

## ***Report to the Cabinet***

**Report reference:** C-058-2014/15  
**Date of meeting:** 2 February 2015



**Epping Forest  
District Council**

**Portfolio:** Housing

**Subject:** Development Strategy – Council House-Building Programme

**Responsible Officer:** Paul Pledger (01992 564248)

**Democratic Services:** Gary Woodhall (01992 564470)

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### **Recommendations/Decisions Required:**

**(1) That the Development Strategy, at Appendix 1 of this report, be approved, with specific attention drawn to the following:**

**(a) Starting with the Phase 2 development at Burton Road, Loughton, the Council is to adopt Code 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes as its standard for sustainable design;**

**(b) The prioritisation of potential sites taken forward for development under the Council's Housebuilding Programme be spread around the towns/villages where sites are located, on a rotational basis, so that all locations have the benefit of affordable housing being provided in their area with priority for the development of potential sites given to areas in which the highest number of housing applicants live;**

**(c) The Council continues to charge Affordable Rents for all new Council homes built under the programme and that the Council's Rent Cap remains at £180 per week;**

**(d) Should any of the development sites identified for Council house building not be developable then the Cabinet Committee looks at the best options to determine the future use of the site;**

**(e) The Cabinet Committee agreed to accelerate the Housebuilding Programme in order to ensure that all 1-4-1 Receipts from Right to Buy sales are spent within the required 3 years of receipt; and**

**(f) The naming of developments will be carried out in consultation with local Ward Members, as well as Town and Parish Councils.**

### **Executive Summary:**

Since its formation in March 2013, the Council Housebuilding Cabinet Committee has considered a number of policies that has shaped the way the Council is delivering new affordable housing across the district as part of the Council Housebuilding Programme, all of which have been captured in the Development Strategy that was agreed by the Cabinet in September 2013. Since then, a number of new or amended policies have been developed

and incorporated in the updated Development Strategy that has been considered by the Council House-Building Cabinet Committee at its meeting in December 2014. However, the decision to adopt the Strategy rests with the Cabinet.

### **Reasons for Proposed Decision:**

Responsibility for the approval of the Development Strategy rests with the Cabinet.

### **Other Options for Action:**

Not to adopt the contents of the Strategy in the format presented and alter any of its statements, targets, standards, procedures or assumptions. However, this could have an effect on the feasibility studies already approved by the House-Building Cabinet Committee.

### **Report:**

1. Within the Terms of Reference for the House-Building Cabinet Committee, it states that “we will consider and recommend to the Cabinet the Development Strategy for the Council’s House-building Programme on an annual basis”.

2. Since the Cabinet first adopted the Development Strategy in September 2013, the Council Housebuilding Cabinet Committee has continued to follow the Strategy to deliver its Housebuilding Programme. However, further policies have been also been introduced and are now captured in this updated Development Strategy. The main changes can be summarised as follows:

(a) Starting with Phase 2, the Council is to adopt Code 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes as its standard for sustainable design. This is based on a “Fabric First” approach where energy efficiency measures take a higher priority;

(b) The prioritisation of potential sites taken forward for development under the Council’s Housebuilding Programme be spread around the towns/villages where sites are located, on a rotational basis, so that all locations have the benefit of affordable housing being provided in their area with priority for the development of potential sites given to areas in which the highest number of housing applicants live;

(c) The Council continues to charge Affordable Rents for all new Council homes built under the programme and that the Council’s Rent Cap remains at £180 per week;

(d) Should any of the development sites identified for Council Housebuilding not be developable then the Cabinet Committee looks at the best options to determine the future use of the site;

(e) The Cabinet Committee agreed to accelerate the Housebuilding Programme in order to ensure that all 1-4-1 Receipts from Right to Buy sales are spent within the required 3 years of receipt; and

(f) The naming of developments will be carried out in consultation with local Ward Members, as well as Town and Parish Councils;

3. The Development Strategy is set out at Appendix 1 of this report for consideration in detail and, subject to being satisfied with its contents, it is recommended for approval by the Cabinet, together with the use of the supporting Design Standards and Employers’ Requirements.

**Resource Implications:**

None.

**Legal and Governance Implications:**

Within its Terms of Reference, the House-Building Cabinet Committee is expected to consider and recommend to the Cabinet the Development Strategy for the Council's House-building Programme.

**Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:**

None.

**Consultation Undertaken:**

The House-Building Cabinet Committee has considered the strategy and we support its contents.

**Background Papers:**

The various reports to the Council Housebuilding Cabinet Committee.

**Risk Management:**

Since the Development Strategy has a direct bearing on the financial viability and delivery of the Council's house-building programme, the greatest risks are that the assumptions prove to be incorrect resulting in each phase being un-viable.

Not gaining planning consent will present a risk of not only having to hand back to the Government one for one Right To Buy and HCA Grant, but also the risk to the Council's reputation with the respective Government Offices and the wider community for failing to deliver on its House-building targets.

Some risks are mitigated by the Council being able to learn from the experience of East Thames, who have been undertaking developments similar to that proposed in the strategy for some time.

Since the Cabinet Committee considers and signs off financial appraisals for every proposed development, the financial effects of the Strategy can be monitored. If, over time, a problem or theme is identified, the Cabinet Committee can review its policies.

In addition, a Programme-wide Risk Register has been developed and is reviewed regularly by the Cabinet Committee, where new risks and/or any actions to mitigate risks are agreed.

# Due Regard Record

This page shows **which groups of people are affected** by the subject of this report. It sets out **how they are affected** and how any **unlawful discrimination** they experience can be eliminated. It also includes information about how **access to the service(s)** subject to this report can be improved for the different groups of people; and how they can be assisted to **understand each other better** as a result of the subject of this report.

S149 Equality Act 2010 requires that due regard must be paid to this information when considering the subject of this report.

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Within the Housing Service Strategy, it has been identified that the target groups that are affected by the Council's house building programme are people in need of:

- affordable housing,
- homelessness assistance,
- supported housing for special needs groups,
- owners and occupiers of poor condition housing
- council and housing association tenants.

From that, it was identified that generally, there is an under provision of suitable accommodation for nearly all target groups. This has been reaffirmed in the most recent Strategic Housing Market Assessment.

Decision making is affected by funding and other factors, such as the availability of building land suitable for particular groups e.g. the elderly or young families.

There is no evidence of unlawful discrimination in relation to the provision of affordable housing.