**Essex - raises the standards with ambitious and innovative housing policy**

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An ambitious and innovative housing policy for new homes in Colchester and Tendring has been adopted by the two councils. This follows an independent examination by a government-appointed inspector.

The policy covers the standards of new homes built at the proposed Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community (TCBGC) to the east of Colchester. This is a new community of almost 8,000 homes and employment spaces. The development is a joint project by Tendring, Colchester and Essex County Council.

The new policy sets out renewable heat-space standards for new homes. It also requires that all new buildings across the Garden Community have the lowest possible impact on our natural environment.

The newly adopted policy framework sets out a masterplan for the Garden Community. It will be used to assess planning applications when they are put forward by developers, the first of which is expected later this year.

Since proposing the Garden Community, the councils have been united in aspiring to high-quality design standards. These standards will not only result in attractive new neighbourhoods but also ensuring residents benefit from healthy homes that are as energy efficient as possible.

The benefits to residents will include:

* Minimising energy demand, significantly reducing energy bills for residents
* Improving the health and well-being of residents. Homes would be cooler in the summer, and warmer in winter
* Improving indoor air quality, helping reduce respiratory illnesses e.g. childhood asthma
* Increasing space for nature which will manage down flood risk while simultaneously increasing access to attractive green spaces for residents

Essex County Council’s Climate and Planning Unit has been instrumental in driving this policy standard forward. The team released open legal advice to help justify requiring higher energy efficient housing beyond national policy requirements. This legal resource is open advice and can be used by any local authority or stakeholder, not just Essex authorities.

Councillor Lee Scott, Cabinet Member for Housing, Planning and Regeneration, said “We need more homes in Essex, but we want to do this in a sustainable, healthy and viable way for our residents and our local environment. The new policy framework being approved and then adopted is a great step forward for us and other authorities to achieve. We are happy to lead the way in responding to the climate challenge using the planning system and will continue to work with our partners to achieve this”

Councillor Peter Schwier, Cabinet Member for Environment, Waste Reduction and Recycling, said "This new policy will make a huge difference in delivering our ambitious housing plan without increasing our environmental impact. It will also relieve the stress of unaffordable energy bills for our residents, without compromising on comfort and health. The hope is that by making the legal resource open to all, this sort of policy will shape the national approach to new build housing moving forward.

**Cllr Peter Schwier AIEMA**

**Cabinet Member for Environment, Waste Reduction & Recycling**

**Chair, East of England Regional Climate Change Forum**