

buildingharlowsfuture.com



HARLOW | BUILDING
HARLOW'S
FUTURE.

OUR NEXT STEPS

LET'S
BUILD
HARLOW'S
FUTURE

together.



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A message FROM THE LEADER

I want Harlow to be the most transformative and impactful local authority in the country. One that truly changes lives - boldly, unapologetically, and with purpose. We are not here to manage decline with a shrug and a spreadsheet in the weary slippers of bureaucracy - we are here to lead the glorious rebirth of one of Britain's most iconic New Towns.

Harlow has so much going for it.

We led the wave of the New Town revolution, invented fibre optics, the recipe for Baileys, the post-it note, the rotary lawnmower, the cricket scoreboard, the franking machine, Prozac anti-depressants and so much more.

Packed into just ten square miles is the only sculpture town in the world, the first ever high-rise residential block, the first ever sports centre and health centre, the biggest social housing landlord in the East of England, nearly 40,000 homes carved into idyllic undulating green space that covers 35% of the district, the country's most extensive off-road cycleway network, inspirational schools, one of the best colleges in the country, multi-billion pound industries both large and small and 100,000 residents.

We are not just part of the UK Innovation Corridor - we are its thumping great heart. And we're growing faster than anywhere else in the country. Within a decade, Harlow will be bigger than major cities like Cambridge.

And yet for too long, we've felt like a lion trapped in a cage. We all share the same frustration - our staff, our partners, our residents - like some supercar blocked in the traffic. We can see the way ahead. We know where we want to go - and we know why we are stuck.

The council has, for too long, lagged behind the ambition of the people it serves. Poor leadership has dimmed the light of a town built on innovation and aspiration. We have been a sleeping giant waiting to be unshackled. But no longer.

We're building Harlow's future.

We are no longer taking decisions because they are easy, but because they are right for our residents both now and in the long-term.

And we have already delivered so much.

Transformative investment has been secured for the regeneration of our town centre and work is now underway, we're building more council homes than in the past thirty years combined, and our Innovation Park is rising from the ground to deliver jobs and industry-leading facilities. We have ensured that Harlow Homes are for Harlow people, and we have entirely restructured the council and have recruited the very best people in local government.

We have increased our budget by 41% for the year ahead so that every single mission, promise and outcome is fully funded - without raising council tax by a single penny. That's not just leadership. That's belief in what Harlow can be.

But now we must go further.

Every Leader of Harlow Council has faced a moment when they have to decide how far they are prepared to go to deliver for our town. And this is our moment. Two very different futures lie ahead. One that continues the drift. Another that leads the renaissance.

We have made our choice. We choose the renaissance. Not in some fusty academic way, but in a way that unleashes Harlow's potential.

And if we get this right we will have led the revolution in the rebirth of this place and hailed a new chapter in our history.

Transforming our council so that council tax is kept down and our town thrives.

Rebuilding our town so that we set the standard for what is truly great.

Investing in our housing so that every family lives in a safe and decent home.

Renewing our neighbourhoods so that pride is restored in every street.

Securing our future so that the children of Harlow today have even better opportunities tomorrow.

Protecting our communities so that every resident feels safe in any part of town at any time of day.

This is not just another council plan that does nothing except gather dust leaving the council with no direction and going around like a washing machine stuck on the spin cycle. It's a movement. A mission. A turning point.

Because this is bigger than us. It's about building a council that truly works for everyone. Where every decision makes a difference. Where every resident feels the impact.

I deeply believe that, for Harlow, the best is still to come. Our biggest risk is allowing this moment to pass. Dropping the ball because the opportunities are too great. It simply is not an option.

Let's finally believe in ourselves and what we can do. We can unleash the pent-up potential of our town and lead Harlow away from mediocrity to an outstanding future.

Our missions are clear.

Our values are strong.

Our time is now.

Let's build Harlow's future - together.



Dan Swords

Leader, Harlow Council

OUR MISSIONS



**Transform
our council.**



**Rebuild
our town.**



**Invest in
our housing.**



**Renew our
neighbourhoods.**



**Secure our
future.**



**Protect
our communities.**



Our values.

Community

We are committed to delivering services in a way that makes residents feel valued, connected and empowered.

Ambition

We strive for continual improvement, driven by innovation and creativity to achieve meaningful change.

