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<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>Housing and Community Services Committee</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM: 11</b>
<b>DATE OF MEETING:</b>	<b>5<sup>th</sup> June 2008</b>	<b>CATEGORY: DELEGATED</b>
<b>REPORT FROM:</b>	<b>Director of Community Services)</b>	<b>OPEN</b>
<b>MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:</b>	<b>Beverly Wagstaffe (07976 081933)</b>	<b>DOC:</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Draft Revised East Midlands Regional Housing Strategy 2008-2016</b>	<b>REF:</b>
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE: HCS01</b>

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## **1.0 Recommendations**

- 1.1 Members note and approve the comments on the draft revised East Midlands Regional Housing Strategy (RHS) 2008-2016.
- 1.2 A response is prepared by officers in consultation with the Chairman of Housing and Community Services Committee utilising the comments indicated in the report.

## **2.0 Purpose of Report**

- 2.1 For Members to consider a response to the draft revised East Midlands Regional Housing Strategy (RHS) 2008-2016. This report has been written by the Housing Strategy Manager following consultation with the Planning Policy Manager and the Core Strategic Housing Group.

## **3.0 Detail**

- 3.1 The East Midlands Regional Housing Group have published for consultation the 'Draft Revised East Midlands Regional Housing Strategy (RHS) 2008 – 2016. Consultation on the draft revised RHS is now open. The closing date for responses is Friday 27<sup>th</sup> June 2008.

- 3.2 The Regional Housing Strategy is based on the following aspirational vision,

*“To help create sustainable communities in which the housing needs and choices of all the people of the East Midlands can be met at a price they can afford.”*

The RHS sets out 7 objectives. This report looks at each theme in relation to South Derbyshire. The Council's Core Strategic Housing Group comments are shown in Italics at the end of each theme. *(Note: Core Strategic Housing Group comprises of both Members and officers).*

- 3.3 Relationship between the Regional Housing Strategy and the Regional Plan.

In order to provide a clear and consistent regional framework, it is important that the RHS does not overlap with those housing issues which are the responsibility of the Regional Plan. Hence, Members should note that matters relating to the overall supply of new housing including numbers, distribution and appropriate provision of affordable housing are the responsibility of the Regional Plan. Therefore, the RHS does not address these matters but addresses other aspects of housing.

3.4 Objective 1: To ensure that regional housing and planning policy are informed by a robust understanding of need and housing market conditions in the region.

In August 2007 the Communities and Local Government Department published practice guidance on Strategic Housing Market Assessments (SHMA). This guidance promotes an approach to assessing housing need and demand, which can inform the development of local development documents and regional spatial planning for housing policies. The methodology prescribed is not mandatory, merely guidance on what should be considered for a robust and credible assessment.

South Derbyshire is part of the Derby sub-region housing market area. The other two partners being Derby City and Amber Valley Borough Council. The sub-region received financial support from the Regional Housing Group (RHG) to carry out both a district and sub-regional SHMA. The consultant, Bob Line, is currently in the final stages of preparing the district SHMA (this should be available in mid June).

Proposed policy in relation to Objective 1.

Policy 1 - The RHG will continue to support robust research into the region's housing markets.

Comments:

*Whilst we welcome the proposal for continuous support from the RHG, the inconsistencies between current SHMA approaches across the region needs to be addressed if consolidation of assessments in the future are to be robust. Therefore we would welcome a more consistent approach to SHMAs across the region.*

3.5 Objective 2: To ensure that everyone in the region is able to both access and afford suitable housing to meet their needs.

This theme is intended to bring together the various issues, which relate to the ability or otherwise of households to access housing in accordance with their need and preferences including the contribution made to affordability by public and private investment.

The RHS recognises that public resources for investment will probably always be limited, and also subject to Government priorities.

Proposed policy in relation Objective 2.

Policy 2 - To maximise the value achieved from investment through all available options.

Policy 3 - To meet and exceed national affordable housing targets through combining investment in new stock with policy measures to increase affordable housing supply changes with regard to both new and existing stock.

Policy 4 - To refer to SHMA findings as indicators of sub-regional priorities for the Regional Housing Plan investment alongside Hi4EM (Housing information for the East Midlands) and other established sources of private sector housing information.

Policy 5 - To make effective use of the regions existing stock across all tenures.

Policy 6 - To maximise opportunities through Section 106 Agreements to increase the supply of affordable housing in the region.

Policy 7 – To make best use of Low Cost Home Ownership products and other intermediate forms of tenure, which reflect demand for such tenures as, identified in SHMAs.

Policy 8 – To maximise opportunities to access housing through increased joint working across housing management.

Policy 9 – To support the implementation of the Regional Homelessness Strategy across the region and its recommendations.

Comments:

*We wish to see a more consistent approach applied across the region to the allocation of affordable housing grant*

*The availability of surplus public land is likely to play a crucial role in the future delivery of affordable housing. Experience shows that promoting the use of surplus public land, however small, is unlikely to make a difference to those public bodies with no direct responsibility for housing. Public funds are limited and whilst it is understandable that such bodies are likely to consider delivery of their own objectives first, we would like to see a policy that requires public bodies to consider public land for affordable housing prior to selling for maximum profit.*

*In relation to Low Cost Home Ownership products we feel that currently there are too many products on the market, which is confusing to the general public. Therefore, we would wish to see a rationalisation of these products.*

*We welcome support for the Regional Homelessness Strategy, however, a lack of Supporting People funds is prohibiting development of many new services and hence action needs to be taken to secure additional revenue funding.*

### 3.6 Objective 3: To contribute to raising the quality of design in housing and the creation of sustainable homes.

This theme mainly focuses on raising the standard and quality of homes. From 1<sup>st</sup> May 2008 all new homes will be rated on their green credentials. Members should note that the Housing Corporation currently require all new grant funded affordable homes to be designed to achieve level 3 of the Code for Sustainable Homes. This standard exceeds the sustainable standards set out in the existing Building Regulations.

#### Proposed policy in relation Objective 3.

Policy 10 - To contribute to a reduction in costs-in-use for households in new and existing properties.

Policy 11 – To develop a range of interventions, which will complement provisions in the Regional Plan and will continue to raise the quality of design in housing.

Policy 12 – To help reduce production costs thereby making new homes cheaper to build (and buy).

Policy 13 – To improve the sustainability of the region's existing housing stock.

Comments:

*We welcome the emphasis on raising the standard and quality of homes. In particular, the promotion of the CABA (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) "Building for Life" criteria. However, we are concerned that in a market driven economy, developers will not rise to the challenge if it impacts on their profit. Hence we wish to see sustainability standards set out in the Building Regulations increased to a level which is no less than that required by the Housing Corporation for affordable new homes.*

3.7 Objective 4: To develop a framework with which regional and local partners can develop sustainable and cohesive communities.

This theme considers meeting the needs of minority groups, such as black and minority groups, gypsies and travellers, as well as foreign nationals.

At the 2001 Census, some 3% of the population in South Derbyshire classified themselves as 'non white'. Excluding the City this is the highest level in Derbyshire. This group are mainly concentrated in the north of the district on the fringes of Derby. The Derby fringe area has been identified for housing growth. Hence, South Derbyshire is likely to see further migration of this group from within the City.

Compared to the other districts, South Derbyshire has the highest provision of official gypsy sites in Derbyshire. Research has recently highlighted a need for further provision across Derbyshire.

Proposed policy in relation Objective 4:

Policy 14: All agencies should give a higher profile in planning, design and funding decisions to ways of encouraging the development of sustainable and cohesive communities before properties are developed, considering ways in which housing activities can help diverse groups live in harmony.

3.8 Objective 5: To ensure that rural affordable housing needs are correctly addressed through the Regional Affordable Housing Programme.

This theme focuses on the need for affordable housing in rural communities. The District Council has recently completed a 3-year programme assessing the affordable housing needs of all those communities with less than 3,000 occupants. Currently, a need for 153 affordable homes across 30 communities has been identified.

Proposed policy in relation Objective 5.

Policy 15 – To meet the region's targets for rural affordable housing and ensure that good practice is promoted across the region in the provision of new rural affordable housing.

Comments:

*Although recognised that there is a need to deliver more affordable rural housing, delivery is often reliant on finding a willing landowner who is prepared to sell land at below the open market price and Housing Corporation grant funding. Schemes are often small and need designing in such a way that allows them to blend within the characteristics of villages. Hence, the RHG need to acknowledge such schemes often need grant funding which is considerably higher than the average for the region.*

3.9 Objective 6: To improve the co-ordination of provision, which meets the housing needs of vulnerable people

This theme looks at supported housing provision for vulnerable people including those suffering long-term illness or disability. Emphasis is placed on the Supporting People programme.

Proposed policy in relation Objective 6.

Policy 16 – Support sub-regional provision of appropriate housing for vulnerable people in their homes.

Comments:

*Investing capital funding alone is unlikely to meet the needs of all vulnerable groups without an increase in revenue funding, i.e. Supporting People funding.*

3.10 Objective 7: To ensure the region provides a robust response to the housing implications of our ageing population.

This objective is about meeting the housing needs of a predicted increase in the proportion of older people. It acknowledges that future needs are not just about building purpose built housing but impacts on the general housing market and the need to widen housing choice for older people across all tenures.

Proposed policy in relation Objective 7.

Policy 17 – The region should anticipate the future needs and aspirations of older people and build these into the appropriate policies, services and tenure types which will be beneficial to older households, with regard to both our current and future housing stock.

Policy 18 – Support the development of greater choice in housing options for older people and support the implementation in the region of Government's National Strategy.

Comments:

*We welcome the proposed policy and the need to widen choice for older people across all tenures.*

## **4.0 Financial Implications**

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications. However, Members should be aware that the Regional Housing Strategy sets out where future investment funds are to be focused and this may have implications for meeting local objectives.

## **5.0 Corporate Implications**

- 5.1 The Regional Housing Strategy (RHS) is an over-arching document that reviews housing-related issues across the East Midlands. Whilst the Local Housing Strategy reviews housing related issues in the district, funding from the Regional Housing

Board is generally based on the RHS objectives and hence it is a key strategy for delivering the housing elements of the Corporate Plan.

## **6.0 Community Implications**

- 6.1 Good quality, affordable housing enables stable and secure family lives. It can improve our social, environmental and economic well-being. It can help create better communities that can attract investment. Getting the strategic housing decision right over the next few years is critical to the life chances of the next generation.

## **7.0 Background Papers**

- 7.1 Draft Revised East Midlands Regional Housing Strategy (RHS) 2008 – 2016 – Managing Growth: Managing Change. Available from:  
<http://www.emra.gov.uk/publications/housing-planning-and-transport/housing2>