

Cherwell District Council

Executive

3 December 2018

<p>Draft Housing Strategy 2018 - 2023 : 'Cherwell - A Place to Prosper'</p>
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Report of Assistant Director Housing, Wellbeing directorate

This report is public

Purpose of report

To consider and approve the draft Housing Strategy 2018-2023 and Action Plan 2019-20 for public consultation for 7 weeks from December 2018 to January 2019.

1.0 Recommendations

The meeting is recommended:

- 1.1 To approve the draft Strategy as an accurate reflection of Cherwell District Council's priorities and ambitions for meeting the housing needs of our communities.
- 1.2 To approve the draft Housing Strategy Action Plan which sets out key actions for delivery in 2019/20.
- 1.3 To approve proposals for the public consultation phase before adoption of the final Strategy in March 2019.

2.0 Introduction

The previous Housing Strategy for Cherwell District Council was published in 2011 covering the period 2012-2017. It incorporated the Homelessness Strategy which is now a standalone and refreshed Strategy adopted in July 2018 and covering the period 2018-20. Homelessness is therefore not included in the draft Housing Strategy in any level of detail although clearly delivering new build housing and improving existing housing contributes to the prevention and resolution of homelessness.

The strategy sets out our priorities for responding to the wider housing needs of the district but with a focus on affordable housing which is the council's key role. It takes particular account of the current and future needs of groups such as older people, disabled people and young people. The housing needs of these groups are a priority in terms of vulnerability, access to housing, affordability and achieving positive health outcomes.

It is not a statutory requirement to have a Housing Strategy but is seen as good practice in setting out the Council's priorities and plans for meeting housing need based on local assessments of need. This includes intelligence from key internal and external partners such as Build!, the Bicester Team, Development Management Oxfordshire County Council and Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal. It is also important that we are clear and open with our partners (particularly Registered Providers (RPs)) and communities about what we expect to deliver. We aim to set out clearly how we will create the right environment and support them in their work to deliver housing against the identified need.

We expect the Housing Strategy to guide and influence partners, particularly developers and RPs, in helping to deliver quality housing that meets our community's needs and enables them to live healthy, positive lives. We expect the final Strategy to be a material consideration in Development Management decisions and the evolution of Planning policy.

3.0 Report Details

3.1 Since our previous strategy was produced there have been some major changes in legislation and national policy. In summary :

3.1.1 Welfare Reforms – The Welfare Reform Act 2012 introduced significant changes to the benefits system including new caps on local housing allowance (LHA) and housing benefit, the creation of Universal Credit (UC) and the reform of Council Tax Benefit and Disability Living Allowance (DLA). The Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 contains further changes including the ending of automatic entitlement for 18-21 year olds and the restriction of benefits for families with more than two children.

3.1.2 The Care Act 2014 – The Care Act 2014 extends the role of local authorities with adult social care responsibilities who provide assistance to people who have care needs. The Act defines housing as a 'health-related service', highlighting the need for integrating care and support provision. To meet these needs adult social services departments will need to work with local housing authorities to provide a range of housing and support services, such as supported housing and extra care housing.

3.1.3 Housing and Planning Act 2016 – The Housing and Planning Act 2016 introduced a number of policy changes including:

- the potential for extension of the Right to Buy (RTB) to RPs
- starter homes (a home available to first time buyers between 23 and 39 at a discount of 20%) were defined as affordable housing for the purposes of the National Planning Policy Framework
- local planning authorities have a duty to keep a register of demand for self-build properties and grant planning permission for adequate serviced plots to meet the measured demand for self-build housing in the district.
- new and changed enforcement powers for local housing authorities aimed at tackling rogue landlords

3.1.4 The Housing White Paper 2017 - 'Fixing our broken housing market', released in February 2017 set out the Government's proposals to:

- make changes to the planning system to facilitate development and build homes faster
- ensure the required infrastructure is delivered at the right time
- support smaller builders, local authorities and housing associations to build
- support building for rent and custom and self-build initiatives