Compassion

We listen to our residents and colleagues with empathy and understanding, making sure their voices are heard, and their needs are met.

Excellence

We strive for the highest standards, committing to quality, continuous improvement, and exceptional performance in delivering services for Harlow.

Unity

We are committed to building a cohesive workplace, collectively delivering on Harlow's missions.

Delivering.

Delivery does not just happen, it must be planned and executed, with communication and agility at its heart. Support and co-ordination will be key, with our people being engaged and empowered, and an unapologetic focus on delivering the outcomes.

We must strengthen our approach to programme delivery with better governance and assurance, ensuring that major programmes are delivered with the highest standards of accountability and efficiency.

By enhancing oversight, refining processes, and embedding robust assurance mechanisms, we will drive successful project outcomes, maximise value, and ensure that every programme contributes to Harlow's long-term growth and transformation. In turn, this will ensure continuing improvement in customer experience, freeing up frontline capacity, with a focus on impact, value, and delivery.



To ensure success, we will:



Introduce a clear, data-driven performance framework for both our financial and programme performance to improve accountability, track progress in real time, and support better decision-making and customer service. This will drive a culture of continuous improvement, ensuring every mission delivers measurable results for residents.



Ensure our places of work are humming with focussed activity and making the best use of our assets. By creating dynamic workspaces that encourage collaboration and innovation, we will reduce operational costs, enhance productivity, and create a more efficient, cost-effective council that delivers better outcomes for our residents.



Establish a dedicated Project Management Office (PMO) to track the seamless delivery of our six missions. The PMO will standardise project management practices, enable strategic oversight and assurance, and ensure alignment for all projects with our core objectives.



Foster a renewed culture of collaboration, efficiency, and delivery. We will break down silos and unite the entire council and every member of staff around our missions and values. We will provide our colleagues with tools and support to deliver effectively, creating implementation networks and a clear link from the six missions to individual performance plans. This will ensure that all teams work together seamlessly, driving collective success and delivering the best outcomes for our residents.



Evolve our systems and processes to drive efficiency, accuracy, and responsiveness across all areas of the council. By implementing cutting-edge technology, automating workflows, and eliminating outdated practices, we will ensure streamlined operations that deliver faster, more effective services to our residents while delivering the council's missions.



TRANSFORM

our council

Harlow Council is entering a new chapter: one defined by ambition, innovation, and delivery for our residents. Our transformation programme is a bold response to the challenges and opportunities ahead, underpinned by a clear purpose: to fundamentally improve how the council operates so we can better serve our residents, support our businesses and community groups, and shape the future of the fastest-growing town in the UK.

Gone is the tired orthodoxy of “this is how we’ve always done it.” In its place: bold thinking, smart technology, and a council culture that is not afraid to challenge itself daily in the pursuit of excellence.


Transformation, for us, is not a slogan, it is about reengineering the council to be more agile, efficient, and outcome-focused and unleashing the might of innovation, reform, and sheer administrative gusto to deliver our missions with resolute focus on the people we serve. This is not about cuts or compromise. This is about redesigning how services are delivered, investing in modern systems and infrastructure, and empowering our workforce to deliver more impact where it counts.

Our staff are the lifeblood of this transformation. Many live in Harlow as well as being council employees, they are residents, neighbours, and proud ambassadors of the town. That’s why we will back them to the hilt, investing in their skills, supporting their work, and unleashing their potential.

This mission is driven by a relentless ambition to be better every day for our residents. And let’s be clear: this is no vanity project. This is value for money with every penny accounted for, every process interrogated, every inefficiency put to the sword.

All to ensure that Harlow is not just ready for the future of local government, it is leading it. Harlow has always been a place of innovation and purpose.

That spirit lives on in the way we are reshaping the council today: dynamic, proactive, and unapologetically focused on progress and outcomes.



This year, we will:



Embed and deliver our comprehensive transformation programme. Focused on driving innovation, optimisation, efficiency and delivery across all of our teams and services.



Continue to freeze council tax and keep our fees and charges low. We will again meet our commitment to not increase the financial burden on our residents but instead drive better efficiency whilst improving service delivery.



Reimagine our approach to communication with residents. By moving to a more modern, digital-first approach so it's easier for you to hear from us, and for us to hear from you.



Introduce a new constitution and governance framework. This will modernise our approach to decision-making, risk and assurance, streamlines processes, and embeds the Executive Leader model.



