



New Build Homes
The performance to date and meeting future
challenges.

FINAL REPORT OF
THE HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

May 2024

Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction

The Committee commenced the review in July 2023 with the aim of understanding Islington's historic performance in comparison with other Local Authority (LA) developers and to understand how the new build programme intends to adapt or mitigate against future challenges such as lack of land supply, high development costs and the fluctuating current and future economic climate.

1.2 Objectives of the review:

- Evaluate historic performance - baseline data – quantity of new homes, how many sites, tenures, household sizes etc.
- Review of partnership working activities undertaken with the aim of increasing supply of new homes
- Compare performance with other LA housebuilders to measure performance.
- Identify any innovative practices undertaken which would improve the delivery of new homes.
- Review measures in place to meet current and potential future economic challenges, including alternative models of delivery.
- Assess effectiveness of lobbying activity to increase financial support and accessing potential sites.
- Review current communications, consultation, and engagement methods to assess effectiveness and ensure fit for purpose.
- Consider broader estate transformation opportunities to increase new housing supply and address issues in existing stock.
- Review design standards and technical specifications (space standards, sustainability, quality, maintainability) to ensure value for money, compliance and quality is achieved

1.3 Throughout the review, evidence was received from a variety of sources, which are listed below:

1.4 Presentations Received

Presentations were received from:

- Alistair Gale, Islington's Assistant Director of Housing, Programming, Design and Customer Care
- Stephen Nash, Interim Assistant Director – Strategic Development & Delivery New Build
- Nick Stylianou, Islington's Assistant Director of Finance - Homes, Neighbourhoods and Public Health Resources
- Karen Sullivan, Islington's Director of Planning and Development.
- Roger Arnold, Martin Arnold Chartered Surveyors and Construction Consultants
- Rachel Bagenal, Assistant Director – Housing Regeneration & Delivery Hackney Council
- Tim Porter, Be First Director of Delivery (Barking and Dagenham)

1.5 Information from witnesses:

Secretary TRA Park View Estate, Islington and Hathersage residents

1.6 Scrutiny visit

Visit to Council's new build homes at Andover Estate- (see Appendix B)

1.7 Recommendations

The review concluded in May 2024. The committee's recommendations are listed in the next section.

Recommendations

2.01 The Committee made the following recommendations:

2.02. To note the Committee's concerns about the council's capacity to deliver an ambitious and complex new build programme and whether or not:

- Appropriate officer resources are available to deliver the council's target of delivering 750 new homes for social rent, as well as completing current schemes on site, while being mindful of financial constraints with the HRA;
- Staff have the ability, skills and specialisms to deliver a scheme from inception to handover through appropriate training, support and performance management;

2.03. Review alternative funding and delivery models e.g. SPV and consider whether direct delivery by the council is the most effective and Value for Money model.

- Research other funding or delivery models used by other developing councils and undertake an options appraisal of different approaches;
- Review investment and delivery models such as Joint Ventures, Special Purpose Vehicles, other partnership models with housing associations developers, contractors and investors

2.04. Review and improve resident engagement to ensure it is inclusive, accessible and fit for purpose.

- Ensure the delivery team has access to high level engagement support to ensure a high quality and consistent engagement service is provided to residents;
- Overhaul the existing new build engagement process so it is fit for purpose (this will involve embedding best practice, locally and regionally, meeting legislative requirements and links in with corporate engagement practice);
- Draft a Residents Charter to set out the council's and contractors responsibilities when consulting and communicating with residents on development sites incl. a clear and fair tenant and leaseholders offer to affected households;
- Utilise a range of modern methods and technology to keep residents engaged and informed e.g. website improvement (not limited to New Build and needs to connect with other council engagement approaches);
- Strengthen the engagement with residents impacted by construction and better manage contractor performance to minimise impacts.

2.05. Review the governance arrangements over the council's new build programme to deliver transparent and accountable decision-making.

- Ensure robust cost management that delivers value for money;
- Ensure effective risk management to ensure all project risks are well mitigated;

- Commit to an internal audit review of governance.

2.06. Continue to explore opportunities to build taller buildings to increase housing supply, including rooftop development.

- Work with Planning to identify where taller buildings might be appropriate in the borough as well as what mitigation is needed when providing tall buildings in un-designated areas;
- Set up Tall Buildings Working Group to assess and incorporate changes to building design due to new regulations and improve efficiencies when designing and constructing tall buildings;
- Identify site for pilot rooftop development and undertake assessment of cost and deliverability, making clear challenges and opportunities;
- Identify other prospective rooftop development activities for future supply

2.07. Explore off-site construction opportunities to deliver at pace.

- Develop typologies that can be replicated on smaller sites in the development pipeline to increase speed of delivery and other efficiencies
- Investigate whether off site construction processes, such as Modern Methods of Construction (MMC), can provide value to the typical type of developments delivered by the council;
- Engage with other Local Authorities to identify and learn from different construction approaches

2.08. Commit to delivering high-quality, climate change resilient homes (net zero carbon) to meet the needs of Islington's residents.

- Continue to design and build high-quality, sustainable and energy efficient homes that meet the challenges presented by climate change;
- Undertake post-occupancy evaluation and building performance monitoring to evaluate impact;
- Ensure that all homes are accessible and adaptable to meet the needs of residents and demonstrate exceeding minimum standards

2.09. Identify housing solutions that enable families to remain in Islington e.g. incentivised private sale homes to existing Islington residents.

- Identify small sites which may be better suited to larger homes such as existing garage sites which could accommodate mews houses for families with housing need for larger properties;
- Establish a working group to investigate whether current funding arrangements in the new build programme can be adapted to subsidise or incentivise homes for local families who are being 'priced out' of the borough and don't meet the criteria for traditional social housing.

2.10. Maximise training and employment opportunities for residents local to the council's new build developments.

- Explore different approaches that will deliver genuine training and employment opportunities to local people through the council's contracts with contractors delivering new homes;
- Review training and employment opportunities provided through contracts over the last 5 years to establish a baseline.

2.11. Asset review to identify future opportunities for new homes.

- Work with the Corporate Landlord and Homes and Neighbourhoods directorates to identify opportunities within the General Fund and HRA asset base and support the drafting and implementation of the Strategic Asset Management Plan highlighting opportunities to maximise the supply of new homes;
- When working on HRA and other new build sites, ensure at inception any opportunities for site assembly are identified and freeholders or leaseholders are approached to investigate whether the supply of new homes can be increased (this should be a priority if the owner is a public body or housing association);
- Work effectively with other public sector bodies (GLA, TfL, the Met, Govt Depts, Health providers etc) to maximise new housing supply through partnership arrangements or disposals of public sector land to the council.

