

Committee:	Executive	Agenda Item No.:	*
Date:	16 th June 2008	Category	*
Subject:	Corporate Response to draft 2008 East Midlands Housing Strategy	Status	Open
Report by:	Housing Strategic Services		
Other Officers involved:			
Director	Strategy		
Relevant Portfolio Holder	Regeneration		

RELEVANT CORPORATE AIMS

SOCIAL INCLUSION – The Regional Housing Strategy seeks to deliver balanced communities and affordable housing for all households in need

REGENERATION – The Regional Housing Strategy proposes high design quality for new build housing which acts as a regenerative tool

COMMUNITY SAFETY – The Regional Housing Strategy proposes high design quality for new build housing which incorporates “Secure by Design”

CUSTOMER FOCUSED SERVICES – The Regional Housing Strategy seeks to meet housing need at an affordable price

ENVIRONMENT – The Regional Housing Strategy seeks to limit fuel poverty through delivering better thermal efficiency standards

TARGETS

Affordable Housing

Decent Homes in the public and private sector

VALUE FOR MONEY

The Regional Housing Strategy outlines Regional Housing spend programmes to 2011. Over £300million grant is proposed to assist affordable housing delivery.

THE REPORT

Executive Summary

The Government’s key housing policy goal is to ensure that everyone has the opportunity of living in a decent home, which they can afford, in a community where they want to live. To achieve this, the Government is seeking:

- To achieve a wide choice of high quality homes, both affordable and market housing to address the requirements of the community
- To widen opportunities for home ownership and ensure high quality housing for those who cannot afford market housing, in particular those who are vulnerable or in need.
- To improve affordability across the housing market by increasing the supply of housing
- To create sustainable, inclusive, mixed communities in all areas, both urban and rural

1.2 The draft 2008 East Midlands Housing Strategy is produced by the Regional Housing Body and seeks to deliver the Government's key housing policy at the regional level. The consultation draft was issued April 2008. The consultation period closes June 27th 2008. Housing Strategic Services request committee approval to respond on behalf of Bolsover District Council.

2.0 Background

REGIONAL HOUSING BODY OVERVIEW

Regional Housing Bodies have had two main functions

- to prepare, implement and monitor the Regional Housing Strategy (RHS).
- to advise the Government on allocations of the Regional Housing Pot (RHP).

Over the next few years the current framework of regional institutions and strategies will change as a result of the Government's Sub-National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration (SNR). It is likely that this will be the last Regional Housing Strategy in its present form. In future the Regional Housing Strategy, Regional Economic Strategy and Regional Spatial Strategy will form part of a wider "Single Regional Strategy" to be introduced following legislation in 2010.

Once the Sub-National Review is implemented, Regional Assemblies will cease to continue in their current form and it will be Regional Development Agencies who will be charged with the development of the new Single Regional Strategy. Responsibility for Regional Housing matters beyond 2011 have yet to be determined and the consultation paper is due to be published by Government setting out various options for these matters.

REGIONAL HOUSING STRATEGY OVERVIEW

The 2008 draft East Midlands Housing Strategy is setting out the housing objectives, policies and actions it believes should be prioritised now or by any successor that may be established post SNR. The relationship between the draft East Midlands Strategy and relevant housing documents is explained below:

a. Relationship between the 2008 Regional Housing Strategy and the Housing Green Paper “Homes for the Future: more affordable, more sustainable”

The July 2007 Housing Green Paper invited submissions of interest for:

- ✓ New Growth Points
- ✓ Eco-Towns

A range of applications for New Growth Points and Eco Towns were submitted in the region and it is anticipated that a significant proportion of new homes will be provided in major new developments.

Consideration has been given as to whether the particular housing issues in these areas will require attention in the Regional Housing Strategy and further comment is welcomed via this consultation.

