



a partnership plan for 2025

Preface

For decades, Redbridge has promised its residents a great quality of life. We have high performing schools, relatively affordable housing, green space and strong communities. From east end working class communities leaving the inner city, to Punjabi or Romanian families traversing continents in search of a new life, we have always welcomed new communities to a Borough where they can find opportunity and safety.

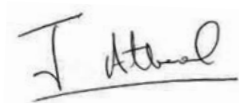
Each generation has to renew our Borough's promise. This plan aims to start a debate about how we can all work together – as public services, voluntary organisations, communities and individuals – to restate who we are and what we want for the future of Redbridge. We are putting this plan forward as a partnership of council, college, clinical commissioning group, the voluntary sector and the police, but it will only come to life if we can bring our communities into the discussion.

Our challenges are clear. Redbridge's population has grown and changed substantially over the past few decades. It is projected to rise by up to 60,000 over the coming decade as Crossrail brings new residents into Ilford and its surrounding neighbourhoods. This makes us the fourth fastest growing part of the country, as well as the fourth most diverse London Borough.

Over the past decades, we have not always succeeded in adapting to change. As our population grew, we did not build enough new homes to accommodate our new residents. Our Borough has become polarised between a wealthier north and west and a poorer south and east. The ability of our public services to respond to these challenges in traditional ways is increasingly constrained by austerity.

As neighbouring Boroughs build new infrastructure and retail facilities, and the economy changes, we need to rise to the challenge of reimagining our Borough for a new century.

Redbridge is a great place to live, but we know it can be better.



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Leader, Redbridge Council



Gerry McDonald
Group Principal and CEO
New City College



Ross Diamond
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Our Opportunity

The Borough's great opportunity lies in regeneration. By 2030, we aim to build over 17,500 new homes, generate 5,000 jobs and create the opportunity for a new leisure and cultural offer, alongside new community facilities. We need to seize this opportunity and ensure it delivers tangible benefits for the communities of today as well as the residents of tomorrow.

Regeneration is about much more than bricks and mortar. It is about strengthening our communities and ensuring that they have a stake in our new high streets. It is about designing places that improve health and reduce crime, and capturing the financial benefits of new development to provide imaginative support and dignity to our older and disabled residents. It is about building green, safe, sustainable places and encouraging the creativity of our residents so they can make the most of the change around them.

Ultimately, it is about including everyone in the next chapter of our story.

Over the past year, we have worked with our residents to understand what the future of Redbridge might be like. Our conclusion is that Redbridge communities recognise the need for change, but only if it clearly benefits our existing residents and preserves the things they value. That means we need to grow our communities and our people alongside our economy and housing stock.

As partners, we are very clear that our role in shaping the future of Redbridge is vital but also limited. Councils and colleges cannot build a new Borough. We are constrained by national government regulation, wider economic conditions and the broader development of London as a global city. We face huge uncertainties such as Brexit which make any attempt to define and deliver a detailed vision of the future foolhardy.

Instead, we have worked with our residents to identify three key opportunities that make sense in any likely future:

Our Opportunity

Ensuring regeneration benefits our communities

we will work together to reduce low pay for our residents



Being a great place for family life

we will work together to achieve our ambition for Redbridge to be a place where children, young people and families thrive, are at forefront of the Borough's development, and where the voice of our children and young people is heard and valued. We will demonstrate we have done this by gaining the UNICEF accreditation as a child friendly Borough.



Tackling the root causes of social challenges

we will work together to address the root causes of crime, ill-health and deprivation.

Our Opportunity

Our Approach

Our approach to the coming decade has emerged from a year of engaging with over 1,600 residents to think about the future of the Borough. We started by asking residents three simple questions: what they value about living in Redbridge today, what they would like the Borough to be like in future, and what two things would most improve the area over the next decade. From this, we identified three areas that mattered most to our residents:

1. **Opportunity:** a stronger local economy, jobs and opportunities for young people;
2. **Quality of life:** good transport links, clean and safe streets, better and more affordable housing;
3. **Communities:** supporting and strengthening our diverse communities.

