



<u>Committee and date</u>	<u>Item</u>
Cabinet 18 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	<u>Public</u>

## FINAL DRAFT HOUSING STRATEGY REPORT

**Responsible Officer** Mark Barrow, Executive Director Place  
Email: [mark.barrow@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:mark.barrow@shropshire.gov.uk) Tel: 01743 258919

---

### 1. Summary

- 1.1 On the 15<sup>th</sup> June 2020, Cabinet resolved to endorse the Housing Strategy proposed vision and objectives and approve a six week public consultation for the draft housing strategy. It was also resolved that a final version of the Housing Strategy, having considered any relevant consultation responses, be brought back to Cabinet for approval.
- 1.2 The 6-week consultation commenced on the 5<sup>th</sup> August 2020 and resulted in the submission of 60 responses from a broad range of our stakeholders including residents, Parish Councils, businesses and the voluntary sector. The responses reinforced the pivotal role that housing plays in our lives together with its many facets.
- 1.3 This report sets out these responses and proposed actions and amendments to the Housing Strategy.

### 2. Recommendations

#### Cabinet is asked to;

- Approve the Housing Strategy 2020 to 2025

## REPORT

### 3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 3.1 There is no statutory obligation to produce a housing strategy in England, although as a strategic housing authority there is a duty to periodically assess and review the housing condition and needs in their area. Latterly, such is the

local and national importance, and prominence given to housing and in particular the Government's attempts and ambition to fix the "broken housing market", that most Councils have housing as a strategic priority and produce a housing strategy to articulate their ambition, vision and objectives.

3.2 The proposed Housing Strategy will demonstrate how the Council will:

- Target housing solutions within the Council area.
- Broaden the housing range for residents.
- Highlight to tenants and residents the forthcoming challenges which both the Council and they themselves will face.
- Structure the Council's approach to housing, as relevant to the Local Development Plan.
- Meet its housing legal requirements.

3.3 An initial screening Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment ("ESIIA") was undertaken at the consultation stage of the draft Housing Strategy. Following the consultation on the Strategy, any identified impacts in equality terms, whether negative or positive have been considered and the ESIIA has been updated accordingly. We would expect at least a low to medium positive impact across the Protected Characteristic groupings, with positive impacts being sought for the groupings of Age and Disability and for people at risk of social exclusion.

3.4 This will include households who are at risk of social exclusion due to vulnerabilities or complex needs, eg young people leaving care, veterans and serving members of the armed forces; people who are at risk of homelessness, and people who are in low income households, including those living in rural isolation and/or living in fuel poverty. There will be ongoing efforts to engage with people in the Protected Characteristic groupings, particularly where low levels of responses to public consultation have been received to date.

3.5 We will continue to engage with all Members as community leaders, and through Cabinet and the Portfolio Holder, which will help the Council to ensure that information, feedback and concerns are raised through a variety of channels and that actions may then be identified as necessary to seek to mitigate any negative impacts for any Protected Characteristic groupings within the community, and to enhance positive impacts across communities and across our rural county as a whole

#### **4. Financial Implications**

4.1 An innovative and robust Housing Strategy seeks to advise potential investors in Shropshire's housing services and ensure development is what is required and where it is needed.

4.2 The implementation of the Housing Strategy will be detailed in an Action Plan, which will detail short, medium and long term actions. Any actions with capital

funding implications will be pursued through the Council's Capital Programme, where projects will be appraised on an individual basis following the process detailed in the Council's Capital Strategy. Each potential action would need to be evaluated on its own merits, and be subject to further Cabinet approvals as necessary, prior to inclusion in the Capital Programme.

