

GREATER CAMBRIDGE HOUSING STRATEGY 2024-2029

To:

Councillor Gerri Bird, Executive Councillor for Housing and Homelessness
Housing Scrutiny Committee 18/06/2024

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Wards affected:

All

Key Decision

1.1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report seeks approval of a revised Housing Strategy for Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Councils for 2024 to 2029, to replace the existing Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy 2019-2023. The draft Strategy is at Appendix A to this report. Annexes to the Strategy are at Appendix B. An action plan for Year 1 is at Appendix C, and the Equalities Impact Assessment at Appendix D.
- 1.2 The Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy is set within the context of, and helps to complement, the councils' current corporate objectives, and a number of other local strategies and plans.
- 1.3 It aims to communicate to partners and to the public at large the councils' aims and aspirations around local housing issues, and how they are intended to be achieved; in relation both to new development and existing homes and communities.
- 1.4 The draft Strategy proposes a revised long-term vision, and a set of objectives, priorities and actions for achieving these.

2.1 Recommendations

The Executive Councillor is recommended to:

- 2.1 Approve the overarching vision for the Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy 2024-2029 (attached as Appendix A to this report):
“Affordable, Healthy, Safe and Sustainable: Homes and Communities for All”.
- 2.2 Approve the objectives laid out in the Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy 2024-2029 (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) High quality, low carbon, energy and water efficient homes.
 - c) Settled lives.
 - d) Building strong partnerships.
- 2.3 Approve the priorities laid out in the Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy 2024-2029 (attached as Appendix A to this report):
 - a) Increasing the supply of new homes, including affordable housing, contributing to healthy and sustainable communities.
 - b) Enabling the housing market to meet a wide range of local housing needs and to support sustainable growth.
 - c) Mitigating and adapting to climate change through good design and quality of new homes.
 - d) Improving housing conditions, management, safety and environmental sustainability of homes, and making best use of existing homes.
 - e) Promoting health and wellbeing, tackling poverty, and promoting equality and social inclusion.
 - f) Preventing homelessness.
 - g) Working with partners to innovate and maximise resources.
- 2.4 Approve the updated Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy 2024-2029 document itself (attached as Appendix A to this report)

- 2.5 Approve the new and updated policy annexes to the Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy 2024-2029 (attached within Appendix B to this report):
- a) Annex 1: Housing for specific groups.
 - b) Annex 2: Affordable Housing Requirements.
 - c) Annex 3: Clustering and distribution of affordable housing.
 - d) Annex 4: Affordable Rents policy.
 - e) Annex 5: Build to Rent Policy.
- f) Note the content of the non-policy related annexes to the Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy 2024-2029 (attached within Appendix B to this report):
- a) Annex 6: Summary of Evidence.
 - b) Annex 7: Glossary.
 - c) Annex 8: Key Achievements 2019-2023.
- 2.6 Approve the Year 1 action plan attached as Appendix C to this report.
- 2.7 Subject to Executive Councillor approval of the Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy 2024-2029, Annexes, and Year 1 action plan (attached at Appendices A,B & C to this report), give delegated authority to the Assistant Director of Housing & Homelessness to agree any minor changes which may subsequently be required.

3. Background

- 3.1 Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Councils agreed their first combined Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy in 2019, having jointly brought forward large-scale mixed tenure developments on the fringes of the City, and with proposals already in place at the time for a joint Local Plan.
- 3.2 This updated Strategy and annexes, if approved, will replace the Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy 2019-2023.
- 3.3 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. It covers both new development and existing homes and communities.

- 3.4 Reflecting that the two districts have many issues in common, the Strategy sets a collective approach for the area as a whole, proposing a number of joint actions to be taken forward; but also highlights where the priorities for each council differ.
- 3.5 The new Strategy, as previously, is set within the context of, and aims to complement, the councils' current corporate objectives and a number of other local strategies and plans. It reflects how both councils' overarching priorities have evolved since 2019.
- 3.6 The Strategy includes a number of Annexes, at Appendix B to this report.
- 3.7 An annex entitled "Summary of Requirements for development of new homes" was approved alongside the 2019-2023 Strategy. This was in the context of requiring an updated position in relation to Cambridge City Councils' Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (AHSPD) 2006, and draft AHSPD 2014; as well as South Cambridgeshire District Council's AHSPD 2010.
- 3.8 To avoid too much overlap with the councils' Local Plans, it is proposed, in the 2024-2029 Strategy to replace that "new homes" annex, with a more focussed "Affordable Housing Requirements" policy annex.
- 3.9 Further policy annexes to the Strategy 2019-23 were subsequently approved by the Executive Councillor for Housing via Housing Scrutiny Committee, namely:
 - a) Annex 9: Build to Rent policy.
 - b) Annex 10: Clustering and Distribution of Affordable Housing Policy
 - c) Annex 11: Affordable Rents Policy.
- 3.10 These three annexes have been updated for 2024-29.
- 3.11 The new Strategy and annexes will be a material consideration in dealing with planning applications, and will help to inform development of the proposed Greater Cambridge Local Plan.
- 3.12 The action plan for Year 1 at Appendix C to this report will be monitored and reviewed by officers from each council on an annual basis, with an updated action plan agreed for each future year during the life of the Strategy. For Cambridge City this will continue to be through the

council's Leadership Team, with, from 2024, additional input from council tenant and leaseholder representatives.