Using this input, we created three stories about the future of the Borough. These were not predictions or visions, but they did offer a coherent sense of how Redbridge might change over the coming years.

The first was called **Glittering Prizes** and set out a world in which we maximised the benefits of growth. Our high streets boomed, but existing residents sometimes struggled to recognise their own neighbourhoods.

The second was **Invincible Suburb**, a story about a Redbridge that struggles to grow. We preserve our suburban feel and green spaces, but we do not have the resources to tackle our social problems.

The final story was called **Brave New Towns**, setting out a future in which we try to grow in a balanced way, welcoming new people but ensuring our existing communities have a strong stake in the process of change.

As well as running focus groups across the Borough, over 1,000 people engaged with us online to determine which of these scenarios they preferred. **The overwhelming preference was for Brave New Towns, which nearly two third of residents indicated that they preferred.**

In our workshops with residents, participants frequently used the word 'balance' to describe this scenario. They often wanted the Borough to grow and improve, but not at the cost of quality of life and rising inequality.

As public services, we clearly cannot guarantee any given future for Redbridge, but we have a role to play in shaping and influencing our future through ensuring that the principle of balanced growth and development is at the heart of all that we do.

This means balancing the needs of tomorrow's residents with today's, the needs of Ilford with the needs of our other town centres and the drive for growth with the need to share the benefits across our communities. We need people in our Borough to feel like change is helping them to create the towns and villages they want.



Three pathways to the future

Based on engagement with over 1,600 residents, we constructed three scenarios for the future of Redbridge.

Glittering Prizes

It's 2025 and Ilford is booming. The High Road is a line of glittering towers running from the Elizabeth Line station down to what used to be Lynton House. Gone are the pound shops and market stalls of 10 years ago have relocated to other parts of the Borough. Today, Ilford is up-and-coming, drawing in the young and well-off who love the town's mix of convenience and easy access to the bright lights of London, and new bars and restaurants are opening all the time. For many people the new Ilford finally arrived on the day in 2021 when a new branch of Whole Foods opened alongside Lidl. Among the new customers are the first cohort of students to arrive at Imperial College's new east London campus, a key anchor institution in a new civic quarter.

This boom has changed the way Redbridge sees itself. No longer a suburb on the fringes of London, the Council promotes the area as an affordable and liveable alternative to increasingly overheated inner boroughs. The town centre has attracted the very beginnings of a cultural and tech scene, with small companies given cheap rent to bump start the Borough's economy. Valentines Park is thronged on summer weekends with people having barbeques, while estate agents have started hyping Barkingside and Gants Hill as the next big thing in local property.

All the new development has helped to relieve pressure on public services. Younger people make fewer demands, after all, and they pay the same Council Tax as everyone else. The fact that they can afford the rising house prices in Ilford means that they are, by definition, pretty well off and can look after themselves. The main demands they make are for good schools and a clean environment.

Higher house prices are rippling out across Redbridge, pushing up costs across South Ilford and reaching deep into Valentines and South Woodford, with some older people tempted to sell-up and downsize to smaller properties in the greener parts of Essex.

People who bought their houses in the 90s and noughties are delighted by their constantly rising house prices. But others are starting to ask whether their children will be able to afford a life in Redbridge, and local campaign groups worry that economic growth is leaving the vulnerable behind. Our brownfield sites have already been built upon and, after years of debate, some new housing is starting to march across the open spaces of Newbury and Aldborough.

The Borough's huge private rented sector used to cater to a wide range of different incomes, but these days it is increasingly unaffordable for the poorest. While the Council has built more affordable housing this hasn't been enough to keep up with demand and it has had little choice but to start moving more and more people into temporary accommodation outside London.

The Borough's communities remain both diverse and cohesive, but there are signs that tension is building as the Borough tries to accommodate huge demographic change. With some of the independent shops of Ilford Lane struggling to survive the demand for new housing, and competition from the High Road, some people feel like Ilford in particular is losing its soul.

Redbridge is a great place to be up-and-coming, but some parts of the population are coming under financial and social pressure.