## 5. Climate Change Appraisal

- 5.1 **Energy and fuel consumption:** Positive effect. One of the key priorities of the Housing Strategy is to minimise the environmental impact of existing housing stock and to positively influence the design of future housing development to maximise resource efficiencies and to ensure optimum use of sustainable construction techniques. Maximising energy efficiency in new and existing housing will also contribute positively by reducing energy costs for occupiers, particularly those on limited incomes;
- 5.2 **Renewable energy generation:** Positive effect. The Housing Strategy will provide opportunities to foster the generation and storage of renewable energy as part of the refurbishment of existing housing stock and the design of new housing;
- 5.3 **Carbon offsetting or mitigation:** Positive effect. The Housing Strategy will provide opportunities to foster the capture and storage of carbon emissions as part of the design of sustainable urban drainage and open space integral to the design of new housing schemes;
- 5.4 **Climate Change resilience and adaptation:** Positive effect. The Housing Strategy will provide positive opportunities to ensure that the refurbishment of existing housing stock and the design of new housing deliver accommodation which is resilient to more extreme weather events and enables occupiers to adapt to the changing climate.

## 6. Background

- 6.1 The rationale and background behind the need and role of the Housing Strategy was outlined in the Cabinet report of 15<sup>th</sup> June 2020 and in summary:-
  - The existing Strategy, which was jointly formulated and adopted by Herefordshire and Shropshire, expired in 2015.
  - Reflecting the huge changes to primary legislation and guidance, the Housing Strategy reflects the Council's role in discharging a range of statutory duties.
  - Providing a link to wider priority policy areas such as economic growth and climate change.
- 6.2 The Housing Strategy 2020–2025 has been developed around the vision 'All homes are well designed decent homes of high quality, which will protect Shropshire's unique urban and rural environments and ensure it is a great place to live. That all Shropshire residents have access to the 'right home in the right place' to support and promote their health and wellbeing throughout their lives'.

- 6.3 It is important that in considering and addressing these fundamental challenges, we articulate through a strategy our objectives and develop the necessary framework on how the Council will engage and work with our many stakeholders and partners to deliver housing and housing related services. The need for focus on key objectives and for joint working is never more pressing than at the current time.
- 6.4 The Housing Strategy was drafted prior to the current Covid 19 crisis and whilst the issues and objectives remain unchanged, many issues have been exacerbated, particularly regarding housing affordability and homelessness.
- 6.5 The six objectives attracted comment in equal measure and largely provided constructive and positive responses as set out in Appendix 3. The objectives and summarised responses are set out below.

**6.5.1 Objective 1**

**To meet the overall current and future housing needs of Shropshire's growing population by addressing the housing needs of particular groups within communities**

Respondents drew attention to geographic variations and to different challenges in each area and that there should be consideration of a broader range of housing options. Demographic challenges were referenced and particularly the need to address housing solutions for older people and those of the young, these together with needing to retain younger residents in communities, and those economically active. Potential solutions were suggested for action post Covid. Infrastructure and resource implications were also highlighted.

**6.5.2 Objective 2**

**To ensure people whose housing needs are not met through the local open market housing can access housing that meets their needs**

Respondents noted that alternative options were required with specific reference to those households caught in the gap between market and social provision. The suggestion was made that the solution was wider than bricks and mortar with references being made to the wider community, environment and infrastructure necessary to create a sense of 'Place'. The need for innovation and creativity with stakeholders and a joined-up approach with registered providers was highlighted.

**6.5.3 Objective 3**

**Working to reduce and prevent households from becoming homeless and where this is not possible ensuring they have safe, secure and appropriate accommodation until they are able to resettlement**

Respondents were overwhelmingly supportive of this objective. Reference was made to the need for a greater understanding of the complex reasons behind homelessness and the need for a strong emphasis on practical and emotional support. A multi-agency response was required and engagement

with the private sector. There were practical suggestions, such as bringing empty homes back into use and exploring the potential use of underused buildings which are not currently residential.

Whilst there was support for Objective 3, it was felt that the wording of the objective should be strengthened and the words 'working to reduce' to be deleted and 'prevent' changed to 'preventing'.

