

TO: EXECUTIVE

DATE: 24 JANUARY 2023

**HOUSING STRATEGY 2023-2028
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The development of a new housing strategy is a priority for the People Directorate. Work on the housing strategy commenced earlier this year. On 31 August 2022, the Council's Management Team and Executive Member for Adult Services, Health and Housing endorsed a draft of the housing strategy for consultation and approved the consultation plan to enable residents, organisations, and Members to give their views on the strategy.
- 1.2 This report summarises the development of the strategy, the consultation plan and responses, and the amendments made to the housing strategy to address the feedback received. A final version of the new housing strategy which includes these amendments has now been prepared for approval.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

2.1 Executive is asked to:

- (i) approve the final draft of the Housing Strategy 2023-2028 for publication, including the amendments made in response to stakeholder consultation**
- (ii) approve the other supporting documents for publication including the consultation report and executive summary**

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 3.1 The housing strategy sets out the Council's ambitions to ensure that everyone has a safe, stable, and genuinely affordable home where they can be independent and financially secure. The strategy supports the Bracknell Forest Council Plan by setting out detailed plans and priorities for achieving the Council's housing objectives.
- 3.2 Stakeholder consultation is an important part of the development of the strategy, enabling residents, partners, housing providers and councillors to identify key local housing issues and to shape the actions needed to deliver the objectives of the strategy. A final version of the housing strategy has now been prepared which takes account of the consultation responses received.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 Should Executive seek any further or alternative changes to the Housing Strategy, these can be accommodated prior to publication of the final version.

5. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Development of the housing strategy

- 5.1 The purpose of the housing strategy is to provide a comprehensive assessment of the housing needs of the local area and a planned approach to addressing these needs. It communicates our vision and priorities to other parties, enables resources and actions to be focused on agreed objectives, and highlights the links and inter-dependencies between housing and other service areas.
- 5.2 The housing strategy draws on data, analysis and objectives from other relevant plans, policy documents and strategies, to provide a strategic overview of housing in a single document. These other sources include:
- Bracknell Forest Council Plan 2019-2023
 - Emerging Local Plan and Housing Background paper 2021
 - Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-2026
 - Housing Needs Assessment 2021
 - Older People’s Housing Needs Review 2021
 - Draft Care and Accommodation Strategy 2022
 - Housing Assistance Policy 2021
 - Climate Change Strategy 2020-2024
 - Health and Well-Being Strategy 2022-2026
- 5.3 The housing strategy presents the following vision for housing:
- All Bracknell Forest residents are able to live in good quality, safe, and affordable homes, where they can be independent and financially secure, and can access the right support when needed.***
- 5.4 In order to achieve this vision, the strategy focuses on four strategic priorities. For each of these priorities, the strategy provides an analysis of the main issues and challenges, an update on work that is underway, and future actions that the Council proposes to take. The four priorities are:
1. Prevent homelessness and increase housing options and support for households in need
 2. Deliver new homes in sustainable communities that meet the needs of residents
 3. Make the best use of existing homes and improve housing quality
 4. Provide a range of housing options for people with care and support needs

Consultation on the housing strategy

- 5.5 A draft version of the housing strategy was published for consultation on the Council’s website in September 2022. The main method of consultation was a 6-week online survey on the council’s website. The consultation was promoted to council staff and councillors, residents, housing providers and a range of voluntary and statutory organisations. In addition, a consultation session for Council Members was held on 10 October.
- 5.6 The consultation closed on 3 November. A consultation report has been produced which summarises the responses received, and the amendments made to the strategy to take account of these. These are summarised below.

Issue raised	Response
Wheelchair accessible homes Insufficient larger adapted homes are available for families.	Amendments made to the Strategy to give greater emphasis to the need for 2 and 3 bed adapted properties.
Young people and role of HMOs Lack of affordable rented options to enable young people to move out of family homes and save for a deposit	Additional wording added to highlight the Council’s role in supporting good quality, well-managed, and regulated HMO provision which meets this need, along