Proposed Response - Bolsover District Council would welcome further detail on New Growth Points and Eco-Towns in the final Regional Housing Strategy.

b. Relationship between the 2008 Regional Housing Strategy and the Regional Plan

The 10 core objectives set out in the Regional Plan set the overall context for the Regional Housing Strategy. Matters relating to overall supply of new housing including numbers, distribution and appropriate provision are the responsibility of the Regional Plan and the 2008 Regional Housing Strategy does not address these matters.

c. Relationship between the 2008 Regional Housing Strategy and the Regional Investment Strategy

The Regional Housing Strategy provides the strategic context to guide decisions of the (future) Regional Housing Investment Strategy that will guide public investment in housing in the coming years.

d. Relationship between the 2008 Regional Housing Strategy and the Regional Economic Strategy

Some of the key housing-based actions promoted in the RES are of direct relevance to the Regional Housing Strategy:

- ✓ Supporting the development of comprehensive infrastructure (transport, economic, cultural) to support housing growth
- ✓ Regeneration in areas of low housing demand through the provision of new and improved housing and community and economic infrastructure
- ✓ Achieving a range of housing provision to improve the range, mix and quality of housing in the region.

3.0 REGIONAL HOUSING STRATEGY (RHS) DETAIL

The Vision for the 2008 draft East Midlands Regional Housing Strategy echo's national housing policy and is as follows:

“To help create sustainable communities in which the housing needs and choices of all people of the East Midlands can be met at a price they can afford”

The objectives within the draft strategy continue the supply-side theme and are as follows:

- ✓ Objective 1: To ensure that regional housing and planning policy are informed by a robust understanding of need and housing market conditions in the region
- ✓ Objective 2: To ensure that everyone in the region is able to both access and afford suitable housing to meet their needs
- ✓ Objective 3: To contribute to raising the quality of design in housing and the creation of sustainable homes
- ✓ Objective 4: To develop a framework within which regional and local partners can develop sustainable and cohesive communities
- ✓ Objective 5: To ensure that rural affordable housing need is correctly addressed through the Regional Affordable Housing Programme
- ✓ Objective 6: To improve the co-ordination of provision which meets the housing needs of vulnerable people
- ✓ Objective 7: To ensure the region provides a robust response to the housing implications of our ageing population

3.1 Objective 1

The robust understanding of need required by this objective was delivered Autumn 2007 via the Northern Strategic Housing Market Assessment (including Bolsover, Bassetlaw, Chesterfield and North East Derbyshire) and are as follows:

- ✓ Low skills low wage equilibrium
- ✓ Possible to identify pockets of deprivation with affluent areas and converse
- ✓ Potential for development much higher than the RSS
- ✓ Strong house prices since 2000 creating affordability problems
- ✓ High levels of special needs households and those requiring adaptations

2008 RHS Actions

- Continue to analyse Strategic Housing Market Assessment findings to inform key messages regarding investment
- Continue to support and develop private sector housing information systems

Proposed Response: Bolsover District Council would welcome information systems such as “Home Track” to be made available at the local level for tracking purposes.

3.2 Objective 2

The RHS recognises that public resources for investment will always be limited and continue to fall short of all housing needs in the Region. The

RHS therefore sets the priorities to determine which housing activities will receive public funding.

The current Investment Strategy for 2008-11 is guided by CLG priorities for housing investment (CLG letter to Regional Assemblies 16th Oct 2006) and by *The Housing Green Paper* published July 2007 which committed the government to delivering 70,000 additional affordable homes annually by 2010/11 (45,000 social rented and 25,000 shared ownership/shared equity).

Regions were then invited to advise on the split of funding between the priorities of *affordable housing*, *local authority decent homes funding* and *private sector renewal*. The East Midlands response was subsequently adapted to meet the targets set by CLG in relation to affordable housing:

£M	Affordable Housing	LA Decent Homes	Private Sector Renewal	Gypsy & Traveller grant	RHP total
2008/9	100 (5)	20 (1)	23 (1)	3.5	146.5
2009/10	105	20	27	3.5	155.5
2010/11	112	20	22	3.5	157.5

Fig1

Local Authority Decent Homes

Fig 1 above shows future spending plans demonstrating greater reliance on private sector funding and away from public sector decent homes investment by a ratio of 5:1 which is a response to the number of local authorities in the region that have now transferred their stock (Pg 28 RHS).

Affordable Housing

Included within the funding for affordable housing is the expectation that mainstream affordable housing funding will contribute to Housing Market Renewal (see para 25 of Regional Housing Investment Strategy). This represents a shift from the RHS 2004-10 strategy with Housing Market Renewal funded through the Private Sector Renewal funding pot during that time period.

