



Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	CABINET – 7 December 2023
Subject	Draft Cotswold Housing Strategy 2024-2029
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Cllr Joe Harris, Leader of the Council Email: Joe.Harris@Cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Charlie Jackson, Assistant Director of Planning & Sustainability Email: charlie.jackson@cotswold.gov.uk
Report author	James Brain, Forward Planning Manager Email: james.brain@cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To seek approval to consult with partners and the public on a new five year Cotswold Housing Strategy. The strategy directly responds to the Council's Corporate Plan that seeks to address housing affordability and increase the supply of affordable housing.
Annexes	Annex A – Draft Cotswold Housing Strategy 2024 to 2029 – technical consultation document Annex B – Draft Cotswold Housing Strategy 2024 to 2029 – non-technical summary consultation document
Recommendation(s)	That Cabinet resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Approve the draft Cotswold Housing Strategy for public consultation as presented at Annex A and B; and2. Delegate authority to the Forward Planning Manager, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to agree a questionnaire for the public consultation exercise and to make minor modifications to improve clarity.
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Respond to the climate crisis• Provide socially rented homes• Make our local plan green to the core• Support health and wellbeing• Enable a vibrant economy



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Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Interim Strategic Housing Manager, Housing Team, Climate Action Manager, Development Management and Heritage and Design Manager



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1** Cotswold District Council recognises the national housing affordability crisis and the impact it has on local residents and communities. A key corporate priority for the Administration is to explore all options to increase the number of affordable homes; especially those within the social rented category, which are one of the few forms of truly affordable housing in the District.
- 1.2** This report seeks approval to consult (with partners and the public) on a draft Housing Strategy Update 2024 -2029 that sets out how the Council will explore options to address this issue, and where possible mitigate the effects of the national housing affordability crisis.
- 1.3** The Council last updated its Housing Strategy in 2016. The draft Housing Strategy Update 2024 -2029 does not include a Homelessness Strategy as this will be the subject of a separate review carried out by the Housing Team and will be presented to Cabinet in 2024.
- 1.4** The draft Housing Strategy Update 2024 -2029 identifies four broad housing priorities:
 - Planning for everyone's housing needs
 - Providing more affordable homes
 - Delivering sustainable, high quality and climate resilient homes
 - Thriving communities and neighbourhoods
- 1.5** Each priority contains a series of objectives and actions that will be delivered over the next five years. An action plan will be prepared upon adoption of the Housing Strategy.
- 1.6** A non-technical summary is provided at Annex B.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** Social rented housing stock has been in steady decline across the county for the past few decades, with former stock being sold through schemes such as Right to Buy and not replaced. Shelter report there are 1.4 million fewer households in social housing than in 1980, and 1 million households are currently waiting for a social rented home. Spiralling house prices (sales and rentals) and household bills, both of which make housing less affordable, have led to an increased demand in the private rental sector, where the supply of housing has been slow to keep up. The result is above inflationary increases in rents, especially in the south of England and urban areas.
- 2.2** In Cotswold District, local earnings have not kept pace with house prices and the average house in the District is now around 14 times higher than the average local salary. This is a large contributor to the number of households on the Council's housing register. As of 31 October 2023 there were 1,453 households across the District in need of affordable rented housing.



3. The draft Cotswold Housing Strategy 2024 to 2029

- 3.1** Tackling the issues raised by the national housing affordability crisis is impossible to do in isolation. The draft Housing Strategy therefore sits alongside other local and national strategies, plans and work programmes.
- 3.2** The draft Housing Strategy has been shaped by national policy and local context and is informed by data and information about the District's housing market. It also provides a foundation on which to base Local Plan policy updates and their supporting justification.
- 3.3** The purpose of the draft Housing Strategy is to:
- inform our partners and residents about the housing challenges and priorities in the area;
 - be a catalyst for delivering further affordable housing and, in particular, social rented housing;
 - focus resources and effort on agreed priorities;
 - highlight the importance of reducing inequalities;
 - maintain a strategic overview of housing development and support a revised Local Plan; and
 - drive our statutory duties.
- 3.4** The draft Housing Strategy will shape and focus the Council's work with partner organisations and registered housing providers, as well as landowners, developers and community-led organisations. It will also support funding bids.
- 3.5** The draft Housing Strategy includes a long-term vision to 2050 that sees a world where everyone in Cotswold District will live in a healthy, affordable, low carbon home that meets their needs within a safe, sustainable and thriving community, which is accessible to all.
- 3.6** The draft Strategy contains a multitude of short-term objectives and actions that begin the journey of delivering this long-term aspiration. Actions and objectives are organised into four broad housing priorities.
- 3.7** Priority 1: Planning for everyone's housing needs: Everyone in Cotswold deserves to live in a suitable home. This requires having the right properties to meet individual needs in the right locations, with great infrastructure, services and support. Cotswold District has not only an ageing population, but an average house price on the open market is 14 times the average wage.
- 3.8** Priority 2: Delivering more affordable housing: There are not enough affordable homes within our district. The high cost of buying or renting through the private market requires people to pay a high proportion of their income towards housing costs. This is being compounded by the additional pressure of mounting bills and inflation, with experts predicting that this will result in higher levels of debt and homelessness.



- 3.9** Priority 3: Sustainable, high quality and climate resilient homes: Housing is responsible for about one quarter of the District's total greenhouse gas emissions, so it has a significant contribution to make in fulfilling our pledge to become carbon neutral by 2045. Good quality low carbon housing is essential for the health and wellbeing of residents, so it is vital that we work to ensure that existing homes are warm, safe, meet the needs of the occupants, are affordable to run, and are resilient to the impacts of climate change.
- 3.10** Priority 4: Thriving communities and neighbourhoods: Everyday needs should be easily accessible within a short distance from home. This includes safe and equitable access to fresh groceries, nature, healthcare, jobs or workspaces and other essential services, facilities and infrastructure. It also means listening and working together with communities on things that matter to them and ensuring new development fits well and enhances existing communities and neighbourhoods.
- 3.11** The draft Housing Strategy will be reviewed regularly during the five year period to ensure it continues to respond to the housing needs across Cotswold, and to reflect changes in local context, national policy, legislation and strategy. An action plan will be prepared upon adoption of the Housing Strategy.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1** Unlike the Homelessness Strategy, a Housing Strategy is not a statutory requirement so an alternative option would be to not update the Housing Strategy. Taking such option would not aid a focussed and co-ordinated approach to increasing the supply of affordable housing in the District. It would also make it more difficult to update the Council's Local Plan.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1** The national housing affordability crisis and need for affordable housing continues to grow. Whilst the Council has been successful with delivering affordable housing through traditional methods, there are alternative options that can be explored to take an even more proactive approach, which meets the needs of the District in a more targeted way, and delivers more truly affordable housing for our communities.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** There are no immediate implications of approving the draft Housing Strategy for public consultation. However, the adoption of the Housing Strategy will place a commitment on various services, notably the Strategic Housing, Forward Planning and Development Management teams. For example, Strategic Housing may have more development proposals to negotiate; Forward Planning may have an increased requirement to plan and monitor affordable housing developments; and Development Management may need to provide more pre-application advice and may experience an increase in planning applications.



7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 No additional legal implications.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT

8.1 No significant risks identified.

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT

9.1 The Housing Strategy, once adopted, is likely to have a positive impact on equality by increasing the supply of affordable housing.

10. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The draft Housing Strategy Update, together with other strategies and plans (i.e. the Council's updated Local Plan and the Design Code), contains various actions that will positively address climate change and aid nature recovery.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 None.

(END)