

Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy 2019-2023 Consultation

Analysis of results

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This summarises the results of the consultation on Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council's draft Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy which took place in December 2018 & January 2019.

It outlines:

- The consultation methodology
- Views raised on the proposed vision & objectives and overall priorities
- Extent to which respondents agreed with the proposed approach to meeting each of the priorities
- General themes and issues arising from the consultation
- How the results have been and will be used to influence the Strategy itself and implementation of the Strategy
- Profile of respondents.

The questionnaire is shown at Appendix 1 to this report. Charts showing a more detailed breakdown of responses is at Appendix 2.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

The consultation ran for five and a half weeks, from 18th December 2018 to 25th January 2019.

It was advertised through:

- A local press release
- The consultation pages of both councils' websites
- Social media - Facebook & Twitter
- Emails to key partners
- Discussion at various partnership forums

Internal staff workshops had been carried out previously, and another one with council tenant & leaseholder representatives from both authorities.

As part of the formal consultation, presentations were made to the sub-regional Registered Provider Forum, some local developers, and to members of Joint

Development Control Committee; a number of issues were raised and participants were encouraged to respond formally.

Questionnaires were available on-line and in paper copy, and people were also given the option to respond in a different way, including contacting the Housing Strategy leads at either of the councils.

Respondents could largely choose which questions they answered, although to be eligible for entry into the £50 prize draw individual respondents needed to give some profile information, and say what they thought were the three most important housing issues which needed to be addressed.

167 individuals and organisations responded. 156 of these completed the survey and a further 8 sent in separate written responses.

Section 6.0 below gives a summary of how the Strategy document has been changed in response to the consultation, and how responses will be used to inform implementation of the Strategy.

3.0 Vision, Objectives and Priorities

Vision & Objectives – extent to which respondents agreed

The survey asked: To what extent do you agree our vision and objectives are the right ones?

137 responses were received to this question.

4 out of 5 agreed or strongly agreed with proposed vision and objectives; around 1 in 12 disagreed.

Of those who disagreed or strongly disagreed, 9 were individuals and 2 were organisations/ businesses. Comments from those that disagreed included: too much development already; villages not listened to; not enough said about transport or infrastructure; not achievable within timeframe and a need for higher targets for delivering all types of housing.

See chart 1 at appendix 2 for more detail.

Priorities – extent to which respondents agreed

The survey asked: To what extent do you agree our priorities are the right ones?

130 responses were received to this question. 78% agreed or strongly agreed with the proposed priorities. 11% either disagreed or strongly disagreed; 11% neither agreed nor disagreed.

Comments from those that disagreed included: not enough weight given to the provision of specialist accommodation; too many flats being built; schools, shops and services should be in place first; should be reference to stakeholders and not 'partners', top priority should be for the elderly; too many priorities with no specific measures; planning for sustainable transport; reduce not increase the number of jobs and a question as to whether there are sufficient resources available.

See Chart 2 at Appendix 2.

4.0 Extent to which respondents agreed with our approach to meeting priorities

This section summarises the views given through the questionnaire around our proposed approach to priorities.

Priority 1: Delivering new homes

The survey asked: **To what extent do you agree with our proposed approach to increasing the delivery of homes, including affordable housing, to meet housing need?**

There were 126 responses to this question

The majority (71%) either strongly agreed or agreed, although around 1 in 4 disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Of those who disagreed/ strongly disagreed, one was a business, one a residents association, one a parish council, one a private landlord. The rest were private residents.

A more detailed breakdown is shown in Chart 3 at Appendix 2 to this report.

Priority 2: Diversifying the market and accelerating delivery

The survey asked: **To what extent do you agree with our proposed approach to diversifying the housing market and accelerating delivery?**

Just under 70% agreed or strongly disagreed with our approach. 12% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Almost 1 in 5 neither agreed nor disagreed.

Of those who disagreed or strongly disagreed, all but one were private residents. One was also a landlord, another was a parish council.

More detail is in Chart 4 at Appendix 2 to this report.

Priority 3: Design & quality of new homes and communities

The survey asked: **To what extent do you agree with our approach to achieving a high standard of design and quality of new homes and communities?**

121 respondents answered this question

Almost 4 out of 5 respondents either agreed or strongly agreed to our proposed approach to quality & design. 7% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Of those who disagreed or strongly disagreed, all but one were individual respondents.

More detail is at Chart 5 in Appendix 2 to this report.

