommodation.

Much of the change that is being sought will be delivered through other new or revised documents such as the tenancy strategy; Housing Allocation Scheme; local lettings plans; or through day to day service and regeneration delivery. In view of the opportunities now at our disposal, this Strategy sets out what the Council is seeking to achieve in a clear and transparent way.

Cllr Andrew Johnson,  
**Cabinet Member for Housing**

## **Contents Page**

**Section 1 – Building a Housing Ladder of Opportunity**

**Section 2 – Deliver Major Economic and Housing Growth**

**Section 3 – Tackle Economic and Social Polarisation**

**Section 4 – Manage a better, streamlined council housing service**

**Section 5 – Action Plan**

### **Annexes**

Annex 1 – Evidence Base

Annex 2 – Borough Investment Plan – Executive Summary (Dec 2011)

Annex 3 – Background Reference Documents

Annex 4 – Glossary

## **Section 1 – Building a Housing Ladder of Opportunity**

- 1.1 With the publication of the Coalition Government's National Housing Strategy and the Mayor's London Plan and Revised Housing Strategy, the pan-regional planning, regeneration and investment setting is relatively certain and streamlined, leaving local authorities to take responsibility for their future. The Council has the advantage of a recently adopted Core Strategy providing a planning framework for the jobs and housing that Hammersmith & Fulham needs. To help deliver the Council's objectives, the enactment of the 2011 Localism Act has given freedoms and flexibilities to local authorities to calibrate their housing approach to suit the localities they are responsible for: the Council intends to take advantage of these new powers for maximum effect.

### **Increasing Home Ownership**

- 1.2 Core to this Housing Strategy is increasing the levels of affordable home ownership in the borough. With house prices the fourth highest nationally, the challenge is great. Compounding that is the wide disparity of house prices and deprivation levels between the north and south of the borough. The Council will promote the Government's reinvigorated right to buy programme to ensure the tenants access the new discounts and will continue to deliver new discount market sale housing and other low cost home ownership housing through the planning system.

### **Objective 1 - Deliver Major Economic and Housing Growth within our Opportunity Areas**

- 1.2 Growth is the engine of economic opportunity and the pathway to helping people out of poverty. Cities are built for people, but they are also built around their transportation systems. The stations are more important than the railway lines. That is why Hammersmith & Fulham is going for growth in Earl's Court, White City and Old Oak/Park Royal, three of West London's major transport nodes. In total we want to create 38,000 jobs and build 22,000 homes in these three Opportunity areas to provide the much-needed economic lung for London in the west. The Council's Local Housing Company will play an increasingly key role in creating affordable housing opportunities in areas of disadvantage. With the fourth highest property prices in Britain and unrivalled transport infrastructure, Hammersmith & Fulham is poised for major economic and housing growth.

### **Objective 2 - Tackle Economic and Social Polarisation through the creation of more mixed and balanced communities where no one**

