



Eastern Community Homes Strategy 2023 – 2028

Version 2 (16-Mar-2023)



Welcome to Eastern Community Homes' Strategy 2023 - 2028

Established in 2020, Eastern Community Homes is the community-led housing hub for the Eastern Region covering the counties of Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk.

We are a central point of information for the development of all forms of community-led housing and work alongside our members - community groups; local authorities; housing associations; and technical advisors - to increase the number of community-led homes built to meet local housing needs.

To develop this strategy, we have listened to the views of our members and funders, asking them about their support needs for delivering community-led housing and how Eastern Community Homes needs to optimise its service delivery in the future. We surveyed our Local Authority members; spoke to community-led housing groups; and held a Board consultation exercise attended by all our Board members.



Why we exist

Across the region:

- The cost of buying a house varies but can be as high as more than 12.5 times the average salary.
- The cost of renting has increased to prohibitive, extortionate levels.
- The number of people on housing registers is increasing across the region.
- Homelessness in our cities, market towns and rural areas is increasing year on year.
- People with specific housing needs are overlooked by commercial housebuilders.

We believe that affordable and suitable housing is a right not a privilege. A growing number of people living in both urban and rural areas have little access to housing through the traditional housing market. Eastern Community Homes enables people to take charge of their own housing and gives them more of a say in the place they live. When people feel safe and happy within their home and the wider community, they are more likely to feel happier and healthier and we see improvements in things such as employment retention, crime levels and local pride.



Models of community-led housing and the support we can provide to groups

We can support groups with:

- Cohousing
- Community Land Trusts
- Housing Co-operatives
- Self-Build
- Self-Help

Our housing enablers are trained through the [Community Led Homes Training & Accreditation Programme](#) and can support all community-led housing models, giving guidance to groups from set-up stage through to finding a site, creating a business plan, building, and living in the homes.

Since 2019, we have developed a pipeline of community-led housing projects driven by self-organised community-led housing groups, the majority of which are looking to build affordable homes or homes for specific communities.

We work closely with [Locality](#) (the national membership network supporting local community organisations to be strong and successful) and have a network of technical advisors, as part of our membership, who bring specialist skills in areas such as surveying, architecture and legal services to our team.



About us

Our governance

Our strategic direction is guided by a Board that has representation from the Chief Executives of the six ACRE Network members and others bringing community-led housing expertise. Each County has a housing enabler so that groups have access to trusted local support and this allows us to build in-depth knowledge of communities across the region.

Cambridgeshire ACRE acts as the accountable body for Eastern Community Homes, undertaking its legal and financial management and employing a part-time Hub Co-ordinator.

Our networks

We organise a Local Authority Network supported directly by 18 local authorities. This enables knowledge-sharing through online events, as well as encouraging strategic policies and procedures to be put in place to support community-led housing projects in both rural and urban locations. Our aim is to increase the supply of community-led housing to meet housing needs in the areas covered by our member local authorities.

Two of our local authority members (Chelmsford City Council and the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority) have commissioned us to deliver bespoke programmes of community-led housing support to groups.

Our communications

Our website <https://easterncommunityhomes.com/> contains further information about our work. You can also find us on [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#).

Our affiliations

We are an active member of the [Community Land Trust Network](#) and also regular take advice from [Cohousing UK](#) and the [Confederation of Cooperative Housing](#). These national partners support us in achieving our work by providing specialised technical support and increasing the awareness of community-led housing.

Our vision, mission and values

Our vision

To enable people to realise their vision of building sustainable homes and creating inclusive communities.

Our mission

To help establish a thriving community-led housing group in every community across the East of England.

Our values

We believe that no-one cares more about a community than its people. The desire of local people to protect and improve their places represents a huge force for change; a change that can foster self-esteem, mobilise local talents, build community resilience and promote inclusiveness. We believe that the medium of such change is local people leading the development of community-owned assets.



Our strategic aims for 2023 – 2028



Strategic Aim 1: **Actively increase the number and range of community-led housing groups developing and delivering housing projects.**

We will:

1. Maintain a team of technically qualified and experienced Housing Enablers that support groups throughout all stages of community-led housing development.
2. Run a programme of online and in-person learning events for community-led housing groups to network together and share experiences/learning between schemes.
3. Give enabling and technical support to 50 community-led housing groups at all stages of community-led housing development.
4. Enhance the service for supporting groups with project management, funding applications and dedicated 1:1 advice.
5. Maintain relationships with suitable consultants, professionals, small and medium-sized builders to enable us to work with communities at all stages of community-led housing development.
6. Develop stronger links with housing associations that are willing to give support to groups with the financing and building of houses.
7. Develop and maintain 'Community-Led Housing Partnerships' at a county level, networking local authorities, housing associations and community-led housing groups to bring forward new projects.
8. Work with neighbourhood planning groups to encourage them to identify specific sites for community-led housing; and to include policies around affordability and stipulations for a local connection criteria in their plans.
9. Develop 200 community-led homes.

Strategic Aim 2: **Develop Eastern Community Homes work with local authorities to increase community-led housing sites across the region.**

We will:

1. Extend our local authority membership offer and run networking events to share best practice between members and officers.
2. Offer local authorities community-led housing policy and planning guidance, encouraging strategic policies and procedures to be put in place to support community-led housing projects.
3. Advise local authorities on the development of common approaches/criteria for allocation of community-led housing sites and the governance needed.
4. Expand our bespoke community-led housing support services to scale-up community-led housing delivery across local authority areas.



Strategic Aim 3: **Promote Eastern Community Homes so the benefits of developing community-led housing are better understood.**

We will:

1. Engage with communities, through online seminars and digital marketing to raise their awareness of how community-led housing can make a better place to live and work for us all.
2. Promote Eastern Community Homes to existing charities, businesses and the health care sector as a way of providing affordable housing for clients and staff.
3. Run promotional campaigns demonstrating the different types of community-led housing across the region.
4. Extend our social media, blogs and website information to promote relevant news items, useful technical information and case studies of successes.
5. Work at a strategic level through local, regional and national community-led housing networks to raise attention to the need and to enable understanding of community-led housing.



Strategic Aim 4: **Strengthen Eastern Community Homes community engagement to build new networks with groups giving them advice on all types of community land ownership models.**

We will:

1. Extend support for defined communities to build housing, including people who are younger, older, homeless, students, LGBTQ+, key workers and veterans.
2. Develop stronger links with those delivering high street changes in market towns to look for opportunities for community-led housing as part of those changes.
3. Extend our advice services to offer support for those looking to establish community not-for-profit organisations responsible for community gardens, civic buildings, pubs, shops, shared workspace, energy schemes and wood and conservation landscapes.



Strategic Aim 5: **Develop Eastern Community Homes' governance and fundraising strategy to support the future sustainability of its work.**

We will:

1. Broaden the membership of the Board to include representation that brings further expertise and experience in housing, planning, housing development and organisational management to steer the work.
2. Consider possible governance options that will allow Eastern Community Homes to become an independent not-for-profit organisation by 2026.
3. Develop a fundraising strategy that allows Eastern Community Homes to continue to deliver its vital work in the longer term.

