

ACCELERATING REGENERATION IN BARKING AND DAGENHAM



BeFirst

Our mission is to accelerate regeneration in the borough, so no-one is left behind.

We aim to ensure that 50,000 new homes are built, and 20,000 new jobs created in the next 20 years.

What we do:

- › Development and development management
- › Land acquisition and site assembly
- › Pre-planning and planning services
- › Place-making involving local residents and existing networks
- › Masterplanning and design briefs
- › Marketing and borough promotion
- › Community consultation and engagement
- › Bid writing to obtain new investment
- › Delivery of capital projects and project management in a range of sectors including housing, decent homes, education and civil engineering
- › Investment funding and partnerships

Front page: Nasir and Tahima, with their son Ezaan, moved into their new Weavers Quarter flat in February.



Delivering for our community

Be First is a very different kind of company.

While we share the passion many others have for building high-quality homes and delivering jobs, that is where the similarities end.

We are a developer, planner and construction manager rooted in the community that we serve - a product of the democratically elected local authority's determination to improve local people's lives. We reflect the fact that the council and its leadership wants to go beyond just doing the minimum to improve their Borough.

Our task is to speed up regeneration by creating great places and taking a holistic approach to building successful communities and increasing prosperity. We will harness the financial support of the local authority, the business acumen of our Board and staff, and the energy and enthusiasm of our young, diverse and dynamic population. And, we will work with everyone who shares our vision.

We are a very new company, and this report summarises our early thinking about key objectives and how we expect to achieve them. But it represents a very solid foundation for accelerating growth in the borough.

I look forward to reporting on our progress each year.

Lord Bob Kerslake
Chair of the Board



Be First is accelerating the Decent Homes programme for council tenants

“
*I love my new
kitchen and
bathroom. They
are stylish and
well-made.
I can't stop showing
them off to all my
friends and family!”*

Robert Dray, 92

Quality homes

We know that housing is top of many residents' concerns. In the last borough survey, 67 per cent said that lack of affordable housing is a concern. The borough needs more and better, quality homes.

In response, we plan to step up the rate of house building and development. In the long run, we aim to help deliver 50,000 new homes in the borough. This is an immense task, given the historical slow rate of new building and the current construction and commercial challenges.

But, we've set ourselves the goal of delivering more than 9,700 new homes in our first five years. To achieve this we will:

- › build over 2,200 homes ourselves, including 1,600 affordable homes
- › increase housing density on a number of sites scheduled for development
- › create opportunities on new sites, and
- › attract external developers to build an additional 7,500 homes

This housing will be in a range of tenures, types and styles, to widen choice as much as possible. We will maximise the number of affordable homes too. And when we say affordable, we mean rents that a couple on the minimum wage – or an individual on the living wage – can afford.

We're also speeding up the council's programme – known as 'decent homes' – to modernise existing council housing. It guarantees tenants, modern kitchens, bathrooms, and effective insulation and efficient heating. Between us, we've improved almost 7,000 so far – about half of all council housing – and we expect to have completed 100% by 2019.



Be First
is working with
our contractors to
get local people
into work

“
As Dagenham
residents ourselves,
we're excited to be
building homes for
the local community”

John Nelson and his three
sons working for Mullaleys

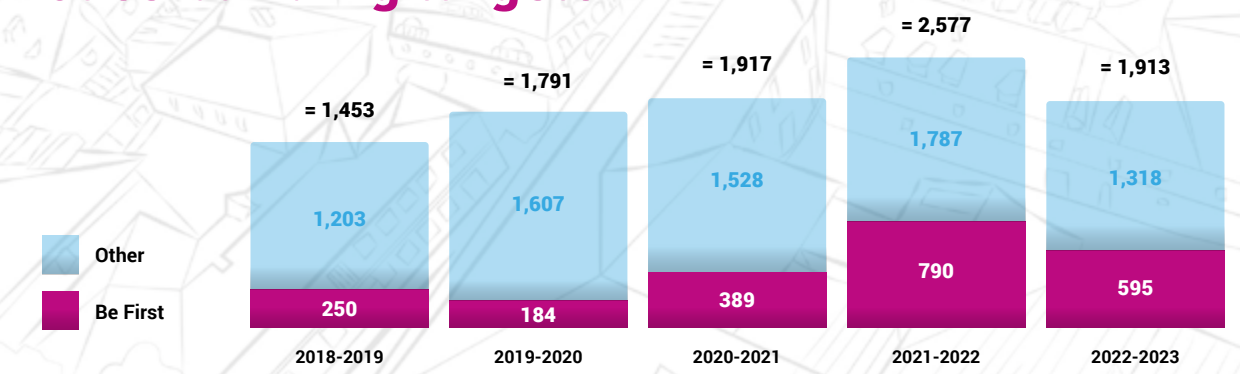
Good jobs in a growing economy

We aim to increase jobs and boost opportunities in the local economy.

Our long-term goal is to create 20,000 new jobs by 2037. To achieve this ambitious target we will:

- › develop new Film and Media studios at Dagenham East, capable of generating around 800 jobs initially
- › work with contractors committed to local job creation and encourage them to use local labour
- › ensure our planning framework supports employment-generating projects and drives job creation opportunities in growth sectors, such as IT and the creative industries
- › investigate we can attract modular construction factories which will take advantage of the borough's proud tradition of manufacturing
- › deliver over 600 private rental and sale properties to attract and retain higher-income earners, enhancing the overall wealth of the borough
- › continually look for opportunities to increase 'inclusive growth'
- › work with the council to enhance the skills and employability of residents and to develop its socio-economic strategies.

