East Surrey
Joint Housing Statement
Introduction

The East Surrey housing authorities of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, Reigate & Banstead Borough Council, Tandridge District Council and Mole Valley District Council have joined together to produce this Joint Housing Statement to mark a joint commitment to working in partnership on housing issues.

Regional and sub-regional working on housing is a strong feature in Government housing policy. The East Surrey districts recognise the value and benefits of working together to secure housing outcomes.

The four East Surrey authorities share many similar demographic, social, economic and spatial issues. The purpose of the Joint Housing Statement is to draw these issues together in a single document and highlight opportunities to work together to benchmark services, to jointly commission research, and identify opportunities to work in partnership.

Unsurprisingly affordability is a significant issue for many households in the area as house prices have risen as a result of economic success. Economic growth has created many opportunities for East Surrey, but it will continue to be a challenge for the East Surrey housing and planning authorities to meet the housing needs of our growing communities in the future.

This Joint Housing Statement looks back at our progress over the last year towards meeting housing need and tackling housing issues. It also looks in brief at joint projects and initiatives to be undertaken in 2006. Each Council has its own Housing Strategy and Homelessness Strategy setting out the strategic direction of housing in each locality. Further information on each local authority’s priorities is available at the web addresses below:

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council: www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk
Mole Valley District Council: www.molevalley.gov.uk
Reigate & Banstead Borough Council: www.reigate-banstead.gov.uk
Tandridge District Council: www.tandridge.gov.uk
About East Surrey

East Surrey is predominantly located in the Metropolitan Green Belt and forms part of the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is within easy reach of London and close to two international airports. These factors create both immense pressure for development and constraints to where development can take place.

East Surrey is a relatively affluent area characterised by high employment rates, high house prices, a strong economy, general good health and low crime rates. The relative affluence of the area masks small pockets of deprivation in which communities experience higher levels of crime, poorer health, lower employment levels and lower incomes.

Both Epsom & Ewell and Reigate & Banstead Councils have transferred their housing stock. Mole Valley District Council is intending to transfer its housing stock, while Tandridge District Council intends to retain the ownership and management of its housing stock.
One: Housing Issues - Assessing Housing Need

An adequate supply of affordable housing is essential to meet increasing housing need in East Surrey. The pressure for affordable housing has been exacerbated in recent years by rising house prices, rising private sector rents, a growing population and competition for land. Delivering affordable housing is a priority across East Surrey.

- Housing in East Surrey is amongst the most expensive in the South East and many young people and new households cannot afford to access the housing market. Table one below illustrates average and lower quartile prices.

Table 1: House Prices in East Surrey January – March 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Average price £</th>
<th>Sales</th>
<th>Lower Quartile Prices* £</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Epsom &amp; Ewell</td>
<td>261,448</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>192,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mole Valley</td>
<td>337,268</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>197,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reigate &amp; Banstead</td>
<td>271,220</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>174,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tandridge</td>
<td>311,261</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>183,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East</td>
<td>221,055</td>
<td>36,777</td>
<td>140,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Land Registry 2005, *ODPM 2004

- Household incomes have not kept pace with house price rises. Across East Surrey around 45% of households have an annual income below £30,000. New households and young people face particular difficulties accessing owner occupation and/or private rented accommodation.

- An increasing number of applicants are joining Housing Registers in East Surrey. This is partly due to demand for affordable housing but is also due to a change in legislation in 2002 which opened housing registers to people who do not reside in the local area. East Surrey is considered by many to be a desirable place to live and many people have joined the register in the last two years.

Housing Register Applicants

- Housing Needs Surveys show an annual affordable housing shortfall of at least 1,800 in East Surrey. It is not possible to meet all this need, however all local authorities strive to maximise opportunities to deliver affordable housing.
Two: Affordable Housing Planning Policies

In common with local authorities nationally, the East Surrey authorities are developing their Local Development Frameworks (LDFs). LDFs form part of a national agenda to reform the planning system to make it more responsive, quicker and involve the community. It marks a change in the emphasis of development plans from a purely land use focus to a broader spatial approach reflecting other local and regional strategies.

- In the last two years Epsom & Ewell and Mole Valley Councils have revised their affordable housing planning policies to reflect the need for more affordable housing and to recognise that most development sites are small. The table 2 below summarises current policies in East Surrey and shows that East Surrey authorities seek up to 40% affordable housing on appropriate sites.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Affordable Housing Requirement</th>
<th>Rural Policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Epsom &amp; Ewell BC</td>
<td>Aim to achieve 30-40% affordable housing on sites of 15 homes or over 0.5 hectares. The tenure mix on sites is particularly important and the Council aims for 75% rented and 25% shared ownership.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mole Valley DC</td>
<td>30% affordable housing on sites of 15 homes or over / 0.5 hectares The Council negotiates 40-50% affordable housing on residential development sites that are proposed on suitably located employment land identified in the Local Plan.</td>
<td>30% on 5 or more dwellings or 0.2 hectares in rural settlements below 3,000 population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reigate &amp; Banstead BC</td>
<td>25-30% affordable housing is required and achieved on larger sites.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tandridge DC</td>
<td>30% affordable housing required on sites of 25 homes or over 1 hectare.</td>
<td>30% on 10 homes or more or 0.4 hectares in rural areas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- The new planning policy framework has allowed Councils to ‘save’ existing policies for up to three years. Different approaches and timescales have been adopted by the each Council to review and develop affordable housing policies. Tandridge and Mole Valley Councils are progressing specific Affordable Housing Development Plan Documents whilst the other two authorities are initially reviewing policy through their Core Strategies. All authorities will need to have regard to forthcoming national planning guidance on affordable housing due in 2006.

