

BARNSELY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT OF: Executive Director of Growth and Sustainability

TITLE: Housing Strategy 2024-2028

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| REPORT TO: | CABINET |
| Date of Meeting | 4th October 2023 |
| Cabinet Member Portfolio | Regeneration and Culture |
| Key Decision | Yes |
| Public or Private | Public |

Purpose of report

This report seeks approval to undertake public consultation on the DRAFT Housing Strategy 2024-2028.

Council Plan priority

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Healthy – The Strategy seeks to address health inequalities linked to poor housing and environment.

Learning – investment in housing will deliver social value and learning opportunity outcomes.

Growing – The Strategy supports economic and housing growth.

Sustainable – The Strategy supports the decarbonisation of existing housing stock via cross tenure investment in housing retrofit- increasing the energy efficiency of homes and reducing fuel poverty.

Recommendations

That Cabinet: -

1. Endorses the DRAFT Housing Strategy 2024-28 and approves the commencement of a public consultation exercise in line with the Communication Strategy explained at section 4. A final version of the Housing Strategy will be submitted for Cabinet approval in January 2024.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the DRAFT Housing Strategy for 2024-28. The Strategy has been developed in consultation with colleagues in the Childrens, Adults, Public Health and Communities directorates; alongside our ALMO, Berneslai Homes. Its purpose is to set out the Council's strategic priorities for housing

over the next four years. The Strategy recognises the key issues affecting housing in Barnsley and the impact these have on residents, sets out how the Council will work in partnership to address the issues identified, and demonstrates alignment with other key strategies and plans.

BACKGROUND

- 1.2 Barnsley's 20-year Housing Strategy (2014-33) was approved in April 2014. It set out the Council's ambitions for housing provision, investment, and management in the borough for the period 2014-2033; with prioritised actions delivered via delivery plans. There are five strategic objectives within the current Strategy. These are:
- Supporting new housing development
 - Building high quality, desirable and sustainable homes
 - Making best use of and improving existing housing stock
 - Developing strong and resilient communities
 - Supporting younger, older, and vulnerable people to live independently.
- 1.3 Significant progress has been made in delivering against the commitments set out within the current Housing Strategy; a summary of key achievements follows:

New Development

- 7099 new homes were built in Barnsley between April 2014 and April 2023.
- C.2500 additional affordable homes were built/acquired during the same period, including 140 delivered as part of the Council's own build programme (delivering social housing) with another 60 to complete during 2023/24.
- The Council delivered its first commercial housing development, Longcar, via our development arm MET Homes Barnsley; with a second scheme (St Michael's) due to complete in December 2023. The sale of homes subsidises the delivery of additional affordable homes.
- The Council adopted its Local Plan in 2019; setting out our strategic aspirations for housing growth and producing 7 strategic masterplans set to deliver up to 8000 new homes during the plan period.
- The Council secured £1m Housing Infrastructure Fund monies to accelerate the delivery of a key housing regeneration scheme in Thurnscoe – delivering 440 new homes that would otherwise have stalled.
- The Council worked in partnership with Homes England to pilot their First Homes product; acting as a trailblazer in delivering this product enabling first time buyers to access market housing who would otherwise have been unable to buy a home. The scheme has since been officially launched.

Quality of Design

- The Council has produced a series of supplementary planning documents (SPDs) to maximise the provision of affordable housing provided through the planning process (Affordable Housing SPD), to enhance the quality of housing design and the provision of accessible homes (Design of New Housing SPD) and to ensure that new homes are sustainable, energy-efficient, and low carbon (Sustainable Construction and Climate Change Adaptation SPD)
- From 2021, the Council has built all Council homes to the Barnsley Low Carbon Standard.

Best use of Existing Stock

- Officers have developed and delivered against the Private Rented Sector Plan (including proactive work to tackle empty homes and launching a new Landlord Accreditation Scheme during 2021/22).
- The Council has invested £360M in our Council Stock to maintain decency and ensure that our tenants live in safe, warm and affordable homes.
- Officers have secured £17.3M to deliver energy support and energy efficiency and retrofit works, across tenure, to over 2000 homes; reducing fuel poverty and improving the energy efficiency of homes (tackling the worst first).

