

Meeting date: 17 November 2022

Report to: Economic Development and Managed Growth Scrutiny Board

Report title: Draft Housing Strategy

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Wards affected:

- All Wards | Bickenhill | Blythe | Castle Bromwich | Chelmsley Wood |
 Dorridge/Hockley Heath | Elmdon | Kingshurst/Fordbridge | Knowle |
 Lyndon | Meriden | Olton | Shirley East | Shirley South |
 Shirley West | Silhill | Smith's Wood | St Alphege
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Public/private report: Public

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to summarise the draft Housing Strategy and Implementation Plan, set out responses received to the consultation and invite the comments of Scrutiny Board. The views of Scrutiny Board, together with consultation responses, will be reported to Cabinet when the draft Housing Strategy is considered for final approval.
- 1.2 An Executive Summary, the draft Housing Strategy and Implementation Plan are provided at appendices 1, 2 and 3.
- 1.3 The Strategy covers the 10-year period 2023 – 2032. The proposed vision (section 1) is that,

“Everyone in the Borough is able to access housing at the point of need and has opportunities to create sustainable homes in thriving communities”.
- 1.4 Section 2 (pages 2 – 7) sets out the local context with regard to other Council strategies and regional and national policy considerations. Six key housing challenges are identified, set out in paragraph 3.3 of this report.

- 1.5 Sections 3 – 8 provide the substantive parts of the Strategy with each section setting out challenges and opportunities followed by the Council's ambition. These are set out in paragraphs 3.4 and 3.5 below.
- 1.6 Section 9 covers implementation with regard to governance, delivery and partnerships. An appendix to the draft Strategy provides an explanation of some of the technical terms referred to in the Strategy.
- 1.7 The Implementation Plan covers the 3-year period 2023-2025 and focuses on new activity. It sets out 24 'Key Things To Do' covering actions across Sections 3 – 8 of the Strategy. These are summarised in paragraph 3.7 of the report.
- 1.8 A 6-week consultation on the draft Strategy and Implementation Plan ended on 2 November. Paragraph 6.2 explains how the consultation was done and paragraphs 3.8 – 3.16 and Appendix 4 summarise the responses received.
- 1.9 The Scrutiny Board is invited to comment on the draft Housing Strategy and consider the consultation responses received. The Board is invited to provide any recommendations to Cabinet for when they consider the final draft Housing Strategy for approval.

2. Decision(s) Recommended

- 2.1 To consider consultation responses received to the draft Housing Strategy and Implementation Plan
- 2.2 To make any recommendations to Cabinet when the draft Housing Strategy and Implementation Plan are reported for final approval in early 2023.

Report Title: Draft Housing Strategy

3. Matters for Consideration

Housing Strategy and Implementation Plan

- 3.1 The draft Housing Strategy covers the 10-year period 2023 -2032 and is supported by an Implementation Plan for the 3-year period 2023-2025. Both are 'Deliverables' in the 2022/23 Solihull Council Plan.
- 3.2 Housing has important and wide-ranging relationships to communities and individual well-being. Reflecting this, the Strategy is relatively lengthy but is summarised at the start with a 'Plan on a Page' and there is also a 6-page Executive Summary.
- 3.3 The main aspects of the draft Housing Strategy are,
1. The proposed housing vision - "Everyone in the Borough is able to access housing at the point of need and has opportunities to create sustainable homes in thriving communities".
 2. The key housing challenges, identified as,
 - Delivering excellent housing services
 - Making the best use of the Borough's housing, across all tenures
 - Tackling climate change through the retrofit of privately owned and socially rented homes, and building new housing to higher environmental standards
 - Enabling good housing and care choices and pathways for older people
 - Helping people with additional support needs
 - Addressing the affordability of housing to meet the shortage of social rented homes and help younger people and other first-time buyers to access home ownership.
- 3.4 Responding to these challenges, sections 3 – 8 of the Strategy are based on,
3. Building Thriving Communities and Wellbeing
 4. Making Best Use of Existing Housing
 5. Tackling Climate Change
 6. Meeting the Housing Needs of Older People
 7. Helping People with Additional Support Needs
 8. Meeting Local Housing Needs Through New Development.