- An analysis of housing needs surveys and housing registers shows that there is a significant need for social rented homes in the area. This has come as a result of the loss of stock from the Right to Buy and high house prices. In terms of housing size, the greatest need is for small units with some need for four bedroom homes.

- The South East Regional Housing Board (RHB) has identified the East Surrey area as the inner south sub-regional housing market. The RHB has outlined its expectation that a sub-regional approach to investment will operate and that authorities in sub-regional housing markets will work together to meet need across the sub-region. In 2006 the inner south group will commence work on a sub-region housing market assessment.

- Future allocations of subsidy for affordable housing will be targeted where need is greatest. The RHB is indicating that affordable homes should be delivered without subsidy wherever possible. This will be a real challenge in East Surrey where much development takes place on infill sites and where land values are high.

- The need for affordable rural housing is a particular issue in Tandridge and Mole Valley. Both authorities have rural exception planning policies to support the provision of housing to meet the needs of people who live or need to live in rural communities.
Three: Delivering Affordable Housing

A range of housing types and tenures are needed in East Surrey to meet housing needs. Affordable housing options include new build rented and assisted home ownership schemes, existing social housing, and private rented accommodation.

Affordable Rented Accommodation

- The number of affordable rented housing units has declined significantly as a result of Right to Buy sales. These homes have not been replaced by new homes. There is a continued need for social rented housing for households on lower incomes. The draft South East Plan requires LDFs to have regard to an overall regional target of 35% when setting affordable housing targets. This proportion includes a both social housing for rent and purchase. All East Surrey authorities seek on site provision of affordable housing wherever possible.

Assisted Homeownership

- Many households in East Surrey aspire to homeownership but are unable to afford market housing. Assisted home ownership schemes provide opportunities for those on moderate incomes to get a foot on the housing ladder. Authorities work in partnership with RSLs to provide a number of homeownership schemes for example shared ownership, Homebuy and Local Homebuy. All the districts operate waiting lists.

- Surrey authorities participated in the Government led Starter Home Initiative with varying success. Its replacement scheme, the Key worker living scheme is likely to attract investment from the South East Regional Housing Board. South East authorities will consider this opportunity.

Private Rented Accommodation

- Private rented accommodation is a housing option for some households in East Surrey. It provides a valuable housing choice for people in housing need, households at risk of homelessness and for households who do not wish to purchase homes. A variety of Private Sector Leasing Schemes operate in East Surrey in partnership with RSLs and private landlords.

- Many key workers require short-term assistance with accommodation needs whilst they complete short-term work contracts or search for permanent accommodation. Several RSLs work in partnership with East Surrey districts to provide assured shorthold tenancies. Key workers are also able to apply to join the housing register in each district.

Existing Social Rented Housing

- Making best use of existing social rented housing stock in East Surrey underpins the supply of affordable housing. Re-lets of existing social housing is the largest single source of affordable housing supply. Regular reviews of the housing stock, progress towards meeting the Decent Homes Target and lettings policies are important elements of ensuring the potential of this stock is maximised.
East Surrey authorities are committed to tackling homelessness through effective proactive advice work at an early stage and the provision of a range of housing options. During the last year the number of households accepted as homeless with a priority need has begun to decline as a direct result of this preventative action.

- The main causes of homelessness in the area are; friends / relatives no longer able to accommodate, relationship breakdown, end of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy. The two main groups of homeless households for whom a duty is accepted are households with dependent children and / or pregnancy and vulnerable single people of which an increasing number have mental health needs.

- East Surrey authorities strive to provide high quality housing advice services with a strong focus on homelessness prevention. This proactive approach is leading to a reduction in homeless in priority need acceptances as illustrated in the graph above on the left.

- All East Surrey authorities meet the legislative requirement to have no families with children in bed and breakfast accommodation for longer than 6 weeks. Preparations are underway to meet the new Government target to halve the number of households in temporary accommodation by 2010. It is a challenging target and increases pressure for a supply of new affordable housing.

- Improving access to the private rented sector is an important priority in East Surrey particularly in light of the target to halve temporary accommodation. Private rented accommodation offers a valuable and flexible housing resource for households at different stages in their lives. Rent deposit schemes and tenancy support services are working successfully across East Surrey.

