



Partnership all Wrapped up

The Warm and Healthy Homes Partnership was officially launched on 8 October along Southend seafront. It offers a range of measures to improve homes across the sub-region over the next two years. With the support of £4.4million of regional funding, the initiative is being managed by the sub-region's private housing group in partnership with a managing agent.

Warm and Healthy Homes is offering healthy home loans, energy grants and other discounted offers for clients who are unable to pay. The aim is to ensure residents are helped to repair their homes and make it warmer with a range of energy efficiency measures. Agreements have been set up with each local authority, including a marketing plan, contractors and assessors approved, and visits are now being carried out to residents. Residents are being left leaflets, fact sheets and a healthy homes prescription advising them of what happens next. Referrals are now being received and work is progressing fast. A freephone number and website address are allowing residents to easily access information and apply for help.

Cllr Ojetola, Cabinet Member for Housing at Thurrock Borough Council, lead authority, said: "These improvements will not only benefit individual households, but the sub-region as a whole. Making homes warmer and reducing homes that



Partners from the five local authorities celebrate the launch

More Urban Design Expertise for South Essex

Tribal is training housing and planning teams to recognise and assess the impact of urban design in Thames Gateway South Essex.

As part of the course, 25 participants from local authorities and partner Registered Social Landlords attended a study trip

on 13 October to the Barking Learning Centre and Newhall, Harlow. Participants were able to see design in action and gain a better understanding of how to identify and manage on-site issues, and monitor quality and delivery once building has commenced.

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are in disrepair, will contribute to improved health and well-being for all residents."

With winter fast approaching, the Warm and Healthy Homes Partnership is urging residents to get in touch as soon as possible.

For more information ring freephone 0800 980 6022 or apply online at www.healthywarmhome.org.uk



Forthcoming events

Thames Gateway South Essex Housing Group will be hosting a conference on 22nd January 2010 focusing on the housing recovery – fact or myth.

This half day event will look at future investment models and housing viability issues and consult on the recent review of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment. It will also review key achievements since the publication of the TGSE Housing Strategy and Action Plan and consider what's next for the sub region.

Guest speakers have been invited from the HCA, Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership, National Housing Federation, Bellway Homes, Family Mosaic and Pathmeads.

For further information please contact the TGSE Strategy Coordinator Alastair Pollock, on 01268 294327 or alastair.pollock@basildon.gov.uk

More Urban Design Expertise for South Essex

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Dr Luis Juarez, an associate at Tribal's master planning and urban design team, said: "It is really positive to see a greater focus on understanding of urban design and the impact it can have on a community."

Through a clearer understanding of the principles, processes and language of urban design, TGSE staff will be better able to assess how planning applications fit with the masterplan for the area and to highlight any quality or delivery issues that might previously have gone undetected at the early stages.

These skills will also better equip staff to produce their own design briefs for council developments when required and to interpret the resulting offer from the developer, to ensure the work is right for the local area.

The course will conclude on 17 November and will be rerun again in 2010. For further information please contact the TGSE Strategy Coordinator Alastair Pollock.



House Prices on the Rise but will it last?

A recent bulletin prepared by the TGSE Housing Group using data from Hometrack's online Housing Intelligence System (www.hometrack.co.uk) outlines the latest trends in house prices and other market indicators. Some key changes are summarised below:

National Trends

Overall house prices in England & Wales have increased over the last two months. Prices rose by 0.2% in September 2009, the second monthly increase this year, however the year on year rate of growth currently stands at -5.6%.



According to Hometrack's Director of Research "Rising sales volumes together with a dwindling supply of housing for sale and a continued increase in demand are underpinning price levels".

Local Trends

Over the last year (August 2008 – August 2009) Lower Quartile house prices in the sub region, in line with national trends, fell in Basildon by £15,000, Rochford £13,484, Castle Point £6,667, Thurrock £12,667 and Southend £6,000. But, over the last two months (July – August 2009) house prices rose in Castle Point, Southend, Thurrock and Rochford, whilst in Basildon they fell.

As of August 2009, the highest overall lower quartile property price was in Rochford at £172k, followed by Castle Point £157k, Southend £138k, Basildon £138k and Thurrock £130k.

Lack of affordable housing remains a significant issue across the sub

region where for example in Rochford 46% of first time buyers cannot afford a flat or maisonette based on a mortgage at 3.0 times their income.

The average time to sell a property in weeks has improved across all five local authority areas, however it levelled off between July and August. Further the monthly percentage change for newly registered buyers and newly listed properties both turned negative in July and August 2009. This demonstrates the fragile state of the housing market and confirms that the increase in house prices driven primarily by the lack of newly registered properties may not be sustained in Quarter 3 of 2009/10.