Strong and Resilient Communities

- The Council has secured £25M Town Deals Funding to deliver Masterplan priorities in Goldthorpe and to complement regeneration works undertaken in 2017/18 to demolish and re-develop new homes on Beaver Street, Goldthorpe.
- A dedicated Warm Homes Service has been established within the Strategic Housing Team to deliver information, advice and assistance to residents relating to affordable warmth and addressing fuel poverty. This includes the development of a warm home's pathway and Affordable Warmth Charter, working collaboratively with health and housing colleagues.
- Within the Local Plan, the Council has a well-developed spatial hierarchy of strategic masterplans, growth zones and regeneration priorities to ensure that new housing developments are sustainable, support existing communities and providing the right infrastructure and facilities for both new and emerging households. This includes the Town Centre Strategy (URBED work) and Principal Towns programme.
- Full Council has approved a new Council Lettings Policy which seeks to make the best use of our diminishing housing stock in line with our statutory responsibilities and in addressing housing need.

Supporting Older and Vulnerable People

- The Council has developed and delivered against the Prevention of Homelessness and Rough-Sleeping Strategy 2018-2023 (responding to the Homeless Reduction Act 2017) and the 'Everyone In' campaign during the Covid Pandemic. This included the opening on Queens

House which provides self-contained temporary accommodation to support some of the borough's more complex and entrenched rough sleepers. The Strategy for 2023 to 2028 is currently progressing through the Council's approval processes with a focus on prevention.

- Officers have worked collaboratively across South Yorkshire to undertake a needs assessment to assess accommodation requirements for Learning Disability (LD) and Autism service users.
- The Council undertook an Older and Vulnerable Persons Needs Assessment to help to develop robust accommodation pathways, including work to re-commission Extra Care schemes.
- Officers developed a new Registered Provider Framework to enable the accelerated delivery/procurement of accommodation for both general needs and specialist housing.

Key Issues

1.4 Whilst the ambitions of the current housing strategy remain, in the main, fit for purpose, there are several key challenges/opportunities which have arisen since the Strategy was published. These changes need to be reflected in this key document which shapes the over-arching Strategic Housing priorities for our borough and provide the Strategic Direction and Alignment for a number of other key housing and health related strategies as referenced in the Strategy itself. The new Strategy also changes the hierarchy approach of addressing housing need – ensuring that we place our focus on are making the very best use of the stock that we have first and foremost and then looking at how we can address unmet and growing need via the delivery of housing growth. Alongside this, the new DRAFT Strategy thus considers:

- **NET Zero** – The previous strategy was written in advance of the Council's adoption of its aspirations to become a net-zero organisation by 2040 and a net-zero borough by 2045 as part of its Sustainable Energy Action Plan (SEAP) and Barnsley 20. The DRAFT Housing Strategy ensures that we are doing all we can in the residential sector to build low/no carbon energy efficient homes and to reduce emissions in existing residential stock, focussing on making homes more energy efficient and reducing fuel poverty across tenure. Government Strategy also now places requirements for minimum energy efficiency requirements in the private rented sector (MEES – minimum energy efficiency standards) and sets a target for social housing providers to attain a minimum rating of Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) C for homes by 2035 (2030 for 'fuel poor' households). Sustainability is a cross cutting theme of the Housing Strategy, with the ambitions of Sustainable Barnsley, in ensuring that people live in sustainable communities with reduced carbon emissions and access to affordable and sustainable energy sources, at the heart of all 4 pillars.
- **Cost of Living Crisis and Pandemic Response** - The response to the pandemic led to changes in government policy, including an increase in funding to support those in financial difficulty and an initial drive to house everyone sleeping rough. However, these temporary measures were withdrawn, alongside a continued rising cost of living, increasing house prices and private rent levels, and changes to the welfare