3.5 The Strategy sets out the Council’s ambitions against each of these themes. These are summarised below.

Strategic Housing Themes and Council Ambitions

Strategic Theme	Ambition
<p>Section 3</p> <p>Building Thriving Communities and Wellbeing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe, healthy and connected communities • Maximise the contribution of housing to meeting people’s health, care and support needs • Strong Locality Working through partnerships, housing plans, policies and management • Enable a strong voluntary and community sector, strengthening housing and care related community involvement and support • Build thriving communities through new development • Ensure that the right housing is in the right place to meet local needs • Prevent problems at a neighbourhood level - identify and tackle any ‘problem sites’.

Strategic Theme	Ambition
<p>Section 4</p> <p>Making Best Use of Existing Housing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable a good and well-maintained housing stock, suitable for its occupiers (all tenures) • Assist older, vulnerable and poorer homeowners through grant assistance and ‘signposting’ • Develop a fairer, more secure, and high quality private rented sector • Take an evidenced based approach to private rented sector improvement (‘Supported Exempt Accommodation’, ‘Selective licensing’, ‘Houses in Multiple Occupation’) • Identify and act against empty homes • Well managed social housing (asset management;

	lettings, tenancy management and fraud).
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Strategic Theme	Ambition
Section 5 Tackling Climate Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the Council’s Climate Change Declaration through housing policies, investment decisions and partnerships • Deliver place-based high quality, cost- effective domestic retrofit to low-income households • Support the ‘able to pay’ market by helping people to access good information about retrofit • Develop and support local retrofit supply chain capability and accredited supplier capacity • Raise the energy performance in the private rented sector through regulation and enforcement (Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards) • Raise energy performance levels in social housing (Council and housing associations) • Build and commission housing to more environmentally sustainable standards.

Strategic Theme	Ambition
Section 6 Meeting the Housing Needs of Older People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure older people have good housing and support options and can make informed decisions about them • Promote independent living by extending the take-up of grant assistance to help people remain in their own homes • Develop more accessible, adaptable and specialist housing for older people • Ensure that health, care, housing and community support services work effectively together.

Strategic Theme	Ambition
Section 7 Helping people with additional support needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that people are able to access housing and support services when it is needed • Deliver effective homeless prevention and advice • Ensure disabled people have the same rights to home security and to health and other services • Implement the agreed Veterans Pledges Action Plan • Help people from refugee and migrant communities successfully navigate the UK housing market and sustain their tenancies in the private rented sector.

Strategic Theme	Ambition
Section 8 Meeting Local Housing Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver more affordable homes to meet housing need and improve the affordability of housing • Enable a better balanced and more diverse housing market in Solihull • Accelerate housing delivery • Promote sustainable development and housing quality • Promote self-build and community led housing approaches.

3.6 The themes do not have an order of priority. In many cases, the challenges and themes are inter-related so delivery in one area of activity will also contribute to others. For example, thriving communities help tackle loneliness and can enable older people to live independently; providing specialist housing meets the needs of vulnerable people and can help make best use of housing.

3.7 The Implementation Plan proposes a number of 'Key Things To Do'. The bracketed numbers refer to the detailed actions in the Implementation Plan.

- The health and housing relationship is strengthened through a 'task and finish' approach and health assessments of housing policies and plans (1,2)

- Good use is made of land in all areas with any local problem sites tackled (3)
- Specific and detailed actions to help ensure Solihull has a well-managed private rented sector (4 – 7)
- Social housing management is strengthened by the creation of a senior-level forum of all Registered Providers (8)
- The environmental sustainability of existing homes is improved through housing 'retrofit' with particular attention to helping vulnerable households (9)
- Building new Council and Council commissioned housing to net zero (10)
- Promoting independent living for older people (11,12,13)
- Increasing the supply of accessible and adaptable housing (14)
- Review and refresh the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, develop specialist homelessness pathways, improve services for young people and rough sleepers and reduce use of temporary accommodation (15, 16, 17, 18)
- Encourage more in-Borough housing provision, partnerships and services for younger adults with disabilities (19, 20)
- Ensure that Solihull's housing policies provide excellent standards in assisting Veterans (21)
- Increasing the supply of social rented and affordable home ownership (22,23, 24).

Consultation Responses

3.8 The consultation approach is set out in section 6.2 below.

3.9 42 responses were received to the consultation with these being received from,

- 17 private individuals
- 5 charities
- 5 housing associations
- 4 Parish Councils
- 3 statutory bodies
- 1 Solihull Council elected Member
- 1 community organisation
- 1 local authority

- 1 health organisation
- 1 consultancy
- 3 anonymous responses.

In addition, there were also some internal responses from Solihull Council officers.

- 3.10 In general, consultation responses welcomed and were supportive of the Strategy and the Council's approach.
- 3.11 There was strong support for the proposed housing vision and ambitions,
- 25 of the 34 who responded agreed with the proposed vision.
 - 27 of the 31 agreed with the housing ambitions set out in the draft Housing Strategy.
- 3.12 The consultation responses are summarised in Appendix 4 and have been arranged to follow the sections of the Housing Strategy.
- 3.13 Some responses raise matters that are outside of the Council's control or the scope of a Housing Strategy (health workforce issues, for e.g.). Other points will be taken forward in more detail through work already in progress (e.g. Domestic Abuse and homelessness strategy work).
- 3.14 In some cases, people expressed concerns about funding, including implications for Council Tax. New initiatives will be subject to their own detailed financial assessment before they are approved, and many initiatives draw on other finance such as government grants. For e.g. new affordable development may be funded by the Council's Housing Revenue Account, Homes England grant and developer contributions.
- 3.15 Recurring themes from the consultation responses helps to highlight a number of important considerations,
- Strengthening the connections between housing, social care and health
 - The need for effective infrastructure provision, including transport connectivity
 - Building partnerships with a wide range of housing providers, and in particular almshouses operating in the Borough
 - The potential to develop the 'Green Economy' locally and how this can promote inclusive growth
 - Maximising social value through Council contracts
 - Older people should have a range of housing options and be able to receive good advice on what is best for them
 - The need for more attention to be given to young people and help for first time

buyers.

3.16 Officers will further consider the consultation responses and make amendments to the draft Housing Strategy and Implementation Plan before it is reported to Cabinet. The views of Scrutiny Board will be an important part of this.

4. What options have been considered and what is the evidence telling us about them?

4.1 The Council is not required to produce a Housing Strategy, but it is a 'Deliverable' outcome in the 2022/23 Solihull Council Plan and there are strong reasons for having a published Strategy (see paragraphs 5.1 – 5.4 below).

4.2 With regard to the Implementation Plan, many of the 'Key Things' will have options for action as they are developed. These will be assessed on a case-by-case basis with recommendations brought to the relevant Cabinet decision-maker.

5. Reasons for recommending preferred option

5.1 Housing in both its built form and its policies and services are important to the Council's overall vision 'where everyone has an equal chance to be healthier, happier, safer and more prosperous through growth that creates opportunities for all'.

5.2 Delivering effective housing plans requires excellent partnership working at many different levels. By clearly setting out the Council's vision and ambitions this Housing Strategy aims to provide a common and shared reference point to facilitate excellent partnership working and help all stakeholders maximise the contribution housing can make to wider objectives.

5.3 The Strategy is cross-sector and cross-tenure with the intention that housing policies are cohesive and complement other Council plans and strategies.

5.4 The Strategy sets the direction for Council and SCH housing plans and strategies, provides a clear basis for partner engagement and helps strengthen funding bids.

5.5 Implementation of the Strategy and Plan will be monitored by the Strategic Housing Board with reports provided to the Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Planning and Housing.

6. Implications and Considerations

6.1 State how the proposals in this report contribute to the priorities in the [Council Plan](#):

Priority:	Contribution:
People and Communities: 1. Improving outcomes for children and young people in Solihull. 2. Good quality, responsive, and dignified care and support for Adults in Solihull when they need it.	The draft Strategy considers younger adults with disabilities and young people (Section 6) and older people (Section 7)