Evidence Received

- 3.1 The Committee received a presentation from the Assistant Director of Housing, Programming, Design and Customer Care, and the Interim Assistant Director for Strategic Development & Delivery New Build; on the council's performance and challenges for the new build programme. The following issues were highlighted:**
- 3.2 There is a housing crisis with a desperate shortage of genuinely affordable homes with over 15,700 registered on Islington's housing waiting list.
- 3.3 At present under 3,000 Islington households live in overcrowded accommodation of which over 500 are severely overcrowded households.
- 3.4 Homelessness is on the rise and temporary accommodation availability is declining. It was noted that presently 146 applicants on the housing register require wheelchair accessible accommodation.
- 3.5 In 2008 Islington Council became one of the first local authorities to start building new council housing again for 25 years, following a period in which it had been forced sell off most of its housing stock through the Right To Buy Scheme.
- 3.6 Islington remains one of the smallest and most densely populated boroughs in London, with much of the borough built up, resulting in a scarcity of land for new housing.
- 3.7 The lack of land supply and high property values in Islington has driven the Council to look for opportunities to build new homes on land it already owns. Most of the completed and under construction new housing projects consist of building new homes alongside existing homes on council-owned estates.
- 3.8 'infill' projects are often on constrained sites that require careful considered design and well managed construction which results in higher construction and development costs.
- 3.9 With every project, the New Build team aims to build as many new council homes as possible; improve communal areas, improve facilities and landscaping; making sure the new homes and any improvements made meet the residents' needs on the estate.
- 3.10 The New Build team aims to ensure that there is minimal disruption to its residents; achieving the best value for money; that proposals prioritise a mix of homes more closely aligned with housing need, including larger family homes, accessible homes and specialist supported housing.
- 3.11 Islington's local lettings policy ensures that local residents are prioritised for new council homes built, especially for residents who live in homes that don't meet their current needs which then provides opportunities to release existing homes which are then re-let to meet the needs of other Islington residents.
- 3.12 With regards to design and construction, Council's aspiration is to achieve higher standards for housing design and build quality homes.

- 3.13 Council aims to be at the forefront of building safe, secure, high quality, maintainable, energy efficient new homes that residents would be proud to live in, that its approach is bespoke to each individual site but pinned to a core set of principles to achieve a consistently high level of quality and performance.
- 3.14 All new homes are designed to be tenure blind, with no visible difference in the appearance and common areas of buildings of different tenure.
- 3.15 The Council has worked successfully with its contractors to maximise the training and employment opportunities for residents arising from its housing development projects.
- 3.16 In terms of housing delivery, between 2009 and the end of August 2023, 580 new high quality, genuinely affordable council homes were built. Also new specialist supported accommodation was also provided, enabling Islington residents to live in their communities rather than outside the borough and to receive the best care and support possible.
- 3.17 The Housing Director acknowledged that new housing development has taken place at more than 40 locations in 17 wards with the result Council has been able to house over 2,500 Islington residents.
- 3.18 Islington Council has built 28 shared ownership, and 102 outright sale homes in the period stated above, with receipts from the sale of these private homes helping to pay for the new affordable housing and other associated estate and social infrastructure improvements.
- 3.19 In terms of funding for new homes, meeting was advised of rental income from the new council rent homes; prudential borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board; open market sales; Right to Buy (RTB) receipts and GLA grant funding.
- 3.20 Islington has a target to build 750 new council homes between 2023-2027, noting the schemes at Finsbury Leisure Centre and Vorley Road. All will contribute to meeting the target with 200 new homes, 50% council rent which meets Passivhaus standards and includes new leisure and medical centres, new public realm, play and landscaping.
- 3.21 In light of the current wider economic climate, the programme of new build homes presents significantly viability pressures and considerable risks such as high inflation, interest rate rises leading to higher borrowing rates for councils; construction costs at a 40-year high which is unlikely to fall; flatlining sales values and increased mortgage rates.
- 3.22 It was noted that delivery of homes have become increasingly challenging as many public and private sector housing developers have either paused, slowed, or radically altered their delivery programmes, resulting in fewer affordable homes being built, particularly in London, that work is underway to mitigate these challenges faced by the industry.
- 3.23 With regards to monitoring of works carried out by sub-contractors, Interim Director advised that a dedicated small After Care team has been in place in the last 18-24 months to carry out checks noting that lessons have been learnt and reassuring members that personnel involved have a construction background.

- 3.24 It was noted that although car parks on existing council estates are possibilities to build homes, acquisition of private car parks is more challenging as Council have no control over such land and such land attracts exorbitant land values which are unaffordable.
- 3.25 On a suggestion that Council consider using one standard design similar to well-known national home builders instead of having multitude of designs, the Director advised that this could not be replicated as most of the new build homes are built on existing estates. It is important to note that, besides building affordable homes, it is important that such developments do not impact on the amenity of existing residents.
- 3.26 On the role of the council's planning policies, the Director of Planning and Development reassured members that following a discussion on Tall Buildings in the context of addressing overcrowding issues at a previous committee meeting, issues around density were being discussed at corporate level. It was expected that new schemes would be brought to planning committee in the near future.
- 4.01 On resident engagement and the council's relationship with different stakeholders in the delivery of its new homes, the Committee received presentations from the Interim Director for Strategic Development & Delivery and the following points were highlighted:**
- 4.02 The Committee was advised that, besides delivering new affordable high-quality homes, it is important for residents to understand why the Council is building new homes on their estate, why it has to sell homes to pay for the works, and how people can apply for newly built homes. This is possible through its consultation and engagement process.
- 4.03 The New Build Team does not determine whether a scheme goes ahead, that lies primarily with the Council's Planning Committee.
- 4.04 The Team ensures that all relevant voices are heard, to ensure that residents are able to influence the development of local buildings and spaces. There was a need to continue resident involvement through the development process.
- 4.05 Interim Director highlighted the engagement process with internal stakeholders. This included initial fact finding; drafting the design guide; stakeholder workshops; building control and technical reviews; members meetings and updates.
- 4.06 Throughout the engagement process, the New Build Team aims to put residents at the heart of the process by involving them in both design and implementation phases.
- 4.07 The meeting was advised that local knowledge and feedback helps improve council schemes and enhance the social value that developments can deliver. This is done via exhibitions, drop in sessions, resident meetings with the Design Team, steering groups and design workshops, feedback surveys, newsletters, posters and visiting residents.
- 4.08 The New Build Team also engage with residents that do not live on the estate so as to get their perspective on the impact of the new scheme.
- 4.09 Resident engagement continues during construction and onto when the scheme is completed and handed over. It was acknowledged that new schemes can have an impact on resident amenity, with possible closures of access roads and noises from

construction activities, and engagement was important to help manage the impact on residents' well-being.