benefits system, which has left more residents in our borough facing fuel poverty, eviction and homelessness and an increasing demand for affordable housing. The DRAFT strategy seeks to ensure that we can make the best use of our stock, promotes the continued delivery of additional affordable housing provision, and improve access to housing and housing support and advice outside of crisis support. The Strategy supports the priorities in the new Homeless and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-28 and the Private Rented Sector plan which seeks to maximise the private rented offer which has significantly grown in Barnsley over the last 10-15 years. The strategy also sets out how we will work collaboratively to ensure that there is a sufficient supply of high-quality supported housing provision in line with the Children's Sufficiency Strategy and adult social care plans.

- **Regulatory Changes in the Social Housing Sector** – The Social Housing White Paper (2020) and Social Housing Act 2023 focuses on the strengthening of regulation and compliance to create safer homes in the wake of the Grenfell tragedy, and this is reflected in the DRAFT Strategy's focus on safety and compliance, continued investment in existing homes, transforming communities, ensuring that our tenants' voices are heard and that the Council as landlord of 18,000 stock has the assurance that our homes are managed efficiently and effectively by the ALMO, Berneslai Homes.
- **Health and Housing** – Whilst the causal link between poor housing and poor health outcomes is well recognised and understood, the DRAFT strategy seeks to address the impacts of poor housing by promoting a systemwide approach to targeting and supporting those residents most impacted by unsuitable and unhealthy homes, to address inequalities and improve conditions across tenure. Working with our statutory, community and voluntary sector partners, the strategy promotes the wider development of cross organisational housing pathways to tackle the main causes of ill health and health inequalities from housing.
- **Regional Alignment** – The Draft Strategy aligns with the key priorities in both the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority Housing Strategy and South Yorkshire Housing Partnership Framework and sets the framework both strategically and spatially in relation to our priorities and funding requirements for both place-based investments and Devolution.
- **Sustainable Growth** - The spatial framework set by the Local Plan (adopted in 2019 and refreshed during 2023) aligns the borough's strategic growth priorities to Barnsley's Urban Centre and Principal Towns; with 7 strategic masterplans, the Goldthorpe Town Deals Regeneration Zone and the Principal Towns Programmes setting the strategic priorities for sustainable housing growth within our borough. This spatial framework sets the Council's aspirations for sustainable and inclusive growth. The previous strategy (written in advance of the adoption of the Local Plan) focussed on growth by 'numbers' rather than the promotion of sustainable communities aligning housing employment, and strategic infrastructure. It was always the intention to revise the Housing Strategy following the review of the Plan to reflect spatial growth priorities as set by the local plan and to focus on the

delivery of high quality, sustainable homes required to meet need.

1.5 The 2030 vision for '**Barnsley - the place of possibilities**' seeks a Healthy, Growing, Learning, Sustainable Barnsley and providing quality, affordable, inclusive, and sustainable housing that suits resident needs and lifestyles is critical.

1.6 Barnsley's DRAFT 2024-28 Strategy Vision is:

"We strive for everybody in Barnsley to live in welcoming and inclusive neighbourhoods with a good standard of housing that enables them to stay safe and warm and live healthy and independent lives."

1.7 The 4 key pillars of the DRAFT strategy are:

- Pillar I: Maximising Existing Borough Housing
- Pillar II: Supporting Strong and Resilient Communities
- Pillar III: Supporting People to Live Healthy Independent Lives
- Pillar IV: Enabling Sustainable Housing Growth to Meet Need

1.8 A copy of the DRAFT Housing Strategy is located at Appendix B.

2. PROPOSAL

2.1 It is proposed that Cabinet Endorses the DRAFT Housing Strategy 2024-28 and approves the commencement of a public consultation exercise in line with the Communication Strategy explained at section 4.

3. IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

3.1.1 Financial

Consultations have taken place with representatives of the Director of Finance (S151 Officer).