**tenure predominates and where housing aspirations and needs are met**

- 1.3 Hammersmith & Fulham is a polarised borough has some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the country and is ranked the 13<sup>th</sup> most deprived borough in London. In 2010, the GLA published the Children in Poverty report which shows the proportion of children living in families in receipt of out of work benefits or of tax credits where their reported income is less than 60% of median income. According to that measure, 35% of children in the borough were in poverty in 2008; this is the 10<sup>th</sup> highest in London. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2006 report Local Affordability Issues for Working Households Buying their First Home showed that 75% of households with occupants aged under 40 who would not normally be able to access social housing, could not afford to buy properties in the lower quarter of house prices in the borough. Through its Building a Housing Ladder of Opportunity work programme, the Council intends to give greater housing priority to this cohort of housing need, who up until now have had minimal access to the housing ladder.
- 1.4 The Council is committed to ensuring that the borough's residents have maximum opportunities to access home ownership opportunities as a means to alleviating economic and social polarisation. Continuing to facilitate the delivery of low cost home ownership products, such as discount market sale and shared ownership/equity will continue to be part of the council's strategic housing approach. Maximising opportunities from the Government's reinvigorated right to buy programme will be a simple and effective way of tackling economic and social polarisation in disadvantaged areas. The Council intends to develop and implement a 'slivers of equity' approach whereby tenants who wish to exercise their right to buy gain an additional discount through meeting their tenancy obligations in an exemplary way as well as making community contributions as set out in the Housing Allocation Scheme. The Council will work with the Mayor of London to achieve this objective. In tandem, the Council intends to pursue 'part' right to buy / part ownership approaches to council housing to help deliver wider social and economic objectives.
- 1.5 The Council through its new Housing Allocation Scheme intends that households who are working or otherwise making a community contribution and those who can demonstrate a local connection with the borough should get greater priority in the housing register. The community contribution will include ex-services personnel who meet the reasonable preference criteria. The Council also intends to adopt a more flexible approach to tenure, with the adoption of fixed term tenancies to ensure available affordable rented housing is used to its maximum value. The Council must have regard to the housing needs and aspirations of the vulnerable, disabled and the elderly, ensuring that there is a robust connection with statutory health responsibilities that local authorities are being vested with.

**Objective 3 – Manage a better, streamlined housing service, with a focus on local decision making, delivering outcomes that improve resident satisfaction**

- 1.6 Council tenant and particularly leaseholder satisfaction with housing services is far too low. The Council has the challenge of improving efficiency and service quality, whilst at the same time reducing the level of debt and ensuring that an effective long term asset management strategy is put in place and applied. The Council's housing stock should be viewed in the context of assets to be managed as well as providing a housing service to tenants and leaseholders.
- 1.7 The Council intends to give consideration to the localisation of housing management services. This will follow market testing which may necessitate eventual contracting out of some housing management services. There will need to be a clear link between resident satisfaction and performance on issues such as anti-social behaviour, repairs and resident involvement, with an incentive to increase service level satisfaction within the contract.

**Conclusion**

- 1.8 Successfully delivering the three objectives set out above, will decide the success of the vision of creating a housing ladder of opportunity.

## Section 2 - Deliver Major Economic and Housing Growth

### Key Facts - Hammersmith & Fulham:

- Has capacity to deliver a minimum of 14,400 additional homes and 25,000 jobs in the next twenty years, with potentially more that can be delivered in the 3 Mayor of London Opportunity Areas
- Has the fourth most expensive market sale housing in England with an average price of £646,257
- Has private rents ranging from £215 per week for a one bedroom home up to £700 per week for a four bedroom home
- Has 4,143 households on the Council's Home buy Register

See Annex 1 for more information

### Planning for Regeneration and Growth

- 2.1 The Council's Core Strategy is the key document that governs the planning framework for regeneration and growth in Hammersmith & Fulham. The following abstract from the Core Strategy sets out in clear terms the Council's approach to the borough's spatial development:

*The council will focus and encourage major regeneration and growth in the five key regeneration areas shown below\* and on the Proposals Map. All development must respect its context and setting. Elsewhere in the borough, development of smaller sites will be more constrained by the local context and character of neighbourhoods.*

*The regeneration areas could provide at least 13,200 additional dwellings and 25,000 jobs during the period 2012-2031 as indicated in the table below. The extent to which these figures can be met or could be exceeded will depend on acceptable development proposals coming forward.*

*The acceptability of any development in the borough will be dependent on a number of factors including:*

- *the appropriate response to the local context and setting;*
- *the creation of inclusive and accessible places that provide acceptable living environments with a suitable mix of housing types, sizes and affordability;*
- *there being satisfactory public transport and highway accessibility and capacity, and measures to produce acceptable trip generation;*
- *environmental impact assessment; and*
- *the provision of services, facilities and infrastructure to support new development.*

*The indicative quantities of new housing and indicative new jobs for each area are set out below. Further detail on the basis for these figures, is provided in specific area and site policies elsewhere in this document\*\* and in supporting planning frameworks.*

\* summarised in Table 1 below

\*\* LBHF Core Strategy (October 2011)

### Regeneration Opportunity Areas

2.2 The Council's Core Strategy (Oct 2011) sets out in clear terms the development and wider regeneration potential that Hammersmith & Fulham has. Despite being one of the smallest boroughs in London it represents a considerable and attractive regeneration proposition. The large majority of that capacity is located in the five regeneration areas identified in the Core Strategy. Of these five, three are endorsed by the Mayor of London as Opportunity Areas in his London Plan.

**Table 1 – Regeneration Areas – Core Strategy Indicative Additional Homes and New Jobs**

	<b>Indicative Additional Homes</b>	<b>Indicative New Jobs</b>
<b>White City Opportunity Area*</b>	5,000 (of which 4,500 in White City East)	10,000
<b>Hammersmith Town Centre and Riverside</b>	1,000	5,000
<b>Fulham Regeneration Area (including Earl's Court and West Kensington Opportunity Area) *</b>	3,400 (excluding any increase in estate lands)	5,000 – 6,000
<b>Park Royal *</b>	1,600	5,000
<b>South Fulham Riverside</b>	2,200	300-500

Note: \* Mayor of London Opportunity Areas

Source: Abstract from Hammersmith & Fulham Core Strategy (October 2011)

2.3 Since the Core Strategy was adopted, the potential jobs and housing opportunities identified above has increased significantly. With the Government's commitment to build a High Speed 2 interchange station at Park Royal City International, the potential housing capacity is likely to be significantly greater than that set out above.

2.4 In terms of the numbers of homes that will be developed, the Core Strategy **Policy H1 on Housing supply** states that the council will work with partner organisations and landowners to exceed the proposed London Plan target of 615 additional dwellings a year up to 2021 and to continue to seek at least 615 additional dwellings a year in



the period up to 2032. The Council believes that Hammersmith & Fulham can exceed that target and deliver 720 homes per annum, but that delivery will be less in the early years of our programme and greater in the later years due to the long lead in times associated with major project delivery.

- 2.5 One of the major strengths of Hammersmith & Fulham is its transport infrastructure. The Council intends to see improved north-south connectivity facilitated by its growth strategy, as well as capitalising on the potential of existing and new transport nodes. Four of the five regeneration areas (i.e., excluding Fulham Riverside) have the benefit of significant existing transport infrastructure that can be used and developed to achieve this objective.
- 2.6 The most obvious example of this is realising the Council's vision for Park Royal City International. With the Government's January 2012 statement supporting the development of High Speed 2 including a transport hub with Crossrail and other elements of the railway network, the Council estimates that up to 10,000 homes could be developed in the wider area. This will be subject to an Opportunity Area Planning Framework being developed by the Mayor of London in conjunction with the four boroughs who are impacted by the vision for Park Royal.
- 2.7 The Council expects Private Registered Providers (usually housing associations) to play a key partnership role in delivering affordable housing that the borough needs over the next twenty years.
- 2.8 In meeting the needs of the vulnerable, disabled and elderly, Core Strategy **Housing Policy H4 – Meeting Housing Needs** states that 'housing for people who need care and support must be protected, and, subject to continuing need, applications for new developments where there is an established local need will be supported'. Residents who benefit from this form of housing are often from groups identified in the 2010 Equality Act. In light of the authority's new statutory health well-being role, there is an opportunity to strategically align and organised housing and health services and interventions more effectively to meet the local needs of vulnerable, disabled (including people with learning disabilities) and elderly residents.
- 2.9 In line with Policy A3 of the Council's Proposed Submission Development Management Document (DPD) (June 2012), all new housing development should provide a mix of housing including aiming for 15% intermediate and 50% affordable rented family housing with three or more bedrooms .
- 2.10 The Council's Borough Investment Plan (BIP) adopted by the Mayor of London in December 2011 sets out in strategic terms the investment needed to deliver the homes and jobs identified above. The BIP also details the community infrastructure, e.g., schools; health facilities;

affordable housing necessary to ensure that the housing development sought is sustainable.

