

Scrutiny Board (Housing and Regeneration)

Working group meeting – Leeds Housing Standard

Date: Thursday 28 August 2014

Time: 11am – 1pm, Committee Room 2, Civic Hall

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 At the first Scrutiny Board meeting of the new municipal year the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Personnel, Councillor Peter Gruen, proposed that the Scrutiny Board should carry out pre-decision scrutiny in relation to the development of a new Leeds Housing Standard. The Board agreed that it would include this in its work programme.
- 1.2 A report on the Leeds Housing Standard is due to be presented to the next meeting of the Executive Board on 17 September. This working group meeting has been arranged to enable members of the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Board to comment on the developing proposals. The attached report sets out the latest developments with the Standard.
- 1.3 With the agreement of the Chair of the Scrutiny Board, the Sustainable Economy and Culture Scrutiny Board and the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board have each been invited to nominate a representative to take part in this working group, given their remits in relation to planning and sustainability matters.
- 1.4 Officers from the Regeneration and Planning functions of City Development and from the Housing and Waste Management functions of Environment and Housing will be attending the meeting to explain the proposals and respond to Members' questions.

2.0 Next steps

- 2.1 Members' observations and recommendations in relation to the Leeds Housing Standard will be written up following the meeting and circulated by email for confirmation. They will then be submitted with the report to the Executive Board.

3.0 Recommendation

- 3.1 Members are recommended to comment on the proposals for a Leeds Housing Standard.

Report of **The Director of City Development and the Director of Environment and Housing**

Report to **Scrutiny Board**

Date: **28th August, 2014**

Subject: **Quality Housing Growth & the Leeds Standard.**

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	☐ Yes	☒ No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	☒ Yes	☐ No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	☒ Yes	☐ No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	☐ Yes	☒ No

SUMMARY OF MAIN ISSUES

1. Executive Board at its meeting in September, 2014 will consider a report on how the Council seeks to achieve appropriate quality standards in support of the delivery of 70,000 houses by 2028, ensuring 'quality' and 'quantity' are achieved in accordance with the draft Core Strategy. The report sets out the importance of excellent quality housing in supporting the economic growth ambitions of the council.
2. The report brings forward recommendations regarding how the Council can give clear and robust guidance, building on the collaborative work between Lead Members, elected Members, officers, partners and representatives of the major house builders.
3. This included the introduction of a 'Leeds Standard' to ensure excellent quality in the delivery of new council homes under three themes; Design Quality, Space Standards and Energy Efficiency Standards.
4. The report proposes how the Council can use the Leeds Standard in its role as Council landlord through its delivery and procurement approaches. Through its actions the Council can also seek to influence quality in the private sector. Those aspects of the Standard concerned with design quality can be addressed through better application of the Council's Neighbourhoods for Living guidance. To assist this a range of updates are proposed to aid clarity. The report makes clear that the wider application of other aspects of the standards is contingent on further

government guidance, which currently envisages a formal development plan process and implementation through the building regulations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Scrutiny Board is asked to note the contents of this report.

1.0 PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

- 1.1 This report seeks to provide Scrutiny Board with a summary of the recommendations which will be made to Executive Board for improving residential design throughout Leeds to ensure we achieve quality and quantity in the delivery of new houses in Leeds through the development of linked activities brought together to form Leeds Standard.

