

REPORT TO: Executive Management Team 13th February 2019
Scrutiny & Overview Committee 21st March 2019
Cabinet 3rd April 2019

LEAD CABINET MEMBER Councillor Hazel Smith

LEAD OFFICER: Julie Fletcher – Head of Housing Strategy

Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy

Purpose

1. To seek Cabinet approval for the Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy. The Housing Strategy provides the strategic direction for housing activity in the area over the next 5 years. Its purpose is to set the context as to how both councils aim to meet the housing challenges and identifies key priorities for action.
2. For new homes the Strategy complements the councils' existing Local Plans and will be a material consideration in making planning decisions. The Strategy will also help to inform the development of joint housing related supplementary planning documents, as well as the next Joint Local Plan.
3. This is a key decision because it is significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards or electoral divisions in the area of the relevant local authority and it was first published in the August 2018 Forward Plan.

Recommendations

4. Cabinet is asked to approve the Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy 2019-2023 and associated annexes (Appendix A and B).

Reasons for Recommendations

5. Having an up to date Housing Strategy will ensure that the Council can demonstrate its vision, objectives and priorities for housing in the area. This Strategy provides a significant shift in terms of its ambitions to provide housing for essential local workers to reduce commuting travel and ensure business growth is sustainable in the future. It also provides a clear direction based on evidence for different types of homes required to build for an ageing population.
6. The Strategy will also provide a strong platform to support the existing Local Plan in terms of the housing requirements and will provide direction in the development of both the Housing Supplementary Planning document and the Joint Local Plan.

Background

7. On 30th August 2018, a briefing was held with Cabinet to discuss the rationale for developing a joined up Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy. The reasons for working together with the City Council to develop a joined up Strategy were mainly

because of the key challenges and opportunities facing both councils, specifically in terms of housing affordability and economic growth; as well as the commitment to work towards a joint Local Plan, and the joint work already undertaken on the strategic fringe sites.

8. On 5 December 2018, Cabinet approved the draft Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy to go out to external consultation.

Considerations

9. Overall, feedback from the consultation of the Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy has been mostly positive. 167 responses were received, with 82% of respondents either strongly agreeing or agreeing to the vision and objectives.
10. The major concern identified through the external consultation was sustainable transport. Other repeating themes included:
 - Affordability and the lack of affordable housing available.
 - Lack of housing supply, shortage of the right homes and shortage of homes in the right locations.
 - Housing delivery should be integrated with employment, transport, services and facilities and other infrastructure.
 - Planning/delivery and viability – issues around policy, process and planning service.
 - Private Rented Sector – generally positive in terms of providing Build to Rent schemes.
 - The importance of quality and sustainability of new and existing homes.
 - The importance of housing for older people, although generally mixed views on the provision of a retirement village.
 - The importance of communities in terms of health and wellbeing.
 - The importance of working in partnership, particularly with parishes.
 - Tackling climate change and making homes more energy efficient.
 - Homelessness – relating mostly to rough sleepers; lack of awareness of homeless issues for South Cambridgeshire.
11. Particular comments raised relating to South Cambridgeshire included:
 - Village envelope and green belt constraints where communities wanted to grow.
 - Mixture of views on rural development and sustainability.
 - Parishes feeling that they weren't listened to in terms of new developments.
 - Question as to why empty homes was not a priority for the Council.
 - The lack of ambition in terms of the council house building programme (this may be due to the comparison with Cambridge City).
12. More broadly, concerns were raised over whether the aspirations were achievable, whether priorities should be reordered, unclear as to the purpose of the Strategy and that there were no clear actions or measures of success.
13. Many of the concerns raised were not issues that the Strategy could address, such as overall number of new homes required, allocation and location of land, transport and infrastructure. However, the Strategy has been amended to reflect these concerns and ensure clear links are provided as to other strands of work, such as development of the Joint Local Plan and the Transport Plan.

14. In terms of some of the comments relating to the formatting of the Strategy, these have been considered as part of finalising the draft document.
15. An Action Plan has been developed to monitor the Strategy's progress, a copy of which is at Appendix B (Annex A). Progress of the Housing Strategy will be monitored on a quarterly basis through existing structures, such as the Corporate Management Team and Executive Management Team. An annual report will also be brought back to Cabinet to monitor the Strategy's success. In particular key performance stats on the number of homes approved for essential local workers and homes for older people will be included.
16. The success of the Strategy will also be reported back to Cabinet in a year's time against the actions identified in the Plan.
17. Amendments to the Strategy following the consultation responses are highlighted in orange for ease of identification (attached at Appendix A).

Options

Option A –To approve the Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy 2019-2023 and associated annexes (Appendix A and B).	Reasons for Approval – Having an up to date Housing Strategy will ensure that the Council can demonstrate its vision, objectives and priorities for housing in the area.
Option B – To reject the Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy	Reasons for Refusal: Without an up to date Housing Strategy the Council may be criticised for not being clear on its housing vision and key aims. A delay in approval would impact on the development of the Housing Supplementary Planning Document and the Joint Local Plan.