### **Local Housing Company**

2.11 In order to both give leadership and take responsibility for affordable housing delivery in the borough, the Council has established a Local Housing Company (LHC) to deliver an element of future new housing supply. Hammersmith & Fulham is one of the few councils in the country to adopt this radical approach to remedying the shortage of housing it is experiencing. The Council has initiated the first phase of conversion/infill sites, exclusively funded from the Decent Neighbourhoods Fund. The pilot programme of 25 discount market sale homes are in development, heralding a significantly larger rolling programme of new housing development activity.

### **Rest of Borough Sites**

2.12 Additional capacity for 1,200 homes has been identified on 'Rest of Borough' sites. This will be an important source of new housing in the short to medium term, as the housing delivery trajectory is generally long for major regeneration projects. Much planning work, time and expenditure is often undertaken acquiring, remediating and preparing such sites for new housing and accompanying infrastructure. Therefore, short to medium term delivery of both market and affordable housing will be critical to maintaining levels of housing delivery. It is important that the Council and Private Registered Providers work closely together to ensure that short to medium delivery is increased and sustained to meet short term needs and targets.

### **Quality housing**

2.13 The Mayor of London's draft Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) sets out design requirements for new housing which the Council wishes to see applied in future developments. The scope of the document is as follows: Shaping Good Places; Housing for a Diverse City; From Street to Front Door; Dwelling Space Standards; Home as a Place of Retreat; Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation; and Managing the Design Process. The design sections of the draft Housing SPG also makes reference to delivering accessible housing and the sixteen Lifetime Homes Standards.

**To achieve the Economic and Housing Growth objectives, the Council will:**

- Seek to deliver the regeneration potential in each of its five opportunity areas, maximising housing capacity from new and existing transport infrastructure
- Develop a strategic housing and health approach to effectively meet the local needs of the vulnerable, disabled (including people with learning disabilities) and elderly residents
- Roll out a wider programme of Local Housing Company-led housing delivery
- Work with Private Registered Providers to deliver new housing in the rest of the borough
- Deliver high quality housing in line the design standards set out in the Mayor of London's draft Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance

## **Section 3 - Tackle Economic and Social Polarisation**

### **Key Facts - Hammersmith & Fulham:**

- Has an average of 36% social housing compared to a London average of 24%
- Has 10, 238 households on the Council's Housing Needs Register
- Is a polarised borough with some of the wealthiest and disadvantaged wards in London

See Annex 1 for more information

### **Tackling Economic and Social Polarisation**

- 3.1 Hammersmith & Fulham is one of the most prosperous boroughs in the country, but paradoxically suffers greatly from social and economic deprivation. Concentrations of poverty exist on our council estates. Causes of this poverty include embedded economic and social under-achievement in areas where the inter-related challenges of unemployment; low educational attainment; and benefit dependency has caused social and economic exclusion to become a norm.
- 3.2 Through a range of interventions, the Council intends to change this situation. This will partly be achieved through regeneration and development interventions described in Section 2, where more working households will be able to access new low cost home ownership housing. The Council also intends to promote a reinvigorated right to buy scheme. But in terms of who is allocated to affordable housing in the future, the Council intends to give greater priority to working households; ex armed services personnel; and other households who are making a community contribution.

### **Affordable Housing and the Ladder of Opportunity**

- 3.3 A central theme to the Council's approach to affordable rented housing is to consider it as an important and flexible segment of the local housing market which provides a platform to other types of accommodation. Social housing for rent historically has been allocated to households in acute housing need and in some instances housing crisis where their personal circumstances require Council support. Affordable housing for rent offers support and shelter for people who are experiencing such housing need or crisis. However, the Council would expect over time many, but not all, such tenants' needs to stabilise and that they will be able to move on to other housing options.

This will enable homes that they vacate to be used for new households that require accommodation.