4 Implications

a) Financial Implications

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The Strategy itself largely reflects priorities and actions already being taken or planned by the two councils. As such, there are no major financial implications at this stage.

Much of the Strategy is expected to be implemented within existing resources.

Additional resources required to implement some of the more specific projects will be detailed within the annual action plan.

Any additional council resource required 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 is attached at Appendix D to this report.

d) Net Zero Carbon, Climate Change and Environmental Implications

Adoption of the revised Housing Strategy in itself is unlikely to have noticeable environmental impact.

Although a number of actions and priorities captured in Strategy for 2024-29 are likely to have an impact, these are primarily being driven by other strategies and plans, within the context of the current Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy 2019-2023.

These include Cambridge City Council's Local Plan, Carbon Reduction Strategy, Biodiversity Strategy, Housing Revenue Account Asset Management Strategy, decisions made on the council's housing development programme, etc.

e) Procurement Implications

There are no direct procurement implications from the Strategy itself, although some of the actions in the annual action plan, as it moves forward, may require external procurement.

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 discussions with key managers and staff across both councils, including a meeting with Cambridge City Council tenant and leaseholder representatives, to help formulate the initial draft.
- b) Engagement with representatives from some of our key partners at an early stage to understand what they might want from the Strategy.
- c) A resident and partner survey questionnaire seeking views on the draft Strategy. This was available online and as a paper alternative. It was advertised on the councils' websites, and through the local press & social media. The survey ran from 22 January 2024 to 3 March 2024.
- d) A workshop with developers and Registered Providers operating locally.

130 responses were received through public consultation, from a mixture of individuals, organisations, businesses and community groups.

Responses to consultation were generally positive and supportive of the proposed Strategy. For example; when asked "To what extent do you agree our vision is the right one", 70% of respondents to that question agreed or strongly agreed with it; compared with 18% who disagreed or

strongly disagreed. Similarly, when asked the extent to which they agreed that the proposed high level objectives were the right ones, 71% either agreed or strongly agreed, with 16% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

The majority of comments received related to new development and housing affordability. Key messages included:

- a) A mix of concerns over the amount of development planned, versus the need for more homes to meet local need.
- b) The importance of wider contextual issues when considering new housing development, including water shortages, and provision of transport & other infrastructure and services & facilities.
- c) The lack of affordable housing options for those on low to middle incomes, concerns over the affordability of affordable housing, and the importance of building council homes.
- d) The importance of meeting the needs of specific groups, including older, younger and disabled people, and key/local workers.
- e) The importance of building and maintaining mixed and sustainable communities, both new and existing, and tackling inequality.
- f) Need for some flexibility around some of the new development requirements to ensure scheme viability.
- g) Design and quality of new homes and communities, particularly in relation to environmental sustainability.
- h) Importance of energy and water efficiency in existing homes across all tenures, including financial assistance to home-owners, the need to speed up retrofit, and tackling damp & mould.
- i) Importance of dealing with empty homes.
- j) Insufficient focus on tackling homelessness.
- k) Importance of resident engagement and the need to support individuals and communities to help themselves.
- l) More information needed on partners and the role of partnerships.
- m) Some skepticism over whether the Strategy could be achieved; and the need for more detailed actions, costings, and how they would be resourced.

Some of the key amendments made to the Strategy as a result:

- a) Reworded the vision, from “Healthy, Safe, Affordable, Sustainable: Homes and Communities for All” to put “Affordable” first.
- b) Clarification on the roles of and relationship between the Housing Strategy and the Local Plans, and issues which need to be addressed through the statutory Local Plan process.
- c) Strengthened references to the needs of specific groups, including adding meeting the needs of younger people.
- d) Made it clearer that there will be a more detailed annual action plan, and included costs and resources relating to specific projects within the action plan.
- e) Tweaked details within some of the new development policies, allowing a little more flexibility in places to cater for differing circumstances.
- f) Strengthened references to the councils’ plans and approaches to home energy improvements and tackling damp & mould in existing homes.
- g) Clarified the relationship between the Housing Strategy and the councils’ Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategies, and the need to avoid too much duplication.
- h) Strengthened references to residents and communities as key partners, with more emphasis on community development and engagement.
- i) Added a bit more about other partners, including more about the role of Registered Providers and developers.

The content of this report will be communicated through a news release, both councils’ websites and via social media. Also in relevant meetings, discussions and other correspondence with partners.

6 Background papers

- More detail on responses received to consultation and how the draft Strategy has been amended as a result.
- Other background papers providing data, national and local policy and other information, are referenced in the Strategy and Annexes at Appendices A & B to this report, with links provided where available.
- [Document 240618 Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy 2024-2029 - Consultation Findings Report - - Cambridge Council](#)

7 Appendices

- Appendix A - Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy 2024-2029
- Appendix B – Annexes to the Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy 2024 to 2029
- Appendix C – Year 1 action plan
- Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessment

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.