

Report of Chief Planning Officer

Report to Joint Plans Panel

Date: 26 February 2015

Subject: Housing growth update

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. The Council held a Housing Growth event on 15 January 2015 which was attended by over 60 representatives from the development industry ,registered providers, members and council officers.
2. The event sought to update delegates on the housing growth agenda in Leeds, the challenges and issues encountered, the Leeds Standard and was also the launch of the consultation on the Neighbourhoods for Living memoranda, which sets out the quality design ambition of the Council.
3. Representatives from the volume house building industry also made a presentation, describing the issues of delivering houses in Leeds from their perspective. Whilst there was a range of opinions at the event it was clear there was willingness by the stakeholders to engage with the Council in delivering new homes and it was agreed that the next steps would be investigating a number of common issues in a series of workshops in the spring.

Recommendations

4. Members are recommended to note the report and comment as they feel appropriate.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report describes the recent Housing Growth event held by the Council on 15 January 2015 and updates members on the next steps in helping to meet the housing growth ambitions of the Council in delivering homes up to 2028.

2 Background information

- 2.2 A Housing Growth event was organised by the City Council on 15 January 2015 and attended by over 60 delegates, comprising representatives from the development industry, members and officers. The aim of the event was to discuss the issues facing communities, the council and the development industry in delivering the quantum of housing needed by the city. It also sought to reemphasise the quality agenda in Leeds articulating to the development industry that the Council is looking for both quality and quantity in delivery, reflecting the positive character and identity of individual places and communities.

3 Main issues

- 3.1 The Chief Executive and Executive Board Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Personnel provided the welcome and introduction to the event and described the Council's ambition and the need for partnership in meeting the need for the right housing in the right place. The Chief Planning Officer set the overall context for housing delivery and the need to improve delivery of housing in Leeds, in terms of quality and in the expeditious determination of residential planning applications to speed up delivery on the ground.
- 3.2 The Head of Housing Partnerships made a presentation on the Housing Growth Team and the *Leeds Standard*. The development of the Leeds Standard was initiated for the Council Housing Growth Programme and is intended to set a high standard for the Council house building programme and to encourage all housing developers to share the aspiration towards growth which is sustainable and to the benefit of communities. The standard comprises three key themes: Design Quality, Space Standards (Internal), and Energy Efficiency Standards.
- 3.3 A further presentation was received from the Council's design team where the *Neighbourhoods for Living* memoranda consultation was formally launched (consultation runs until 12 March 2015). *Neighbourhoods for Living* was first launched and adopted by the Council in 2003 and it continues to provide guidance to developers for delivering quality housing designs that recognises local character and identities. However, the memoranda seeks to help and support developers who are providing the majority of new homes in the city, and refers to key current issues of design and further explains the existing principles within the *Neighbourhoods for Living* document.
- 3.4 A final presentation was from representatives of the volume house building industry to explore the issues in delivering housing in Leeds from their perspective and the challenges and issues they encounter.

3.5 Inevitably, there were a range of views expressed on the topics that were discussed, but there was clarity on the Council's commitment to addressing the need for high quality housing in the right place in the City and developers commended the Council for taking a proactive approach to this often difficult and sensitive issue.

3.6 Following on from the event, it was agreed to investigate a number of common specific areas that were encountered by different stakeholders to explore the issues, with the aim of improving processes, reducing delays in determination, ensuring quality and facilitating a swift start on site and delivering much needed housing. It was therefore proposed to hold three focus groups which would look at:

- Pre-application and early engagement
- The planning application process, including viability and S106
- Conditions discharge

3.7 Delegates were invited to express an interest in attending, any or all of the focus group sessions in a workshop by 16 February 2015 to help move forward the issues. It is anticipated the first of the sessions will commence in March 2015.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

4.1.1 It has been widely recognised that in realising the Council's housing growth ambition, that a more collaborative approach is required, especially in achieving the design and quality aspirations of the Council. The development industry representatives have been given the opportunity to respond as part of the consultation process on the *Neighbourhoods for Living* memoranda. Going forward, the Council wishes to engage with local communities and the development industry in finding solutions to the barriers which exist in reaching expeditious decisions on residential applications and the delivery of housing on the ground. These sessions will take place over the forthcoming months.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

4.2.1 There are no specific equality considerations arising from this report

4.3 Council policies and City Priorities

4.3.1 Housing growth is one of the Council's breakthrough projects and the work so far signals that Leeds is open for business for high quality schemes.

4.3.2 The effective and expedient determination of planning applications contributes to the overall prosperity of the City and plays a key part in the regeneration and growth agenda. The service makes a key contribution to the delivery of housing growth, a priority in the City Priority Plan 2011-15.

4.4 Resources and value for money

- 4.4.1 Any further work will be conducted within existing budget and resource constraints, but gaining consensus and working more collaboratively with local communities and the development industry is crucial. The Council needs the development industry to work with us as well as local communities to help speed up housing delivery, so this work area is crucial.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- 4.5.1 There are no specific legal implications and this report does not relate to a key or major decision.

4.6 Risk Management

- 4.6.2 The Council's housing growth programme is ambitious and runs the risk of under delivery against the Core Strategy targets, therefore it is crucial that there is greater understanding and collaborative working in meeting the Council's aspirations for the City.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 There is an ambitious target for Leeds to deliver 70,000 homes by 2028. The Council is aiming for Leeds to be the best city in UK with strong, sustainable economic growth, a suitable housing mix, and excellent places to live for existing and future residents. The Core Strategy provides a strong basis for this, setting out the over-arching policy framework which is supported by Neighbourhoods for Living, Supplementary Planning Documents, Neighbourhood Design Statements, and saved policies and documents.
- 5.2 The Council wishes stakeholders to embrace the approach which delivers the highest quality for the people of Leeds, as well as quantity. The positive character and identity of individual places and communities is important to Leeds as it moves forward with delivery of housing growth.
- 5.3 The development of the Leeds Standard focussing on design quality, space standards and energy efficiency standards will be adopted on the Council's own housing programme, and the Neighbourhoods for Living memoranda provides additional explanatory information to support developers in designing residential schemes that reflect the high quality design aspiration for the city.
- 5.4 Whilst there are inevitably a range of different perspectives and opinions from different stakeholder groups in relation to housing delivery, the development industry are positive in responding to the proactive approach being taken by the Council in driving the delivery of new housing forward. The next steps will be the thematic stakeholder workshops in March 2015.

6 Recommendations

Members are recommended to note the report and comment as they feel appropriate.