Priority 4: Improving housing conditions and making best use of existing homes

The survey asked: **To what extent do you agree with our approach to improving housing conditions and making best use of existing homes?**

There were 110 responses to this question.

83% of respondents to this question either agreed or strongly agreed; 17% neither agreed nor disagreed; nobody disagreed.

See Chart 6 at Appendix 2 to this report for more detail.

Priority 5: Promoting health & wellbeing through housing

The survey asked: **To what extent do you agree with our approach to promoting health and wellbeing through housing?**

There were 113 responses to this question

77% of respondents to this question agreed or strongly agree; 8% disagreed; 15% neither agreed nor disagreed.

See Chart 7 at Appendix 2.

Priority 6: Preventing and tackling homelessness & rough sleeping

The survey asked: **To what extent do you agree with our approach to preventing and tackling homelessness and rough sleeping?**

Around three quarters of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the proposed approach to homelessness. A higher percentage here neither agreed nor disagreed compared to other questions. Only 5% disagreed or disagreed strongly.

See Chart 8 at Appendix 2 to this report.

Priority 7: Partnership working

The survey asked: To what extent do you agree with our approach to working with key partners to innovate and maximise resources available?

Three quarters of respondents agreed or strongly agreed to the proposed approach to partnership working; as with the question around homelessness, around one in five neither agreed nor disagreed.

See Chart 9 at Appendix 2 for more detail.

5.0 GENERAL THEMES ARISING FROM THE CONSULTATION

There was a whole range of different views expressed across the survey as a whole. These have been grouped into key themes below.

a) Concerns about housing affordability and the lack of affordable housing available.

In answer to the question 'What do you think are the main housing issues affecting the Greater Cambridge... area' over half of respondents (56%) to the question (79/141) cited lack of affordability and/or lack of affordable housing as their number one concern. A further 29% said it was their second highest concern; and 12% their third highest (although some of these answers were repeats).

- Responses mentioned the need for a range of affordable housing tenures, including social housing, homes for rent and homes to purchase.
- A number of respondents were concerned about South Cambridgeshire's minimum target for 200 new council homes being too low; (although the Strategy itself does say that there are ambitions to double this subject to available funding).

This clearly endorses the emphasis given to provision of affordable housing and tackling affordability in the Strategy.

b) Lack of housing supply, shortage of the right types of homes, and shortage of homes in the right locations

18/141 respondents cited one or more of these as the number one housing issue locally; 26/141 the second most important, and 28/141 the third most important. Issues arising from the consultation included:

- Homes needing to be in the right places; including close enough to jobs and not having to commute, or to enable to remain in their own communities.
- Reference to property sizes included need for more larger and more smaller types of properties, plus homes with private outside space. Some villages could benefit from smaller properties to provide more of a diverse mix of homes.
- Varying views were raised on the types and tenures of housing required. Many favoured affordable housing, although a few also emphasised the importance of market housing to support the economy. Importance of community led housing through Community Land Trusts, and self & custom build housing were also raised (although the affordability of self & custom build was also questioned). Responses around new PRS models are dealt with in para 5.0 (g) below.
- A wide range of groups were cited as needing to be catered for including families, older people (including retirement and downsizer accommodation), younger people, first time buyers, single homeless, those needing specialist supported housing and key/essential workers.
- The issue of both over and under development in villages came up in a number of responses. Some felt that small villages were not sustainable locations for new development; others felt that more development would help to make villages more mixed and sustainable.
- A small minority of respondents cited overdevelopment as one of their three most important issues. The consultation also highlighted that a small minority also felt too much student housing was being developed in Cambridge.
- Development on gardens was highlighted by a few people, with views both for and against.

c) The importance of providing appropriate and sustainable transport and other infrastructure.

4% said transport and/or other infrastructure was the most important issue affecting the area; 8% the second most important, and 12% the third most important issue affecting housing in Cambridge. Some specifically referred to issues around transport, others simply cited 'infrastructure'.

- The importance of infrastructure, services, community facilities & projects etc, being delivered at an early stage of development. The need for adequate transport links and sustainable transport options was an issue raised repeatedly in responses to different questions. This included the need for good public transport, cycle networks and storage, and need to tackle traffic congestion and parking issues.

