



**Executive**  
15<sup>th</sup> January 2007

**Report from the Director of  
Housing and Community Care**

For Action

Wards Affected:  
ALL

**Mayor of London's Housing Strategy – Response to Initial Consultation**

Forward Plan Ref: H&CC-0607-21

**1. Summary**

- 1.1 This report outlines the main themes of the consultation document *Towards the Mayor's Housing Strategy*, published by the Greater London Authority on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2006, sets out the consultation process for the strategy and seeks approval for the draft response set out in Appendix 1.

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 That members endorse the response to the consultation document.
- 2.2 That members note the proposals for further consultation during 2007 and the timetable for production of the strategy.
- 2.3 That members note the arrangements for consultation and response at the sub-regional level.
- 2.4 That members agree that the final Brent response should be approved by the Director of Housing and Community Care in consultation with the Lead Member for housing to ensure that, where appropriate, it is consistent with the West London response.

**3. Background**

- 3.1 In July 2006 the government announced its proposals for new powers for the Mayor of London in a number of areas, including making the Mayor responsible for production of the regional housing strategy and

for making decisions on the broad allocation of funding for investment in new affordable homes. Implementation of these proposals will require legislation in some cases and a GLA Bill was included in the Queen's speech at the opening of the current parliamentary session. It is expected that the Bill will be enacted during 2007. In the meantime, the Mayor has already taken on some additional responsibilities where legislation is not required. This has included taking on the responsibilities of the London Housing Board, in particular its role in making recommendations to ministers of the allocation of resources from the regional housing pot.

- 3.2 Technically, the Mayor does not yet have the power to produce a new housing strategy for London. However, unless the GLA Bill fails to gain assent or is substantially amended, he will be granted this power during 2007. The Mayor's housing strategy will be a statutory document, with which local housing strategies will be expected to demonstrate conformity, in much the same way that local development plans must conform with the statutory London Plan.
- 3.3 In anticipation of the granting of the Mayor's new powers, he has published *Towards the Mayor's Housing Strategy*. This is an initial consultation document setting out the broad themes and policy priorities that the Mayor has identified at this stage and framing some general questions about the ways in which these priorities might be delivered.

## **4. Detail**

### **4.1 Consultation**

- 4.1.1 It is important to note that the Mayor's Housing Strategy will not come into effect until April 2008, since the current London Housing Strategy, published in 2005, covers the two-year investment programme 2006-2008. The publication of the current document is therefore the first stage in what will be a lengthy process of consultation and development. Broadly, the timetable is as follows:

- November 2006: Publication of *Towards the Mayor's Housing Strategy*
- 7<sup>th</sup> February 2007: Deadline for written comments
- April 2007: End of consultation. The period between February and April will include consultation with the groups outlined below and a conference.
- July 2007: Publication of draft Mayor's Housing Strategy and Strategic Housing Investment Plan
- 2007/2008: Further consultation on draft and formal scrutiny by London Assembly (subject to passing of GLA Bill).
- 2008: Publication of strategy (subject to passing of GLA Bill)

- 4.1.2 The Mayor has already put in place new, non-statutory, structures for ongoing consultation and involvement to replace those that supported the London Housing Board.

- The Mayor's Housing Forum and a range of sub-groups will be the main consultative body, replacing the Housing Forum for London and with broadly similar membership that will include London Councils.
- The Housing Equalities Standing Group will include representatives from a range of groups and play a key role in the equality impact assessment process for the strategy.
- The Housing Investment Panel will bring together public sector investors, including the Housing Corporation and London Councils, and will lead on development of the Strategic Housing Investment Plan.
- The Housing Delivery Group will be the main forum for private sector developers and housing associations and will link closely with the Investment Panel.
- The London Assembly will have statutory responsibility for scrutiny and will make its own decisions as to how it will carry out this role in due course.

4.1.3 At the sub-regional level, a consultation event is planned for 18<sup>th</sup> January 2007. This will provide an opportunity for members, officers, tenants and partner agencies including developers and RSLs to discuss the strategy and question GLA officers directly. The Director of Housing and Community Care will be presenting the West London perspective at the event. Given the timing of the meeting, the West London response will not be agreed until the end of January. It may therefore be necessary to amend our own response to take account of any new proposals that the council would wish to support, as well as to emphasise any areas on which Brent may differ from West London partners. It is therefore proposed that the final version of Brent's response should be approved by the Director of Housing and Community Care in consultation with the Lead Member for Housing.

## 4.2 Main Policy Themes

4.2.1 The consultation paper identifies seven main strands and identifies policies for each, while raising broad questions as to how these or other policy approaches might achieve the overall strategic aims. The proposed response in each of these areas is set out in detail in Appendix 1, while the following paragraphs provide a brief summary. While there is much in the consultation paper that is familiar and much that is welcome and in line with priorities and objectives for Brent and the West London Sub-region, there are some areas of concern and these are highlighted in the draft response and, briefly, below.

4.2.2 **Putting People First** highlights the desirability of bringing together the range of strategies for which the Mayor is responsible to ensure that they provide a coherent response to London's needs. In particular, the aim is to align the strategy with the London Plan, with strategies and policies around worklessness, child poverty, housing for disabled households, affordability and the provision of supported housing.