#### 6.5.4 Objective 4

**To ensure people can access a mix of housing options within Shropshire's urban and rural landscape, that best meets their needs in terms of tenure, safety, size, type, design and location of housing**

Respondents noted the need to address rural housing issues which in turn could help sustain rural services and facilities. Again, the importance of Place was referenced. There was a need to explore all opportunities and implication that there was a broader range of potential solutions. The benefits of good housing are well documented and were referenced here, in so much as housing is intertwined with health and social cohesion. Poor quality housing was highlighted as a potential focus for action, as was the need for partnership working.

#### 6.5.5 Objective 5

**To minimise the environmental impact of existing housing stock and future housing development in the interest of climate change. To work with policy makers, developers and private and social landlords to maximise resource efficiencies and to ensure optimum use of sustainable construction techniques.**

Respondents largely supported this objective and welcomed the use of modern method of construction techniques. Suggestions were made that incentives for private landlords could be explored as well as encouraging excellence in building and refurbishment. Modern methods of construction were viewed as presenting opportunities both environmentally and economically for the County, including linking apprenticeships and local employers. The re-use of empty properties had numerous references together with the importance of green space and corridors. New housing was noted as not necessarily being the only answer – use of local materials and 'greening' of development, along with making better use of existing stock should be actioned.

As with Objectives 3 and 6, it was felt that this Objective needed to be strengthened to become a more positive statement. As such, 'to work with policy makers, developers and private and social landlords to maximise' has been deleted.

#### 6.5.6 Objective 6

**To support the drive for economic growth by ensuring that there is enough housing supply to enable businesses to attract and retain the local workforce that they need**

This objective was the least supported. It was highlighted that housing and economic growth need to be considered in tandem and there is a need to ensure that economic growth and housing are equally matched in terms of their provision. As with Objective 5 it was noted that local young people need to be involved in the actual developments through apprenticeships and opportunities for local companies.

This objective is proposed to be strengthened with the words “To support the drive for economic growth by” being deleted.

6.6 The consultation has provided affirmation of the focus and content of the Housing Strategy 2020–2025, and resulted in the need to amend objective wording whilst retaining the emphasis as follows :-

- Objectives 1 and 2 will remain unchanged.
- Objective 3 will be amended to “preventing households from becoming homeless and where this is not possible ensuring they have safe, secure and appropriate accommodation until they are able to resettlement”.
- Objective 4 will remain unchanged.
- Objective 5 to be amended to “To minimise the environmental impact of existing housing stock and future housing development in the interest of climate change, and to maximise resource efficiencies and to ensure optimum use of sustainable construction techniques”.
- Objective 6 to be amended to “Ensuring that there is enough housing supply to enable businesses to attract and retain the local workforce that they need”.

## **7. Additional Information and Next Steps**

7.1 The Housing Strategy once approved will provide the strategic framework in which to develop an Action Plan for its implementation. It is acknowledged that this Strategy cannot be delivered in isolation of our many stakeholders and partners. Therefore an Action Plan will be prepared in partnership with these stakeholders to identify the short, medium and long term actions that will deliver these strategic goals. This will incorporate where appropriate actions and suggestions made by respondents to the formal consultation to the draft Strategy. The Action Plan will reference how progress will be monitored and measured.

7.2 Progress on the delivery of the Strategy through the Action Plan will be reported on an annual basis to Scrutiny and the Place Overview Committee.

## **8. Conclusions**

8.1 Approval of the Housing Strategy 2020–2025 will help to inform the Council’s housing related services and make sure that these align with local need and demand, therefore supporting effective and efficient use of resources. It will

also allow the Council to communicate clearly with residents, developers, landlords, and other stakeholders and partners, about the Council's housing priorities, and assist us to achieve better housing outcomes for the County.

<b>List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)</b>
---

<b>Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)</b>
--

Cllr Rob Macey - Portfolio Holder for Planning and Strategic Planning
---

<b>Local Member</b>
---------------------

All members
-------------

<b>Appendices</b>
-------------------

Appendix 1 - Housing Strategy 2020 – 2025
---

Appendix 2 – ESIIA
--------------------

Appendix 3 – Consultation response summary
--