Implications

18. Whilst the publication of the Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy does not in itself have any implications on resources, the actions coming out of the Strategy will have implications as follows: -

Financial

19. There are financial dimensions to some of the projects within the Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy that will already have been identified and accounted for. New initiatives recommended for further investigation within the Strategy will be considered individually as part of the service planning and budget setting process. In particular:
 - (a) A number of the actions included in the Strategy are necessary as part of the development of the next Local Plan, with associated housing needs assessments. Resources required in this respect will be budgeted for accordingly as part of the Council's budget process.
 - (b) In terms of increasing the delivery of homes, there will be a financial impact for the Council if it wishes to double its council house building programme. Additional staffing costs have already been budgeted for in 2019/20. There is

the potential to borrow money through the lifting of the HRA borrowing cap and a financial analysis and approval will need to be explored as this action is taken forward.

- (c) It is identified within the Strategy that the Council wishes to explore opportunities for direct commissioning of land through local authority investment. An Investment Strategy is included within the Medium Term Financial Strategy and any investment decisions will be made in accordance with the Investment Strategy decision process.
 - (d) A budget of £30,000 has been set aside to identify a site or sites for Gypsy and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople. If a decision is taken that the Council will deliver the site, this will have financial implications in terms of purchasing land, implementing the infrastructure and management costs.
20. 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.

Legal

21. There will be legal implications in terms of the implementation of some of the actions within the Strategy. These will be considered as appropriate as they arise. For example, in terms of joint investment partnerships, Local Lettings Plans as part of S.106 Agreements, specific legal agreements in terms of providing homes for essential workers, build to rent schemes, older people's housing, etc.

Staffing

22. There may be staffing implications in terms of the implementation of some of the actions within the Strategy. These will be considered as appropriate as part of the service planning and budget setting process. For example additional staff to deliver the council's new build programme and to prepare for the implementation of Universal Credit has already been identified within the 2019/20 budget setting process.

Risk Management

23. Risk Registers will be reviewed to include any risks identified for particular projects. For example the risks associated with the timely delivery of new homes, or the delivery of the joint Local Plan or provision of new council homes will be included within the appropriate risk registers.

Equality and Diversity

24. An Equality Impact Assessment (Appendix C) has been undertaken and no adverse impacts have been identified. The Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy is all encompassing for all groups. Positive outcomes within the Strategy are identified in particular to the protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Race
- Rurality

Climate Change

25. The ambition to drive up standards for new homes for environmental sustainability, including onsite renewable energy and low carbon; as well as some specific projects for existing homes identified within the Strategy, support the Climate Change Agenda.
26. 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.
27. The review of the Council's Asset Management Strategy for its council stock will also consider the environmental impact and climate change issues in the improvement of its homes.
28. The environmental impact of the number of new homes required, locations, transport and infrastructure required to support them, etc. is part of a separate assessment through the Local Plan process.

Consultation responses

29. Extensive consultation has been carried out throughout the development of the Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy.
30. A series of workshops have been held with staff, tenant & leaseholder reps and Members.
31. A six week consultation was held during December/January 2019. During that period, briefing sessions were held with developers, registered providers and for the Joint Development Control Committee.
32. 167 responses have been received as part of the external consultation. A summary of the external consultation responses is available, at Appendix D, as background information.
33. Following further consultation with Lead Members the following points were considered:
 - Page 16 of the Strategy: concern was raised that promoting housing for essential local workers could mean the avoidance of providing affordable housing. The wording has not been changed as there is provision that exemplar schemes must deliver a range of homes that are provided for and are affordable to their workforce.
 - Page 20 of the Strategy: it was felt that the Strategy may not go far enough in terms of promoting self build for households wishing to downsize within their own garden land. The wording has not been changed as it needs to align with the current Local Plan but can be considered further as part of the development of the Housing SPD and joint Local Plan.
 - Page 27 of the Strategy: agreed that an action to review the Empty Homes Strategy during 2019/20 would be included.
 - Page 27 of the Strategy: agreed to change the photo to something more relevant to the Strategy.
 - Page 37 of the Strategy: Query as to the revised wording relating to the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority. The wording has not been changed as it was felt that the additional wording strengthened the Council's position in terms of securing investment and that the final

paragraph made it clear that we would continue to work with the Combined Authority to achieve this.

- Page 39: It was agreed that Private Landlords should be added to all boxes relating to key partners.

Effect on Strategic Aims

34. The Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy is important for three of the Council's main strategic aims:
- Growing local businesses and economies
 - Housing that is truly affordable for everyone to live in
 - Being green to our core

Background Papers

Where [the Local Authorities \(Executive Arrangements\) \(Meetings and Access to Information\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#) require documents to be open to inspection by members of the public, they must be available for inspection: -

- (a) at all reasonable hours at the offices of South Cambridgeshire District Council;
- (b) on the Council's website; and
- (c) in the case of documents to be available for inspection pursuant to regulation 15, on payment of a reasonable fee required by the Council by the person seeking to inspect the documents at the offices of South Cambridgeshire District Council.

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