

# Boost for new homes as Cameron visits town

by Pete Bryant

TALKS are under way to set a new target for affordable homes in Guildford borough after the council admitted missing previous targets,

This follows David Cameron and Nick Clegg's visit to the town on Monday to launch a housing strategy to help buyers. They arrived at Linden Homes' Boxgrove Gardens development, in Epsom Road, to announce the government's plan to boost housebuilding and make money lending easier.

Mortgages of up to 95% of the value of new-build homes will be available again and will be of particular assistance to first and second-time buyers.

However, the news came as

Guildford Borough Council admitted it is likely to fall short of its target set during 2007/8, to build 400 affordable homes in the borough by the end of 2011/12. Of this figure, 319 are expected to materialise.

"It is a matter of regret we have not been able to meet our target for enabling affordable housing," said Sarah Creedy, lead councillor for housing and social care.

"However, the government's housing strategy gives more local control for social housing and we will continue to urge them to give us the tools to make the best job of doing this."

The missed target is blamed on the recession, which reduced construction across the country.

During a meeting of the

council's executive yesterday (Thursday), councillors were set to discuss providing affordable homes to address significant need in the borough. New targets will be discussed, which may be amended depending on the economic outlook, and will include the delivery of traveller accommodation.

Boxgrove Gardens is a 199-home development, with 70 homes built for shared ownership and affordable rent.

Despite the development representing a positive step in quenching a thirst for homes, starting prices of £219,995 for one and two-bedroom apartments, and £579,995 for four and five-bedroom houses are unlikely to appeal to the majority of first-time buyers.

With the development not due to be complete until spring 2013 at the earliest, Boxgrove Gardens may contribute to the council's development plan up to 2026 but short-term problems for buyers remain.

However, at Monday's launch, Linden's managing director, Ian Baker, described the government's strategy as an important step forward in making responsible, affordable lending available. He added that improving developer access to prime sites was crucial to the success of the strategy and that loans should be available for apartments as well as houses, to help as many people as possible.



David Cameron and Nick Clegg visit Boxgrove Gardens.