- 3.4 As part of its ladder of opportunity approach, the Council wishes a wider section of the community to be able to access affordable rented housing. Specifically, the Council intends to give greater priority to future applicants who are making a community contribution, such as ex armed services personnel and working households. The Council also wishes households whose incomes rise above a certain threshold, to access housing options in the private sector (e.g., private rented housing, discount market sale housing); other intermediate housing options run by private registered providers; or, where eligible, exercise their right to buy.
- 3.5 The Ladder of Opportunity set out below, illustrates affordable rented housing as one of a number of 'rungs' on a ladder. To emphasise the point, the Council sees affordable rented housing as a staging point for households' housing aspirations not a destination point.

**Ladder of Opportunity**

Freehold home ownership	Higher levels of income and wealth	Leasehold home ownership
Low Cost Home Ownership / inc Shared Ownership & Shared Equity		Private Rented Assured Shorthold Tenancy
Assured Tenancy / Assured Shorthold Tenancy		Secure Tenancy / Flexible Tenancy
Starter Tenancy		Introductory Tenancy
Non Secure Tenancy		
Living in Shared Accommodation		Living at Home
Homeless	Lower levels of income and wealth	Refuge / Hostel / Supported Accommodation

- 3.6 Due to the high cost and restricted access to the home ownership market, it may not be possible for residents to reach the top of the ladder. It may also be the case that residents do not wish to reach the top of the ladder for personal reasons or simply move further afield to fulfil their aspirations, e.g., to live in a suburban location or move to new employment. Whilst the Council respects the right of residents to exercise choice, there will be limits as to what choices they can exercise at the expense of the public purse. Whether through the need to repay debt associated with historic capital expenditure on affordable housing or through financial limits imposed by the housing benefits regime, the Council has to ensure that available public and social sector housing assets and resources are used to maximum effect.
- 3.7 In that vein, the Council's approach to flexible tenancies is about ensuring that there is more movement between the affordable rented sector and other tenures, providing the necessary level of support where it is needed.

### **Increasing Affordable Home Ownership: A Reinvigorated Right to Buy**

- 3.8 Delivering the reinvigorated right to buy will be central to tackling social and economic polarisation on the Council's housing estates. Exercising the right to buy is a simple and effective means to realising tenants' aspirations; increasing wealth; and encouraging ambition. The Government's maximum discounts of £75,000 for eligible households is expected to lead to increased interest in the right to buy locally which the Council plans to both meet and encourage.
- 3.9 In tandem, the Council will continue to work with partner organisations to develop innovative approaches whereby tenants through community contributions can build up additional equity that can be used at some point to increase the discount on homes sold under the right to buy.

### **Housing Allocation Scheme**

- 3.10 The Council intends to radically change the way it prioritises and allocates accommodation to applicants on its housing register. Specific objectives the Council wants to achieve following the adoption of this document and its broader approach are as follows:
- Gives additional preference to working households and applicants such as former Armed Forces Personnel who are making a community contribution
  - Adopting a Housing Allocation Scheme that realistically reflects housing options available to applicants
  - Introduces a 'Assisted Choice' approach, modifying a system which has allowed the registration of applicants who have no realistic prospect of successfully bidding for affordable rented housing

- Increases the use of the private rented sector both in the borough and outside its boundaries in order for the Council to meet its housing obligations
  - Meets its statutory homelessness obligations
  - Introduces a more rigorous approach to registrations, ensuring that the Housing Register is up to date; that registration information is verified at the earliest stage ensuring all applications are *bona fide*; and, applicants being required to personally update their applications on an annual basis
- 3.11 Two of the direct consequences of this approach will include the discharging of homelessness duties into the private rented sectors, and giving greater priority to those currently in work. More detail on how the Council intends to adopt and implement this approach is set out in its Housing Allocation Scheme document.