- 4.10 The New Build Team provides regular newsletters, organises 'meet the contractor' events, provides a dedicated resident liaison officer; provides updated through project webpages, attends TRA/TMO meetings, as well as seeking Social Value through procurement to benefit local residents.
- 4.11 A successful engagement process will be tailored to the needs of the project, as it is important to recognise that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach. The engagement process will make use of local knowledge and feedback to develop and refine proposals. This allows for a 'win/win' approach whereby existing and future residents will benefit, achieving an acceptable balance of development time, cost and quality once construction is underway.
- 4.12 The Committee was informed of recent changes within the New Build Team. Previously the engagement process was managed by a Project Manager. A Strategic Engagement Manager has been introduced to manage the engagement process; their role included reviewing how the team currently engages to identify good practice and areas for improvement; learning from other boroughs and incorporating best practice; working closely with LBI Engagement and Participation Team and Communications Team; and ensuring that resident engagement meets the requirements of the GLA, the Social Housing Regulator, and other relevant bodies.
- 4.13 In terms of Cross Public Sector Working, One Public Estate supports locally led partnerships of public sector bodies to collaborate around their public service delivery strategies and estate needs. An example of this was the funding of some of the ground works to Parkside Estate. It was commented that TFL remain one of the few large landowners in the borough, and further liaison and lobbying may be needed to maximise the land available for development.
- 4.14 The New Build team engages with the Islington Local Estates Forum. This engagement had contributed to completed and proposed projects such as Vorley Road (37 council homes, new medical centre, new library), the Finsbury Leisure Centre (100 council homes, new leisure centre, new medical centre, new energy centre) and Daylight New Park (new council homes, new medical centre, new adult day centre).
- 4.15 The Council had received GLA funding through the Homes for Londoners scheme, which was welcomed. In terms of best practice and knowledge sharing, the New Build team was part of the Local Authority Design Working Group.
- 4.16 The team also engages in various networking activities such as the Housing Forum which supports councils at different stages in delivering more quality homes for their communities nationwide; the London Councils Housing Developers Group; and various engagement forums with neighbouring councils, contractors and consultants.
- 4.17 The Committee was advised that the council was one of the founding members of the Benchmarking Construction for London group. This involved sharing tender award data and supporting information to help produce construction cost benchmarks; this helped the council to obtain value for money in construction costs.
- 4.18 The Committee asked about the possibility of further collaboration with other organisations, noting the Richard Cloudsley School development was progressed

through a joint venture with the City of London. In response, the meeting was advised of the unique circumstances which made this development possible, however if such opportunities arise in the future, the team would take it up.

- 4.19 The meeting was informed of partnership working with other services. The New Build team has links with the Adult Social Care Services which helps in identifying local housing demands, as well as under-occupiers.
- 4.20 In response to suggestions that council build on top of existing residential buildings or build downwards, the Executive Member for Finance, Planning and Performance reminded the meeting of successful conversion of garages and undercroft spaces, and that Council has no plans to build below ground.
- 4.21 The Interim Director advised that fun day events were sometimes organised in estates with a view to design play areas; this was an opportunity to obtain feedback from children and young people.
- 4.22 In response to a question about previous collaboration exercises with smaller housing associations to build new homes, the Interim Director advised that this was possible previously when the council had development sites within the borough. The New Build Team had provided advice to small housing associations when seeking planning permission.
- 4.23 On the question of abandoned projects and if this could be attributed to failure with the engagement process, the meeting was advised that only one out of 40 schemes was abandoned and this was due to challenging circumstances from the economic climate.
- 5.01 The Committee received a presentation from Roger Arnold, Managing Director of Martin Arnold Limited, a multidisciplinary construction consultancy that specialise in residential and affordable housing. The following issues were highlighted:**
- 5.02 The consultancy currently employs 130 people within the London Borough of Greenwich and although it has never worked with Islington Council on any of its schemes it has worked with 16 London boroughs.
- 5.03 It is primarily involved in the residential sector of the industry, working with housing builders, housing associations and local authorities with particular focus on joint ventures between housing associations and developers, such as the 1,500 units built in a joint venture by Clarion and Countryside.
- 5.04 The meeting was advised that current market issues affecting the industry are contractor insolvency, legacy projects, fire remediation, second staircases and compliance with new requirements under the Building Safety Act.
- 5.05 With regards to contractor insolvency, the meeting was advised that in light of the challenging economic climate over the last 12-18 months with inflation, Brexit, and a lack of some skill sets; some contractors have found it difficult to survive and folded, with the result that clients are now left with legacy projects.
- 5.06 Legacy projects left behind by contractors are now being picked up by clients seeking to complete schemes. However, contractors were often unwilling to take on such schemes, especially with the risks that might arise when carrying out the building

process. This could potentially lead to increasing construction prices on such schemes.