Integrate our property and environment teams across the council and HTS. By co-locating our teams, introducing new service standards and contractual arrangements and driving better value for money we will increase resident satisfaction with these services.



Optimise our discretionary service offering. This will further improve our discretionary service facilities, introduce a corporate programme of events, and ensure our discretionary services meet our residents' needs and desires.



Ensure all statutory services are high-performing and fit for the future. This will ensure that services we are required to deliver by law continuously improve with the focus and emphasis required.



Become an employer of choice. This will modernise our approach to attracting, retaining and developing top talent, and enhancing performance management.



Deliver a holistic approach to customer services. This will ensure that every interaction is seamless, responsive, data-driven and centred around the needs of our residents.



Champion Harlow's interests in the local government reorganisation. This will ensure the town emerges in a position of strength and influence.



Transform how we procure our goods and services. A more dynamic, modern and commercial approach will improve efficiency, effectiveness and maximise social value.



Successfully deliver the largest ever Non-Housing Capital Programme. This will realise £39million of investment to drive forward key projects that enhance infrastructure, public spaces, and community facilities.



Strengthen our core functions of legal, HR and finance. This will enable all services to be more agile, efficient and impactful to deliver our missions.



REBUILD

our town

We are delivering a once-in-a-generation rebuilding. This isn't just a renewal; it's a complete reimagining of our town centre, and we are setting our sights high. Thanks to significant investments from both the Government and private sector, we have secured the resources needed to turn our vision into reality.

Our mission is clear: to create one of the best town centres in the UK, an exciting, dynamic space that serves people of all ages, at all times of the day. From new shops, bars, and restaurants to vibrant cultural spaces, entertainment venues, and world-class public realms, Harlow will be a destination where people come to live, work, and play.

Thousands of high-quality homes will breathe new life into our town, while a bold programme of acquisitions ensures no part of Harlow is left behind. This is our chance to shape a thriving, inclusive town for future generations, a place where opportunities abound, pride is restored, and Harlow's potential is fully realised.

But our commitment doesn't stop at the town centre.

We are also focusing on the comprehensive rebuilding of Harlow's left-behind neighbourhoods, ensuring they too benefit from this renaissance. This regeneration will not just be about new buildings, but about renewing the very heart of our communities, making them places where people can thrive, connect, and be inspired.

With these combined efforts, we're not just rebuilding Harlow; we are creating a town that works for everyone.



A town that is modern, inclusive, and forward-thinking, with a future as bright as the people who live here.



This year, we will:



Complete the transformation of Broad Walk. This will deliver a high-quality, vibrant high street that is safe, secure, and meticulously maintained.



Complete the construction of Harlow's new Sustainable Transport Interchange and the rebuilding of Terminus Street. This will create a first-class, sustainable transport hub that enhances connectivity for residents, visitors, and businesses as a new gateway to the town centre.



Deliver the comprehensive regeneration of Market Square. This will transform the northern end of the town centre into a vibrant destination for residents and visitors to enjoy leisure, hospitality, and nightlife.



Build the Arts & Culture Quarter and establish Harlow as a cultural capital. This will create a vibrant cultural hub in the heart of the town centre, enhance our heritage assets and provide extraordinary cultural offerings that are recognised across the East of England.



Complete our programme of acquiring key town centre sites and buildings. This will ensure no area is left behind in Harlow's regeneration and ending the legacy of fragmented land ownership.



Invest in the Harvey Centre. This will build upon its commercial success enshrining its place as a retail destination that plays a key role in supporting the rebuilding of the town centre.



Deliver the comprehensive pipeline of town centre redevelopment schemes. Through the Harlow Regeneration Partnership, we will transform all areas of the town centre, introducing high-quality residential, commercial, and leisure spaces that align with the town's long-term vision for growth.



Establish a comprehensive and clear plan to rebuild our housing estates. This will revitalise communities and improve the quality of life for residents.



Successfully complete Phase 1 of our Council House Building Programme. This will deliver much-needed social rented homes to meet the growing demand in Harlow and revitalise place where our residents live.



INVEST

in our housing

At the heart of our ambitions lies our responsibility to provide safe, high-quality, and well-managed housing for our residents. As the largest social housing landlord per capita in the East of England, with over 9,000 homes, we hold a position of both privilege and responsibility with nearly one third of residents living in one of our homes.