### **Tenancy Strategy**

- 3.12 In tandem with the Housing Allocation Scheme, the Council intends to adopt flexible tenancies for its own rented housing and recommend to Private Registered Providers (normally housing associations) that they should adopt such an approach also. Over time, this will help increase number of homes that the Council is able to let. In the shorter term this will place greater obligations on new tenants to pay their rent on time; refrain from engaging in anti-social behaviour; and avoid attempts at tenancy fraud, as engaging in such behaviour may lead to their tenancy not being renewed. The approach is also designed to facilitate interim rented housing options for working households who aspire to low cost home ownership.
- 3.13 More detail on how the Council intends to adopt and implement this approach is set out in the Tenancy Strategy.

### **Local Lettings Plans that Deliver Mixed and Balanced Communities**

- 3.14 The Council intends to adopt a number of Local Lettings Plans for specific schemes and areas in the borough so that no one single tenure dominates. In line with the broader approach set out in the Housing Allocation Scheme to diversify the income and wealth levels of households receiving affordable accommodation in the borough, Local Lettings Plans offer an opportunity to deliver area-specific outcomes. This will include allocating affordable rented homes to working households who wish to rent who are registered on the Council's Home buy Register.
- 3.15 More detail on how the Council intends to adopt and implement different Local Lettings Plans and approaches to them will be consulted on as and when appropriate.

## **Homelessness Strategy: Tackling the worst impacts of economic and social polarisation**

- 3.16 The Council has a statutory obligation to produce and implement a homelessness strategy. Just as the Council is keen to create incentives for people on low to medium incomes, it is also keen to ensure that there is a safety net for those who are unable to fend for themselves. Such people may include victims of domestic violence; people with mental health or dependency issues; people with major health issues; and, households with vulnerable children. In addressing the needs of the homeless and those threatened by homelessness, the Council will need to continue effective cross-departmental working, particularly those responsible for supporting people funding, to ensure a holistic and effective strategy is in place to prevent homelessness where possible.
- 3.17 More detail on how the Council intends to adopt and implement this approach is set out in its Homelessness Strategy.

## **Asset Management and Estate Regeneration**

- 3.18 In recent years, the Council's housing stock has benefited from circa £200m of decent homes resources, it nonetheless requires significant ongoing investment. The Council estimates that this could entail an annual average of c £30m expenditure over the next five years alone. The programme of work that the Council has in place seeks to build on the achievement of the decent homes programme, maintaining the standard whilst addressing the backlog of works that were not covered by that programme.
- 3.19 The Council intends to adopt a forward looking, funded and deliverable asset management strategy and has already begun the process with a review of its sheltered housing stock. In the absence of any significant public capital funding, the Council intends to be innovative and radical in its approach to regenerating its estates. When considering individual sites – whether vacant/poorly used sites, individual blocks or whole estates, the Council will take into account the following factors:
- Asset Management Appraisal
  - Redevelopment opportunities with adjacent land owners and/or development agencies, helping to ensure that new investment benefits local residents
  - Unpopularity of housing with residents (e.g., high levels of transfer requests)
  - Opportunities to deliver a wider mix of tenures to increase community sustainability in line with Core Strategy and London Plan policies.
- 3.20 The over-arching objective of the Council's asset management approach will be to reduce social and economic polarisation by



diversifying tenures on Council estates; raising the quality of housing either through comprehensive refurbishment or redevelopment; maximising urban densities particularly where there is developed transport infrastructure; and creating local employment opportunities. Whether through a development partner or the Council's Local Housing Company, creating more low cost home ownership choice through its asset management approach will be a key driver for change.

**To tackle economic and social polarisation, the Council will:**

- Encourage council tenants to take up their right to buy and develop alternative approaches such as 'slivers of equity' that enable tenants to earn additional equity from meeting tenancy obligations and making community contributions
- Implement a Housing Allocation Scheme that will give greater priority to people with a local connection who can make a community contribution, including working households and ex-armed service personnel
- Implement a Tenancy Strategy that introduces flexible tenancies, helping to improve mobility in the affordable rented sector
- Implement Local Lettings Plans where needed to encourage more balanced, sustainable communities
- Implement a Homelessness Strategy which supports preventative approaches to homelessness
- Develop and implement a council housing stock asset management strategy