Priority:	Contribution:
3. Take action to improve life chances and health outcomes in our most disadvantaged communities. 4. Enable communities to thrive.	Meeting the housing needs of older people and improving health outcomes are important in the draft Housing Strategy Section 3 of the Strategy is concerned with 'Building Thriving Communities'
Economy: 5. Develop and promote the borough's economy, with a focus on revitalising our town and local centres. 6. Maximising the opportunities of UK Central and HS2. 7. Increase the supply of affordable and social housing that is environmentally sustainable.	Section 8 of the draft Strategy 'Meeting Local Housing Needs Through New Development' focuses on maximising the delivery of affordable and social housing
Environment: 8. Enhance our natural environment, improve air quality and reduce net carbon emissions.	Section 5 'Tackling Climate Change' sets out the Council's ambition to implement 'domestic retrofit' to help reduce net carbon emissions from residential buildings. New affordable homes built by the Council will be to net zero standards.
9. Promote employee wellbeing	N/A

6.2 Consultation and Scrutiny:

6.2.1. The following documents were consulted on for the 6-week period 21 September – 2 November 2022,

- Draft Housing Strategy (and Executive Summary)
- Draft Implementation Plan
- Health Equalities Assessment Tool
- Fair Treatment Assessment
- Housing Intelligence Dashboard.

6.2.2. A consultation webpage with each of these documents was created with an on-line response form. Responses could also be received by email or post.

6.2.3. A wide range of organisations were contacted directly to make them aware and invite their responses including,

- Solihull Council Members

- Parish and Town Councils
- Solihull MPs
- West Midlands Combined Authority
- West Midlands Local Authorities
- Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
- Homes England
- Regulator of Social Housing
- Housing associations operating in Solihull
- National Residential Landlords Association
- Housing and advice organisations contracted with the Council
- Use of 'Stay Connected' and 'Latest News' to make the consultation known more generally.

6.2.4 In addition, notification was provided to members of a range of multi-agency boards and groups including the Solihull Health and Wellbeing Board, SCH Board, Strategic Housing Options with Care Group, Multi Agency Homelessness Forum and the Voluntary and Community Sector Engagement group.

6.3 Financial implications:

6.3.1. No immediate implications as a result of this report.

6.4 Legal implications:

6.4.1. Local authorities do not have a statutory duty to produce a Housing Strategy and there are no immediate implications as a result of this report.

6.4.2. Specific initiatives in the draft Strategy, such as greater regulation of the private rented sector, are reliant on specific legal and regulatory processes being followed before policies can be agreed and adopted by the Council.

6.5 Risk implications, including Risk Appetite:

6.5.1. No immediate risks as a result of this report. It is important to note that specific parts of the Housing Strategy have detailed risk assessments.

6.5.2. Overall, the successful implementation of the housing vision and the housing strategic objectives will depend on a wide range of factors outside of the Council's control. This includes levels of government grant funding, legislation, partner investment and

6.6 Equality implications:

6.6.1. A Fair Treatment Assessment (FTA) has been completed for the Housing Strategy and this formed one of the documents that was consulted on.

6.6.2. The Housing Strategy aims to deliver positive outcomes for people with Protected Characteristics. This is set out in more detail in the draft FTA but includes,

- Health – the draft Housing Strategy places an emphasis on how housing investment and management can help tackle health inequalities and promote better outcomes
- Age – Section 6 of the draft Housing Strategy is concerned with meeting the housing needs of older people
- Disability – Section 7 looks at helping people with additional support needs and this includes younger adults with disabilities, veterans and those at risk of homelessness
- Socio-economic – Section 8 focuses on meeting local housing needs through the provision of more affordable housing.

6.7 Linkages to our work with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), Local Enterprise Partnership or the Birmingham & Solihull Integrated Care System (ICS):

6.7.1. The draft Strategy references the important role of the WMCA in helping the Council to realise its objectives (paragraphs 2.30 and 2.31, page 6).

6.7.2. The implementation of the Integrated Care System is also of great importance to realising the proposed housing vision. This is identified in Section 3 of the Strategy (paragraphs 3.10 and 3.17).

6.7.3. As described at 6.2 above, WMCA and ICS officers were invited to comment on the draft Housing Strategy and associated documents.

7. List of appendices referred to

7.1 Appendix 1. Executive Summary

7.2 Appendix 2. Draft Housing Strategy

7.3 Appendix 3. Draft Implementation Plan

7.3 Appendix 4. Consultation Responses Summary.

8. Background papers used to compile this report

8.1 None.

9. List of Other Relevant Documents

9.1 Health Equalities Assessment

9.2 Fair Treatment Assessment