- provide more support for first time buyers alongside other affordable provision
 - introduce a revised methodology for calculating housing need.
- 3.1.5 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA) - implemented in April 2018 and has substantially increased the duties owed by local authorities to homeless people and people threatened with homelessness. These include a greater emphasis on homelessness prevention with councils being required to help people at risk of losing accommodation as soon as they are threatened with homelessness within 56 days and increased duties to households not in priority need.
- 3.1.6 National Planning Policy Framework – the government published the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and amended Planning Policy Guidance in 2018. Changes include:
- introduction of a new Affordable Housing definition. Social rented homes are reintroduced into the government’s definition and it is broadened to include Build to Rent units (marketed at an affordable rent), Starter Homes and Discounted Market Sales housing.
 - At least 10% of homes on 10+ dwelling schemes should be for affordable home ownership, with exemption rural exception sites, Build to Rent schemes and specialist housing proposals (such as for the elderly or students).
 - Introduction of ‘entry level exception sites’ suitable for first-time buyers or those looking to rent their first home. These sites must comprise a high proportion of entry-level homes and adjacent to existing settlements.
 - Shifting viability assessment from the decision-making stage to the plan making stage and ‘where up to date policies have been set out the contributions expected from development, planning applications that comply with them should be assumed to be viable’.
 - Introduction of a new standardised housing need assessment
- 3.1.7 The Social Housing Green Paper – The government published the green paper ‘A new deal for social housing’ on 14 August 2018, setting out a proposed strategy for reforming social housing. It aims to rebalance the relationship between landlords and residents, tackle stigma and ensure social housing can act as a stable base and support social mobility. It is based around five themes:
- ensuring homes are safe and decent
 - effective resolution of complaints about social landlords
 - empowering residents and strengthening the regulator
 - tackling stigma and celebrating thriving communities
 - expanding supply and supporting home ownership.
- 3.1.8 Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Licensing reforms - From 1 October 2018 the Government extended the number of properties subject to mandatory licensing so it is now a requirement that HMOs that are occupied by 5 or more people from two or more separate households regardless of how many floors are subject to mandatory licensing.

These developments have been taken in to account and reflected in the Strategy.

3.5 Key Facts – State of the District

3.6 This is the evidence base that has been collated and used to identify what our priorities should be and where the challenges and gaps are. Just as the Homelessness Review informed the Homelessness Strategy the State of the District has informed the

draft Housing Strategy and will be a public document published as a resource that partners and interested parties can refer to.

3.9 Housing Strategy 2019 – 2022 : The Priorities

We have arrived at the following 3 high level priorities in consultation with the Lead Member, Housing and key internal and external partners. We have also drawn on the points raised by the 20 Councillors who attended a Member workshop about the Strategy on 9 October 2018.

3.10 PRIORITY 1: Increase the supply and diversity of affordable housing to ensure the right types of housing are available in the right places.

3.11 PRIORITY 2 : Improve the quality and sustainability of our homes and build thriving, healthy communities

3.12 PRIORITY 3 : Enhance opportunities for residents to access suitable homes and have housing choices

The Strategy expands on these priorities to describe what we are aiming to achieve and deliver. The action plan details the 'how' in 2019/20 and will be refreshed and monitored annually in recognition of the changing policy landscape, local authority structures and resources and key partnerships.

4.0 Conclusion

4.1 The Housing Strategy is an important document in setting out the council's ambitions and priorities against Housing which is a key Business Plan priority (relates directly to BP priorities : Deliver Affordable Housing, Prevent Homelessness and Deliver Innovative and Effective Housing Schemes but also to wider priorities such as Promote Health and Wellbeing, Enhance Community Resilience and Support and Safeguard Vulnerable People).

4.2 It is important that the Strategy is consulted on publicly for a reasonable time period. The proposed timeline is :

Consultation to start on Friday 7/12/18 at 12 noon (after the 3 day standstill period).

Consultation to close 25/1/19 which allows 7 weeks (to allow for xmas period)

The final Strategy will be brought to Executive on 4/3/19.

4.3 The Strategy is supported by a preliminary equalities impact assessment. A fuller assessment which takes account of consultation responses will support the final Strategy.

5.0 Financial and Resource Implications

5.1 Delivery of the Housing Strategy requires significant investment of time and resource by the council.

Decisions about specific projects and developments will need to be made, depending on the business case, throughout the lifetime of the Strategy.

Comments checked by:

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6.0 Legal Implications

- 6.1 The Housing Strategy is not a statutory requirement but takes account of the relevant legislation regarding housing.

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7.0 Decision Information

Key Decision

Financial Threshold Met: no

Community Impact Threshold Met: yes

Wards Affected: All

Lead Councillor : Councillor John Donaldson - Housing

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
1	Action Plan 2019-20
2	Key Achievements 2012-17
3	Strategic Context in Detail
4	State of the District's Housing 2018
5	Equalities Impact Assessment
Background Papers	
None	
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