

THE PLAN FOR HOMES

Working Plymouth 5th March 2014



Background

On 18th July 2013 Councillor Mark Lowry, Cabinet Member for Finance with responsibility for housing delivery, announced the intention to prepare the Plan for Homes which seeks to facilitate a transformational step change in housing delivery in Plymouth. The Plan for Homes is one of the key initiatives agreed as part of the new Corporate Plan on 22nd July 2013 (Minute 28). On 25th September 2013 the initial ideas being explored for the Plan for Homes was reported to the Working Plymouth Scrutiny Panel, who strongly supported the initiative (Minute 18). On 1st November 2013 the Plan for Homes was formally launched as part of a major regional housing conference held at Devonport Guildhall. The Plan for Homes, containing 16 initiatives was formally agreed by Cabinet on 12th November 2013 (Minutes 62 and 62a) with funding approved by the City Council on 25th November 2013 (Minute 63).

Progress with The Plan for Homes

The overall ambition of the Plan for Homes is to increase housing supply by 1,000 homes per annum for a 5 year period (1st April 2014 to 31st March 2019). It is expected it will create 2,000 jobs and put £45.3 Million into the local economy.


The 16 initiatives are arranged under 5 themes:

- Finance
- Land
- Infrastructure
- Community Engagement
- Leadership

As at 20th February 2014:


- 2 initiatives have been completed
- 9 initiatives are progressing well
- 7 initiatives require further progress to be made

Detailed progress on each of the initiatives is set out in the table below:

Initiative	Lead	Support	Progress	Delivery Status
Finance				
We will create an Affordable Housing Loan Facility of up to £50 million to the Plymouth Housing Development Partnership.	Nick Carter	Malcolm Coe	Inclusion of £50 million loan facility into the Capital Programme agreed by Full Council on 25 th November 2013. Meetings with Registered Providers have commenced to establish specific loan rates and criteria and these will be completed by 31 st March 2014.	
We will waive planning pre-application fees for all self-build projects, Code Level 4, 5 and 6 schemes and for affordable housing developments that meet our policy requirements.	Peter Ford	Nick King	A new Planning Department Fees policy incorporating these provisions has been the subject of consultation with the Plymouth Regeneration Forum and Local Agents Forum and was introduced on 2 nd December 2013.	
Where appropriate, we will consider more flexible land and Section 106 payments to improve development cash flows to support a start on site by an agreed date.	Peter Ford	Nick Carter	The new process to consider future requests for Section 106 variations has been agreed which will apply to planning applications validated from 1 st April 2014.	
Where the objective of sustainable linked communities is not prejudiced within a particular neighbourhood, we will consider off-site affordable housing contributions to unlock stalled sites, provided developers commit to starting on site by an agreed date.	Nick Carter	Peter Ford	Initial scoping of sites which could benefit this approach commenced in December 2013. Some discussions have commenced on the possibility of off-site commuted sums to support development viability and bring forward developments.	

Initiative	Lead	Support	Progress	Delivery Status
Land				
We will work with the development industry to complete a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment to identify sites to substantially increase the supply of housing with planning permission.	Richard Grant	Grant Jackson	A Strategic Market Housing Needs Assessment was completed in October 2013 and published in November 2013. The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment was commenced in August 2013 and is expected to be completed in May/June 2014.	
We will release over 100 acres of land for housing by completing a Strategic Land Review by March 2014 to identify every possible city council-owned site suitable for housing development. We commit to release these sites in phases and as quickly as possible.	Nick Carter	David Taylor Paul Barnard	A Strategic Land Review commenced in August 2013 and has currently completed consideration of over 500 sites. 10 sites were released for housing development in December with a closing date for propositions of 28 th February 2014. The Strategic Land Review is on track for completion by March 2014.	
We will develop a “flagship” scheme on a city council-owned site to encourage innovation and greater input from Registered Providers.	Nick Carter	Paul Barnard	A call for schemes was made as part of the launch of the Plan for Homes at the Plymouth Housing Summit on 1 st November 2013. A further call was made at the Plymouth Housing Development Partnership on 5 th December 2013.	
We will create a dedicated Sherford Delivery Team to enable a start on site at Sherford in 2014.	Peter Ford	Olivia Wilson	The Sherford Implementation Team, comprising officers from across several authorities, has been created and had its first meeting on 17 th October 2013. A planning permission and signed Section 106 was issued on 12 th November 2013. Red Tree has signed land deals during January 2014.	

