

North Lanarkshire Council

Report

Housing and Regeneration Committee

approval noting

Ref SL/DS/MK

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Development of the Local Housing Strategy 2021-26

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to update the committee on the progress of developing the new Local Housing Strategy (2021-26) and to report a projected delay in the publication of the strategy as a result of the impact of Covid-19 on a range of factors which directly affect the development of the strategy.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) Note the progress made to date in the development of the new Local Housing Strategy (2021-2026);
- (ii) Note the impact of Covid-19 on the key consultation activities planned to meet the requirements as set out in Scottish Government Local Housing Strategy Guidance (2019);
- (iii) Note the impact of Covid-19 on the progression of Housing Need and Demand Assessment 3;
- (iv) Note the potential projected impact of Covid-19 on housing and housing related areas;
- (v) Note the timescale for the adoption of the Local Development Plan and National Planning Framework 4 and importance of alignment with the new Local Housing Strategy;
- (vi) Given the factors outlined in sections 2.1 to 2.14 note a delay to the publication of the new Local Housing Strategy (2021-26) to later within the calendar year (2021).

The Plan for North Lanarkshire

Priority All priorities

Ambition statement (1) Ensure a housing mix that supports social inclusion and economic growth

1. Background

- 1.1 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 places a statutory requirement on local authorities to produce a Local Housing Strategy (LHS) that sets out its strategy, priorities and plans for the delivery of housing and related services.
- 1.2 The LHS is at the heart of the arrangements for housing and planning through its links with Development Plans and its strategic role in directing investment in housing and housing related services locally. It sets out a strategic vision for the delivery of housing and housing related services and the outcomes that it will seek to achieve. The Scottish Government expects LHS's to be prepared and submitted around every five years. North Lanarkshire's current LHS spans the period 2016-21 and a range of development activities have taken place to inform the new LHS which will span the period 2021-26. This has included a number of early consultation activities and completion of a suite of thematic evidence papers to identify the current and emerging key housing issues and challenges.
- 1.3 Progress however on the new LHS has been impacted significantly by Covid-19, with a number of crucial areas affected which directly inform the LHS. These include impacts on consultation and involvement activities, understanding the emerging housing environment post Covid-19, and the progression of the Housing Need and Demand Assessment 3. As such it is envisaged that there will be a delay in the publication of the new LHS to later in the 2021 calendar year, with a view to reporting the final LHS (2021-26) to November 2021 committee as opposed to February 2021 committee. Discussions have been held with Scottish Government to discuss the current challenges and progression of the LHS. Scottish Government have confirmed there is flexibility in relation to publication timescales as set out in the LHS guidance and are satisfied with the approach to delay publication to later within the same calendar year to enable an effective, robust and accurate LHS to be produced which reflects the views of a wide range of stakeholders, containing priorities and corresponding actions which are relevant to North Lanarkshire.

2. Report

Consultation and Engagement

- 2.1 The 2001 Housing Act requires that local authorities consult on their LHS and the statutory Equality Duty on public bodies requires the involvement, consultation and engagement of as wide a range of local residents and tenants and communities of interest as possible.
- 2.2 Early engagement helps to ensure that people have a greater opportunity to have their say and influence the future of their communities, including the delivery of housing and housing related services. As a result the LHS should be a robust strategy that reflects local need accurately and shows the influence that local people have had on the development of LHS priorities. As such guidance states that the LHS should demonstrate how engagement and consultation:
 - Was undertaken early on in the LHS development process and how it has continued through its development and subsequent annual review;
 - Used a range of media to ensure as wide an audience as possible within local communities and from relevant representative groups including people with or who share protected characteristics;

- Ensured, in an effort to end inequality, that the make-up of the local population is accurately reflected;
 - Recognised that some people's views may not be readily heard through traditional engagement methods and provide evidence of how those less willing or able to engage, were given the opportunity to do so;
 - Has influenced the development of LHS priorities, outcomes and actions.
- 2.3 A number of early engagement and consultation activities took place prior to the introduction of Covid-19 lockdown measures. These included a tenants and residents conference stall and survey, food for thought sessions with North Lanarkshire Federation and an online survey on housing priorities. These opportunities provided some limited but useful insights into the views of tenants and residents on the new LHS priorities. The majority of consultation and engagement activities were however, planned to take place throughout April - July 2020. These included a stakeholder event, pop up locality roadshows, an online survey, presentations at partnership forums, focus groups, co-production meetings, in addition to a range of other methods to engage with as wide a range of stakeholders as possible.
- 2.4 As a result of Covid-19 lockdown measures most of these consultation opportunities have had to be cancelled/postponed given the nature of the face to face/in person method of consultation. Furthermore, in an effort to ensure the public were kept informed as much as possible to fight the Covid-19 pandemic the majority of the Council's publicity has been understandably focussed on Covid-19 related information. This has had a further impact on consultation activity planned.
- 2.5 Consultation activities have been reviewed to focus on alternative digital and postal methods for the time being, with a view to expanding the range of activities as lockdown measures ease. This however is also notwithstanding challenges, which include the varying digital platforms utilised by different stakeholder organisations which can prove challenging in carrying out consultation, and engaging with people considered 'harder to reach' who are more likely to experience digitally exclusion to a greater extent.
- 2.6 Given the significant impact on consultation activity it is envisaged that there will be a need for an extended period of time to enable the consultation requirements set out in the guidance to be achieved, ensuring that the new LHS priorities are informed by a range of stakeholders including tenants and residents.

Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA) 3

- 2.7 The Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA) is a primary element of the evidence base for the LHS and Development Plans, and its findings should help determine outcomes and priorities for future housing and related service delivery.
- 2.8 Scottish Government Local Housing Strategy guidance requires evidence that housing supply targets have been informed by a robust and credible housing need and demand assessment, have been agreed corporately and contribute appropriately to the Scottish Government's goal of increasing housing supply.
- 2.9 Work on the joint Glasgow and Clyde Valley HNDA 3 commenced autumn 2019. This has subsequently been delayed, mainly due to the delay in the publication of National Register of Scotland population estimates (2018 based) which is now not

due for publication until September 2020, and the detailed analysis required which has been impacted by Covid-19 through the redeployment of analysis staff to other key priority service areas and the challenges associated with completing such detailed analysis whilst adapting to a new 'remote' way of working. As a result it is now projected that a provisional estimate of Housing Need will be available in October/November 2020. Discussion has been held with Scottish Government on using the provisional Housing Supply Target from HNDA 3 in the new LHS until it gains robust and credible status by the Centre for Housing Market Analysis.

Understanding the Impact of Covid-19 on Housing and Related Areas

- 2.10 Evidence tells us that Covid-19 has already had a seismic impact on the economy, with a significant increase in unemployment and in the number of people claiming income related benefits. Further adverse impact is projected with the cessation of the furlough scheme, as business and industry attempts to recover from the pandemic. We know from evidence that the economy has a direct fundamental link to housing and housing related areas. As such it is envisaged that as household income reduces, and access to mortgage finance decreases, the need for affordable housing will increase. Other key areas such as addressing homelessness and the implementation of Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans have been impacted, and a significant increase in the number of domestic abuse incidents has been recorded during the pandemic.
- 2.11 It is highly probable that these issues will influence the priorities and actions set out in the LHS.

Other Considerations – National Planning Framework 4 and the Local Development Plan

- 2.12 The development of the LHS is linked to the timescales for Development Plans and the two should be closely aligned, with joint working between housing and planning teams. The Local Development Plan in North Lanarkshire has been submitted for examination and the anticipated timescale for adoption is summer 2021.
- 2.13 The principles for this collaborative working are set out in Scottish Planning Policy which will be integrated in the National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) which will also set out new national and regional spatial strategies. NPF4 is anticipated to be placed before Parliament in autumn 2021 with adoption anticipated in spring/summer 2022.
- 2.14 It is preferable that the development of the new LHS is aligned with both the adoption of the LDP and NPF4 to ensure that any modifications can be reflected in the LHS. A later publication date of the LHS is therefore preferable to enable this.

3. Equality and Diversity

3.1 Fairer Scotland Duty

The LHS has a significant impact on reducing inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage. An impact assessment has been carried out at an early stage to consider how we can reduce inequalities through the strategy which will be reviewed as development of the strategy progresses.

3.2 Equality Impact Assessment

An early equality impact assessment has been carried out for the new LHS and has identified a number of positive impacts on particular characteristic groups, specifically older people, disabled people and children and young people. The equality impact assessment will continue to be reviewed as more evidence becomes available in respect of Covid-19 related impacts and updated as development of the LHS progresses.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial Impact

No financial impact of relevance to note at this stage. Any financial impact identified throughout the development process will be reported to committee when the final LHS is presented for consideration.

4.2 HR/Policy/Legislative Impact

There is a legislative requirement to develop this LHS as set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. There are no HR impacts of relevance to note at this stage.

4.3 Environmental Impact

The LHS will be subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Report indicating that the LHS falls within the scope of the Local Development Plan in terms of SEA. The screening process will be undertaken as part of the development work to identify any potential environmental impacts.

4.4 Risk Impact

There are significant risks associated with publication of the new LHS in line with the previous indicated timescales reported to committee. These risks have been mitigated by enabling further time for development as a result of Covid-19 to address the issues outlined in the report.

5. Measures of success

- 5.1 Development of a new LHS for North Lanarkshire to cover the period 2021-26 which contributes to delivery of The Plan for North Lanarkshire.

6. Supporting documents

- 6.1 Appendix 1 – Revised Project Plan.



Head of Housing Solutions

| Key Task | Development Stage | | | | Consultative Draft | | | | | Final Draft | | | |
|---|-------------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|--------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-------------|----------|----------|----------|
| | pre-June 2020 | July - Aug 2020 | Oct - Dec 2020 | Jan – Mar 2021 | April 2021 | May 2021 | Jun 2021 | Jul 2021 | Aug 2021 | Sep 2021 | Oct 2021 | Nov 2021 | Dec 2021 |
| NLF Meeting (face to face if appropriate at the time/virtual) | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Update LHS with Consultation Feedback | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Final Draft with Head of Service | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Peer Review | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Production of finalised strategy | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Graphics (Final Strategy) | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Approval at Committee | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Publication | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Note: This consultation plan is subject to revision dependent on appropriate consultation methods available at the time (all methods outlined above are planned at this stage in digital/virtual, online, telephone and postal methods)