HomeBuy - the key to affordable home ownership



In the current financial climate, it can be difficult to make that first move onto the property ladder. Help is at hand in the form of HomeBuy which provides low cost home ownership opportunities to first time buyers and others who cannot afford a property to meet their needs. The scheme also helps people who wish to rent but cannot afford to pay market rents.

What is the role of the HomeBuy agents?

HomeBuy agents have been appointed by the government to act as a one stop shop for affordable housing across the country. As the HomeBuy agent for Essex, Moat provides information about low cost home ownership products available through a variety of housing associations in the area. Moat offers a professional and experienced information service to anyone interested in affordable home ownership. The HomeBuy agent can advise on eligibility, how to apply and details of properties in the area.

What options are available?

- NewBuild HomeBuy offers shared ownership opportunities on selected new homes. Existing shared ownership properties are also available through the Resales scheme. Purchasers buy shares worth between 25% and 75% of a property's market value with a subsidised rent payable on the remaining share.
- The HomeBuy Direct and First Time Buyer's Initiative schemes offer affordable equity loans on selected new homes. Purchasers buy a majority share of a property's market value and receive a low interest equity loan to cover the balance.
- New Build Discounted Rent offers new build homes to rent at 80% (or less) of typical market rents. There may be the option to buy a share in the property on a New Build HomeBuy basis later on. This is called Rent to HomeBuy.
- Social HomeBuy allows existing housing association residents to buy between 25% and 100% of their rented home. An affordable rent is charged on the remaining un-owned share.

Where do I go for further advice?

You can contact Moat for further details about how the schemes work and what opportunities are available within the Thames Gateway region.

Telephone: 0845 359 6161 Website: www.homebuy.co.uk
E mail: marketing@moat.co.uk

Two Stars for Basildon ALMO



St Georges Community Housing is on the road to Decent Homes after achieving a two stars 'good' rating from their recent inspection by the Audit Commission.

Basildon District Council tenants have achieved a step towards new investment in their homes.

St Georges Community Housing, the Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) which manages Basildon Council's housing stock, has received an independent inspection report by the audit commission. St Georges Community Housing are celebrating after achieving a two stars 'good' rating from their recent inspection by the Audit Commission in June this year.

Importantly, the Homes and Communities Agency has agreed to release £5m of the Decent Homes funding for the first year of improvements in 2009/10 – this will mean that the ALMO can significantly increase their programme of works for properties in the District and concentrate on getting them up to Decent Homes standard. Ongoing discussions are taking place to agree the amount of funding to be released for 2010/11.

Housing schemes in the sub region



^ Howard Road Chafford Hundred

Family Mosaic has started on site at Howard Road which will deliver 59 affordable homes. This is the first scheme in Thurrock to achieve Code For Sustainable Homes Level 4, funding has been provided from the Homes and Community Agency and Thurrock Council. As well as affordable homes the scheme will deliver private housing and a new Doctor's surgery, delivered by Stephen Howard Homes. The start of the scheme is a real achievement in the current market and represents true partnership between all agencies involved.



^ Watts Wood Park Purfleet

Family Mosaic has completed on 49 new affordable homes at Watts Wood Park, the former Esso Sportsfield site in Purfleet with Bellway Homes. The remaining 114 units will be for private sale. The scheme includes car parking, public open space and landscaping. The affordable units provide 24 units for social rent and 25 units for shared ownership through a mix of flats and houses, delivered with HCA grant funding totaling £1,294,684.

For more information visit www.familymosaic.co.uk or call 0845 000 000.



^ Flexilet, Arisdale Ave South Ockendon

Flexilet on Arisdale Avenue is located in South Ockendon, Thurrock, an important location for growth within the Thames Gateway. The new development will contain 80 homes comprising 1 & 2 bedroom flats and 3 & 4 bedroom houses, including 23 homes for Affordable Rent, 11 Intermediate homes and a mix of Private Sale and Market Rent.

The joint scheme between Estuary Housing Association and Bellway Homes is valued at £10m. The scheme will be funded by a £1.83m grant from the Homes & Communities Agency with the remaining cost being met by Estuary's private finance.

Arisdale Avenue meets the aspirations of the New Arisdale Design Brief, to create a new activity area for South Ockendon and a pleasant urban environment in which new communities will develop and grow. Commencement on site has now taken place with completion in August 2010. For further information please call Estuary Housing's sales line on 0845 272 8727.

Royal Court Basildon >>

Basildon Council is transferring the land and property making up the Royal Court estate in Laindon to affordable housing developer Family Mosaic.

The exciting new £17m scheme will provide 91 affordable new homes for rent and shared ownership, alongside 37 flats for outright sale, replacing the existing large tower blocks. The new development will also provide a much-needed new community centre, shop and play area. Family Mosaic is working in partnership with Basildon and contractor Lovells to regenerate Royal Court, and the scheme has also received key funding from the Homes and Communities Agency.