Brave New Towns

Seven Kings was on the front cover of Time Out this week, heralded as the new Stoke Newington for its eclectic array of multicultural businesses, its nightlife and its diverse local communities.

It was a welcome accolade in a Borough where the buzz for most of the past decade has focused on Ilford. While growth has focused on the south of Redbridge, the Council has taken a deliberate policy of spreading new housing, reducing pressure in the wards around Ilford and giving high streets in Gants Hill, Barkingside and Seven Kings more opportunities to regenerate. Redbridge's approach has been to enthusiastically grasp the opportunities of growth, but to work alongside residents to ensure that new growth enhances their quality of life. Developments in areas like Ilford and Gants Hill have been carefully planned to ensure that residents get the cultural offer, the schools, parks, libraries and clean streets they need. This hasn't always been easy – there are parts of the community that don't really want any growth at all – but the end result has been a set of new developments that feel like part of the neighbourhood.

As part of this, local public services have worked closely with residents to find new ways to keep the Borough clean, safe and vibrant. Some communities now run their local parks, others have taken on libraries and a few have even developed their own renewable energy schemes.

The proceeds of growth have been used to enhance green spaces, build new schools and support arts and culture. Ilford in particular is gaining a reputation as a destination for young families who want affordable homes with good transport links.

Communities have had a real voice in the future of the High Road, businesses from Ilford Lane and Seven Kings now have a visible and growing presence in the heart of town, and Redbridge is developing a reputation for being distinctively and excitingly diverse as a Borough and local economy. But this approach has come at a price. The vibrant night time economy has brought with it increased levels of crime and antisocial behaviour, and enforcement services are strained. The Council's determination to insist on a high level of affordable housing has led to high profile skirmishes with developers, and building around Ilford has been slower than many would have liked. The focus on inclusion this means that the Council has not maximised the income it could have made from regeneration. The green belt remains sacrosanct, in line with resident demands, with the result that northern wards of the Borough have had to take much more new housing than they want.

Just as importantly, by limiting the supply of glitzy new housing, the Borough has failed to maximise the number of affluent young professionals it can attract. This has helped maintain the Borough's old character, but it means less council tax revenue to fund public services. This matters, because the challenges of being part of London have not abated. While the council has built more of its own homes, and new temporary accommodation units, the new housing has not been enough to addressing spiralling costs in the private rented sector. Combine this with the costs of an ageing population and many of the Borough's public services remain under huge pressure.

Invincible Suburb

London or Essex? The people of Redbridge have never quite resolved this conundrum.

In the early 2020s the UK's decision to leave the European Union decided the question for us. Developers had long been anticipating that Brexit might slow London's population growth, reducing the Borough's potential to develop new housing and forcing the council to rethink its regeneration plans over a longer timeframe.

There has been some growth in the south of the Borough, but the council's strategy has shifted away from accommodating an influx of new residents towards offering a green, leafy suburb. The unwritten goal is to keep the population growing by using high quality of life to attract affluent workers from across London and the Home Counties.

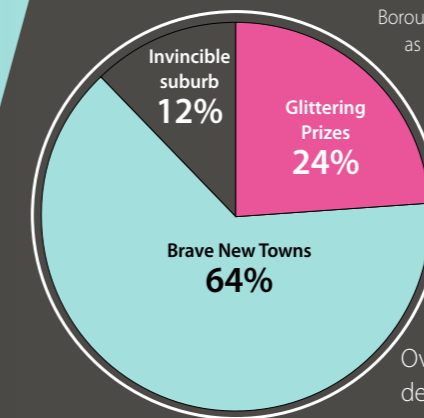
Redbridge retains its distinctive character as a diverse set of urban villages and town centres. It has managed to remain, in parts at least, a green and leafy suburb. Visitors from the region come to attend open air performances at the striking Valentine's theatre. Quality of life in parts of the Borough remains high. Our schools continue to be a beacon of quality across the country. In the south, Ilford has seen a few glittering towers go up and improvements in the quality of the shops and restaurants on the High Road, but progress is slower than anyone anticipated. The new civic and cultural quarter promised in 2018 is only just getting off the drawing board.