In addition to making housing affordable, the RHS seeks measures to ensure best use is made of existing housing to increase the overall supply. Bringing empty properties into residential use has a similar effect on the housing supply as the construction of new homes. The draft RSS for the East Midlands included the aspiration of lower vacancy rates but no policies were proposed as to what lower rates would be achieved. The RHS has commissioned a study to address the issue of empty property and the study will help to strengthen future action in these areas.

With 2.6 million homes in England being rented from 500,000 private landlords, the private rented sector represents an underutilised resource

for supplying both the intermediate market and meeting housing need. The government has announced a major independent review of the private rented sector (CLG 23rd Jan 2008) which will look at what works well in the sector. The RHS recommends:

- ✓ Landlord Forums
- ✓ Landlord Accreditation Schemes

Private Sector Renewal

Interventions supported under Private Sector Renewal should contribute to the achievement of affordable warmth and independent living targets. The Regional Housing Group has previously signalled its intention to support delivery based on loans schemes and equity release and will consult with those who have established schemes in the West Midlands and Yorkshire and the Humber. Regarding future funding for Private Sector Renewal, the Regional Housing Group has signalled its intention to delegate arrangements for sub-regional allocations.

Targets

The per annum target for delivery of affordable housing through grant stands at 2,605 for the region (65 units pa per LA area on average).

2008 RHS Actions

- Maximise developer contributions to new affordable housing
- Secure agreement from public sector bodies that “best price” for land in public ownership will be that offering the highest receipt *after* ensuring that site development will deliver against local housing policies
- Receive regular implementation reports and engage effectively in the operation of the Housing Corporation’s Regular Market Engagement model
- Encourage use of Empty Property Management Orders
- Support alternative uses for current sheltered housing where these have been identified by SHMAA’s
- Encourage LA’s to develop common housing management policies to cover Choice-based lettings, SP funded and other special needs schemes and move-on accommodation
- Maximise opportunities for joint working beyond the housing sector in homelessness prevention
- Support further developments of the Homelessness Strategy to consider differing client groups and operational aspects of housing services.

Views are sought on the evidence and views of Strategic Housing Market Assessment Areas about the balance and appropriate split between rental properties and Low Cost Home Ownership products for future investment.

Proposed Response – Bolsover District Council are satisfied with the recommended Low Cost Home Ownership: Social Rented split proposed

by the Strategic Housing Market Assessment but wish to see inclusion of the Savills review of Strategic Housing Market Assessments for the region included in the RHS.

Proposed Response – Bolsover District Council seek clarification as to the role of the Homes and Communities Agency in delivering Housing Market Renewal. Bolsover District Council seek clarification as to the availability of grant for refurbishment of properties and CPO via Homes and Communities Agency.

Proposed Response – Bolsover District Council request consideration of lobbying central government for provision of tax breaks for private sector landlords letting (empty) properties to those on the Housing Register.

3.3 Objective 3

The East Midlands Design Review Panel is supported by EMDA and the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment. The panel supports the delivery of sustainable, high quality and well planned buildings which is a matter for local planning activity and the framework of the RSS. CABE has developed “Building for Life Criteria” which can be used by LA’s when considering planning applications.

There is further potential to reduce fuel poverty and achieve sustainable homes through the development of schemes which encourage housing providers to exceed Decent Homes Standard for thermal comfort. Reducing energy use not only reduces fuel poverty but contributes to reduction in climate change.

Example of good practice in existing stock – “Green Homes Project” Bolsover District.

2008 RHS Actions

- Work with regional partners including Local Authorities to promote the “Building for Life” criteria
- Identify and publicise independently verified exemplar projects on public or private land
- Work with Energy Saving Trust Regional Advice Centre to support the delivery of carbon savings in existing housing stock
- Commission research to review funding and control measures available to the public sector with reference to intervention in private sector stock
- Promote greater use of Modern Methods of Construction
- Work with regional partners to showcase good practice in refurbishment of current housing to high standards of sustainability

Proposed Response – Showcasing of good practice in refurbishment is welcomed by Bolsover District Council

Proposed Response – RHS identification of grant monies available regionally through Warm Front and other bodies is requested

Proposed Response – The RHS has failed to highlight the role of “Manual for Streets” which is a material consideration in securing appropriate design/layout yet only partially regarded by Highways Authorities. No reference to “tenure blind” development and the role that this can play in delivery of balanced communities.