- 5.07 Fire remediation remains a challenge for the industry. There was a focus on rectifying cladding, which has been the industry model for over two decades, with the result that skilled staff were being overstretched.
- 5.08 The provision of second staircase in tall buildings was another issue which has resulted in additional construction costs and raised viability concerns for developers.
- 5.09 Another concern is the implementation of the Building Safety Act and the role of the new Building Safety Regulator, which still remains unclear in terms of how this would operate. The legislation aimed to address safety concerns for high-risk residential buildings of over 18m. While this is important work, most developers have had to include a further period of up to 15 months to the process of delivering homes, thereby resulting in increased costs.
- 5.10 With regards construction pricing, the consultant advised that contractors are unwilling to bear risks, so it has been noticeable recently that design and build pricing includes caveats that protects contractors before the end of contracts. The result was that clients are taking more risks.
- 5.11 The construction industry has taken on a number of measures to mitigate risks by undertaking joint ventures, a model favoured by housing associations; construction management plans which uses sub-contractors; having sensible discussions on risks associated with legacy projects; and sharing of knowledge and skills through Housing Involvement partnerships.
- 5.12 Joint ventures provide an opportunity for both clients and contractors to share risks. This is a tried and tested model in the delivery of social homes, and includes the advantages of risk and skill sharing throughout the design and build process.
- 5.13 Construction Management Schemes tend to be taken up by ambitious clients, where sub-contractors are employed to carry out the works. This is regarded as high-risk model, which is that it tends to take up a lot of client time.
- 5.14 Some developers were currently seeking grant support to fund developments, especially in the light of the recent requirement of second staircases for tower blocks. It was commented that the GLA is currently inundated with claims on this issue, to the extent it was affecting the delivery of affordable housing.
- 5.15 In response to a question on abandoned legacy projects, the construction consultancy would advise local authorities to complete such projects, especially as development costs will continue to increase in the long term.
- 5.16 In terms of Housing Management Partnerships, the committee was advised that in recent years the likes of pension funds and hedge funds have come into the affordable housing market to provide funds for a financial return.
- 5.17 It was commented that many local authorities were reviewing their housing delivery strategy, reviewing ongoing projects and making sure that schemes are both deliverable and viable.

- 5.18 Many London local authority schemes tend to be on infill sites and garages rather than big sites, especially as they are identified as 'low hanging fruit', however such schemes tend to be difficult due to land issues, access on site, and can be relatively expensive.
- 5.19 It was suggested that local authorities should be wary and cautious when reviewing schemes, as in some instances developers could over promise on what they can actually do with small sites, and costs can significantly increase as a result.
- 5.20 Maintaining a good working relationship with planners is key to ensure that schemes meet the requirements of the local planning policy. It was considered that local authority developments needed to set a good benchmark.
- 5.21 With recent government announcements on the five year housing land supply, local authorities were reviewing their strategy on home delivery, especially in light of the revised fire safety regulations and the requirements of a second staircase. This would have consequences on whether some sites were deliverable.
- 5.22 The industry was anticipating over the next 12-18 months for construction costs to fall, which was welcomed by the industry, although concerns around increased costs associated with fire safety regulation and staircase requirements still remained.
- 5.23 Another issue of concern for contractors was the level of risk and insolvency balance, with contractors not willing to carry the risk in light of what has occurred to the industry over the last few years.
- 5.24 There was a strong reliance on housing associations to kickstart the building of social homes, however with ongoing issues such as damp and mould and fire safety to resolve, capital funds were being diverted to address these issues within existing stock, rather than building new homes.
- 5.25 In response to a question on whether Islington would be able to deliver its 750 homes target, the Consultant advised that this would depend on factors such as how far the Council is on its journey in terms of planning process, its procurement exercises, the type of sites being developed, whether they are infill developments or buildings of over 18m, with associated issues of fire safety regulation, and so on.
- 5.26 On any issues of insolvency of contractors, Islington's Interim Director advised that only in one instance did a contractor go insolvent with a new contractor brought in to complete it. In another instance there was a mutual termination agreement because of concerns about the financial health of the company.
- 5.27 To minimise financial risks, the council is involved with organisations that rate the financial health of its contractors. The council has also made changes to its payments arrangements to support the sustainability of developers. It was commented that senior officers take part in cross-London forums where commercially sensitive financial information is discussed.
- 5.28 It was noted that the provision of an extra staircase can result in the loss of floor space therefore affecting the viability model of schemes. However, the industry was having discussions with planning officers to ensure that such provision does not result in the loss of units.

- 5.29 The suggestion to employ a materials management system was welcomed, however it is important to note it is not suitable in schemes such as infill sites or garage conversions, as economies of scale come into play with larger schemes. The Committee was also advised that this methodology would have its own challenges, that funds would be required upfront, and recently there have been a number of companies involved in such systems who have fallen into difficulty and filed for insolvency.
- 5.30 On the use of pension and hedge funds to build social housing, the meeting was advised that this type of financing is solely used by housing associations and was not a preference of local authorities.
- 5.31 With regards to joint ventures, the meeting was advised that this is an option where council have land and developers are invited to build social homes on a 50:50 basis with the private sector making the funds available.
- 5.32 The Committee considered the financial challenges associated with new build housing. In light of the Covid pandemic, high inflation, the additional staircase requirement, ensuring compliance with fire safety regulations and damp and mould remediation, funding has had to focus on these priorities, instead of developing new social housing.
- 5.33 A member suggested avoiding the use of sub-contractors on social housing developments. It was suggested the council should explore partnership working and working to address skills shortages within the construction industry. It was also commented that the council should give serious consideration to building homes over 18m, due to the lack of available land in the borough.
- 5.34 On developers' claims on scheme viability, the consultant advised that developers always aim to maximise profit on any scheme, and that the council with its own in-house viability experts or independent experts should be able to review and verify their claims.
- 6.01 **The Committee received a presentation from the Assistant Director of Housing Regeneration & Delivery of Hackney Council. The following issues were highlighted -**
- 6.02 Hackney had a longstanding programme to develop new council homes via the Estate Regeneration Programme (ERP) which started in 2011, Housing Supply Programme (HSP) in 2016 and the New Homes Programme (NHP) in 2024.
- 6.03 By April 2018, 660 new and refurbished homes had been completed, which were mostly estate regeneration schemes.
- 6.04 Between May 2018 and May 2022, Hackney Council started, completed or received planning permission for 1,984 homes.
- 6.05 Hackney Council employs the direct delivery model, with its Design & Build model and inhouse sales team, plus some development agreements.
- 6.06 Hackney Council has established a skilled in-house delivery team along with the associated infrastructure to deliver new housing.