While life in the north of the Borough goes on much as it did a decade ago, elsewhere the pressure is on. Slow housing growth has not made Redbridge's problems

go away. On the contrary, it has entrenched many of them. Population growth may have slowed, but it has not stopped. People are still coming into the Borough, which is well connected and still cheaper than Newham or Tower Hamlets. With only limited new housing to accommodate them, the incomers are often housed in an increasingly overheated private rented sector which is slowing spreading into the north of the Borough, creating tensions among existing communities. Landlords are even starting to buy up rental properties in Bridge and Monkham and converting them into HMOs.

The result has been a triple whammy for local public services. Less growth has meant less money to pay for affordable housing and new civic facilities. Fewer new people coming into the Borough means that council tax and business rate income is lower than expected, while demand on the council's services from vulnerable groups is still growing. At the same time, reduced migration has led to labour shortages across London's public sector.

Many of the problems the Borough faced in 2017 have not been solved. Without economic and population growth to pay for new infrastructure, the Borough still lacks housing (particularly affordable housing), GP surgeries and leisure facilities. Redbridge has managed to preserve many of the things residents' value about the Borough, but the pressure for change is building.



Over 1,000 people took a quiz to determine their preferred scenario.

Our Priorities for 2025

Our goal here is not to set out a detailed road map for the next decade, but to identify concrete opportunities that we can realistically grasp right now to help deliver a better future whatever else may happen. We will formally review our shared priorities every year to ensure that we are constantly addressing the most important issues for the Borough.

These priorities are not the only things we will achieve over the coming years. As individual organisations we will continue to focus on providing the best possible education, health and street services to our residents. We will make sure we coordinate this work either through the Borough partnership or through groups such as the Borough's Health and Wellbeing Board.

Our initial work programme will focus on:

Ensuring regeneration benefits our communities: we will work together to reduce the 20 per cent of our residents who work for low pay. The council has already taken steps towards achieving this by introducing the London Living Wage (LLW) for all directly employed staff, and will extend the same benefits to contracted staff over the coming years. We will encourage public services and private employers in Redbridge to achieve LLW status, and we will seek opportunities to tailor public sector job offerings so that they are more accessible to people in the Borough. Our goal will be to offer high quality employment opportunities that can help people to escape in-work poverty, with a focus on supporting vulnerable people to lead independent, healthy lives. We will work together to provide good schools and high-quality life-long education opportunities so that our residents have the skills to secure and progress in decent work.

Being a great place to live as a family: families come in all shapes and sizes, and in Redbridge we want all of them to thrive. This means maintaining the strong offer we already make to families: a clean and safe environment, an increasingly wide range of leisure facilities, great education offers and high quality green space.

But it also means recognising that not every family in the Borough has equal access to these opportunities. We need to address this by giving children and young people a real voice in shaping the future of our Borough. Over the coming years the Redbridge Partnership will challenge young people to help us achieve UNICEF child-friendly city status, receiving global recognition for the quality of our support.

Tackling the root causes of social challenges: from burglary to employment, from supporting dignity in old age to securing our children's futures, Redbridge faces a wide range of complex social challenges. We know we cannot spend, enforce or legislate these issues away. The only way to secure the future our residents want is to address the root causes of our problems, finding ways to stop crime or diabetes before they emerge, and minimising their impact once they do. We will work together on specific problem areas – including crime and mental health.

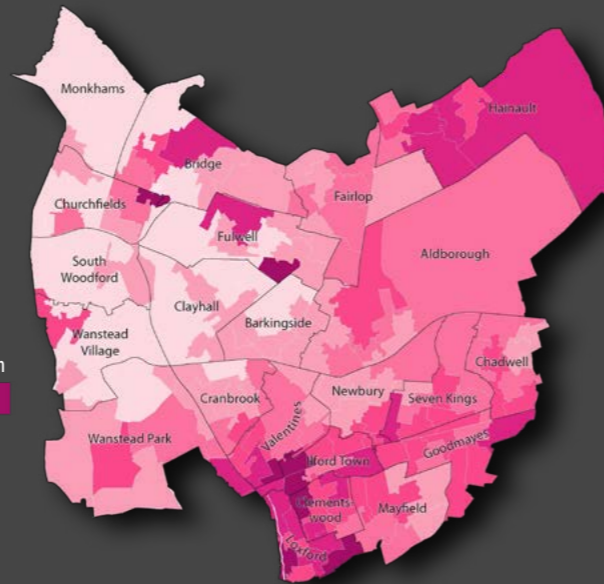
Mental wellbeing has a significant impact across many areas of a person's life and overall wellbeing including their ability to work, maintain relationships, participate in family life and their local community.