However, our residents are clear that we have underinvested and the judgement from the Regulator of Social Housing has confirmed that we must do better. We accept that challenge without hesitation. We are reshaping our housing services from the ground up, with a renewed focus on quality, accountability, and outcomes.

This is underpinned by the largest housing investment Harlow has ever made; a total budget of more than £136 million this year, representing a 23% increase on last year. This unprecedented investment includes a revenue budget exceeding £61 million to strengthen and improve day-to-day housing operations, services, and maintenance, alongside a capital programme of over £75 million dedicated to modernising and renewing council homes across the town, ensuring better quality, safety and long-term sustainability for residents.

The outcome? Better homes for families to grow and thrive in; housing that meets the needs of all ages and life stages; faster, more reliable repairs and maintenance; quicker turnaround of empty homes; renewed housing stock; stronger customer service and clearer standards; fewer residents facing homelessness; and Harlow homes for Harlow people.

**The work has begun.
The expectations
are rising.**




This year, we will:




Enact, in full, our Consumer Standards Improvement Plan.

This will address past compliance failings and restore confidence in our housing services.



Complete our full internal and external stock condition survey of 100% of our homes.


This will drive smarter investment, more proactive maintenance, and better-informed decisions - ensuring every home is safe, decent, and fit for the future.



Ensure full compliance with all regulatory and legislative requirements as a social housing landlord. This will embed a culture of accountability and high standards that will safeguard residents, strengthen trust, and position Harlow Council as an exemplary housing provider.



Implement our comprehensive Tenancy Audit programme. This will ensure every council home is visited and inspected at least once a year to better support our tenants.



Embed our new Housing Allocations Policy and digital application system. This will ensure that Harlow homes are for Harlow people and create a fairer, faster, and more transparent process.




Introduce a new repairs policy and service standards. This will ensure that all repairs are completed within target and are right first time.




Successfully deliver the largest ever Housing Capital Programme. This will realise £75 million of investment to modernise existing homes, build new homes, and enhance communal spaces.




Redesign our approach to housing management. This will ensure we are innovative, effective and truly responsive to the needs of our community.



Implement our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (2025–2030). This will reduce homelessness and aim to eliminate rough sleeping in our town.



Optimise tenant and leaseholder engagement. We will foster stronger, more meaningful partnerships with our residents through regular communication, accessible feedback channels, and increased opportunities for involvement in decision-making.



Ensure our council homes are re-let without delay. We will streamline the process and reduce turnaround times for void and empty council homes, ensuring they are quickly and efficiently made available for new tenants.

RENEW

our neighbourhoods

Harlow's neighbourhoods have always been the beating heart of our town. The fifteen minute neighbourhood concept that the town was built on was ahead of its time. From the very beginning, our estates were designed to be more than just places to live; they were created to inspire pride, foster community, and showcase the ambition of our town.

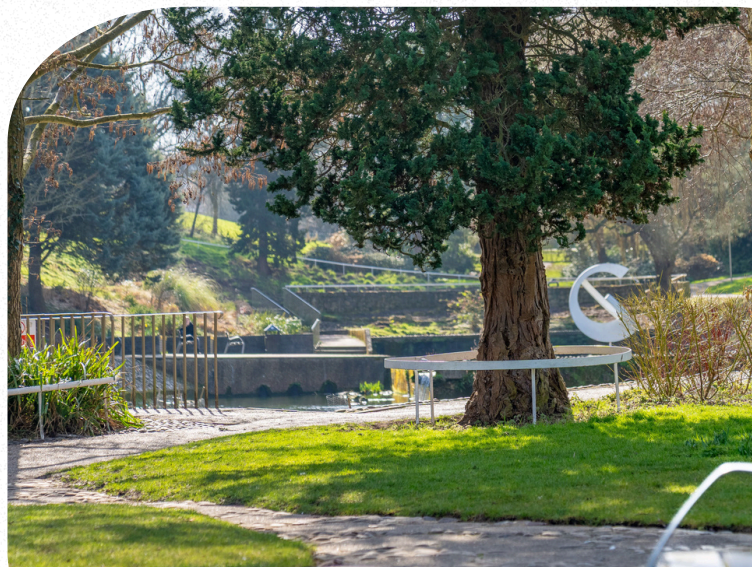
Immaculately maintained and welcoming, our streets were a symbol of everything Harlow stood for, a place where families thrived, where businesses flourished, and where residents felt a deep connection to their environment.