- 6.07 Hackney Council aims to deliver high quality mixed tenure developments including homes for social rent, shared ownership and outright sale alongside a range of non-residential uses, public realm improvements and socio-economic outputs.
- 6.08 Hackney Council builds additional, high-quality homes within existing estates by building on underused land, typically car parks, garages and depots.
- 6.09 Hackney's commitment to residents is that new home delivery will be Council led, not for profit, will use council land, and will work together with its residents. Hackney was clear that council tenants are given priority for all new builds.
- 6.10 During the period 2018 - 2022, Hackney Council had a target of 1,984 homes, 956 of which were affordable (social rent and shared ownership). In addition to the above, its current manifesto target is to deliver 1,000 new social rent homes over the period of 2022 – 2026.
- 6.11 In terms of new social rented homes, the meeting was advised that Hackney's current and new sites building programmes are contributing 568 Social Rent homes toward this target.
- 6.12 3,400 homes have now been built across more than 30 sites in Hackney. This included a mix of large and small sites and included estate regeneration, infill and brownfield sites.
- 6.13 It was noted that shared ownership and outright sale had been used to fund new social rent homes in Hackney.
- 6.14 Hackney Council employs a self-funding approach to its portfolio, that the ERP and HSP provides 50% affordable and NHP provides 75% social rent.
- 6.15 In terms of resident participatory design, it was advised that this results in surrounding improvements and alignment with capital works in existing homes.
- 6.16 Hackney Council aimed to deliver well-designed, high-quality homes that support attractive, functional, safe and sustainable neighbourhoods, places where people want to live and that make a positive contribution to the Borough. The aim is to build characterful, cost effective, robust and well-loved homes that age well and stand the test of time.
- 6.17 In addition to the above, Hackney Council aims to deliver resilient, high performing and energy efficient homes that lower the energy burden of the residents and contribute to the Council's net zero targets.
- 6.18 Hackney Council aims to ensure that its housing programme should be financially self-sustaining and that its investment should break even over 50 years, as it endeavours to protect the Council's finances and front-line services
- 6.19 The Assistant Director advised that rents and services charges of residents in existing homes do not pay towards the cost of building new homes, noting that Hackney's council rents are amongst the lowest in London.
- 6.20 Hackney Council seeks to maximise inward funding from GLA and other external sources.

- 6.21 The meeting was advised that cost of building has increased significantly over the last few years, that each square metre of new buildings now costs at least £4,000 to build and that the total cost of each new home is £500,000+
- 6.22 The Assistant Director reiterated that council rents don't pay back the full cost of a new home over 50 years, and that as with other local authorities, Hackney does not receive enough government or grant funding to fill the gap in development costs.
- 6.23 It was noted that outright sale homes are needed in the programme to cross-subsidise the social rent homes so as to make them viable.
- 6.24 In terms of viability, the meeting was advised that the cross-subsidy model is very challenging in current market especially with the increasing construction costs, inflation and property prices plateauing. It was also noted that the number of Right To Buy (RTB) sales is expected to reduce significantly over the coming years, that a 75% reduction is predicted.
- 6.25 In addition to the above challenges, there have been changes to the regulatory framework on tall buildings with the introduction of staircases, building safety and energy efficiency. It was also noted that grant rules have changed in terms of GLA eligibility criteria.
- 6.26 With regards to opportunities for building homes, Hackney was now diversifying from its present model, that it is working with the market to respond to current challenges, bringing contractors and partners into the process earlier
- 6.27 Hackney was evolving and developing its skills as a developer by boosting commercial and construction expertise.
- 6.28 To address the funding issues, Hackney Council was seeking further subsidies from GLA and other sources and also refining its approach to design by being efficient, seeking standardisation, and the use of modern methods of construction (MMC).
- 6.29 On the question of building homes in blocks of over 18m, the Assistant Director stated that there is no blanket policy against tall buildings and that this may be suitable in certain locations within the borough. The Committee was reminded that there is a lot of work with its design team to ensure high quality homes are built and where possible attempts are made to maximise spaces.
- 6.30 Hackney was working with other authorities such as Barking and Dagenham on resolving some of the challenges around building social housing.
- 6.31 In instances where the Council had demolished social housing, it endeavoured to replace it, albeit not necessarily the same quantity on the same site.
- 6.32 On the suggestion to use MMC when building new builds, the Committee were reminded that there are challenges; there are no savings unless these methods are scaled up, noting that it is an industry in its early stage.
- 6.33 Hackney Council has moved away from the use of gas boilers to heat pumps in its new build homes.
- 6.34 On garage conversions, the Committee was advised that these can be expensive and it can have a disruptive impact to the amenity of existing residents, noting that

issues around low ceiling heights of garages require digging down and the need to move some of the utilities all add to additional construction costs.

- 6.35 The Assistant Director acknowledged that lessons have been learnt through Hackney's approach, that the end product has been high quality homes, their work has helped to remove anti-social activities and there has been significant improvement to the public realm.
- 6.36 The Committee was advised that there are no plans to cease garage conversions in Hackney, despite the challenges.
- 6.27 On the funding and viability of the new builds, the meeting was advised that Hackney Council is in constant conversation with its in-house finance team, and that the Council ensures that its finances of the New Build programme are not compromised.
- 7.01 The Committee received a presentation from the Director of Delivery at Be First - Barking and Dagenham's housing programme. The following issues were highlighted:**
- 7.02 Be First is a Council owned regeneration company tasked with accelerating regeneration in the Borough of Barking and Dagenham.
- 7.03 Over £1.5bn of development has occurred on Council owned sites over the last five years and has delivered over 1,000 new homes, workspace and mixed-use schemes.
- 7.04 Be First also provides planning services at no cost to the Council, that it is focussed on delivering inclusive growth but also making a financial return for the Council.
- 7.05 Be First's mission is to accelerate regeneration in the borough, so that no-one is left behind. Its main focus of work has been direct delivery of new homes (the majority of which are affordable) utilising Council PWLB borrowing for the Council's housing company, Reside.
- 7.06 Be First was delivering 20% of London's new council housing and last year was the third biggest council house builder in England.
- 7.07 Although it has never been part of its original plan Business Plan, turnkeys have become an important additional income stream. The purchase of homes from the private sector has helped accelerate regeneration and benefit from private sector build costs, however council borrowing is still required.
- 7.08 Be First have completed an income strip deal for the Trocoll House scheme adjacent to Barking Station. Rail Pen/Fifth Capital owned the site, and Be First secured planning permission and took on all construction risk. Be First was committed to an annual rent rising with CPI but capped at 4%.
- 7.09 Be First had purchased 18 additional properties for the Council, like Dagenham East Travelodge and Welbeck Wharf, which had helped facilitate regeneration and deliver rental income relatively fast. Other schemes included Thames Road, which was a land assembly project to unlock longer term opportunities.
- 7.10 It was noted that there had been limited direct commercial development by Be First; there was some ground floor commercial uses in residential schemes, but the main commercial scheme was industrial.