	with an action to explore funding options for additional low support move-on accommodation for young people.
Modular Homes Consideration should be given to modular homes	Additional wording included to indicate the council's support for modular construction where it can speed up development.
Hidden homelessness There should be a reference to hidden homelessness in the strategy and what can be done about it.	The lack of local data on hidden homelessness is acknowledged; wording has been added on the need for joint working through the homelessness forum to identify and respond to hidden homeless households.
Affordable housing More affordable houses are needed for local families rather than more flats	This issue is already covered in the strategy, but this section has been strengthened by providing indicative targets for affordable housing over the next five years and actions needed to deliver larger affordable rented homes.
Disabled Facilities Grants(DFGs) Encourage people to seek assistance to enable works to be completed before it is too late.	This has been added as a future action in the strategy - to promote the service through publicity, social media, website review, etc.
Older people Limited accommodation options exist for older people with care and support needs who do not own their property.	Additional wording included emphasising the need for future extra care housing at affordable rent levels for people who cannot afford to purchase/lease.
Mental Health More specialist housing provision needed for people with a mental health condition including short-term and temporary housing.	In addition to the priority to develop a new mental health support service for single homeless people, closer joint working with the Community Mental Health Service to understand the demand for specialist mental health accommodation has been highlighted.
Drug and Alcohol users Should be more emphasis on the need for accommodation for this group due to their complex needs, referencing the ten-year drugs strategy.	The strategy has been amended to refer to the Government's 10-year drug strategy and to highlight the need for targeted action and support to prevent homelessness among this group.
Affordability of housing Private rents are too expensive and insufficient affordable options exist for people who cannot access social housing or shared ownership housing.	The strategy recognises that many households face challenges, due to the increasing cost of private housing and limited access to affordable housing and seeks to increase the supply of shared ownership homes and family homes for affordable rent to create more affordable opportunities for residents.
Under-occupiers More needs to be done to move elderly single occupiers out of larger homes to free them up for families.	The strategy already includes actions working with Registered Providers to ensure under-occupiers are provided with practical help and assistance tailored to their individual circumstances.

<p>Register provider engagement More dialogue needed with Registered Providers to enable them to assist in the delivery of homes which meet the priority needs of the community.</p>	<p>An additional action has been included in the strategy to establish regular engagement with Registered Providers.</p>
<p>Parking Lack of off-road parking on existing and new developments.</p>	<p>This is matter for the Local Plan rather than the housing strategy.</p>
<p>New housing development Concerns about communication of new planning applications, building on greenbelt land and outside of existing housing areas, high-rise buildings and ensuring sufficient infrastructure.</p>	<p>The strategy emphasises the need for sustainable development that protects the local green belt as far as possible whilst ensuring sufficient land is made available to meet future housing needs the application of planning policies to individual sites is a matter for the planning service.</p>
<p>Delays in development Reduce the time developers have to commence new developments following approval and discourage land-banking.</p>	<p>Little evidence has been found to suggest that developers are land-banking or delaying commencement. Planning law dictates the expiry time for planning permissions. Additional wording has been added to encourage developers to engage with planners at an early stage to reduce delays caused by proposals that are unacceptable.</p>

- 5.8 It is important that stakeholders' comments are considered and addressed in developing the housing strategy. The final version of the housing strategy incorporates several amendments and additions that respond to the points that have been raised.

6 Consultation and Other Considerations

Legal Advice

- 6.1 Section 29 of The Deregulation Act 2015 abolished the statutory requirement for English authorities to produce a housing strategy as previously required by section 87 of the Local Government Act 2003. Many local authorities continue to prepare a local housing strategy as a matter of good practice and as part of their overall strategic housing role.

Financial Advice

- 6.2 There are no direct financial costs associated with the publication of the housing strategy.

Other Consultation Responses

- 6.3 Several service areas within the council were consulted in the development of the strategy, including planning, public health, commissioning, public protection, climate change and property services.
- 6.4 A detailed consultation plan was developed to engage stakeholders and residents, as set out in this report.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.4 The priorities and actions that are outlined in the housing strategy aim to advance equality of opportunity, reduce inequality, and narrow the gap in outcomes for people in relation to a wide range of housing-related issues. This includes increasing access to housing, addressing a diverse range of housing needs, enabling people to remain living independently in the home and meeting support and care needs.
- 6.5 An Initial Equalities Screening Form has been completed which shows positive housing outcomes for all groups. This is supported by a detailed equalities analysis which has been updated to address responses received in the stakeholder consultation.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.6 None

Climate Change Implications

- 6.7 The strategy sets out the relevant climate change issues and the current and proposed actions in relation to the development of new homes and making best use of and improving the quality of existing homes.

Background Papers

Bracknell Forest Housing Strategy 2023-2028 Final draft with amendments
Bracknell Forest Housing Strategy 2023-2028 Draft Executive Summary
Housing Strategy Consultation Report
Initial Equalities Screening Form
Housing Strategy Equalities Analysis

Contact for further information

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