

HOUSING BOARD

17th July 2019

DEVELOPING A HOUSING EVIDENCE BASE

Purpose

This report informs the Board of proposals for developing a housing evidence base that could inform a more in depth exploration of specific strategic housing issues , including the proposed role of this Housing Board.

Thematic Priority

This report relates to the following Strategic Economic Plan priorities:

- Secure investment in infrastructure where it will do most to support growth.

Freedom of Information

The paper will be available under the Combined Authority Publication Scheme

Recommendations

Board members are asked to:

1. Note and comment on the proposals to develop a housing evidence base;
2. Support the proposed approach or undertaking the housing evidence base work and the proposed role of the SCR Housing Board.

1. Introduction

- 1.1** Housing availability and quality is a priority for Mayor Dan Jarvis, and a key part of the manifesto upon which he was elected. Alongside this, the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) refresh, with its emerging emphasis on an inclusive economy driving a higher rate and quality of growth, provides an opportunity to shape a fresh perspective on the role of housing as a driver of the SCR's wider economic, social and environmental ambitions, including the City Region's 'place' offer.
- 1.2** This paper sets out the proposal to undertake an evidence gathering exercise to potentially inform a more in-depth exploration of specific strategic housing issues over the next 18 months, including how it is proposed that the Housing Board input to this work.

2. Proposal and justification

- 2.1** A strategic review of housing offers an opportunity to stand back and consider a range of broad issues. However, it will be essential that it does not make immediate assumptions about problems and solutions, but instead takes an evidence led approach. The first step, or 'Phase 1', would involve two avenues of baseline evidence gathering and inquiry as follows:
- 2.2.** One avenue of review inquiry would therefore be to focus on 'need', capturing and rehearsing the issues we already have some information on and familiarity with. These include:
- affordability (we are only delivering half of what is needed);
 - housing quality (over 20% of existing homes are below minimum acceptable energy efficiency standards);
 - national funding situation (SCR only able to access 20% of national housing pot);
 - housing innovation opportunities such as modular build homes;
 - opportunities for linking with the Health Service to address health and wellbeing, and health service pressures, where housing is a contributor; and
 - basic questions around whether the right types of homes are being built in the right places.
- 2.3** A second avenue of inquiry – and one which takes the debate into different territory – would be to stand back from the 'known knowns' (need) to consider the 'known unknowns' (aspiration). This aspect of the review would seek to assemble evidence across a broad sweep of issues on the state of the housing market in SCR, in particular, the nature of demand with a focus on consumer preferences and whether or not the market is effectively responding to these. It would start with no pre-defined ideas or assumptions, addressing open-ended questions concerning:
- The state of the housing market across the SCR;
 - The nature of housing demand and aspiration, and how this plays out differently across the SCR;
 - Consumer preferences and the extent to which these are currently being met (with a particular focus on market housing);
 - Housing type and tenure;
 - The overall contribution of market as well as affordable housing to delivering the SCR's economic, social and environmental objectives and ambitions of the SEP.
- 2.3** The Housing Board would be a key customer for the findings, conclusions and recommendations arising from this first phase, leading into a substantive discussion as to 'where next?' The Housing Board would consider the initial findings of Phase 1 with a view to helping inform consideration to the purpose and value of progressing to a broader independent commission or alternatives thereafter.

The timetable in summary might be as follows:

- Phase 1 (July – December 2019) - Taking Stock: A review of the state of the Housing Market in Sheffield City Region.
- Phase 2 (January 2020 - April 2020) - Stakeholder Consultation: A series of discussions of findings, conclusions and recommendations with key stakeholders.

This will need to gather evidence from national, regional and local stakeholders including house builders, investors, academics and housing associations.

- Phase 3 (May – December 2020) - Exploring Solutions: Reflecting on possible tools and interventions that might effectively address identified challenges and maximise opportunities. Fundamentally, it will seek to reach conclusions about supporting the delivery of the right housing, in the right places, and of the right quality and price for communities across SCR.

3. Consideration of alternative approaches

- 3.1** The Review will consider a range of strategic housing issues and a range of potential alternative solutions to help address them. The proposal to ‘take stock’ at the end of Phase 1 will allow for alternative options to be considered in how to proceed with the Review and what issues any further exploration will focus on.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial

The work will be led by the SCR Executive with funding for any external support being provided from the Mayoral Capacity Fund.

4.2 Legal

There are no specific legal issues arising from this report.

4.3 Risk Management

Key risks:

- Partners and Stakeholders unwilling to participate in and/or contribute to the Review.
- The outputs from Phase 1 not sufficient to warrant progression to the next phases of the Review.
- Review conclusions not supported by key housing policy, investment and delivery bodies.
- Availability of budget to undertake the necessary exploration and analysis for a robust Review.

4.4 Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion

The Review and its conclusions will take into account issues relating to equality, diversity and social inclusion.

5. Communications

- 5.1** The recognises National Housing Crisis shows that housing continues to be a sensitive issue with a range of views as to how the Crisis should be tackled. The housing evidence based work proposes the engagement and involvement of a range of bodies so as to seek to gather a broad range of views and perspectives. There will also be opportunities throughout the work timetable to publicise progress and emerging findings.

6. Appendices/Annexes

None

REPORT AUTHOR Colin Blackburn
POST Assistant Director Housing, Infrastructure & Planning
Director responsible Mark Lynam
Email Mark.lynam@sheffieldcityregion.org.uk
Telephone 0114 2203442

Background papers used in the preparation of this report are available for inspection at: 11 Broad Street West, Sheffield S1 2BQ

Other sources and references: