

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Liverpool City Region Housing Strategy (LCRHS) is a major piece of work, funded by Government Office NW, and commissioned by the Merseyside Housing Forum, to provide an investment framework for future housing development across the City Region.
- 1.2 The LCRHS document was reported to the Merseyside Housing Forum and the Merseyside Chief Executive Officers and Leaders group last year (2007) and the executive summary is attached as appendix A.
- 1.3 Following the development of the strategy, an Action Plan (attached as appendix B) has been developed to take forward the strategy's recommendations, and therefore this report seeks endorsement of the strategy and action plan, and that the recommendations for ongoing governance and implementation are noted.

2.0 LIVERPOOL CITY REGION HOUSING STRATEGY

- 2.1 The LCRHS is a key element of the Sustainable Communities agenda of the Liverpool City Region Development Programme in response to the Northern Way challenge.
- 2.2 The strategy sets out the broad framework for housing activity and investment priorities across the sub region to support the economic growth ambitions of the Liverpool City Region Development Plan.
- 2.3 The Liverpool City Region consists of three distinct Housing Market Areas (HMA's) as follows:
- 2.4 Northern HMA (Wirral, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, and West Lancashire) - This area has the greatest potential for economic growth but faces the most acute stock imbalance, environmental and multiple deprivation issues. Without intervention to address these issues, the full benefits of expected economic growth will not be realised in the area.
- 2.5 Southern HMA (Chester, Ellesmere Port and Neston, Flintshire, Vale Royal and Wrexham) - This area is well positioned in terms of its economy, and offers unrivalled quality in its neighbourhoods and quality of life. However, there are extreme issues of affordability and lack of housing choice, compounded by constraints on housing development due to a shortage of brownfield sites and location of services and infrastructure.
- 2.6 Eastern HMA (St Helens, Halton and Warrington) - This area is the most diverse and as a whole offers the most balanced housing market. There are however issues of affordability in the Southern part of the area, coupled with regeneration challenges and a need to build balanced housing markets within Halton and St Helens.

- 2.7 The Strategy was informed by series of strategic housing market assessments, one for each housing market area (HMA), and sets out a series of policy recommendations developed to focus policy and investment on delivering sustainable growth, prioritising areas in need of regeneration, creating balanced housing markets and delivering a better choice of affordable housing and better quality neighbourhoods.

3.0 STRATEGY ACTION PLAN

- 3.1 Following development of the Strategy, consultants Arc4 were commissioned by the LCRHS steering group to develop an Action Plan which builds on the Strategy's recommendations. The Action Plan, attached as Appendix B, was developed in consultation with local authorities, Registered Social Landlords and other partners and recommends the activities and governance, working and monitoring arrangements necessary to implement the Strategy's recommendations.

- 3.2 The Action Plan draws together a series of actions required to implement and further develop the LCRHS and the associated planning framework. In compiling this Action Plan, due consideration was given to the appropriate joint working arrangements at the City Region Housing Market Area (HMA) and local authority level and the limited resources and competing priorities of all partners.

4.0 ACTION PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The action plan recommends actions under the following five key themes which are linked to the strategic enablers recommended in the Strategy.

- 4.2 *Affordability* – actions include developing at HMA level, joint Strategic Housing Market Assessments, planning obligations papers and considering the feasibility of a joint empty homes strategy for the City Region.

- 4.3 *Housing Supply* – actions include undertaking joint Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments for each HMA and monitoring the housing numbers delivered against targets in the LCRHS.

- 4.4 *Addressing regeneration priorities* – actions include developing larger aspirational type housing in the North HMA and keeping under review the priority regeneration areas identified in the LCRHS.

- 4.5 *Housing Strategy update and evidence base* – actions include working with local RSLs to ensure the spatial and regeneration priorities of the LCRHS are reflected in their operational business plans.

- 4.6 *Multi Area Agreement (MAA) and strategic housing objectives* – actions include establishing MAA indicators for New Heartlands and for housing growth areas with potential to develop MAA for the City Region.

5.0 GOVERNANCE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 Work to develop new governance arrangements for the six Merseyside authorities is already underway comprising of a City Region Leaders Cabinet which will be the principal decision making body, supported by a number of topic based boards, including the Housing and Spatial Planning Board. Responsibility for the development of the Housing and Spatial Planning Board rests with the Leader and Chief Executive of St Helens Council, supported by officers from each Merseyside District in a Strategy Group. At a Member level, all Merseyside Districts will be represented on the Board.

5.2 The consultants recommend that the new Housing and Spatial Planning Board should be the governing body for the Action Plan and that consideration be given to extending its membership so that it covers the wider Liverpool City Region rather than limited to Merseyside.

