

London Borough of Bromley

Report No.
ELS05032

PART 1 - PUBLIC
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Agenda
Item No.

XX

Title: **DRAFT LONDON HOUSING STRATEGY 2005-2016
(NOVEMBER 2004)**

Decision Maker: **Development Control Committee** Decision Date: **08 Feb 2005**

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Non-Executive Key

Budget/Policy Framework: Within policy and budget

Chief Officer: Chief Planning Officer Stuart Macmillan

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Ward: All Wards

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The London Housing Board has produced a draft London Housing Strategy (November 2004) for consultation purposes. The document covers a number of issues including; consideration of the current position in terms of increasing the number of homes, improving the quality of existing homes and building sustainable communities between 2005-2016. These aspects are then assessed in relation to what improvements are necessary and the how these improvements can be made.
- 1.2 The relevant issues have been summarised below for information and observations made where appropriate to feed back to the London Housing Board.
- 1.3 A copy of the Draft Strategy has been placed in the Members Room or can be accessed from the following website:

http://www.go-london.gov.uk/housing/draft_housing_strategy_2005.asp

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Members are asked:
 - (i) To agree the comments made within the report and to consider any further comments on the proposed Draft London Housing Strategy to feed back to the London Housing Board;
 - (ii) to note the issues raised in the report.

3. COMMENTARY

- 3.1 The London Housing Board produced the first London Housing Strategy “Homes and Communities in London” in August 2003.
- 3.2 The draft strategy has been developed in response to a request from Government for all Regional Housing Boards to produce updated regional housing strategies by May 2005 that are closely aligned with and cover the same timespan as their regional spatial strategy which in the case of London Boroughs is the London Plan which covers the period to 2016.
- 3.3 The sub-regional housing strategies (South East London Housing Strategy (2003-2006)) have informed the draft strategy under consideration.
- 3.4 Set out below are some of the key issues that the Strategy addresses and comments on these aspects where appropriate that will form the formal response to the London Housing Board.

Where are we now and where do we want to be?

Increasing the number of homes and improving the quality of existing homes.

- 3.5 The draft strategy outlines the following key points in relation to the above throughout London up to 2016:
- 3.6 London’s population is expected to continue growing with 800,000 more people living in London by 2016 and the supply of housing has not kept up with increased demand over recent years although additional sources of supply have included conversions and bringing empty property back into use.
- 3.7 The net supply of housing in London is currently 24,000 per annum against the London Plan minimum target of 23,000 whilst aiming towards 30,000 homes each year to meet a backlog of existing need, to meet population growth and to replace outdated stock.
- 3.8 A number of barriers exist to the provision of additional homes including; the lack of physical and social infrastructure to support new residential developments, difficulties in land assembly in terms of multiple ownership and remediation requirements, uncertainties of the planning system and high costs in the provision of affordable housing.

Affordable housing

- 3.9 Lack of affordable housing and inability of first time buyers to be able to afford to buy property within London.
- 3.10 There has been an increase in the provision of smaller affordable units (and there is still greatest demand for 1 and 2 bedroom units) although there is a substantial and unmet need for affordable larger homes. In 2003/04 just over 10,000 new affordable homes were provided in London compared to a total supply of 24,608.

Increasing supply of supported housing

- 3.11 Difficulties have been experienced in getting revenue funding guaranteed for new supported housing schemes making them a high risk activity for Housing Associations.
- 3.12 Importance of London Plan provisions of aiming to increase supported housing and for boroughs to identify the full range of housing needs (including disabled people, older

people and households with special requirements), to provide all new homes to Lifetime Homes standards and 10% of all new housing should be wheelchair accessible or easily adaptable for wheelchair users.

Ensuring new housing is of a high quality

3.13 Emphasis on need for consistent good design within boroughs and by developers.

3.14 Importance of addressing the needs of people who require special needs housing.

Creating mixed and sustainable communities

3.15 The Strategy emphasises that one of the key features of a sustainable community is that it is a well integrated mix of decent homes of different types and tenures to support a range of household sizes, ages and incomes. This is important in light of the current uneven spatial distribution of socio-economic groups in London that is potentially damaging to social cohesion.

3.16 Overcrowding across London is now higher in the social sector than the private sector, partly due to families needing larger accommodation or due to households in need of two smaller homes sharing one.

Where do we want to be and how do we get there?

Increasing the number of homes and improving the quality of existing homes.

3.17 The second part of the Strategy suggests ways of achieving an increased number of homes and improving the quality of existing homes in light of the issues raised above.

Increasing new supply

3.18 In relation to the housing provision targets set out in the London Plan the Strategy states that the GLA 2004 Housing Requirements Study will clarify the number of homes needed between 2002 and 2012 and the London Housing Capacity Study (LHCS) (GLA, 2004-2005) will identify the long term potential across London for land for housing purposes. Paragraph 4.3 of the Strategy highlights a number of initiatives that are already taking place between GOL, GLA, ALG, the Housebuilders Federation, Housing Associations London Development Agency, English Partnerships, London Boroughs and the private sector to help assist in increasing the number of homes across London.

