

Homes Fit for the Future - Consultation and Findings

1. Purpose

To share findings of the public consultation on the Housing Strategy for Nottingham, 'Homes Fit for the Future 2024-28'.

2. Background

The Council launched a 6-week public consultation on the draft Housing Strategy to offer stakeholders an opportunity to provide feedback to help shape the final document. Running from 16 July to 27 August 2024, the consultation was city-wide and, in particular, sought comments and feedback from city residents and the partner organisations who will be impacted by the commitments made in the Strategy.

The Council had already undertaken a series of engagement events with key partners to understand Nottingham's housing market and the diverse needs, demands and aspirations of its citizens. This engagement activity began with a presentation of the detailed evidence base prepared and the emerging themes. This was followed by a series of workshops where key partners and stakeholders were invited to share their thoughts on the emerging themes and the challenges and opportunities within each to shape the priorities for the strategy and the strategic aims. The Council undertook an ethnicity and housing event to uncover and understand the needs and barriers associated with housing experienced by minority ethnic groups.

The Strategy has been widely consulted on internally with key teams including Planning, Adult Social Care, Children's Integrated Services, Public Health, Carbon Reduction and Energy Projects, and Safer Housing, throughout its development. Key partnerships such as the Council's Health and Wellbeing Board and local NHS Place-Based Partnership have also been consulted with. The Council's governance process has had oversight of the strategy, and an overview presentation has previously been given at a meeting of the Housing and City Development Scrutiny Committee prior to the public consultation.

3. Proposals

The Homes Fit for the Future Strategy has been developed to improve the quality, supply and affordability of housing in the city. The Strategy is set to run until 2028 and covers social housing, the private rented sector and owner-occupied homes. It sets out a vision for housing in the city that "Homes in Nottingham meet the aspirations and needs of our current and future residents. People live in safe, warm homes that they can afford, in vibrant local neighbourhoods where everyone can thrive". The Strategy puts forward four priority areas and fourteen key actions to achieve the vision. Priority areas are:

- enabling the building of new homes and regeneration, and improving housing standards while continuing the progress towards a carbon net zero future;
- making the best use of the available housing stock and supporting the development and acquisition of more affordable homes;

- preventing and reducing homelessness and rough sleeping, and
- supporting people to live independently, in partnership with health services, social care and other partner agencies.

The consultation involved a structured survey and the opportunity to provide additional comments and feedback. Consultation respondents were asked if the strategy identified the right issues and how effectively they think the proposed priorities and actions will address them.

4. Consultation Methodology

The public consultation took place during a period of limited financial resources, necessitating the avoidance of any non-essential spend. An online survey was hosted on the Council's Engage Nottingham Hub webpage and provided both the public and stakeholders with the opportunity to feed back their views on the Strategy. There were also hard copies available on request in libraries. The Strategy covers all tenures and consideration was given as to how to ensure people living in social housing, the private rented sector and owner-occupied homes, as well as the relevant organisations, could be reached.

The survey was promoted through all the relevant Council online platforms, including newsletters and social media, utilising all the corporate and relevant topic-related channels including My Nottingham, The Leaders Update, the housing information bulletin 'NOUSE', Nottingham Renters and Growing Nottingham. Partners were engaged with directly and through Council-led networks, including relevant committees and the specialist housing partnerships and networks. Partners were also asked to promote the public consultation through their networks to further amplify the engagement and to help reach a wider audience. Partners could also request a presentation on the Strategy tailored to their organisation. There was a hybrid launch event in Loxley House and the event included a presentation of the Strategy, followed by a question-and-answer session.

5. Participation and Responses

There has been a total of 145 responses via the survey (citizens and organisations), two organisations feedback via email and there were 17 people in attendance at the launch event, representing a variety of organisations. Over the consultation period, requests were received to present at the Social Housing Forum and at a senior leadership meeting for a Registered Provider.

- **Consultation launch event**

The consultation launch event included an overview of the Strategy and a question-and-answer session. Attendees talked about the most pressing housing issues for their organisations and asked questions to ascertain how the Strategy captured and proposed to tackle them. Feedback received was positive and no specific changes to the vision, priorities, or key actions were suggested. Much of the discussion covered detail as to how specific actions could be delivered and, although the responses did not negate a need to change the strategic document, they will be further analysed and used to support the development of the Strategy Implementation Plan.

- **Summary of survey results**

The survey had responses from a good array of organisations including Regeneration and Development companies, Registered Providers and Specialist Providers, Private Sector Landlords, Education, third sector and not-for-profit organisations. The Survey questions and a summary of responses is as follows:

- 1) Do you agree that the following are the most pressing housing issues in the city?
 - All four housing issues identified were recognised as the top concerns, with over 80% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that these were the most important issues.
- 2) To what extent do you agree with this vision statement?
 - Overall, 69% of respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed with the vision statement.
- 3) How important do you think each of the four priorities will be in achieving our vision?
 - The first priority had the lowest number of Agree or Strongly Agree responses at 71%. All the other three priorities had over 90% of responses recorded as Agree or Strongly Agree.
- 4) Of our 14 key actions, which five do you think will have the most impact on achieving the vision?
 - 'Bringing empty homes back into use'
 - 'Preventing homelessness and rough sleeping'
 - 'Supporting the development of affordable homes'
 - 'Improving neighbourhoods, homes, and services for our tenants'
 - 'Ensuring that homes in the private rented sector are high quality, sustainable, and secure' AND 'Supporting regeneration and economic growth'

6. Next Steps

Overall, the feedback from the consultation is that the vision statement, strategic priorities and key actions are the right ones to proceed with for the final document. Amendments under consideration from the consultation are:

- changing the title of the key action 'Achieving the right balance of student housing' to 'Achieving the right mix of student housing';
- amendments to the 'private rented sector' section to include more detail about the Council's statutory duties; and
- amendments to or additional actions that sit below each key action (in the Strategy document these are captured in the sections titled 'Over the term of this strategy, we will:' for each key action).

Further analysis will also be undertaken on the key themes that have emerged from across the consultation period to ensure that the final Strategy document has fully considered and made use of the feedback given over the public consultation period.

A final consultation report will be developed as part of the upcoming report to the Executive Board.

Over the consultation period, and following the 2024 General Election, there have been new national policy announcements on:

- proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework;
- housebuilding targets;
- rules on the spending of Right to Buy Replacement Receipts; and
- the new Government's Renters' Rights Bill, replacing the previous Government's planned Renters' Reform Bill.

The Strategy document will be amended to reflect the latest Government position on these areas to ensure it is up to date on publication. The Strategy is scheduled to go to Executive Board in October for formal adoption.