- 7.11 Be First had also sought to employ a Fund and Asset Management approach via an advisory board for regeneration and building new homes.
- 7.12 A number of benefits had arisen as a result of Be First's approach, such as public engagement, development management, planning (including producing the Local Plan); regeneration/place-making; highways; civic works and design quality.
- 7.13 451 further homes were delivered across the borough during 2022-23; 849 New Homes 'Topped out' in 2022-23 across 6 schemes; and 55 apprenticeships were supported during 2022-23 through contractors. Around £22m had been spent with local small to medium sized businesses in 2022-23.
- 7.14 Barking & Dagenham's Planning Committee had supported in approving 9,000 new homes for the borough over the last three years.
- 7.15 The strong focus on direct delivery with council borrowing has meant that Be First has perhaps been less engaged with the private sector and focussed on individual delivery of a wide range of projects.
- 7.16 Be First's initial six years had established a good track record and reputation in terms of quality, efficiency, delivery capacity and in achieving some big wins. It was commented that this had required a wide range of skills and tools which wouldn't have been available in a council in-house team.
- 7.17 On the issue of governance, the Committee was advised that the council remained the main shareholder of the company, council officers were on the Board, and that all profits made were directed back to the council to subsidise the services it delivers.
- 7.18 In response to a question, the meeting was advised that Be First act as a Project Manager and that in terms of procurement, they offer a "cradle to grave" approach.
- 7.19 Considering that the council had over the years lost a lot of its social housing via Right to Buy, it was noted that with this arrangement, new homes will be shielded.
- 7.20 Be First was not a registered housing provider, but Reside was, and the Council still retained the freehold of the properties.
- 7.21 It was commented that Be First avoids gentrification simply because the value of homes in the borough was relatively low when compared to neighbouring boroughs.
- 7.22 In response to a question on whether this approach was piloted before proceeding, the Director informed the meeting that company was founded in 2018 and that the Council was still building homes before they were all migrated to Be First. The company had grown in size since.
- 8.01 The Committee received evidence from a Parkview Estate TRA resident representative.**
- 8.02 The TRA representative commented that residents have no objections to the council's plans of building social housing, however it was reported that the development in and around the estate had been frustrating for residents. It was recognised that there will be some disruption and inconveniences to residents, however residents felt that there was an absence of project management on the scheme, and questioned if there was a lack of skill, capacity and leadership in the

council to deliver such projects. The TRA representative felt that the council was avoiding contact with residents, as attempts to seek information had not been successful.

- 8.03 The TRA representative expressed concern at the loss of 3/4 bedroom dwellings from the scheme and thought that adequate steps had not been taken to protect vulnerable residents from the impact of development. It was also commented that, considering that this was presently the only active project in the borough, more was expected from the Council. The representative also stated that it was worrying that senior council officers had not attended TRA meetings, despite numerous requests.
- 8.04 The TRA representative queried the viability of the new build homes, especially in light of local authority rent caps. The TRA representative also advised that an FOI request on the cost of the new development had not been answered; and there was the view among residents that Council should have bought properties on the open market rather than building the new homes, as it was not viewed as value for money.
- 8.05 In response to the comments above, both the Executive Member for Finance, Planning and Performance and Corporate Director of Community and Wealth Building indicated that they would schedule a meeting in the next few weeks to discuss some of the issues raised, as well as following-up via email to clarify some of the issues raised, apologising for the inconvenience that it had caused to residents. In response to a question on the scope of the scheme changing, the Executive Member acknowledged that there were a number of factors that resulted in it not being built and that it was not an easy decision, but it was in the interest of the Council not to continue with building.
- 9.01 The Committee received a presentation from Nick Stylianou, Assistant Director of Finance, on the New Build budget, funding and challenges. The following points were highlighted:**
- 9.02 The meeting was advised that the funding of the new build programme meets construction costs, fees, on-costs for marketing, community infrastructure levy (CIL), risk management and contingencies.
- 9.03 In addition to above, there are ongoing costs for repairs and maintenance, major works, management and capital financing/debt repayments.
- 9.04 Sources of funding for new build homes include PWLB borrowing, Right To Buy one-for-one receipts, CIL/S106 and open market sales, of which the first two provides between 85-90% of funds.
- 9.05 Ongoing income received, such as rental income, funds ongoing costs of maintaining the properties and potential future sales/staircasing of shared ownership properties.
- 9.06 Rents have been capped for a number of years and with inflation and high construction cost it has been increasingly challenging to finance new developments.
- 9.07 It was noted that cost of borrowing has increased, for example the Public Loan Works Board (PWLB) 40 year maturity rate rose from 2.06% to 5.49% between December 2021 and November 2023. The meeting was advised that, in terms of HRA concession, the 40 basis point discount ends in 2025, which was too soon for many of the projects in the pipeline.

- 9.08 There were other restrictions on RTB receipts. Although the Council can use receipts to fund up to 50% of eligible spend incurred, resources are finite. From 2024/25, the Treasury will keep 20-25% of receipts.
- 9.09 There were also restrictions on using RTB receipts with other external funding (for example, grant funding from the GLA or DLUHC).
- 9.10 Viability issues hinders building new homes as government rent caps can impact the ability to fund future debt, management and maintenance.
- 9.11 It was also noted that the requirement to subsidise new build borrowing was to the detriment of funding Major Works/Decent Homes improvement works.
- 9.12 Despite challenges, Islington Council was committed to delivering new homes, The current programme was delivering 162 Homes (including shared ownership) and the existing and new pipeline the council had a target of 750 new social rented homes.
- 9.13 In light of the current financial challenges, that over the last 12 months the Council has conducted a comprehensive review of its New Homes programme, reallocating funds to the most viable schemes and ensuring that it continues to build new affordable homes to meet the council's target.
- 9.14 Major pipeline schemes included the Finsbury Leisure Centre, Bemerton South and Vorley Road developments, of which £118.08m has been allocated, which would be met from borrowing and additional open market sale units.
- 9.15 The meeting was advised that there is a budget of £20.2m to bring various schemes to planning, which was funded from HRA reserves.
- 9.16 The Committee was reminded of the challenges to delivering new affordable homes, including complexity of schemes (planning and building restrictions in Islington, availability of land and site access); challenging legislative issues (fire and building safety); impact of depressed housing market (with reduced private sales values and falling demand); inflationary pressure and historic lack of central government investment in council house building.
- 9.17 In overcoming the above challenges a number of sector wide actions have been taken such as lobbying central government in terms of greater flexibility on funding; simultaneous use of RTB and GLA grant which will ensure affordability; retaining 100% of RTB receipts as RTB has resulted over a long period in the reduction of affordable housing stock and long-term rent policy which impacts scheme viability as rents fund ongoing costs of new builds.
- 9.18 Islington has undertaken a number of actions to address its challenges and they include a review of scheme affordability; identifying alternative funding sources; considering opportunities across General Fund sources; assigning dedicated Programme Management Officers to lead on designing and implementing programme assurance framework; introducing a new scheme of delegations and updating gateway process and additional capital programme financial scrutiny.