Proposed Response – The RHS should seek to bring out elements of Housing Green Paper and RSS Strategy policies that look to deliver better quality design. Housing Strategies can then inform planners delivering LDF Core Strategies and policies linked to design quality. Statistics exist that demonstrate 55% of East Mids new build developments are judged as poor against national average of 29% new developments judged as poor against Building for Life criteria (undertaken by CABE). The Region is playing “catch up” on design quality and this needs to be highlighted in the RHS. It is already highlighted in the “Northern Way.”

Proposed Response – The Northern Sub-Region is working towards a common design quality policy potentially focussing on Building for Life criteria and Manual for Streets. This should be highlighted as good practice in the RHS.

3.4 Objective 4

The Government’s Response to the Commission on Integration and Cohesion (Feb 2008) includes the following recommendations:

- ✓ Local allocations policies, local lettings policies and nomination agreements should contribute towards creating mixed, cohesive and integrated communities and local authorities should allow applicants to choose their home through Choice Based Lettings. Choice Based Lettings offer applicants greater control about where they want to live and all local authorities should offer such schemes by 2010.
- ✓ That all affordable housing providers receiving investment funding should demonstrate how this funding will assist in promoting cohesion and delivering mixed communities
- ✓ Authorities to mainstream cohesion across all aspects of housing by incorporating housing strategies with Sustainable Community Strategies to ensure that housing fully contributes to community cohesion, economic development and improved public services

In response to this challenge CLG plans to revise guidance to local authorities about the importance of the strategic housing role and preparation of housing strategies in late Spring.

The RHS seeks to promote policies which will support sustainable communities. The impact of Migrant workers on local housing markets forms part of an evidence base under development by the RHG that will be taken into account within the RHS final draft. Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments are well advanced in the region and will be included as part of a further review of the RSS.

2008 RHS Actions

- Take account of the forthcoming study into migrant workers in the East Midlands
- Endorse and adopt in the RHS the findings of "Black and Minority Ethnic Communities and Housing for the East Midlands"
- EMRA to lead a review of Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments

Proposed Response – Incorporating Housing Strategies with Sustainable Community Strategies is welcomed. Bolsover District Council will utilise CLG guidance.

3.5 Objective 5

It has become clear from various reports that the scale of rural affordable housing need is greater than has been produced in the region for many years. The Housing Green Paper has given notice that policy guidance will be forthcoming on Affordable Rural Housing and the RHG are committed to also maintaining focus on larger settlements (between 3,000 and 10,000 population) and market towns (10,000 – 20,000 population).

Targets

993 rural affordable units from 2008-11 within the Region

2008 RHS Actions

To implement the investment strategy for 2008-11 rural affordable housing targets

Proposed Response – Bolsover District Council request targets for affordable housing numbers/proportions in settlements 3,000 – 10,000 and 10,000 – 20,000 (within the context of need having been established).

3.6 Objective 6

The Supporting People (SP) programme is a major provider of revenue funding for support services for vulnerable people. Capital investment of public resources in new specialist accommodation continues to be guided by the RHS. If this is to be coordinated with SP funding, the RHS is the logical place to create the necessary framework. No such framework currently exists.

This work will be linked with the Regional Homelessness Strategy that has identified the need for support as an essential part of providing pathways out of homelessness.

Aids and Adaptations

The RHG has supported a review of demand for Disabled Facilities Grant in the East Midlands. Draft recommendations are:

- ✓ Prioritising DFG outcomes within Local Area Agreements to achieve greatest leverage of funding
- ✓ Housing options advice, help moving house, minor repairs and adaptations, equity release to fund work privately will all have a part to play in modernising DFG service provision
- ✓ Planned growth and separate funding arrangements for minor repairs and adaptations may have a positive effect on the DFG system

2008 RHS Actions

- Review recommendations arising from DFG research
- Encourage LA's to develop cross-boundary arrangements accommodation
- RHG to work with the regional Supporting People Implementation Group to jointly commission research

Proposed Response – Supporting People Grant is to be un-ringfenced through the LAA process. Bolsover District Council welcomes RHS proposals to create more certainty through delivery of an SP framework linked to capital investment.