Family Mosaic's resident liaison officer Chris Barlow is working closely with local residents who will benefit from the new development to keep them up to date on developments.

Basildon Councillors met on site during April at a small ceremony to officially declare the works underway. For more information visit www.familymosaic.co.uk or call 0845 000 000.



Kiln Road << Benfleet

In July 2009, East Thames completed a new affordable scheme known as Grovewood Court in Kiln Road, Benfleet. The development comprises 6 x 1 bed flats and 2 x 2 bed flats. The scheme was grant funded by the Homes and Communities Agency with support from Castle Point Borough Council.

Despite the economic downturn, there was considerable interest in the new scheme including a well attended open day in July 2009. The development was originally marketed for shared ownership with prices starting at £34,500 for a 30% share on the 1 bed flats and £38,250 for a 30% share on the 2 bed flats. All 8 properties are now occupied. Five properties have been sold on a shared ownership basis. Subsequently, in recognition of the changing market conditions, three properties have been allocated on a "rent now, buy later" basis following agreement between East Thames, the Homes and Communities Agency and the Council.

The development was officially opened by the Council's Cabinet Member for Homes, Cllr Wendy Goodwin, on 14th October 2009. Cllr Goodwin said "I was delighted to open this new development provided by East Thames Housing Group. It provides a much needed contribution to affordable housing in Castle Point and it is very encouraging that so much interest has been shown in it given the present difficult economic situation".

For further information please call East Thames Housing on 0845 6000 830.

Focus on Canvey comes alive!

In April 2008 the Castle Point Regeneration Partnership launched its "Regeneration Framework – Where Ambition Comes Alive".

The delivery programme includes the regeneration of Canvey Island town centre.

The Castle Point Regeneration Partnership is currently creating a long-term master plan that will bring a new and exciting future to Canvey Island town centre. The aim of this master plan is to breathe new life in to Canvey Island town centre making it a heart for the community and a place where people want to live, work, visit and enjoy.

The master planning project, which commenced in March 2009, is considering the options for shops, restaurants, community facilities and new housing and the design of streets and open spaces and preparing an action plan for delivery.

The Castle Point Regeneration Partnership is consulting the local community through a



"Regeneration Shop" located in the Canvey Island town centre. In respect of housing, the regeneration of Canvey Island town centre potentially opens up significant opportunities for new housing including affordable housing.

The Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, published in January 2009, indicates that an estimated 400 to

500 properties could be delivered in Canvey Island town centre. In accordance with the Council's Core Strategy and Affordable Housing Strategy, 35% of the total provision of new housing would be expected to be affordable housing.

For further information on the regeneration of Canvey Island town centre visit www.canveycomesalive.co.uk

Groundwork working with you



Groundwork is a leading environmental regeneration charity. They have a number of projects that could assist Housing Associations, ALMOs and stock holding local authorities. Groundwork can for example help with innovative solutions to maintenance needs, engagement with tenants on decision-making processes, enhancing open spaces and training schemes.

Groundwork UK along with the National Housing Federation has secured a major partnership bid to the new Future Jobs Fund. Training and development for

long term unemployed young people is a challenge but essential to build and maintain strong communities. If you are able to offer placements, training opportunities or simply a green space that needs attention with a small budget please contact Groundwork East of England on Tel 01234 766058 or info@groundwork-eastofengland.org.uk

For general information please contact James Edge, Regional Development Manager on Tel 07710 303346 or james.edge@groundwork.org.uk

The Regeneration Framework has six key ambitions:

- 1. Regenerating our local economy and places** – through supporting the regeneration of town centres and key employment areas, assisting local businesses to grow and developing skills within the community
- 2. Meeting housing needs** – through encouraging the development of schemes which meet local housing needs and are well integrated into the urban area
- 3. Learning for all** – through the provision of new 21st century education facilities and new primary health care facilities throughout the Borough
- 4. Making our environment greener and cleaner** – through working with RSPB, EEDA, Land Restoration Trust, the Castle Point Wildlife Group and other interested parties to protect biodiversity, address the climate change agenda and improve the contribution of green space to living conditions in the Borough
- 5. Becoming healthier** – through renewing leisure and community facilities at strategic locations
- 6. Getting around** – through supporting improvements to public transport and transportation schemes that support sustainability objectives

Empty Homes project launched

The Empty Homes project was formally launched at the Thames Gateway South Essex Strategic Housing Members Group meeting in July.

Over the next two years, the TGSE sub-region will receive a regional government investment of £1.5 million, to be used to pay for improvements to empty homes. Eight properties are currently being processed for assistance in the sub region and more will follow.