Yet, over time, our neighbourhoods and streets have fallen into a state of disrepair. We know that the maintenance of our public spaces directly impacts the pride people feel in their neighbourhoods.

We are on a mission to restore the pride of Harlow. We will create neighbourhoods that once again residents are proud to call home.

By revitalising the cleanliness and appearance of our streets, we will create a town that feels alive, vibrant, and full of possibility. We will invest in the upkeep of our environment, turning our public spaces into places of beauty and opportunity for leisure and culture, where families can thrive, where businesses can grow, and where everyone can take pride in the place, they call home.

This is about more than just tidying up; it's about reigniting a sense of pride in every street, every park, every area that makes up our town. ✓



This year, we will:

Deliver the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund programme. These impactful interventions will help to restore pride into our neighbourhoods targeting underpasses, playgrounds, shopping hatches and other highly visible locations.

Continue our successful Open Parking Programme. We will create over a thousand new parking spaces in our neighbourhoods to continue to reduce congestion and tackle the blight of antisocial behaviour.

Transform our grounds maintenance and street cleansing services. We will introduce and embed enhanced and clear service standards that go far beyond basic upkeep.

Implement a new proactive tree maintenance policy. This will ensure we better manage and enhance safety, improve the health, safety and appearance of our trees.

Launch a dedicated Street Scene Priority Taskforce. This will tackle the forgotten and neglected street clutter that chips away at the pride of our town.

Undertake a comprehensive programme to transform the appearance of our roundabouts. This will create welcoming gateways into the town and our neighbourhoods.

Deliver a programme of improvements to neighbourhood car parks across Harlow. This will enhance surfaces, lighting, layout and signage to create safer, more attractive, and accessible parking areas that better serve residents.

Embed a programme of proactive action to address the maintenance gaps left by Essex County Council. We will step in to address the proper maintenance of ancillary infrastructure such as highways signage, railings, bollards and drainage.

Support and encourage community-led initiatives. This will enable residents to take pride in and actively contribute to the care and maintenance of their local areas - fostering a sense of ownership, responsibility, and collective action. Creating spaces for physical activity, wellbeing and connection.

Remove unwanted, redundant structures and buildings that blight our neighbourhoods. This will transform forgotten spaces into vibrant, functional assets that benefit residents.

Establish industry leading town centre stewardship and maintenance. This will ensure high-quality management of the town centre which reflects the scale of regeneration.



SECURE

our future

Harlow is on the cusp of a remarkable new chapter - emerging as the UK's fastest-growing town and a model for future-ready living.

This is not growth for growth's sake. Its purpose-driven progress - a bold transformation positioning Harlow as a national leader in opportunity, innovation, and inclusive prosperity. Through the visionary Harlow and Gilston Garden Town initiative, we're laying the foundation for a connected, sustainable, and thriving future.

With cutting-edge infrastructure, smart planning, and strategic investment, we're creating dynamic spaces where businesses flourish, families thrive, and communities come alive. From housing and education to culture and commerce, every element is being reimagined to serve today's needs and tomorrow's ambitions.


Our mission is clear: to deliver long-term, inclusive growth that enhances lives and empowers people. We're building a town where connectivity is seamless, opportunity is abundant, and quality of life is second to none. At the heart of it all are the people of Harlow, residents old and new, whose voices, wellbeing and aspirations will shape every step of this journey.

Inward investment and partnerships are key to this transformation. By showcasing Harlow's strengths, its location, talent, and vision, we will unlock new industries, create jobs, grow local businesses and accelerate innovation.

Together, we're creating an environment that attracts investment, celebrates innovation, and champions sustainability. With our strategic location, skilled workforce, and strong community spirit, Harlow is set to become a beacon of 21st-century urban excellence.

This is more than development - it's a legacy in the making.

Now is the time to shape the future. With vision, investment, and collaboration, Harlow is ready for its renaissance.




This year, we will:




Maximise inward investment from the private sector. Through a new approach to our Growth Board - recognising that we are the beating heart of the UK Innovation Corridor - we will build a dynamic, business-friendly environment that attracts innovative companies, supports new startups, and fosters collaboration between local businesses, investors, and developers.