## **Section 4 - Better, streamlined council housing services**

### **Key Facts - Hammersmith & Fulham:**

- Has approximately 82,000 homes in the borough, of which nearly a third are owned by the Council or other social landlords (26,000 homes) with the remaining two thirds (56,000 homes) in private ownership.
- Provides direct services to residents living in 17,500 homes managed by the Council. 13,000 homes are for rented by tenants with the remaining 4,500 owned by leaseholders

See Annex 1 for more information

### **Improve resident involvement and satisfaction in housing and wider management services**

- 4.1 Responsibility for the management of the council housing returned to the borough from Hammersmith & Fulham Homes Ltd. (the arms length management organisation) in April 2011. Now managed by the Council's Housing and Regeneration Directorate, the Council directly provides housing management services to over 17,500 tenanted homes and leasehold homes.
- 4.2 The Council is determined to increase the quality of housing management services and will need greater resident involvement to make that happen.
- 4.3 In March 2012, the Council adopted a Resident Involvement Strategy and Action Plan designed to promote the Council's accountability as a housing service provider to its residents, whilst providing a means for residents to feedback and improve those same services. In terms of the principles to the approach, the Council will increase the number and diversity of residents involved; widen the ways in which residents can be involved; ensure resident involvement delivers continuous improvement, value for money and services shaped by residents; ensure that residents have the information needed to monitor and make accountable housing service provision.
- 4.4 The Council also intends to introduce greater transparency on the costs of housing management provision. An initial means to achieving this will be through the introduction of tenant service charges, providing clearer information on the cost of various estate management services. As importantly, there is the broader objective of increasing awareness to tenants and other interested parties the levels of expenditure and income from rent and the public purse required to support the services provided.

- 4.5 The Council intends to give consideration to the localisation of housing management services. This will follow market testing which may necessitate eventual contracting out of some housing management services. The Council believes a 'mixed economy' approach where new agencies have the opportunity to provide services in a cost-efficient, innovative way can form the basis for both increased resident satisfaction and service improvement.
- 4.6 In addition to improving housing management services, the Council will continue to deliver a range of community safety initiatives on and around its estates. It will continue to adopt a zero-tolerance approach to anti-social behaviour and where possible extend CCTV to improve in personal and community security.

### **Maximises opportunities for more effective, integrated service delivery**

- 4.7 The Government has backed the council's proposal for a White City Neighbourhood Community Budget where improvements in the quality of public sector services in the area are being sought, working collaboratively with local residents and other local partners.
- 4.8 The Council intends to work with Government and local partners on reviewing local procedures and national rules governing the delivery of local services and entitlements, and to explore some 're-design' of local service delivery and associated governance at the local level to provide integrated service delivery. To allow a genuinely flexible local system to take root in White City, the Council wishes to work with the local community, partners and Government to develop new local procedures and identify (and seek derogations from) national rules that impose barriers to joined-up delivery.
- 4.9 Housing is a significant component to this radical approach. The White City housing estate has over 2,000 homes of which three quarters are council tenancies. There are significant opportunities for local residents in the redevelopment of the land in the east of the area, where 4,500 new homes are being built. 25% of these are intended to be reserved for existing White City tenants, creating space in the current housing stock which can be used to create a more diverse social mix in the community. Through this approach, there is scope to establish a special purpose vehicle, capturing the asset values and income streams that are currently in the area. Freedoms and flexibilities following HRA reform and other powers following the passing of the 2011 Localism Act will play a key role in realising the vision for White City.

### **Deliver Effective Private Sector Housing Services**

- 4.10 The Council plays an important role in improving the quality and safety of private sector housing in the borough. This includes licensing and

regulating houses in multiple occupation (HMOs); regulating fire safety in partnership with the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA); improving energy efficiency, tackling excess winter deaths, reducing fuel poverty; bringing empty homes back into use, increasing the available housing stock particularly to assist in reducing housing need within the borough; targeting “eyesore” properties, co-ordinating council services – planning, building control, legal, valuers as well as private housing and health; and safeguarding public health.