Proposed Response – Although the section tracks vulnerable persons through supported housing through to move-on and then permanent housing with floating support, reference should be made to non-housing related social inclusion initiatives – work/skills-based training, befriending schemes, adult education. Link again to Sustainable Communities plan.

3.7 Objective 7

Population aging is of huge significance and the RHS seeks to be robust on this matter. In February 2008 the government published its National Strategy for an Ageing Population. This predicted that by 2026 there will be an increase of 2.4 million older households than today. It also predicted double the number of older disabled people and has noted that 1 in 5 children born today can expect to live to 100 years old.

However on current national trends, research has shown that the social sector can expect to be housing relatively smaller numbers of retired people over the next 25 years and the Housing Sector needs to consider its response to these changes. Planning for an ageing population must extend further than existing stock and needs to be cross-tenure to avoid seeing future provision in terms of solely sheltered housing

The National Strategy for an Aging Population is part of a wider vision for Housing as set out in the Housing Green Paper and the main actions are summarised below:

- ✓ Housing and aging to be a cross government priority

- ✓ Funding of £35 million between 2008-11 to support the development of housing information and advice for older people and increase current handyman services and Home Improvement Agencies
- ✓ A 31% increase in the Disabled Facilities Grant by 2011
- ✓ Over £800 million additional funding for the Warm Front programme between 2008-11
- ✓ All public housing to be built to Lifetime Homes Standards by 2011
- ✓ Lifetime Homes standard to be mandatory part of the Code for Sustainable Homes
- ✓ Improvement to systems of joined up assessment, service provision and commissioning

Further to the publication of the National Strategy, the Government has announced a bidding round of £80 million funding during 2008-10 to build extra care housing to allow older people and those with long-term conditions to live in a home of their own.

2008 RHS Actions

- Support the housebuilding industry in the region to incorporate the Lifetime Homes Standard on a voluntary basis
- Explore the potential for developing loan and equity release products to assist vulnerable households in the region to finance repairs and improvements to their homes
- Encourage bids for affordable housing grant which provide increased housing options for older people from BME Communities
- Continue to develop the evidence base and understanding of the needs of an aging population and its implications for housing markets.
- Ensure that all existing housing stock and tenures are appraised with regard to future use

Proposed Response – RHS expectation of voluntary take-up of Lifetime Homes standard unlikely. Bolsover District Council would like to see a section on older persons housing included within Objective 3. Inclusion of Lifetime Homes standard within design quality policies. Need reference to sound-proofing within apartments.

Proposed Response – Bolsover District Council request addition of “future use” appraisal to Private House Condition Surveys and Homebuy Surveys. Include as action point within RHS.

4.0 Sub-regional Priorities and Strategies

New guidance for developing local and sub-regional housing strategies has been commissioned to explain how housing can help to contribute to wider place shaping ambitions. The new guidance will set out the relationship between housing strategy and the new strategic framework for delivering Strong, Safe, Prosperous Communities including the Sustainable Community Strategy, Local Development Framework and Local Area Agreements.

Local Development Frameworks, Local Area Agreements and Multi Area Agreements should take account of the Regional Housing Strategy. In turn, the Regional Housing Strategy will operate within the framework of Comprehensive Area Assessments

Implementation of the RHS

To be developed during the consultation period but will reflect LAA's and CPA/CAA.

Proposed Response – Bolsover District Council welcomes identification of forthcoming sub-regional strategy within the Northern Sub-Region as good practice. A piece of work on strategic integration between planning, housing and economic strategies within the sub-region has also been commissioned which should also be highlighted as good practice. Due for completion July.

Proposed Response – Bolsover District Council seek RHS identification that some East Mids districts are affected by Housing Markets outwith the Region. No reference to City Regions.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 1. THAT MEMBERS APPROVE THE 2008 REGIONAL HOUSING STRATEGY CONSULTATION RESPONSES PROPOSED IN THIS REPORT**

ATTACHMENT: Y/N
FILE REFERENCE: *please complete*
SOURCE DOCUMENT: *please complete*