Initiative	Lead	Support	Progress	Delivery Status
We will incentivise the delivery of city centre housing by creating a ' city centre density bonus ' in order to provide more homes, as well as encouraging a broader mix of house types including one-bed properties.	Mark Evans	Kate Saunders	A City Centre and Centres Retail Study has been commissioned as part of the evidence-base work for the Plymouth Plan which will consider this issue. This is expected to be completed in May/June 2014. Consideration as to how the density bonus can support current city centre projects is being explored.	
We will make more city council-owned land available for self-build and establish a streamlined planning process to deal with subsequent planning applications.	Amy Luxton	Peter Ford	Further self-build sites are being identified as part of the Strategic Land Review. A number of sites have been the subject of Surplus Property Declarations. A Planning Officer has been identified as a single point of contact to deal with all future self-build applications.	
Infrastructure				
We will work with institutional investors to attract new investment into infrastructure for housing within Plymouth and consider how a "build now pay later" scheme could support housing delivery.	Paul Barnard	Nick Carter	Initial meetings have been held with 4 potential investors who have expressed interest since the launch of the Plan for Homes.	
We will develop a Local Infrastructure Prospectus to support future infrastructure provision to support housing and regeneration projects.	John Dixon	Simon Pickstone	Initial discussions have been held between officers but the format for the Local Investment Prospectus still needs to be established within a wider review of capital/investment governance.	

Initiative	Lead	Support	Progress	Delivery Status
Community Engagement				
<p>We will use the Neighbourhood Plans process in conjunction with local communities to identify sites for homes to meet local needs.</p>	<p>Hannah Sloggett</p>	<p>Grant Jackson Adam Williams</p>	<p>Officers will review the approach to this as part of the development of the Barne Barton Neighbourhood Plan. The wider engagement of communities in identifying sites for housing needs to be developed. We have also started discussions with the Plymouth Housing Development Partnership for them to hold special hearings on housing to help local people, community groups and businesses to give evidence on the need for new homes, and potential sites for new homes.</p>	
<p>We will appoint a Relationship Manager for each Registered Provider and large developers to encourage further investments in Plymouth and work more closely with local communities.</p>	<p>Nick Carter</p>	<p>Paul Barnard Peter Ford Jonathan Bell Paul May</p>	<p>A draft list of proposed Relationship Managers will be finalised in February 2014 with a view to commencing One-to-One meetings by March 2014.</p>	
Leadership				
<p>We will support the “Yes to Homes” campaign and proactively make the case for additional accelerated housing to meet Plymouth’s needs.</p>	<p>Paul Barnard</p>	<p>Nick Carter</p>	<p>The “Yes to Homes” Campaign was considered under a Motion on Notice at the Full Council meeting on 25th November 2013 and agreed unanimously.</p>	

Initiative	Lead	Support	Progress	Delivery Status
<p>We will seek a step change in housing investment by developing partnership, joint venture and new funding models with the Plymouth Housing Development Partnership.</p>	<p>Paul Barnard</p>	<p>Nick Carter</p>	<p>The enhanced role expected of the Plymouth Housing Development Partnership was discussed at its meeting on 5th December 2013 with a view to developing a clear delivery programme of housing sites and numbers for the next 5 years by April 2014. Release of the HCA Prospectus for the Affordable Housing Programme 2015-18 now provides a funding context for a discussion on the scale of ambition for the partnership and the individual Registered Providers within it. A bidding strategy is being developed with the Plymouth Housing Development Partnership to maximise bids for the city. In response to the Plan for Homes, the Plymouth Housing Development Partnership are considering the appointment of a Partnership Manager to ensure that they can play a more proactive role to deliver a step change in housing delivery.</p>	

Conclusion

Good initial progress has been made with regard to the 16 initiatives that make up the Plan for Homes. The Portfolio Holder for Finance receives a monthly monitoring report on progress with each of the initiatives and specific sites or issues are discussed regularly at Portfolio Holder One-to-One meetings.

It is suggested that a further progress report is made to the Working Plymouth Scrutiny Panel around the first anniversary of the launch of the Plan for Homes in November 2014.

Paul Barnard
Assistant Director for Strategic Planning & Infrastructure
Planning Department
20th February 2014