- There is a strong commitment to improving the quality of temporary accommodation by the stock owning authorities. The Government has indicated that it will be revising statutory guidance on minimum standards for temporary accommodation in 2005/06. Both Mole Valley and Tandridge use their own stock in addition to designated temporary accommodation.
Five: Improving Private Sector Housing

Decent housing is essential in the development of safe and sustainable communities. There are clear links between poor housing conditions and poor health. Although much of the housing stock in East Surrey is in good condition some homes do suffer from disrepair. East Surrey Councils have schemes to improve the repair and energy efficiency of homes and to improve accessibility for people with mobility problems.

- In April 2006 the Health and Safety Rating System (HSRS) will replace the Fitness Standard. The HSRS is a risk-based approach to assessing disrepair and unfitness. East Surrey authorities will continue to provide advice and in some cases financial assistance to private owners and landlords to help them improve the condition of their properties. Increasingly East Surrey authorities are referring householders to organisations such as Houseproud that can offer equity release products and / or loans to assist with costs.

- Private rented accommodation is a valuable housing option for many households. East Surrey Councils are committed to maintaining close working relationships with private landlords through Private Sector Landlords Forums, newsletters and other initiatives. During 2006 mandatory licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation will begin, this will provide a useful opportunity to forge even closer links with private landlords and ensure appropriate standards are maintained.

- The greatest need for grant aid in the private sector is for disabled adaptations. In 2004/05 the combined total expenditure in East Surrey on Disabled Facilities Grants was over £1.3 million. The authorities with the highest expenditure are the stock transfer authorities Epsom & Ewell and Reigate & Banstead.

- Empty homes do exist in East Surrey but in low numbers, generally less than five per cent of the total housing stock in each authority area as the graph shows. This is comparable to the England average 3.2%. Empty homes are an unused housing resource that could help to meet housing need. All authorities work towards bringing these properties back into occupation.

- Care and repair services are important in enabling older and vulnerable people to maintain their homes. They help people to apply for funding to adapt their homes, offer home repair services and Handy Person services in some areas. The Anchor Staying Put Agency provides services in Mole Valley & Reigate & Banstead. Tandridge has an 'in-house' service. Residents in Epsom & Ewell can access the independent service ‘Care Options’.

Six: Supporting People to Live Independently

Housing has a key role in helping to maintain the independence of vulnerable people. The ability of vulnerable people to access or remain in suitable housing with appropriate
support has a direct impact on their health and well-being. East Surrey authorities work in partnership with the Surrey Supporting People Team, Primary Care Trusts, Surrey County Council and other agencies on a range of initiatives.

- All the Surrey Districts endorse the Surrey Supporting People Strategy. The five strategic priorities are:
  - Women at risk of domestic violence
  - Young People and care leavers (including homeless 16/17 year olds and young single parents)
  - People with multiple and complex needs (often people who are homeless/at risk of homelessness with mental health, alcohol and drugs needs, a history of offending and challenging behaviour)
  - Frail elderly people (including those with dementia)
  - People with learning disabilities

- Tandridge and Reigate and Banstead have created a multi-agency Joint Supported Housing Panel. Its purpose is to assess the housing support needs of individual applicants to ensure appropriate accommodation and support is matched to the individual. Matching support and accommodation to individual’s need will assist the Councils in reducing homelessness by ensuring appropriate offers of accommodation are made and tenancies can be sustained. Epsom & Ewell operate a similar supported housing register.

- The East Surrey area has an increasing number of very frail older people. Working in partnership with Surrey County Council, Surrey Supporting People Team and Primary Care Trusts the East Surrey districts have produced Extra Care Housing Strategies for older people. The aim of the strategies is to expand the range of housing and care options available to frail older people in East Surrey. Possible options include modernising traditional social rented sheltered accommodation, converting existing care homes to Extra Care housing, building purpose built schemes and encouraging developers to meet the housing and care needs of older people.
Seven: Looking Ahead

East Surrey Authorities work in partnership on a range of housing issues. Intrinsic to our approach is an acknowledgement that housing markets and the lives of households cross local authority administrative boundaries. Opportunities for joint working in the future are likely to increase in light of Government guidance on sub market assessments. Indeed, bidding criteria for housing projects often require partnership working with other authorities and organisations. Here are some examples of joint projects that have been completed this year or are currently underway:

- Joint Tandridge and Reigate and Banstead Supported Housing Strategy
- East Surrey Gypsy and Traveller Housing Needs Assessment Survey
- Eastern Surrey Extra Care Housing Strategy for Older People
- Mid Surrey Extra Care Housing Strategy for Older People

Over the next 12 months some key research projects will begin. The housing markets and need assessment work will underpin sub regional priorities and actions in future:

- Work towards joint commissioning Housing Needs Surveys and Sub-Regional Area Housing Markets Assessment in East Surrey recognising that housing markets are not related to local authority boundaries
- Joint commissioning of RSL partners to develop and / or manage Extra Housing Schemes in Surrey
- East Surrey sub regional housing needs assessment
- Joint work on choice based lettings, including IT procurement
- Joint RSL / Developer Forum

This statement is the first in series of annual housing statements for East Surrey. It provides an overall summary of housing issues in the area. The next statement will summarise the outcomes of the research projects and will have a focus on joint projects, actions and outcomes.