**Lobby Government for increased ‘freedom to manage’ their housing revenue accounts in order to create and sustain strong and balanced neighbourhoods in deprived areas**

- 4.11 The Council welcomes the reform of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) system, but is concerned that the opportunity to maximise the use of councils’ assets is being un-necessarily limited, particularly where there is the paradox of high value assets and significant socio-economic deprivation.
- 4.12 Specifically, the Council wishes to use its housing property assets to deliver new jobs, additional housing, economic growth and to deliver the local regeneration necessary to arrest and reverse local deprivation without increasing debt levels, the Council needs the freedom to:
- Mix tenures and therefore rents within the HRA (not just affordable rent but also market rent and low cost home ownership) to deliver mixed and balanced communities.
  - Retain all receipts from disposals and Right to Buy provided they are reinvested in council housing, regeneration, reduction of HRA debt and other priorities
  - Use additional revenues from higher rent payers once ‘Pay to Stay’ regulations are implemented.
  - Council housing debt should be accounted as trading debt rather than national debt whilst accepting fully all proposed constraints on council borrowing including the borrowing limit that will apply under HRA reform
- 4.13 The Council will continue to dispose of high value housing assets that are in a poor state of repair to reduce the council’s housing debt as well as to fund major initiatives such as the local housing company ‘hidden homes’ schemes.
- 4.14 The Council will continue lobbying Government for the “freedom to manage” its housing revenue account so that the council can create strong and balanced neighbourhoods in areas that where there are concentrations of deprivation.

**To deliver better, streamlined housing services, the Council will:**

- Improve resident involvement and satisfaction in housing management services which will include market testing and contracting out alternative approaches
- Maximise opportunities for more effective, integrated service delivery
- Deliver a Strategy to improve the quality and safety of private housing
- Lobby Government for increased 'freedom to manage' their housing revenue accounts in order to create and sustain strong and balanced neighbourhoods in deprived areas

## Section 5 – Action Plan Summary

**From 2012, to achieve the Economic and Housing Growth objectives, the Council will:**

<b>What</b>	<b>By When</b>
Seek to deliver the regeneration potential in each of its five opportunity areas, maximising housing capacity from new and existing transport infrastructure	2012 – 2032
- Develop a strategic housing and health approach to effectively meet the local needs of the vulnerable, disabled (including those with learning disabilities) and elderly residents	2013
Roll out a wider programme of Local Housing Company-led housing delivery	2012 -
Work with Private Registered Providers to deliver new housing in the rest of the borough	2012 -
Deliver high quality housing in line with the standards set out in the Mayor of London’s Draft Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance	2012 -

**To tackle economic and social polarisation, the Council will:**

<b>What</b>	<b>By When</b>
Encourage council tenants to take up their right to buy and develop alternative approaches such as ‘slivers of equity’ that enable tenants to earn additional equity from meeting tenancy obligations and making community contributions	2013 -
Implement a Housing Allocation Scheme that will give greater priority to people with a local connection who can make a community contribution, including working households and ex-armed service personnel	2013 -
Implement a Tenancy Strategy that introduces flexible tenancies, helping to improve mobility in the affordable rented sector	2012 -
Implement Local Lettings Plans where needed to encourage more balanced, sustainable communities	2013 -
Implement a Homelessness Strategy which supports preventative approaches to homelessness	2012 -
Develop and implement a council housing stock asset management strategy	2013 -

**To deliver better, streamlined housing services, the Council will:**

<b>What</b>	<b>By When</b>
Improve resident involvement and satisfaction in housing management services which will include market testing and contracting out alternative approaches	2012 -
Maximise opportunities for more effective, integrated service delivery	2012 -
Deliver a Strategy to improve the quality and safety of private housing	2012 -
Lobby Government for increased 'freedom to manage' their housing revenue accounts in order to create and sustain strong and balanced neighbourhoods in deprived areas	2012 -