

Council progressing with its affordable homes ambition

The council has always said since the beginning of the coalition administration that they will build 20,000 affordable homes during this council term.

But at the same time it is one of the biggest and most frustrating issues facing the capital – finding a safe and affordable home to live.

Average monthly private rental costs in Edinburgh are now more than £1,000 and it is expected that rent will account for 45 per cent of people's average income by 2020.



Councillors Adam McVey (SNP) and Cammy Day (Labour) signing the coalition agreement in 2017

A flagship commitment, set out by the SNP/Labour city council administration last year, was to build 20,000 new homes by

2027. Experts welcomed the ambition – believing it will help halt a surge in property prices and rental costs.

According to Edinburgh by Numbers 2018 Edinburgh's population is set to rise from 513,200 in 2017 to an estimated 583,140 by 2041, so will the new homes be enough?

Around 80 per cent of the council's 20,000 new homes will be made available for social rent, with the remainder directed to mid market rent and low-cost home ownership. Currently, more than 21,000 people in Edinburgh are registered for social rented housing with an average of 190 households bidding for every home that becomes available for let. Around 70 per cent of council rental properties in Edinburgh go to homeless households.

Although only 966 homes are expected to be approved in 2018/19, the council predicts that 1,000 properties will be completed for people to move in. In 2019/20, it is predicted that more than 3,500 homes could be approved and 1,578 will be completed – with 2,085 approvals and 3,414 completions the following year.



Councillor Kate Campbell Housing and Economy Convener Photo
The Edinburgh Reporter

Cllr Kate Campbell, housing and economy convener, said: “The house building programme is one of the most important things that we will do in this administration.

“The Right To Buy policy decimated social housing stock in the city leaving us with one of the lowest percentages of social housing of any local authority in Scotland. We desperately need lots more affordable homes which is why we’ve committed to 20,000 affordable homes over 10 years.”

She added: “We are leading the way in affordable housing investment, delivering hundreds of rented homes through new partnerships. Edinburgh Living, our new partnership with Scottish Futures Trust, is now up and running, with people beginning to move into the first homes this year.

“Making sure that everyone has a safe, warm home that they can afford is an absolute priority.”

Around 4,500 of the new affordable homes will be integrated with health and social care services to meet the needs of older people and people with “complex physical and health needs”.

The council acknowledges that a key risks to providing 20,000 new homes is a “failure to secure suitable land for development” – as well as facing a funding gap of £77 million from the Scottish Government.

The authority will use a three-pronged attack to free up land for development including working with house builders to unlock land, engaging with owners to understand delays in sites being brought into use and acquiring sites for housing development, including compulsory purchase orders if required.

Cllr Campbell added: “Land is limited and expensive but we’re buying land where we can to build affordable homes on. Buying the former National Grid site on Edinburgh’s Waterfront is one of the biggest land acquisitions of any local authority in recent times.

“We are bringing plans forward for other large sites at Fountainbridge, Powderhall and Meadowbank as well as a small sites programme which is using gap sites and small pieces of land to build affordable homes across the city. And our projects at Pennywell and Leith Fort have won a whole host of awards. Our strong partnership with housing associations means that we already have over 2,300 affordable homes under construction across the city.”

Last year, the council identified enough suitable land to build 8,312 homes where there are currently barriers to development. The authority has put together a list of 42 sites which could benefit from “direct intervention” to free up land for building new homes.

Claire Flynn, a spokesperson for ESPC said: “The commitment of Edinburgh Council to delivering 20,000 affordable homes by

2027 is encouraging. As ESPC has previously commented, a shortage of stock has been limiting the property market in recent years, and, in turn, this has been driving up property selling prices and rent prices.

“Almost 80 per cent of these new homes will be social rental homes, with the remainder offering mid-market rent and low-cost home ownership. An injection of new homes into the property market is a positive step and should help to ease the surge in average selling prices and rent costs, helping first time buyers onto the property market and renters find properties at affordable prices within Edinburgh.

“Demand for residential properties is still outstripping supply within the capital, causing rising selling prices and homes are frequently exceeding their Home Report valuation, which can make it difficult for buyers. More homes are needed to satisfy this demand, which is why the pledge of 20,000 affordable homes is a welcome move by the council.”

House-builders have labelled the ambition to provide new homes as “essential” to Edinburgh meeting the expectations of a surging population.

Nikola Miller, head of planning practice at industry body Homes for Scotland, said: “If our capital city is to continue to thrive, a mix of all housing tenures is essential to meet the needs and aspirations of its growing population as well as encourage the investment required for its economic success.

“Our members stand ready to deliver the homes that Edinburgh needs.”

David Bol is the Local Democracy Reporter