- 9.19 In response to a question on abandoned projects, and in particular Block D on Parkview Estate, the Executive Member commented that prior to the decision being taken by the Executive in March, residents had been kept abreast of developments over a 12-month period.
- 9.20 The Executive Member commented that the Committee would be provided with a detailed breakdown of the construction costs of abandoned projects, including Parkview Estate, to include planning, site preparation etc. and also costs for live projects that are successful.
- 9.21 On concerns about the longevity of new build homes, the Executive Member stated that people wanted to continue to live in Islington, in homes that are affordable to rent, and that the decision to build private homes for sale was to subsidise the building of social housing.
- 9.22 On the suggestion of relocating the loss of the 3/4 bedroom properties to other blocks on either Parkview Estate or to other developments, the Corporate Director indicated that this suggestion will be considered further, noting that other developments in the borough were delivering these types of homes.
- 9.23 In response to concerns that the council had not been transparent enough with residents, and the suggestion that the council lacked the capability to deliver major projects, the Corporate Director acknowledged that the council was refining its approach, and as stewards of considerable amount of public monies, this responsibility was taken seriously. On the concerns around resident engagement, it was advised that council has invested in three new roles to address this.
- 9.24 In response to the cost of abandoned projects, the Corporate Director acknowledged that the cost of schemes that were not progressing was regarded as written offs, and commented on a number of live schemes that are deemed successful.
- 10.01 **At the 30th April meeting, the Committee heard further evidence from residents of Parkview and Hathersage Estates. The following points were raised:**
- 10.02 Residents reported that new developments had resulted in immense disruption to their daily lives; including the loss of open spaces and play areas for children. This had been the case for over 10 years. It was suggested that there had been a lack of leadership from the council and no communication on future plans for areas that have remained fenced off. In response, officers explained the work to progress the scheme and noted previous discussions with the TRA. It was advised that all efforts will be made to repair the relationship with the TRA, including following up after the meeting to clarify the issues raised.
- 10.03 Officers advised that although they could not commit to a new scheme on Hathersage Estate going ahead, it was commented that officers are working on reinstating the communal spaces and play areas, and would follow-up with residents on this. It was accepted that more needed to be done in terms of communicating with residents effectively. Executive Member for Finance, Planning and Performance reiterated his commitment to working with the TRA, commenting that all attempts will be made to address their concerns.

- 10.04 Residents said that the ongoing disruption had affected their trust in the council to deliver on the scheme. Residents reiterated concerns about a lack of consultation; a disabled resident said she experienced accessibility issues around the Parkview estate during the development which had not been resolved, and another resident highlighted safety issues, commenting that her child had been hurt on the estate. Residents indicated that concerns had been raised with the council's liaison officer, but had not been resolved.
- 10.05 In response, officers acknowledged the concerns of residents and noted the issues associated with development. Officers agreed to follow-up with residents after the meeting to clarify and discuss their concerns. Going forwards the Council will seek to keep residents updated at every stage of the building process. Officers also summarised examples of schemes that had been completed successfully.
- 10.06 In light of the concerns raised by residents, it was suggested that a check list was required, which clearly set out the expectations on new build developments and resident engagement so that everyone has a clear understanding of expectations and there is a clear path of how to move forward.
- 10.07 The Chair thanked residents and TRA representatives, apologising for the inconveniences and the disruption to their lives. It was hoped that the scrutiny review would help to address such issues, and now that these had come to the attention of the committee, members would continue to scrutinise this issue and hold the council to account.
- 10.08 Members commented on the need for transparency around council development plans and discussed the need for larger 3-4 bedroom properties to address overcrowding issues and the housing crisis. Residents also asked for an explanation of abandoned schemes to be shared with local residents, given the disruption on estates.

Findings

- 4.1 The Committee summarised the key findings from the review as follows:
- a) That there is a shortage of social housing in the borough as a result of years of government policies, the economic climate, lack of funding and lack of land supply. New regulatory requirements were also presenting challenges to development.
 - b) That on the issue of funding to build new homes, Council should review alternative funding and delivery models, if they would be more efficient in delivering new homes.
 - c) Resident engagement needs to be robust to ensure that local people are kept abreast of all activities throughout the new build process; the Council should make use of a range of communication methods to keep residents informed.
 - d) In light of land supply concerns, the Committee were of the view that Council should explore opportunities to build taller buildings and review relevant planning policies.
 - e) The Committee suggested that incentives and support be made available for Islington residents to buy private sale homes, as some residents are ineligible for social housing and also unable to afford homes in the open market. This would support Islington residents to remain within the borough.
 - f) The Committee recommended a complete asset review to identify future possibilities for developing new homes.

Conclusion

- 5.1 The Committee commended the ongoing work of the Council in addressing the housing crisis through the building of new homes, recognising the challenges especially in the current economic climate and the unique circumstances in Islington with its lack of land supply.
- 5.2 The Committee have made a number of recommendations with a view to consider innovative ways and working in partnership with other stakeholders to build new social housing.

Housing Scrutiny Committee
2023-24 Membership

Councillor Jason Jackson
Chair

Councillor Ilkay Cinko-Oner
Vice Chair

Councillor Valerie Bossman-Quarshie

Councillor Gulcin Ozdemir

Councillor Mick Gilgunn

Councillor Ernestas Jegorovas-Armstrong

Councillor Michael O'Sullivan

Councillor Phil Graham

Rose Marie McDonald – Resident Observer

Dean Donaghy – Resident Observer

Substitute Members

Councillor Jilani Chowdhury

Councillor Ben Mackmurdie

Councillor Heather Staff

Councillor Rosaline Ogunro

Councillor Caroline Russell

Councillor Marian Spall

Councillor Heather Staff

Councillor Dave Poyser

Acknowledgements

The Committee would like to thank all the witnesses who gave evidence to the review

Officer Support

Alistair Gale, Stephen Nash , Karen Sullivan – LBI
Ola Adeoye– Democratic Services