House building targets





Be First
is championing the
cultural industries,
creating new
opportunities and
vibrant places

“
*My studio gives
me the space I need
at a price I can afford”*

Laura Iosifescu,
Ice House Quarter tenant

Great places

We're determined to help make the borough a more attractive and thriving place. Our approach will be to look at development holistically – which means we are not just interested in the bricks and mortar but in all the things that make a place good to live, work, learn and play.

We will:

- › work with the council to expand and build new schools to ensure that every child has a good school place
- › lead major capital projects to improve community facilities, parks, transport and cultural and leisure facilities
- › open up and generate opportunities in major areas of the borough, such as Creekmouth, Thames Road, Chadwell Heath and the Gascoigne Estate
- › support the local arts community and burgeoning creative industries, through delivery of the Artist Enterprise Zone, Film Studios, and Townscape Heritage schemes
- › secure funding for neighbourhood transformation, major cycling initiatives, and 'Healthy Town' developments
- › support more local parks' events for residents
- › improve sites with high levels of footfall, such as the station and town centre, to make them more attractive to residents and visitors alike
- › market and promote the borough in compelling ways to attract visitors, investors and businesses.



Be First
is supporting
some of the fastest
growing sustainable
transport
infrastructure

“
*Cycling is
practical, healthy
and fun. We're
rapidly increasing
participation and
making sure the sport is
open to everyone.*”

Jayne Malbon,
trainee coach, Barking and
Dagenham Cycle Club

Connected communities

We are committed to 'inclusive growth' in Barking and Dagenham, which means we will harness the benefits of economic regeneration to improve residents' lives, and to tackle social exclusion and inequalities.

Our housing, employment and infrastructure projects are designed to tackle these issues head on. But we believe that the way we work is equally important. The public-sector ethos is at our core and delivering high quality, socially inclusive and environmentally friendly development is embedded within our values. Meeting the needs of the borough's aspirational working-class population – rather than traditional models of gentrification – is at the heart of our business plan.

It also means that we aspire to engage our communities imaginatively and positively, acknowledging their strengths and working with partners to develop capacity where it's needed. We aim to offer best-in-class engagement using the arts, sport, health and much more to ensure that the local community plays a full role in the regeneration of the borough, and benefits from the process as well as the outcomes.

Furthermore, as a council owned company any surplus we generate will be returned to the council to fund essential services for residents such as social care, environmental services and education.



Be First
is working with the
country's biggest
developers to
accelerate
house-building

“
*We're excited to be
working in Barking
and Dagenham – it's
a really positive
environment”*

Geoff Pearce,
Swan Housing Group

Working together

We know we cannot build all the housing and infrastructure that the borough needs on our own. In fact, the majority of new homes needed here will be built by external developers.

But Barking and Dagenham is increasingly London's investment hotspot, so we are confident our plans can succeed. The borough is:

- › affordable – with land and property prices currently 50% lower than the London average
- › available – 400 hectares of development land
- › well connected – from Barking it's just a 15-minute journey time to the City, to the M25 and to London City Airport
- › positive – we are pro development and our streamlined planning and consultancy services will help to smooth and de-risk investment decisions.

To generate interest, we will focus our efforts on high profile strategic opportunities, such as Barking Station, Barking Town Centre and Dagenham East.

We already have an impressive list of partners working here. Our brief is to help developers obtain planning consent and move as quickly as possible to building works so that everyone benefits. The major sites under development include:

- › L&Q/GLA - 378 homes with detailed consent at Barking Riverside and outline consent for 10,000 homes, approximately 700 per year
- › Weston Homes - 597 homes at Abbey Retail Park
- › Countryside Properties - 531 homes at Fresh Wharf
- › Countryside and L&Q at Beam Park - 2,900 homes
- › Benson Elliot at Vicarage Fields - 885 homes.



Be First
is building schools
to ensure no child
goes without a
school place

“
*We’ve a truly
beautiful school,
built in record time
on time and on budget”*

Richard Paul,
Headteacher of
Greatfields School

About us

We are a pioneering, independent regeneration company, wholly owned by Barking and Dagenham Council.

Our key tasks are to:

- › improve the delivery of the council’s capital programme, reducing cost and increasing quality and output
- › expedite and increase the delivery of the council’s social housing
- › deliver top quality, affordable design from leading architects
- › develop an in-house consultancy service for planning and architectural services
- › use the planning system to catalyse development and ensure consents are built, and
- › become an effective and profitable developer.

Our commercial team acquires land for the council and carries out development activity directly – and works with partners to progress their developments. We benefit from the freedoms and flexibilities that being an independent company allows.

Our Board includes some of the country’s top regeneration experts, but we remain fully accountable to the council – our sole shareholder. To deliver our business plan, the council has committed to provide up to £790m investment capital. The result is that we deliver new housing at prices affordable to ordinary working people and any financial surplus goes back to the council.

In addition to the range of socio-economic and place-shaping benefits, we will deliver a £10.3m contribution to the council by March 2021, and £10.3m each year thereafter from then to fund essential services for residents such as social care, environmental services and education.

An aerial, line-art style illustration of a city, likely London, featuring various buildings, streets, and green spaces. A blue, rounded rectangular logo with the word "BeFirst" in white is centered over the image.

BeFirst

www.befirst.london
[@BeFirstLondon](https://twitter.com/BeFirstLondon)

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