

Item

GREATER CAMBRIDGE HOUSING STRATEGY 2019-2023



To:

Councillor Richard Johnson, Executive Councillor for Housing
Housing Scrutiny Committee [12/03/2019]

Report by:

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Wards affected:

All

Key Decision

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report seeks approval of a new Housing Strategy for Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Councils. The draft Strategy is at Appendix A to this report. Annexes to the Strategy, which include a more detailed action plan, are at Appendix B.
- 1.2 The Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy aims to communicate to partners and to the public at large the councils' aims and aspirations in relation to local housing issues, and how they are intended to be achieved; in relation both to new development and existing homes and communities.
- 1.3 It is set within, and aims to complement a range of council priorities, strategies and plans; in particular the recently adopted Local Plans for Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire.
- 1.4 The draft Strategy proposes an overarching long-term vision, and a set of objectives, priorities and actions for working towards that vision.

2. Recommendations

The Executive Councillor is recommended to:

- 2.1 Approve the overarching vision statement laid out in the Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy 2019-2023 (attached as Appendix A to this report): 'Healthy, Safe, Affordable: Homes and Communities for All'.

- 2.2 Approve the vision laid out in the Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy 2019-2023 (attached as Appendix A to this report): 'We want Greater Cambridge to be a place where:
 - a) Everyone has access to a suitable home, and residents are able to live as healthily, safely, and independently as possible;
 - b) The housing market functions effectively, providing homes which are affordable to people on all incomes; to meet the needs of residents and support the local economy;
 - c) There is a wide and varied choice of good quality, sustainable homes of different sizes, types and tenures, including new provision of council homes, to meet the needs of a wide range of different households and age groups;
 - d) Homes are warm, energy and water efficient, with built-in resilience to climate change and fuel poverty;
 - e) Homes are affordable to live in, located in high quality sustainable environments, served by jobs and neighbourhood facilities, appropriate green space, effective and sustainable transport links and other necessary infrastructure.
 - f) People from all walks of life live in harmony, within mixed, balanced and inclusive communities; and homes and communities continue to meet the needs of residents into the future.
 - g) We have strong relationships with residents, developers and partners that enable housing and services to be delivered effectively, and that support innovation where appropriate.

2.3 Approve the objectives laid out in the Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy 2019-2023 (attached as Appendix A to this report):

- a) Building the right homes in the right places that people need and can afford to live in;
- b) Enabling people to live settled lives; and
- c) Building strong partnerships.

2.4 Approve the priorities laid out in the Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy 2019-2023 (attached as Appendix A to this report):

- a) Increasing the delivery of homes, including affordable housing, along with sustainable transport and infrastructure, to meet housing need;
- b) Diversifying the housing market and accelerating delivery;
- c) Achieving a high standard of design and quality of new homes and communities;
- d) Improving housing conditions and making best use of existing homes;
- e) Promoting health and wellbeing through housing;
- f) Preventing and tackling homelessness & rough sleeping; and
- g) Working with key partners to innovate and maximise resources.

3. Background

3.1. Having worked together for some years to bring forward large scale mixed tenure developments on the fringes of the City, and with proposals in place for a joint Local Plan, it was agreed that Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire Districts would work together to develop a Housing Strategy for the Greater Cambridge area.

3.2 The Strategy aims to communicate to partners and to the public at large the councils' aims and aspirations in relation to local housing issues,

and how they are intended to be achieved. This is in relation both to new development and existing homes and communities.

- 3.3 The Strategy is set within the context of, and aims to complement, the councils' corporate objectives, and a range of other local strategies and plans. In particular the recently adopted Local Plans for Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire.
- 3.4 Reflecting that the two districts have many issues in common, the Strategy sets a collective vision, objectives and priorities for the area as a whole, and proposes a number of joint actions to be taken forward.
- 3.5 However, it also recognises the distinctive character of both areas, and highlights where the priorities for each council differ.
- 3.6 An action plan, and more detail on some of the issues raised in the Strategy, are available in the Annexes to the Strategy at Appendix B to this report.
- 3.7 Consultation took place both internally involving a range of different council services, as well as externally with the wider public.
- 3.8 167 responses were received through public consultation, from a mixture of individuals, organisations, businesses and community groups.
- 3.9 Responses to consultation were generally positive and supportive of the proposed Strategy. For example; when asked 'To what extent do you agree our vision and objectives are the right ones', 82% of respondents to that question agreed or strongly agreed with them; compared with 8% who disagreed or strongly disagreed. Similarly, when asked the extent to which they agreed the proposed priorities were the right ones, 78% either agreed or strongly agreed, with 11% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.
- 3.10 The majority of responses related to new development issues. Key messages arising from the consultation included the following:
 - a) Real concerns around affordability and the lack of affordable housing, with strong support for increasing supply of affordable homes to meet a range of needs.
 - b) Lack of housing supply, shortage of the right types of homes, and shortage of homes in the right locations. The need for appropriate development for an ageing population was highlighted as well as building for younger people, other specific groups and to support the economy.