- Transport was important to enable people to travel to and from work, as well as being able to get about more locally.
- Transport was seen as having an important role in supporting health and wellbeing, and in the context of climate change.
- A few raised the issue of the importance of digital connectivity, which included both physical infrastructure and better services. Digital connectivity was mentioned as essential to ensuring sustainability of rural communities.
- Access to other services and facilities – particularly (although not exclusively) in rural villages; including power & water supplies and drainage. Some respondents just referred more generally to 'infrastructure'.

Although largely a Local Plan issue to resolve, it was clear that this had not been adequately reflected in the strategy.

d) Planning, delivery and developer viability.

A whole raft of planning-related issues was raised. 10/141 respondents cited issues with planning – including policy, process and planning service as being one of their top three issues. Concerns raised in response to a range of questions included:

- Some saw existing planning policies as restricting development, particularly in rural areas.
- Some felt Green Belt should be reviewed; others felt Green Belt should be protected.
- Village frameworks were an issue, with some feeling that small developments outside the framework could help to make villages more sustainable. One suggested that consideration should be given to relax or redefine village boundaries. Others were clear that development should not be allowed outside of the framework.
- A number of respondents thought there should be more development on, and a more flexible approach to rural exception sites to provide different types and tenures of homes to meet local needs; not necessarily just affordable. It was felt there also needed to be more engagement with parish councils and local communities on exception site development, and more notice taken of the views of both. However, the point was also made that this needed to be alongside entry level development on other Local Plan sites.
- Village Design Statements were also seen as important, but require full engagement with both parish councils and local communities, and again views needed to be effectively taken on board. There also needed to be more emphasis on Neighbourhood Plans. More coordination and planning to avoid piecemeal development was also mentioned.

- Some respondents said that the time it took planning applications to go through was too slow. Problems included slow and/or apparently inefficient processes and issues with planning service skills and capacity.
- Concerns were also raised around the market being developer led, and that developers may 'land bank' and may claim that affordable housing or other contributions are non-viable but still make significant profits. Land values were also a concern.

e) Quality and sustainability of new homes and communities.

14/141 respondents cited this in the top three issues facing the area. Issues raised included:

- The importance of quality of place and ensuring the wider area remains a good place to live, and that development helps support mixed and integrated communities.
- A number of respondents said that it was important to ensure new homes were built to high standards. This included reference to: minimum space standards; all homes needing to be built to minimum Part M4(2) accessibility standards to enable people to remain in their own homes as they aged; need to consider climate change in design; build quality including low maintenance and running costs; etc.
- However, there were concerns from others that being too prescriptive around standards could have viability implications and reduce the number of homes that could be brought forward. It could also impact on affordability for occupiers, and in the case of space standards could also limit choice.
- Homes should be designed sympathetically with their surroundings. Reference was made to both larger urban developments, and the negative impact of urban house styles on village character.
- The importance of monitoring delivery to ensure that homes are delivered to the required standards; including some suggestions as to how this could be done.

f) Climate change and energy efficiency.

Some respondents referred to the importance of responding to and tackling climate change, and the need to be more radical in this area.

- High energy efficiency standards were seen as important by some, as well as renewable energy and low carbon technologies – particularly on larger developments.
- Although again there were counter-arguments around viability (see para 5.0 (e) above). Where non-traditional technologies are introduced, there

need to be mechanisms for residents to be shown how to use them effectively.

- Homes need to be adaptable for changing energy requirements. There should be opportunities for new communities to contribute surplus energy back to national grid/energy network.

g) PRS Build to rent models.

Some respondents highlighted this as important, to support the economy and meet housing needs. Responses included:

- The need for PRS as part of a mix of tenures on larger sites.
- One respondent said we should be cautious about developing a local approach to new PRS, as developers tend to work regionally or nationally and this could have a negative impact on delivery.
- The need for long-term institutional investment in this area.
- The need for longer term PRS rentals, and the importance of effective management, and use of enforcement powers where required.
- Good quality new-build HMOs were supported by some, but opposed by others.

h) Other ways of diversifying the market and accelerating delivery.

- A few were supportive of homes for specifically essential workers in particular locations.
- There was some reference to the need to promote modern methods of construction, although with caution attached: eg around there being an immature supply chain, and potential risks around long-term durability and maintenance costs.
- The market is dominated by larger developers, and SME builders need to be supported.

i) Building for an ageing population.

A number of responses referred to the need for housing suitable for older people.