There are no direct financial implications linked to the recommendations detailed in the report. The public consultation process will be undertaken online and managed internally.

The key Council housing new build and decarbonisation strategies included in this report from an HRA perspective, the implications are duly considered as part of the HRA budget setting process. These papers are scheduled to be presented to Members in January 2023.

The HRA Business Plan provides a financial assessment over 30 years, considering planned actions as part of the Housing Strategy, and its impact on the management and financing of the Council's housing stock.

3.1.2 Risks

This is an ambitious housing strategy and there are significant risks and

challenges in resourcing and delivering against the strategy both locally and regionally. One of the key risks is ensuring that we can meet both general and specialist housing needs requirements and maintain the supply of affordable/social housing. Our Council housing stock is reducing year on year due to Right to Buy, and we are currently unable to build sufficient replacement homes. This is exacerbated by a slower turnover of tenancies each year and demand for social stock from several services across the council for either temporary or 'move on' general needs accommodation. The Council must make some difficult decisions in prioritising the allocation of general needs accommodation for specific service users, which has a huge impact on council revenue costs (in sourcing private/out of area accommodation) and the quality of life of individuals in ensuring that they can live healthy and independent lives within their home borough.

There are also significant resourcing issues in delivering against all aspects of the housing strategy given increased pressures to directly support the provision of accommodation arising in our adults and children's services teams and in project managing the delivery of new/renovated accommodation to address current and future need.

Finally, there are risks in ensuring that the Council meets all of our regulatory requirements as landlord of our 18,000 stock and that sufficient assurances are in place with our ALMO which operationally manages the management and maintenance of council homes.

There are also some opportunities for the Council is ensuring that all opportunities are maximized to lobby for, and access, any devolved housing funding, and flexibilities via SYMCA and in ensuring that the Council is fleet of foot in developing key housing asks of Government.

3.2 Legal

There is not a legal requirement for the Council to have a Housing Strategy. However, there is a robust and extensive legislative framework which determines council duties in relation to the prevention and relief of homelessness, in its role as a landlord of 18,000 housing stock, in its role as the Local Planning Authority and in providing housing to meet local need. The DRAFT strategy ensures that sufficient focus is given to ensuring that the Council meets its requirements under the Housing Act 1996, Homeless Reduction Act 2002 and 2017, Care Act 2014, Localism Act 2011, Levelling Up and Regeneration Act, the National Planning Policy Framework 2021, the Building and Fire Safety Acts 2021/2022 and the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023.

3.3 Equality

A full Equality Impact Assessment will be completed following the consultation process and in advance of the Strategy's resubmission to Cabinet. Having access to good quality and affordable homes is important for all the borough's diverse communities, and the Housing Strategy seeks to remove barriers people can face in accessing a home to meet their needs.

The pillars within the Housing Strategy will support the provision of homes that meet the needs of older people, people with disabilities, larger families, single people, and couples. The Council will continue to engage with communities and make sure the homes provided and enabled, meet their changing needs.

3.4 Sustainability



3.1.3 Climate change poses a significant threat to environments, individuals, communities, and economies on local, national, and international scales. In recognition of this, the Council has aimed to be net carbon neutral as an organisation by 2040, and as a borough by 2045. The Housing Strategy has a positive impact on all elements of the sustainability wheel as creating sustainable communities and reducing fuel poverty and health inequalities exacerbated by housing are embedded throughout each of the four pillars.

3.1.4 Pillar One of the Strategy sets out plans to improve the energy efficiency of existing stock, across tenure; reducing emissions in our borough associated with residential properties and decarbonising our homes. The focus is on addressing fuel poverty and reducing health inequalities associated with inadequate, inappropriate, or poor-quality housing. Making the best use of existing homes and buildings is also a more sustainable way to grow the housing offer rather than automatically building new.

3.1.5 Pillar Two seeks to promote strong and resilient communities with the right infrastructure and facilities to promote active and sustainable travel, local resilience, safety and pride in our built environment and green spaces.