- c) The importance of providing appropriate and sustainable transport and infrastructure, to support new development and minimize negative impact on existing communities. A number of people commented that the draft Strategy did not make sufficient reference to these issues.
- d) Issues around planning, housing delivery, and developer viability; This included concerns around speed, efficiency and effectiveness of the planning system; and the complexities of bringing forward large numbers of homes at pace, to meet a range of different needs, in what is mainly a developer-led market.
- e) Importance of quality, and sustainability of homes – both new and existing - in terms of energy efficiency & climate change, space standards etc; alongside the potential impact on developer viability.
- f) There was some support for diversifying the market, particularly through appropriate development of new private rented sector models.
- g) The importance of maintaining the quality of existing homes, and housing needing to be seen in the context of the wider community. This included the need for services and infrastructure to enable communities to support themselves and to support health and wellbeing. Also the importance of bringing long-term empty homes back into use.
- h) The need to tackle homelessness, with a particular interest from respondents on the publicly visible issue of single homelessness and rough sleeping.
- i) The importance of working in partnership with organisations and communities, and the need to strengthen partnerships in key areas.
- j) Concerns around the strategy itself, including whether it was deliverable, and the need for clearer actions and more measurable outcomes.

3.11 The Strategy has been strengthened in a number of areas to take into account of these views.

3.12 Results of the consultation have also been taken into account in drawing up the action plan.

3.13 Responses will be used to help inform the development of the proposed Housing and Sustainable Design & Construction Supplementary Planning Documents; and discussions around the housing-related elements of the new joint Local Plan. They will also be used to inform the implementation of other agreed actions.

3.14 The Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy will replace the Interim Housing Strategy Statements agreed by each of the councils in 2017.

4. Implications

(a) Financial Implications

A number of the actions included in the Strategy are necessary as part of the the Local Plan process, so in that respect the Strategy itself does not require any additional resource over and above what is being/ will be considered as necessary to implement the council's current Local Plan and deliver a new joint Local Plan for Greater Cambridge.

Any financial implications for delivering the council's own house-building programme will continue to be considered through the process of seeking scheme specific approval.

Resource required to implement housing elements of other council strategies and plans referred to in this Housing Strategy is also outside the scope of this report.

It is anticipated that much of the remainder of the Strategy will be implemented within existing resources. If additional resource is required as further actions emerge, we would look first to whether partnership funding might be available to support implementation.

If any additional council resource is required, this would need to be considered alongside other priorities as part of the council's annual budget setting process.

(b) Staffing Implications

No staffing implications have been identified.

(c) Equality and Poverty Implications

An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and is available as a background paper.

(d) Environmental Implications

The Strategy should help to promote with developers the importance of considering the environmental impact of bringing forward new homes.

However, the environmental impact of the numbers of new homes required, locations, transport and infrastructure required to support them etc, is part of a separate assessment through the Local Plan process.

A new Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning document, whilst referenced in the Strategy, will be the main vehicle for ensuring that environmental impact and climate change issues are considered in the development of new homes and maintenance of existing ones.

Similarly, the Strategy references delivery of the Council's Climate Change Strategy but impact on climate change is a matter for that Strategy, not the Housing Strategy.

(e) Procurement Implications

There are no direct procurement implications from the Strategy itself, although some of the actions in the action plan may need to be procured externally.

(f) Community Safety Implications

No direct community safety implications have been identified.

5. Consultation and communication considerations

The following consultation has taken place:

- a) A series of workshops with key managers and staff, plus one with council tenant and leaseholder representatives, across both councils, to help formulate the initial draft.
- b) A resident and partner survey questionnaire, available online and as a paper alternative; advertised on the councils' websites, and through the local press & social media. The survey ran from 17th December 2018 to 25th January 2019.
- c) A workshop with developers operating locally.

- d) Discussion with sub-regional partners including Registered Providers through the sub-regional Registered Providers' & Enablers' Forum; and with local authority & other partners through the sub-regional Housing Board.

A summary of the results of the public consultation will be made available on both Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Councils' websites. This will show how the consultation has been used to shape the strategy, and how it will be used to support implementation of the action plan.

6. Background papers

Background papers used in the preparation of this report:

- (a) Public survey questionnaire
- (b) Summary analysis of consultation responses
- (c) Equality Impact Assessment
- (d) Climate change rating

7. Appendices

- (a) Appendix A: Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy 2019-2023
- (b) Appendix B: Annexes 1 to 8 – including action plan

8. Inspection of papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact Helen Reed, Housing Strategy Manager, Tel: 01223 - 457943, email: helen.reed@cambridge.gov.uk.