Accelerate the delivery of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town with revised governance arrangements. This will streamline decision-making, enhance coordination across partners, and ensure the efficient implementation of the Garden Town vision.




Maximise the strategic Government investment Harlow needs to thrive. This includes lobbying for the new hospital, supporting the relocation of the UK Health Security Agency, and pushing for major infrastructure upgrades that will underpin our growth.



Attract high-end retail and leisure brands to Harlow. This will ensure that the major regeneration programme creates a vibrant retail and lifestyle destination.




Enable sustainable, active and affordable travel. This will include investment to enhance and expand Harlow's off-road cycle track network as well as the introduction of micromobility schemes such as a comprehensive cycle hire scheme and other forms of active travel.



Commence the final phase of development at Harlow Innovation Park. This will create state-of-the-art spaces that foster collaboration, innovation, and business growth alongside leading leisure offerings.



Secure the £20m in funding to deliver Harlow's Plan for Neighbourhoods. This will be delivered through collaboration with local stakeholders to drive essential investment into key areas, enhance local infrastructure, improve services, and strengthen community ties.



Embed a new approach to inclusive growth. By working closely with diverse local groups and stakeholders, we will ensure everyone's voice is heard, fostering a deeper connection between residents and the changes taking place.



Deliver Harlow's allocation of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund by focusing on impactful community-driven projects. Through targeted initiatives, this will enhance local infrastructure, create employment opportunities, and foster economic growth.

PROTECT

our communities

Crime, anti-social behaviour, and regulatory exploitation have no place in Harlow. Not on our streets, not in our neighbourhoods, not in our future. We've listened to residents, and the message is thunderously clear. People want to feel safe, day and night, in every corner of our town. And that is what we will deliver.

This is not some woolly aspiration. This is action. Serious action. We are cracking down on crime with a zero-tolerance approach. Our streets will be watched with expanded CCTV. Our enforcement teams will be bolstered. We will strengthen our relationship with the police to ensure that if you break the law, you will be brought to justice. And we will make it very clear - Harlow is not a soft touch.

We've united all the expertise of our Public Protection teams, community safety, licensing, environmental health, into a coordinated enforcement unit. From food hygiene to rogue landlords, dodgy traders to noise nuisances, we are cleaning Harlow's streets of these blights. Our teams will be visible, resourced, and committed to a step-change in our approach.

We're not just reacting. We're preventing. Working hand-in-glove with police, schools, charities, and local leaders, we'll strike at the root causes. We'll build resilient communities, not just reactive ones. And we'll do it by backing those who respect the rules.

**Harlow is proud
and determined.
So, let's get the
job done.**



This year, we will:

➤ **Embed our new Public Protection directorate to deliver a fully joined-up, intelligence-led approach to enforcement.** This unified team will maximise impact by breaking down silos, sharing data, and responding quickly to the issues that matter most to residents.

➤ **Strengthen our relationship with key partners.** This will include Essex Police, Essex County Fire and Rescue Service and a range of support agencies using our new Community Safety Hub to deliver a more coordinated, united and proactive response to make our streets safer.

➤ **Revitalise the Safer Harlow Partnership.** We will establish a more strategic, action-oriented force for tackling crime, anti-social behaviour, and community safety.

➤ **Deliver an expanded and upgraded CCTV network.** We will install more high-definition cameras in crime hotspots and public spaces and modernise our systems and adopt smarter, integrated technologies to enable real-time monitoring and rapid-response.

➤ **Establish and implement a structured Community Payback Programme.** This will include visible reparation from offenders while delivering real benefits to our neighbourhoods by contributing to the community projects.

➤ **Continue to reclaim areas of our town that have been blighted by antisocial behaviour.** This will be achieved through targeted and effective initiatives such as Clear, Hold, Build and Safe to Go Stow.

➤ **Update and strengthen our emergency planning and resilience processes.** This will ensure that Harlow Council is fully prepared to respond to any crisis.

➤ **Enhance our approach to the enforcement of licensing and environmental health regulations.** Our approach will ensure not just compliance, but leadership in meeting new and evolving legislation, through smarter enforcement, stronger partnerships, and cutting-edge tools.



Now
**LET'S GET
THE JOB
DONE.**

An aerial map of Harlow, Essex, in a dark blue color scheme, serving as the background for the entire page. The map shows a grid of roads and various land parcels.

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FUTURE.

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