2.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The Council is aiming to deliver significant new housing growth of 70,000 houses by 2028, and there is a need to achieve the highest possible design quality to benefit existing and future residents of Leeds.
- 2.2 A housing market which delivers high quality housing in attractive and well-designed neighbourhoods is central to the City's economic growth ambitions. The development of the Leeds Standard is intended to set a high standard and encourage all housing deliverers to share the aspiration towards growth which is sustainable and to the benefit of communities. Good quality housing located in excellent places enhances the perception and reputation of Leeds as a place to live, invest and locate business. It should be seen not as something added on to the housing growth target but integral to its delivery and that of the overarching objective of economic growth and being the Best City.
- 2.3 Recent applications for housing development in Leeds, in particular concerns about character and quality, led to a collaborative workshop which was held in late 2013. The aim of the workshop was to promote a greater understanding of how schemes can be designed to better reflect the positive character and identity of adjoining areas to overcome the commonly perceived problems which arise in submitted applications.
- 2.4 The workshop was attended by members of Plans Panels, representatives of major house builders, designers and officers from the Council involved in housing delivery. There is a need for ongoing proactive engagement with leading house builders on these issues to help speed the delivery of the decision on new housing developments and thereby boost the supply of new housing.
- 2.5 Our 'Best City' ambitions refer to the quality of the built environment and quality of life for all our residents which are significant drivers for continuous improvement and positive change.
- 2.6 The National Planning Policy Framework, the recent Farrell Review (of architecture and the built environment), our own emerging Core Strategy and our existing

'Neighbourhoods for Living' document all point to achieving the highest possible quality design to improve people's quality of life in the places they live.

- 2.7 The Housing and Regeneration workshop in May 2014 also provided a strong basis for this more collaborative and forceful direction to improve the design quality of housing and neighbourhoods in Leeds. Participants included representatives from major house builders, Homes & Communities Agency (HCA), Registered Providers, Estate Agents, Home Builders Federation, planning consultants, Civic Trust, Councillors and officers.
- 2.8 There has also been a design workshop in respect of the new build council housing programme, to share and explore issues of quality in terms of internal space standards, energy/environmental standards, and external layout & architectural quality.
- 2.9 Earlier this year Executive Board received reports, in February and April, setting out the Council's approach to the delivery of new housing at scale, on previously developed land in its ownership, the delivery of new affordable housing in partnership with registered providers in the city and the delivery of new homes through the Council Housing Growth Programme.
- 2.10 The Council Housing Growth Programme Executive Board report, 25th June 2014, provided a further update for Members, and introduced the three themes of the proposed 'Leeds Standard' for this work Design Quality, Space Standards and Energy Efficiency Standards. These themes are now used as a focus for providing an understanding of existing local policy and guidance in this report to Members, and assist in steering a way forward for achieving 'quality housing growth in Leeds'.
- 2.11 Attached as Appendix 1 is a matrix setting out the existing local planning policy and guidance that has been developed to underpin the themes of the Leeds Standard as it applies to the Council Housing Growth Programme and in the Council's role as Local Planning Authority, to housing growth as a whole.

3.0 MAIN ISSUES

- 3.1 The application of the Leeds Standard will take two routes, measures to influence market delivery through the clarification and application of the principles held within the 'Neighbourhoods for Living' document and a clear set of standards and specification for the Council's new build programme under each of the three themes. The approach combines some existing standards and draws on a number of existing Council policies to support and reinforce the standard in addition to some additional specification in respect of the Council's new build programme.
- 3.2 In order to influence the development of market led housing growth the Leeds Standard will take the form of a reinforcement and update of existing policy. Appendix 1 describes this in more detail.
- 3.3 As a social landlord with a significant new build programme the Council will set a new standard for development in excess of that which might ordinarily be brought

forward by the market. In so doing it will seek to show how excellent quality can be achieved and how design lies at the heart of good development.

- 3.4 Executive Board have previously approved a programme of investment to deliver a comprehensive programme of new build housing. The resources currently available to deliver the Council Housing Growth Programme stand at £73m. The programme will deliver nearly 1,000 new Council homes, a level not seen since the 1970s.
- 3.5 The design quality aspect of the standard will incorporate good urban design and site layout and will use the existing standards of 'Neighbourhoods for Living'(NfL). The provisions of NfL will be used to prompt, steer and assess design proposals as they develop.
- 3.6 In terms of Space standards properties developed via the Council Housing Growth Programme will be developed to appropriate sizes which can be flexible and allow for reconfiguration if required. This links to the challenge of meeting the increased demand for smaller units in certain localities which will assist to free up larger family houses. In addition, a range of additional criteria will be considered for schemes and are set out at Appendix 1 the Leeds Standard Matrix.
- 3.7 The main design principle for energy efficiency is to reduce the carbon footprint and reduce running costs.
- 3.9 Appendix 1, the Leeds Standard Matrix, sets out the specification requirements to achieve excellent energy efficiency standards in relation to the Council Housing Growth Programme. The procurement process needs to be adaptive to allow for new innovation and to reflect new technology that is constantly been developed within this area of the design and building of new homes.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Scrutiny Board is asked to note the contents of this report.