3.1.6 Pillar Three focusses on enabling people to live, healthy independent lives in accommodation which supports their needs now and in the future.

3.1.7 Pillar Four seeks to ensure that all new homes are low/no carbon (in line with

emerging planning/building standards), meet the requirements of the Sustainable Construction and Climate Change Adaptation SPD, and are built in sustainable locations. The Council is leading by example in terms of quality of design and sustainability credentials, pledging to build all new Council Homes to the Barnsley Low Carbon Standard.

3.5 Employee

There are no direct employee implications arising from this report. As part of the Council's Transformation Programme, there will be a requirement to strengthen the Strategic Housing Function in terms of resourcing and how it connects/interacts with other services and organisations to ensure that it is able to deliver/enable all aspects of this ambitious Housing Strategy over the coming four years.

3.6 Communications

The communications and marketing team will collaborate closely with the Strategic Housing team to develop effective communication channels for partners and the public, ensuring clear understanding of the consultation process and the new strategy once it is adopted. Progress against the delivery of the Strategy will be monitored by the Housing Board via the development of 2-year delivery plans.

The aims set out in this Strategy will only be achieved by working in partnership with a range of local and regional stakeholders. The Council works strategically with partners through the Housing Board and with Housing Association and Developer Partners to help meet the wide range of housing need across the borough. Working with Homes England and the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority to access funding opportunities is vital to make housing delivery schemes viable.

This DRAFT Housing Strategy has been developed in collaboration with the Housing Board, which includes representation at a senior level from Adult Care, Children and Young Peoples Services, Planning, and Public Health.

4. CONSULTATION

Significant internal consultation has already been undertaken with key officers within the Council and via this Governance route. Working with officers in the Council's Communication Team, it is proposed that a 4-week on-line public consultation on the Strategy will commence from 14th October 2023 until 11th November 2023. It will also be possible to view and provide comments on the Strategy at Local Libraries.

Further consultation will be undertaken with Registered Providers, neighbouring Local Authority Housing Services and Developers at a Developer's Forum to take place in early November 2023.

An all members briefing on the DRAFT Strategy will take place over two sessions (one on-line and one in person) during late October 2023.

There will also be an opportunity for our tenants to have their say on the new Housing Strategy at a Customer Panel meeting to be held in October/November 2023.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 **Do Nothing & Retain the Existing Strategy** – The current strategy is a high-level document which span 2014-33 in line with the Local Plan period. Members could agree to retain the existing high-level strategy and key ambitions. This option is not recommended. The 2014-33 Strategy was developed as part of a suite of Strategies including the Jobs and Business, Transport and Employment and Skills strategies; all of which have updated to align with Barnsley 2030, regional priorities and updated Government Policy and directions. Section 1.4 identifies key issues and challenges that are not adequately considered in the current strategy.
- 5.2 **Option Two: Support consultation on the DRAFT Housing Strategy.**
Preferred Option.

6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Section 1.4 identifies the several key challenges/opportunities which have arisen since the 2014-33 Strategy was published. These changes need to be reflected in this key document which shapes the over-arching Strategic Housing priorities for our borough and provide the Strategic Direction and Alignment for other key housing and health related strategies as referenced in the Strategy itself.

7. LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Draft Housing Strategy 2024-28
Appendix 1A: Appendix to Strategy: Strategy and Policy Drivers

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Housing Strategy 2014-33 & Cabinet Decision 9/4/2014/6.3
If you would like to inspect background papers for this report, please email governance@barnsley.gov.uk so that appropriate arrangements can be made

10. REPORT SIGN OFF

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| Financial consultation & sign off | Senior Financial Services officer consulted and date: Ashley Gray 12/09/2023 |
| Legal consultation & sign off | Legal Services officer consulted and date. Kate Gothard 16/08/2023 |

Report Author: Sarah Clyde
Post: Head of Strategic Housing
Date:20/09/2023