- 4.2.3 **Building More Homes** focuses on the overall supply shortage and the potential to increase and speed up delivery of land, planning and buildings alongside the infrastructure needed to support development.
- 4.2.4 **Building the Right Homes in the Right Places** concentrates on the targeting of investment, especially through the National Affordable Housing Programme, for which the Mayor will have the power to direct the broad distribution in the region. In particular, this section identifies a need for larger homes, for a shift to investment in new build housing in the intermediate sector, to deliver the tenure mix outlined in the London Plan and to shift resources more overtly towards London Plan priorities and to the areas where capacity exists. This last point, which implies a shift in resources towards the major opportunity areas such as the Thames Gateway, is potentially one of the most difficult issues for boroughs such as Brent.
- 4.2.5 **Designing Places Where People Want to Live** highlights the importance of good design and seeks views on how the powers and resources of the Mayor and other agencies, including local authorities, could be best directed to achieve high quality in building and infrastructure without compromising on cost or deliverability.
- 4.2.6 **Reviewing Intermediate Housing** proposes that the focus should be on building new homes, rather than directing subsidy towards purchase of existing properties, that freeing up social housing through increased take-up by existing tenants should be a priority, that more large homes should be provided to accommodate families with children, that more work should be done to promote and develop intermediate renting and that developers and others should be encouraged to develop intermediate housing products that would not require public subsidy.
- 4.2.7 **Promoting Choice and Mobility** discusses the impact on lettings and allocations of the shift in investment proposed in the earlier section on building the right homes in the right places. Essentially, the question is how increased development in the east can accommodate the needs of the whole region. Specific proposals include a pan-London choice based lettings system. Key questions include the need for infrastructure investment to support new homes in the Thames Gateway and the options for households wishing to move out of London. As with the linked section on the spatial distribution of investment, this is one of the areas likely to present most difficulties for local authorities and sub-regional partnerships.
- 4.2.8 **Tackling Climate Change** stresses the Mayor's desire to link the strategy closely to his responsibilities for climate change at the regional level. This section notes action already taken to amend the London Plan to improve energy efficiency in new developments, as well as the Mayor's forthcoming strategies for Climate Change and Energy and Climate Change Adaptation.

## 5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The Mayor's new powers will come into effect from the 2008-10 funding round.

- 5.2 These new powers will include making recommendations to Ministers for the allocation of resources from the Regional Housing Pot. This allocation is currently undertaken by the London Housing Board, and includes, for example, resources for Private Sector Renewal and Housing Revenue Account Supported Capital expenditure. Also the Mayor will decide the broad allocation of funding for Housing Associations for new affordable housing development in Brent.
- 5.3 As the mayor will have the power to direct the broad distribution of these resources in the Region, it follows that funding will be targeted to reflect the priorities set out in the Mayor's Strategy. This in turn is likely to shift resources within the Region, for example directing resources to the major opportunity areas, such as the Thames Gateway.
- 5.4 The details of any changes and any possible wider impact, for example on allocations to homeless households, cannot be predicted accurately at this stage
- 5.5 It should be noted that these changes do not include any control over those resources that are currently allocated direct to local authorities, such as the Decent Homes Programme.

## **6. Legal Implications**

- 6.1 The Greater London Authority Bill ("G.L.A. Bill") passed its Second Reading stage in the House of Commons on 12 December 2006 and it is expected that the Bill will receive royal assent in 2007, when the Greater London Authority Act 2007 will become law. The G.L.A. Bill states that the Mayor of London will have the power to prepare a "London housing strategy" for the whole of London. Such a strategy will have an effect on all London local authorities and their housing policies by extending the Mayor of London's influence and powers regarding housing policy in London and the allocation of monies in respect of housing throughout all London Boroughs. Seven main policy themes are identified in the Mayor's consultation document as to how the Mayor intends to extend his influence and powers regarding housing policy in London and these are set out in paragraph 4.2 above.
- 6.2 In the G.L.A. Bill, it states that local housing strategies produced by local authorities, including housing strategies produced under section 87 of the Local Government Act 2003 and other statements of local authorities' policies or proposals relating to housing, must generally conform with the London housing strategy produced by the Mayor of London.
- 6.3 The G.L.A. Bill states that in the London housing strategy, the Mayor will give recommendations to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government as to how much of the money allocated by the Secretary of State for housing in Greater London during the relevant period, starting with 2008-2010, should be granted to each local authority in London. The G.L.A. Bill also states that the London housing strategy will set out the Mayor's expectations as to how local authorities will use the money allocated to them by the Secretary of State.

## **7. Diversity Implications**

- 7.1 There are no immediate diversity implications arising from this report. However, it should be noted that the draft strategy to be produced in summer 2007 will be subject to a full Impact Needs Requirements Assessment. At that stage, it will be possible to identify any specific implications for Brent.

## **8. Staffing/Accommodation Implications**

- 8.1 There are no staffing or accommodation implications arising from this report.

### **Background Papers:**

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