5.0 APPENDICES

- 5.1 The Leeds Standard matrix

The Leeds Standard Matrix

Purpose	Key Themes	Application to Housing Growth - implementation framework	Application to Council Housing Growth Programme – adopted standards and specification
Design Quality and Liveability	• Unique Character of different communities • Place making • Choice of materials • Housing Mix • Design principles & local distinctiveness • Housing Types • Space About Dwellings • Densities • Meeting Housing Need • Lifetime Homes • Greenspace Provision/Green Infrastructure • Access to service & Infrastructure	Neighbourhoods for Living SPG updated as “NfL in Practice”. UDP Saved Policies City Centre Urban Design Strategy Conservation Area Assessments Neighbourhood Design Statements Core Strategy Policies : P10 – P12 H3, H4 & H8 G1 – G8 P9 & ID1	Use and enforcement of Council policies and guidance particularly the Council’s ‘Street Design Guide’ and “Building for Tomorrow Today” Supplementary Planning Document Neighbourhoods For Living applied as an assessment matrix .Target score of 70%min plus specific aspects for individual schemes.
Space Standards	• Minimum Space Standards • Explore optional Building Regulations	Encourage improvements in housing sector overall using council programme standards as opposite Building Regulations following Housing Standards Review	HCA Level 1 Space Standards BS9266 “Design of accessible and adaptable general needs housing code of practice” referenced as applicable. Additional specification including: • A hallway/vestibule to be provided to allow for storage of outside clothing and any mobility aids • Minimum ceiling heights (in line with English Partnership’s Quality Standards Delivering Quality Places as an existing example of good practice) of 3m on the ground floor and 2.4m on upper floors • Bedrooms to be doubles • One bed units to be built on the footprint of a two bed unit to allow flexibility and subsequent conversion in response to changes in demand.

Sustainable Design & Construction	• Energy Efficiency • Low Carbon • SUDS • Local sourcing of materials	Encourage improvements in housing sector overall using council programme standards as opposite CS Policies EN1 – EN3 Building for Tomorrow Today SPD	Design/Orientation • maximise solar gain, energy that is received free from the sun. • Each property to either have solar PV or be designed to allow easy retrofit. • All properties should have SMART electricity meters Fabric • ‘fabric first’ as high levels of insulation equals low energy demand. • Low u-values to all elements Floor/Wall/Roof 0.15 or lower, windows 0.8 or lower triple glazed. • Aim for all surfaces to be within 5°C of each other, creating a comfortable environment. • Airtightness / MVHR High levels of air tightness and no draughts or uncontrolled ventilation, resulting in heat loss. • Aim to achieve 1 air change per hour or less • MVHR providing the correct ventilation and air changes per hour = better air quality. • MVHR recovers 90% of heat back into incoming air. Heating • low levels of heating (in relation to Insulation and air tightness) • boiler size to achieve efficiency in relation to property size • gas central heating designed to allow boiler to operate in condensing mode; Underfloor heating where relevant • Electric only properties to be explored as an option, if low heat demand. This saves on servicing costs, installation costs, saving of gas standing charge. Hot Water • Either from gas central heating, combi or cylinder. • Or if electric only: • Small flat – electric point water heater / shower or small cylinder. • Larger house – Cylinder Immersion / with option of solar hot water.
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