The project will be managed by the Thames Gateway South Essex (TGSE) Housing Group in partnership with Pathmeads Housing Association (part of Genesis Housing Group), who will be responsible for renovating and refurbishing empty homes bringing them back into use for tenants identified through local councils' housing registers. Affordable rent levels will be set for all properties in the scheme and landlords will need to agree a five-year lease with Pathmeads.

Pathmeads will be loaned money from the regional pot to bring the homes to Decent Homes standard. This loan will then be repaid



through the rent revenue when a tenant in housing need has been placed in the property. This will ensure that the scheme is self-funding beyond 2011.

At the launch, Cllr Frank Tomlin from Basildon District Council, the lead authority, commented, "This scheme will improve the housing choices of families waiting for housing and will provide a long-term contribution to meeting the sub-regions' housing need. All the partners are keen to be proactive and improve accommodation

pathmeads

Part of the Genesis Housing Group

standards to provide a greater range of available properties. The scheme has the added value of reducing the eyesore of empty homes and will help increase the sustainability of housing options in the area."

If you own property in South Essex which is empty and in need of repair or renovation, please contact your Local Authority Private Sector Housing Team. Further information can be sourced from Basildon District Council on 01268 294035 or www.basildon.gov.uk

Southend wins bid to help dementia sufferers

People with dementia, their families and carers are set to gain extra support thanks to Southend's successful health partnership bid for national funding.

The partnership's winning £122,160 bid to be a demonstrator site for Peer Support within the National Dementia Strategy, was submitted by Southend-on-Sea Borough Council, jointly with South Essex NHS, South Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (SEPT), the Alzheimers Society and other local voluntary organisations.

This money will be used to help those with a diagnosis of dementia, their carers and their families.

Peer Support Networks enable people to find out more about the opportunities available to help them live well with dementia. Southend-on-Sea Borough Council's Executive Councillor for Adult Social Care, Health and Housing, Councillor Mark Flewitt says: "The key to this new era of dementia care must be informing, inspiring, educating and training a diverse workforce that delivers care and services to people with dementia and their carers."

For more information please call 01702 215000 ext 5505 or email media@southend.gov.uk

Retrofitting for the Future



Thurrock Council has been awarded an initial grant to undertake further feasibility work to enable one of their properties to be refurbished under the government backed Retrofitting for the Future Competition.

If successful, the property will become one of a number of exemplar demonstrator houses in England that will achieve a minimum 60% cut in energy consumption.

The proposed house is a 4 bed end of terrace townhouse on a residential estate in Purfleet, Essex, which will benefit from a whole house upgrade to achieve 80% carbon emission reduction utilising

prototype and new innovation technologies.

Housing in the UK accounts for 27% of carbon emissions and 60% of the houses we will be living in by 2050 have already been built. Therefore, to meet the target of an 80% reduction in carbon emissions by 2050 we must virtually eliminate emissions from existing housing stock. It is the intention that successful schemes will be replicated and rolled out across the social housing sector.

For further information please contact Darlene Martin at Thurrock Council on 01375 652652.

Did you know?

27% of the UK's total carbon emissions come from domestic buildings and 45% from buildings in general.

Nutritious Food Top of Menu at Foyer



Nutritious food on a budget was top of the menu for youngsters living at Swan House, a foyer in the Vange area of Basildon.

Swan Foundation (South East), the charitable subsidiary of Swan Housing Group, works with young vulnerable people at the

20-unit foyer accommodates who are homeless or living in unsuitable conditions.

Chef and Nutritional Therapist, Gary Baverstock, has been on hand to take the cooking sessions and to engage with young people about healthy eating. He said: 'The aim is to teach young people

about nutrition but also to give them the confidence to cook on their own. Many of the young people living at the foyer have to live on a tight budget. This initiative not only assists in widening their cooking skills, but demonstrates that it is still possible to eat well on a tight budget.'

The TGSE Housing Group forms a sub group of the wider Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership and is represented by Housing Strategy and Development partners from the following organisations:

- Basildon District Council
- Castle Point Borough Council
- Rochford District Council
- Southend-on-Sea Borough Council
- Thurrock Borough Council
- Estuary HA Ltd
- Family Mosaic
- Guinness Trust
- Moat Housing Group
- Swan Housing Group

A wider group of RSLs meet quarterly through a Forum and include the five representatives above and the following additional organisations: Chelmer Housing Group, Circle Anglia, East Thames Group, Gallions HA, Flagship Housing, London and Quadrant, Sanctuary Group and Southern Housing Group.



Housing Viability Seminar

The TGSE Housing Group has commissioned Tribal to undertake bespoke work on housing viability and alternative funding models in the sub region. A half day seminar was organised on 28 October for

TGSE local authorities and RSLs to discuss the issues further and explore among other topics: Residual Land Valuation models, methodologies, stakeholder consultations, implications for

Planning Policy and site by site case studies.

For further information, please contact Alastair Pollock at the address below.

For further information, please contact:

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