5.3 It is also recommended that the Liverpool City Region Housing Strategy steering group and the Merseyside Housing Forum support the work of the Housing and Spatial Planning Board and that the latter considers expanding membership to local authorities from the Southern and Eastern HMA's outside Merseyside as and when appropriate.

6.0 WORKING GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 The strategy suggests that in order to have an appropriate officer level group, the previous Joint Housing & Planning Working Group be re-established, with the inclusion of West Lancashire to ensure all North HMA area LA's have a group to progress policy issues. The Member group already exists in the Merseyside Housing Forum, however, again the inclusion of West Lancashire is needed to provide full coverage.

6.2 It is also recommended that two new groups are established at the City Region level to take forward the actions relating to private sector renewal (with an emphasis on empty homes) and sustainable communities priorities.

7.0 MONITORING RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 The LCRHS recommended that for monitoring purposes Mott McDonald MIS be appointed central custodian of the data used to inform the Strategy with a responsibility to update the data and monitor progress. The six Merseyside authorities currently operate this arrangement through the core contract and to date Mott McDonald MIS have drafted a first annual monitoring report for the wider Northern Housing Market Area. It is recommended that options to extend the central custodial arrangements to the other non Merseyside Local Authorities be considered.

7.2 It is recommended that the LCRHS steering group should review the Action Plan on an annual basis, with progress reports given to all relevant groups and including the Housing and Spatial Planning Board, identifying revisions to the Strategy or specific targets.

8.0 PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK AND INDICATOR RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 The LCRHS Action Plan recommends that the potential for developing a Multi Area Agreement (MAA) to underpin the key strategic housing objectives, and underline the vital role of Newheartlands, should be explored. This would augment the initial MAA, which focuses on economic issues and recognises the role that housing provision has in supporting the economy of Merseyside.

8.2 The Action Plan also recommends that the Housing and Spatial Planning Board should consider NI 154 (net additional homes provided), and NI155 (No of affordable homes delivered) as a minimum for any potential LCR MAA for housing growth bids.

9.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The LCRHS provides a framework for housing investment decisions in the City Region, including allocation of the Regional Housing Pot.

9.2 The LCRHS Action Plan is intended to operate within available resources wherever possible, however, additional resources may be required to ensure that the Merseyside Policy Unit has the capacity to serve the Housing and Spatial Planning Board.

9.3 Some of the actions contained in the document are likely to require future financial contributions from the Council, for example, the development of joint Strategic Housing Market Assessments and Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments. However, the level of any financial requirements are still to be determined, and further details will be brought to members for consideration and approval when known.

10.0 **STAFFING IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 There are no staffing implications arising directly from this report.

11.0 **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 The strategy contains recommendations to respond to the needs of diverse groups within the City Region including Black and Racial Minorities, and Gypsies and Travellers.

12.0 **COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

12.1 There are no issues of Community safety arising from this report.

13.0 **LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS**

13.1 There are no LA 21 implications arising directly from this report.

14.0 **PLANNING IMPLICATIONS**

14.1 There are no specific implications arising directly out of this report, however, the planning system plays a major part in the development and delivery of this strategy. The LCRHS is consistent with the existing Regional Spatial Strategy and national advice in Planning Policy Statement 3 – Housing, which encourages local authorities to work together at a Housing Market level. The emerging Single Regional Strategy will be used to determine future funding allocations from Government. The Single Regional Strategy will combine the Regional Spatial Strategy with the funding priorities of the Regional Economic Strategy. The Regional Housing Strategy is already reflected in the Regional Spatial Strategy and the priorities set out in the LCRHS echo those in the latest Regional Housing Statement.

15.0 **ANTI-POVERTY IMPLICATIONS**

15.1 There are no anti-poverty implications arising directly from this report.

16.0 **SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS**

16.1 Regeneration of the most vulnerable areas of the City Region and the creation of sustainable communities will have a positive effect on social inclusion.

17.0 **LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS**

17.1 This report is relevant to all Wards.

18.0 **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

18.1 Liverpool City Region Housing Strategy executive summary (Appendix A).

18.2 Liverpool City Region Housing Strategy Action Plan (Appendix B).

19.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

19.1 This report seeks that:

- The LCRHS executive summary attached as Appendix A be endorsed.
- The LCRHS Action Plan attached as Appendix B, be endorsed.
- The recommendations for ongoing governance and monitoring of the Strategy and its Action Plan be noted.

Alan Stennard
Director of Regeneration

This report was prepared by Andy Bate who can be contacted on 691 8242