3.19 The above reference to the LHCS is supported in light of the importance of the study in illustrating whether or not the target figure of 30,000 new homes per annum can actually be achieved across London within existing policy constraints.

Affordable Housing

3.20 Paragraph 4.8 clearly sets out the current position in London in relation to the provision of affordable housing. It states that the current strategic target of 50% new homes each year to be affordable (70% social and 30% intermediate) will be kept under review in light of output achieved, availability of public subsidy and updated assessments of need and demand. Importantly it states that significant decisions will need to be made on the trade-off between having more homes and more larger homes (that are in demand) within given investment.

3.21 The above could have an impact upon the achievement of a large number of additional homes (above current targets) across London and the proposed target of 30,000 additional homes per year in the London Plan.

Ensuring new housing is of a high quality

3.22 Paragraph 4.23 states that the London Plan requires that all new developments should achieve the highest possible intensity of use compatible with the local context and sets out a density matrix for residential developments based on location and public transport accessibility. Paragraph 4.24 then specifies the need for high levels of design quality to achieve affordable housing targets and to create neighbourhoods that are attractive to live in which is supported. It also emphasises that the London Plan includes clear policies on promoting good quality and sustainable design in addition to ensuring that developments are attractive, enhance the public realm, are safe to live, provide a mix of uses, are accessible to all and environmentally sustainable.

3.23 In relation to the above it is important to make reference to the fact that the density matrix (Table 4B.1) in the London Plan should not be seen as prescriptive but applied flexibly in light of local circumstances as set out in the draft Housing Provision SPG produced by the GLA (December 2004).

3.24 To achieve high quality design within new developments the Strategy lists a number of relevant means which are supported including:

- Strengthening local authorities' design capacity and expertise;
- Increasing use of modern methods of construction;
- Ensuring community safety and environmental sustainability are incorporated into designs.

Meeting diverse housing needs

3.25 Paragraph 4.56 of the Strategy states that the London Plan makes clear that, when planning for housing, policies should specifically identify the needs of diverse groups including making provision for special needs housing, sheltered housing, hostels and residential care homes and to assess the needs of travellers and gypsies. It also reiterates the London Plan requirement for all new homes to be built to Lifetime Homes standards and for 10% of all new housing to be wheelchair accessible.

3.26 The above is supported and addressed mainly within existing policies in the Revised Deposit UDP (Sep 2002). Importantly though with regard to gypsies and travellers Boroughs will need to identify any shortfalls in accommodation needs through local housing needs assessments (this issue is dealt with separately within DC Committee agenda 8/2/05).

Creating mixed and sustainable communities

3.27 The Strategy specifies that in the interests of sustainability, social cohesion and equality there is a need to ensure that sites across all of London continue to incorporate affordable housing, and lead to more mixed and balanced communities with a more even spread of affordable housing across London. The Strategy identifies relevant means to further assist current policy to achieve this including promoting estate renewal and best practice in designing and planning, developing good practice guidance (to feed into review of London Plan) in managing mixed community sites and anti-social behaviour and recommending its incorporation into planning guidance and reducing overcrowding.

3.28 The formulation of further good practice guidance on mixed and balanced communities is welcomed. With regard to reducing overcrowding paragraph 4.76 states that aside from setting a target for the supply of larger homes and reflecting this in planning guidance the most significant way to increase the supply of larger units is to change the way the Housing Corporation measure output from social housing grant to reflect size of units as opposed to number of units.

3.29 The Board proposes to develop more scale neutral investment criteria to encourage more investment in larger homes and recommend its inclusion in the next ADP bidding round guidance. It also proposes to set a target for the supply of different sized homes in the social sector between 2006 and 2008. If the latter is completed it will help the Borough to achieve an increase in larger affordable units (where appropriate) that are in demand and therefore is supported.

3.30 Key aims in relation to the above issues are set out below and supported:

- Ensure that more people can be housed increasing the supply of new homes of appropriate sizes in each sector;
- Maximise the output of new affordable housing to reduce existing backlog and make progress towards meeting new need in London;
- Increasing the supply of supported housing;
- Promoting supply of new homes that are of the highest quality design possible;
- Reducing the net number of empty homes;
- Locating homes in streets and on estates which are safe, attractive and clean;
- Reduce the gap between unmet housing needs among some BME communities and non-BME communities and between those with special housing needs and others;
- Encouraging more mixed neighbourhoods – in terms of income, economic activity, tenure, household size, ethnicity; more sustainable communities and a more even spread of social housing across London.

4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The Strategy feeds into the South East London Housing Strategy relevant to London Borough of Bromley, and contains some important references to planning policy and the achievement of an increased number of houses within the context of good quality design and creating mixed and balanced communities.

Non-Applicable Sections:	Financial Legal Personnel
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	SPG Housing Provision (GLA, December 21004) Revised Deposit UDP September 2002 The London Plan (February 2004)