- There was a mix of views on whether new provision should be through general needs housing which could be adapted, or specialist housing, or a combination of both. More information is needed on what older people want.
- There were very mixed views around whether a retirement village was a good idea, with some for, and others very much against.
- Homes for older people needed to be in sustainable locations and accessible in terms of, facilities, public transport, social networks; etc

- Issues raised around accessible homes for both older and disabled people are highlighted in para 5.0 (e) above. The point was also made that homes should be able to be adapted later, where necessary, without too much cost. On the other hand, enabling people to remain in large homes could impact on the availability of homes suitable for younger families.
- Homes for people to downsize into was considered important, although it was also stated that older people should not be pressurised into moving. One respondent felt that this would not necessarily free up homes for families, as some of those homes could be turned into HMOs, impacting on settled communities.

j) Health and wellbeing and importance of communities.

There was general recognition of the importance of good quality homes, environments and communities on physical and mental health and wellbeing. Responses here were quite diverse and included:

- The importance of appropriate good quality housing, in mixed communities, made up of a mix of ages and household & tenure types.
- The impact of infrastructure and the wider environment on communities and on health and wellbeing, including: transport options, reducing traffic congestion and air quality; design of public realm, community and green space.
- Importance of high quality local services which are adequately funded including education, health and technology enabled social care services.
- The need to promote community at all levels, and the importance of work around community development and community cohesion;
- The need for all levels of local government to work together, and to support involvement of a wide range of organisations in this work, including voluntary and community sector organisations.
- The need to promote community action and support communities to help themselves, to help tackle loneliness and isolation.
- The importance of digital inclusion amongst residents of all tenures,
- The importance of community spaces to enable people to meet and take part in community, learning, etc activities.
- The need to improve integration between young and old.

k) Existing homes, and empty homes.

The main issues raised here included:

- Importance, again of communities, public and sustainable transport links, etc.
- The need for investment in social housing, including regeneration, and need for social housing to be effectively managed.
- Concerns around the impact of Universal Credit and the need to work together to deal with it.
- The importance of private rented homes being effectively managed and maintained, of using enforcement powers where necessary.
- The importance of seeing private landlords as partners, working with not against them. There was a concern from landlord respondents that the balance too much in favour of rights of tenants.
- Some thought it was important to deal with empty homes, and felt that South Cambridgeshire should be doing more about it; although some wondered whether numbers were high enough to justify resource.
- The need to deal with empty homes on new developments.

l) Partnership working.

Working in partnership was generally seen as important.

- Particular reference was made to needing to improve relationships with developers, treating them more as partners.
- Parish councils had not specifically been referenced in the draft Strategy as partners, and there were concerns that work with them, and with wider communities, needed to improve; particularly in relation to new development where some felt their views had not been taken on board.
- A number of other partners were highlighted as needing to be identified in the Strategy.
- A number of respondents expressed an interest in working more closely with the councils, either generally or on specific types of projects.
- The importance of working closely with the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority.

m) Issues around national policy.

Concerns included:

- Right to Buy and lack of replacement.
- Impact of Universal Credit and low Local Housing Allowance rates on homelessness.
- Need for national rent controls and more PRS enforcement powers.

n) Homelessness.

Issues raised in relation to homelessness included:

- The impact of lack of housing supply on homelessness.
- The impact of mental health and drug & alcohol issues and the importance of early intervention and appropriate support for those who need it.
- The need for some clarification on terms used and work with partners.
- An apparent lack of understanding amongst some that homelessness goes beyond street homelessness/ rough sleeping and that much of it is hidden; suggesting a need to improve communication in this area.
- Need to capitalise on public interest in this area and work more closely with businesses, community organisations and the wider community to tackle homelessness issues.
- An interest in the Housing First model being pursued by Cambridge City Council to provide housing for people with multiple and complex needs.

o) General comments.

- Need for more specific actions and measurable outcomes.
- Need for some terms to be more clearly defined.
- Some felt the strategy was unachievable – too aspirational or insufficient resources to deliver; others thought it was not ambitious enough.
- The purpose of the Strategy, and the interrelationship with the Local Plans and Supplementary Planning Documents needed to be clearer.
- Some felt the priorities were not listed in the right order.
- A few made general statements along the lines that the councils just need to get on with delivering.