APPENDIX A

SCRUTINY REVIEW INITIATION DOCUMENT (SID)
Review: New Build Homes – Performance to date and meeting future challenges
Scrutiny Review Committee: Housing Scrutiny Committee
Director leading the review: Jed Young – Acting Director of Homes & Neighbourhood
<p>Lead Officers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stephen Nash – Interim AD New Build Development & Deliver • Alistair Gale – Acting Assistant Director – New Homes
Overall aim: Review of the new build programme to understand historic performance in comparison with other Local Authority (LA) developers and understand how the programme intends to adapt or mitigate against future challenges incl. lack of land supply, high development costs and fluctuating current and future economic climate.
<p>Objectives of the review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evaluate historic performance - baseline data – quantity of new homes, how many sites, tenures, household sizes etc. ▪ Review of partnership working activities undertaken with the aim of increasing supply of new homes ▪ Compare performance with other LA housebuilders to measure performance ▪ Identify any innovative practices undertaken which would improve the delivery of new homes ▪ Review measures in place to meet current and potential future economic challenges, including alternative models of delivery ▪ Assess effectiveness of lobbying activity to increase financial support and accessing potential sites ▪ Review current communications, consultation, and engagement methods to assess effectiveness and ensure fit for purpose ▪ Consider broader estate transformation opportunities to increase new housing supply and address issues in existing stock ▪ Review design standards and technical specifications (space standards, sustainability, quality, maintainability) to ensure value for money, compliance and quality is achieved
<p>How is the review to be carried out:</p> <p><u>Scope of the review</u></p> <p>The review will be conducted in writing reports, taking evidence from external organisations, and analysing data to focus on:</p> <p>Types of evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officer Presentation • Written evidence from officers • Performance data • Witness evidence from other developing boroughs (Camden and Hackney), housing associations operating a similar service (Newlon) and HA development partners (London Square and Mt Anvil)

- Benchmarking with other developing boroughs
- Site visits

Additional Information:

To consider any useful comparators as part of a 12 month review if required.

In carrying out the review the committee will consider equalities implications and resident impacts identified by witnesses. The Executive is required to have due regard to these, and any other relevant implications, when responding to the review recommendations.

The Housing Scrutiny Committee will also seek witness evidence from the following officers at the meetings:

- Nick Stylianou, Assistant Director of Finance - Homes, Neighbourhoods and Public Health Resources

Programme

Key output:	To be submitted to Committee on:
1. Scrutiny Initiation Document	17th July 2023
2. Draft Recommendations	18 April 2024
3. Final Report	13 May 2024

Appendix B

Housing Scrutiny Committee – Notes of Scrutiny Visit

Date – 6 February 2024

Attendees: Cllr Jason Jackson, Ola Adeoye (Committee Clerk) & Alistair Gale (Interim Director New Builds), Andrew Osborne (Team Leader) and Will Nelson (Quinn - developer)

Exercise – A visit to Andover Estate to view some of the new builds homes which are part of the Council's delivery of new affordable homes.

- Garage conversion scheme – this is a pilot scheme combining existing homes and garages to deliver much needed larger homes.
- These are treated as pilot with the view that this can be extended to other sites within Andover Estate and other locations within the borough.
- Garage conversions are not without complications and constraints, but the pilot has provided lots of lessons that indicate a cost-effective way to make better use of these type of garages to provide accommodation for residents rather than cars or storage.
- A number of lessons have been learnt following the activities on Andover Estate that will be fed back into processes for future projects.
- New build homes within infill sites present a range of challenges, the disruption and inconvenience of existing residents, construction noise, inadequate resident engagement and access. There are also issues around increasing the density on estates; this needs to be carefully considered and managed to ensure successful integration and positive outcomes.
- There can be opposition to loss of open spaces from existing residents so it is important to ensure that open space improvements are included within the project.
- The Council has completed over 45 individual new build projects with new homes built on both largely unused or poor quality spaces – particularly car parking and garages on estates.
- Delivering larger scale projects, such as estate redevelopment is extremely challenging and requires significant support from a range of stakeholders. The council has a track record of adding new homes to existing estates, with examples of replacing poor quality homes on a few schemes.
- The Chair viewed the nearly completed garage conversions to new, larger homes, a 1 bedroom and 3 bedroom type of accommodation. Each dwelling was built to high specification. It was notable that none of the homes had any provision of white goods such as cooker, washing machine or refrigerator.
- The 3 bedrooms are located at the end of the terrace of old garages, with individual access to sizeable garden space and modern shed equipped to store bicycles. Floor to ceiling height of each dwelling was 2.2m and all rooms are spacious. The Project Manager stated that effectively 2 garages were knocked together to build the 3 bedroom homes.
- The Committee also viewed the improvement to the walkways above the garage into existing homes.
- Access to the homes above the converted garages were accessible via a security gate which helps to minimise the anti-social behaviour which was prevalent around the unused garages. The Chair was informed that maintaining council owned garages has often been financially challenging.

- Officers advised that if the pilot on Andover Estate was viewed as a success it could be replicated across all estates in Islington where there are similar opportunities.
- Contractors have been on site for over two years longer than planned due to issues such as the need to revisit the design of the rooms to meeting Islington's high standards, piling was required which was not anticipated before commencing, the repositioning of services such as gas and electricity etc . Also, there were delays through the planning process which had not been taken on board and also with insulation works carried out for the balcony above.
- Three contractors are currently working on Andover Estate, Osbourne, Mears and Quinn.
- Osborne are the new build contractor, Quinn have undertaken the garage conversion pilot and Mears is undertaking the capital works to some of the existing homes on the estate.
- Resident benefits such as an improved walkway, installation of electric lift, improved public realm, gas upgrades and public realm works were highlighted.
- It was noted that multiple contractors working on the same estate at the same time can be challenging; however this was required when carrying out infill developments, garage conversions and capital works
- The Interim Director informed the Chair that lessons from the experience on Andover have been taken on board by the New Build Team which will be beneficial for future developments.
- The Chair viewed Block J - a row of terraced houses, built to a high specification with regards the size of rooms and the private garden.
- The same architect company was involved with both the garage conversion and the new build homes.
- All newly built homes whether the infill development, garage conversions and the new build homes in Andover Estate will be handed over to the Council for letting within the next couple of months.
- The Chair also viewed the affordable workspace on Durham Road positioned in an underground car park, a huge benefit to the area. This was built with GLA grant funding.