We need a partnership approach to tackle this challenge, and mental health has already been identified by our local health partners as one of their key transformation areas to be taken forward as part of work to develop an integrated care system across the Borough.



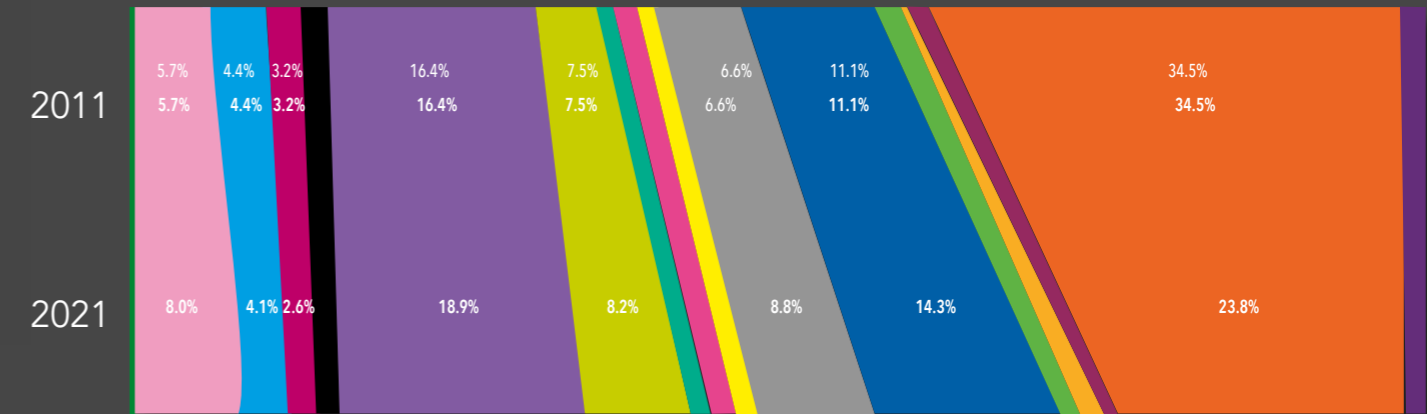
Our Priorities for 2025: what data is telling us

Redbridge is a **varied borough** with pockets of wealth and deprivation and the population is **generally happier than London as a whole.**



Change in ethnic composition

Source: Housing-led Ethnic Group Projections, GLA (2016)



Ethnic Group (from left to right above)

- Arab
- Bangladeshi
- Black African
- Black Caribbean
- Chinese
- Indian
- Other Asian
- Other Black
- Other Ethnic Group
- Other Mixed
- Other White
- Pakistani
- White & Asian
- White & Black African
- White & Black Caribbean
- White British
- White Irish



Redbridge has a growing population, with particularly a **growing youth population.** However the **elderly population is also growing and with it particular health pressures.**



Child obesity is higher than London as a whole

This is an indicator of potential Type 2 diabetes and increased risk of cancer. There are also higher levels of projected mental health issues amongst our population than London as a whole.



How we will judge success

We know where we want to get to, and we have identified some of the actions that will get us there. The key test of whether we are succeeding is whether our residents can feel and see positive changes around them. We have identified several residents – reflecting the diverse make-up of our Borough - whose lives we will follow throughout the course of this Borough plan. Every two years we will ask them for their views on how Redbridge is changing and publish the results.

The first interviews have been presented as part of this plan (**Appendix A**).



Keep the
borough

Clean and safe