6. 0 How consultation is being used to influence the Strategy

A number of changes have been made to the Strategy as a result of the consultation, including:

- Some minor changes to the vision, objectives and priorities, in relation to: building for different age groups; warm homes; sustainable transport and infrastructure; and homes in the right places.
- More explanation on the relationship between the Strategy, Local Plan and Supplementary Planning Documents.
- More explicit reference to the importance of good transport links, in particular public and sustainable transport, in bringing forward new homes.
- More reference to wider infrastructure, including: energy and water capacity; digital connectivity; and green space.

Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy 2019-2023
Summary of External Consultation Responses

- More reference to making homes more affordable to live in, beyond direct housing costs, including heating, utility and transport costs.
- More explicit reference to working with communities to help them to develop and to support community cohesion and long-term sustainability.
- Clarity that older people should be able to choose to downsize if they wish to do so.
- When considering off-site construction, the need to take into account future repair and maintenance implications.
- More reference to the role of parish councils as partners.
- More reference to Village Design Statements and Neighbourhood Plans for South Cambridgeshire.
- More around climate change and promoting energy efficiency measures, warm homes, new home energy technologies and tackling fuel poverty.
- Strengthening and clarifying South Cambridgeshire's approach to empty homes; and adding the need to review the City's approach to identifying and dealing with empty homes on new developments
- Strengthening reference to the link between: availability, quality and affordability of housing and environments and physical & mental health; and the need to work more closely with GPs and other health professionals.
- Clarification around arrangements for the two districts to introduce new homelessness strategies.
- The need for a range of different housing options for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness
- Clarification of the distinction between homelessness and those begging or adopting a street lifestyle
- Added reference to opportunities for working with the wider public in dealing with homelessness and rough sleeping.
- More information on the proposed Housing First homelessness accommodation planned for the City.
- Additions made to the key partners list.
- Some amendments to definitions in the Glossary, and some new ones added.

Responses will be further taken into account in implementing the action plan. For example they will be considered as the councils progress work in relation to:

- Drawing up a new Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to support the current Local Plan.
- Developing a new Sustainable Design & Construction SPD – again to support the current Local Plan.
- Researching housing needs of different groups.
- Shaping the proposed new joint Local Plan.

- Engaging partners across all areas of activity.

7.0 Profile of Respondents

Individuals or organisations?

Respondents were asked to say whether they were responding as individuals or businesses/ organisations.

There were 165 responses to this question. Around two thirds were responding as individuals; 30% as businesses or organisations; and 5% as 'other'.

See Chart 10 at Appendix 2 to this report.

Status of individuals

Of those who responded as individuals, the majority were living and/or working in Greater Cambridge. A handful were individuals operating as private landlords, or were residents living just outside Greater Cambridge.

See Chart 11 at Appendix 2.

Categories of organisation/business

The 50 responding on behalf of organisations or businesses could be grouped into the following broad categories:

Registered provider; other housing provider; developer/land promoter; local/regional government; large institution; parish council; residents' association; and voluntary sector.

The largest group of responses was from parish councils (25%), registered providers (13%) and developers (13%). See Chart 12 at Appendix 2.

Parish councils were particularly concerned about transport and infrastructure issues, need for appropriate and affordable housing, and need for engagement and partnership working with parish councils.

Issues raised by developers and RPs included: overcoming barriers to housing delivery –including planning policy and process, viability, new PRS development and housing for particular groups.

Tenure of individuals

Of those individuals who specified their tenure, almost three quarters were owner occupiers. 1 in 10 were private tenants, and 9% were council tenants or leaseholders. The remaining 9% was a combination of individuals operating as private landlords, in shared ownership, housing association tenants or 'other'.

See Chart 13 at Appendix 2.

Age of individuals

Those responding as individuals were asked which age band they fell into.

Of the 89 who responded, over 65s made up the largest ten year age band, followed by 55-64s. Unfortunately there were no respondents aged under 24.

Affordability and transport were issues across all age groups. Most of the responses relating to conditions in the private rented sector came from younger age groups.

See Chart 14 at Appendix 2.

Ethnicity of individuals

88 individuals gave their ethnicity

4 out of 5 identified as White British. The second largest group was White Other at 8%.

See chart 15 at Appendix 2.

Disability of individuals

89 individuals responded to the question of whether they considered themselves to have a disability.

12% of respondents considered themselves to have a disability; 77% had no disability.

See Chart 16 at Appendix 2

How people heard about the survey

Over half (58%) said they heard about the survey by email. About 1 in 10 (9%) was by word of mouth. 7% via website, and 7% through social media (Twitter or Facebook).

See Chart 17 at Appendix 2