

22 June 2017 at 7.00 pm

Conference Room, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks
Despatched: 15.06.17



Planning Advisory Committee

Supplementary Agenda

	Pages	Contact
6. Housing Strategy 2017	(Pages 1 - 4)	Gavin Missons Tel: 01732 227332

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Housing Strategy 2017 (Supplementary Information)

This paper provides a summary of the feedback received from consultation on the Draft Housing Strategy and associated Local Housing Needs Study. In respect of the Local Housing Needs Study, housing surveys were sent to every household in the District and a response rate of 18.2% was achieved, which far exceeded expectations. In respect of the subsequent Draft Housing Strategy, a period of consultation was undertaken from 19/05/17 - 09/06/17.

Ranking of the District's housing priorities by key stakeholders			
	Low	Medium	High
Building homes to buy on the open market	46%	31%	23%
Building affordable homes to rent	0%	21%	79%
Building affordable homes to buy (shared ownership, shared equity)	7%	29%	64%
Building executive homes	92%	8%	0%
Building properties designed for older people	7%	14%	79%
Building properties designed for people with specialist needs	8%	46%	46%
Improving the quality of existing stock	18%	55%	27%
Encouraging and enabling self-build	75%	17%	8%

- Building affordable homes to rent and buy and building properties designed for older people were ranked as the highest priorities by stakeholders;
- Building properties designed for people with specialist needs and improving the quality of existing stock were generally considered to be of medium priority, followed by building homes on the open market;
- The lowest priority was given to encouraging and enabling self-build and building executive homes (that said, the District Council's self-build register has already received 31 expressions of interest);
- Rising house prices means that first-time buyers are finding it increasingly difficult to get on the housing ladder - people have no option but to rent, and for longer, and young adults cannot afford to leave home and live independently;
- High housing costs compared with incomes (including high private rental costs as well as the high cost of owner-occupation), which means that shared-ownership is necessary to support the local economy;
- A lack of small properties available for those who wish to downsize, which is particularly relevant in the context of an ageing population;
- There is a shortage of housing for older people and those with high health and/or social requirements, but this needs to be in the right location with appropriate services and facilities;

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- The increase in those with a diagnosis of dementia will impact on housing needs as there is limited existing provision except for expensive care homes - also a need to build new extra care housing for older people with dementia facilities;
- There are people unable to access social housing with long waiting lists and people are also struggling to find homes for private rent due to being benefit claimants;
- Pockets of deprivation within the District with a need for more affordable housing;
- A need for supported accommodation for vulnerable young adults and those with mental health issues; and
- A need for rural affordable housing for local needs.

Draft Housing Strategy

Priority 1:

Providing a good mix of decent and affordable housing across tenures

Respondents generally supported this priority, with key comments and/or concerns being:

- Need to build the right type of housing - affordable and of the right size;
- Need affordable housing for first-time buyers and people with a local connection;
- Need specialist and general needs housing that is fit-for-life;
- Need a fair balance of development across the District;
- No/limited development on Green Belt land - only for affordable housing for local people;
- Need supporting infrastructure;
- Need to create healthy environments, including green spaces; and
- Some concerns about national policy, including Starter Homes and the proposed extension to Right-to-Buy.

Priority 2:

Improving the quality and use of the existing housing stock

Respondents generally supported this priority, with key comments and/or concerns being:

- Need to maintain/improve the existing housing stock;
- Energy efficiency works to reduce fuel poverty and contribute to health outcomes;
- Need to make best use of the stock, including fully utilising the District's empty homes;
- The use of fixed-term tenancies to help free-up accommodation; and
- Facilitate mutual exchanges to help reduce the District's overcrowding and under-occupation.

Priority 3:

Meeting the needs of vulnerable and low-income households

Respondents generally supported this priority, with key comments and/or concerns being:

- Need to support the third sector which, in turn, supports the District's vulnerable groups;

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- Improve accessibility of benefits and related advice to increase the level of independence aimed for in the strategy;
- Measures to assist younger households should have more prominence and improved access to social rented accommodation; and
- Need to support younger care leavers into suitable housing.

Other

- *"I particularly welcome and support the true integration approach you are proposing";*
- *"It is vital that we have a joined-up strategy to serve all sections of society";* and
- *"I think the structure is very good and makes the document very usable".*

Summary

Feedback from respondents on the Draft Housing Strategy generally reflects that received from stakeholders through the Local Housing Needs Study and a wide-range of anecdotal evidence.

The following broad themes have emerged from this particular consultation exercise:

- **Housing affordability**
A general lack of affordable and low-end housing across sectors and local private rents are expensive.
- **New development**
Whereas respondents are generally in support of new housing, some cite strict local planning constraints as a reason to resist development. Where development is supported, general preferences were for affordable housing and particularly to meet the needs of younger and older people with a local connection.
- **Infrastructure**
A need for both soft and hard infrastructure to support new development and some reported areas already at capacity.
- **Vulnerable groups**
General support for the objectives which aim to assist younger, older and vulnerable groups.

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Proposed alterations to the Draft Housing Strategy:

The Vision and Strategic Housing Priorities are not considered to require any change, though it is proposed to make the following minor amendments to the Draft Housing Strategy having considered feedback from respondents:

- On Page 9, Table 2, to add in monthly private rent levels in order to enable easier comparisons with Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates in Table 3. To also add in a short analysis of the data presented and point being made;
- On Page 12, to add in an explanation of infrastructure considerations/requirements and how this is addressed through the planning process;
- On Page 15, to add in an explanation of the District Council's 'place-making' areas to accompany the existing 'place-making' map on Page 62;
- On Page 18, to add in an objective to explore the potential for a new shared-equity rural affordable housing product as a potential alternative and to overcome anticipated issues associated with Government's new 'Starter Homes' product;
- On Page 27, to add in a paragraph recognising the restrictions associated with particular low-carbon retrofit measures on ageing, listed and other historic properties and/or properties being located in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and conservation areas;
- On Page 31, to add in an objective to explore additional measures to help facilitate mutual exchanges with a view to reducing under-occupation and over-crowding;
- On Page 50, to add in a short summary of the County Council's 18+ Care Leaver Service and how its work programme fits in with objectives contained in the Draft Housing Strategy; and
- In Appendix A, to add in a short description and/or link for all external programmes and initiatives etc., which are referenced in the Draft Housing Strategy.

Note:

Any feedback related to planning constraints, land use and development have been passed to Planning Policy colleagues in order that they can also be considered as part of the District Council's current review of its Local Plan.

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