

11,000 new council homes  
Consultation Plan – Stage 2  
Borough-wide principles

November 2014

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## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 On 22 July 2014 the Cabinet agreed a report on progress in developing the long term plans for the delivery of new council homes. This report provided an update on the delivery of 11,000 new homes and the early sites that are already in progress.
- 1.2 Cabinet also agreed a consultation draft of a Charter of Principles intended to form the framework for consulting with residents of Southwark on the ongoing delivery of 11,000 new council homes, and asked officers to consult with residents on these principles.
- 1.3 The principles build on the outcomes of the Housing Commission, the approach to community engagement and the way we have been working with residents in the ongoing major works programme 'Putting Residents First' and on projects such as the refurbishment of Lakanal.
- 1.4 This Charter of Principles consultation was only the first stage in a series of conversations the Council will have with people in Southwark about how it will deliver the 11,000 homes by 2043.
- 1.5 The various stages of the 11,000 new council homes consultation are as follows:

|                | <b>11,000 council homes – stages of public consultation</b>                   | <b>Time frame</b>                         |
|----------------|---|---|
| <b>Stage 1</b> | Charter of Principles   | August 15 – October 13 2014               |
| <b>Stage 2</b> | Borough-wide principles for development                                       | Jan – September 2015                      |
| <b>Stage 3</b> | Estate-by-estate engagement   | Late 2015 onwards                         |
| <b>Stage 4</b> | Engagement with local residents around involvement in management of new homes | TBC – as various projects near completion |

- 1.6 This consultation plan sets out the framework for how we propose to engage residents in **stage 2** of the 11,000 new council homes project, on the **borough-wide principles** for development.

### Summary of Stage 1: Charter of Principles

- 1.7 This initial stage of consultation began on 15 August and ended on 13 October 2014. The timeframe of the consultation was extended from 22 September 2014 after consultation with the Future Steering Board.
- 1.8 The Charter outlines the Council's commitments to residents across a number of key areas. These are:
- Pledge 1: How the Council will work with residents on developing the principles for housing investment and renewal on estates.
- Pledge 2: How the Council will work with residents on development of new homes on their estate.

- Pledge 3: How the Council will involve residents in ensuring that the new homes are of high quality.
- Pledge 4: How the Council will give residents a say on how the new homes are managed
- Pledge 5: How the council will demand high standards for the quality and affordability of new homes
- Pledge 6: What the council will do if residents are affected by redevelopment.

- 1.9 The response to the consultation was considerable: 1913 responses were received by the deadline and a further 103 in the following weeks, making a total of **2,016**<sup>1</sup> responses.
- 1.10 There was overwhelming support – around 90% - for the six pledges which have subsequently been adopted by cabinet. With over 2,000 responses in total we can have a high level of confidence that the results reflect those views of the wider population of residents in council homes.
- 1.11 Almost 700 individuals expressed an interest in staying involved representing 36% of those that replied. This provides a great opportunity for us to engage a significant constituency of new residents in the 11,000 homes project going forward.
- 1.12 The consultation generated almost 1900 separate comments. 1260 of these were linked directly to the individual pledges.
- 1.13 Many comments related to issues that fall into the borough-wide principles stage of consultation e.g. around location of new homes and design standards. These will be analysed and used to inform and shape the second stage of consultation.
- 1.14 Some concerns were expressed from residents covering a number of themes, such as:
  - Lack of confidence that the council will uphold the pledges
  - Potential cost of the programme
  - Ensuring we reach a broad and diverse range of people
  - Who will be entitled to the new homes
  - Fear of demolition of existing homes
- 1.15 Responding to these concerns and using them to inform how we involve residents in decision-making during the borough wide principles stage of the consultation is a high priority for the council. For example, there will be:
  - A system of review of the operation of the charter of principles annually, through existing representative groups and other residents who have been involved.
  - Ongoing involvement of the Futures Steering Board made up of representatives of Tenant Council and Homeowners Council in the development of the engagement activity as it progresses.
  - A proactive communication strategy that seeks to address some of the

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<sup>1</sup> The comments from the additional responses received beyond the deadline will be analysed and used to inform future engagement and other relevant teams.

frequently asked questions that have arisen through the consultation, clarifies what we mean when we use terms such as “affordability” and “regeneration”, and tackles some of the misinformation and misapprehension.

- An approach to consultation that combines engagement through the formal tenant and homeowner structures, alongside taking ensuring that those who are not engaged in the formal structures are able and encouraged to get involved.

## Stage 2: Borough-wide Principles Consultation

- 1.16 This plan sets how we propose to conduct the second stage of the 11,000 new council homes consultation, on the borough-wide principles for development.
- 1.17 The second stage of consultation on the 11,000 new council homes was due to begin in Spring 2015 but has been moved forward to January 2015 to be coordinated with the consultation on the New Southwark Plan. The New Southwark Plan will set out how we will deliver our Housing Strategy, and will support the delivery of some of our key housing strategic ambitions, including the building of 11,000 new council homes for rent. As such, is important that we consult with the public on these directly related issues at the same time.
- 1.18 The borough-wide principles consultation will start in January 2015 and run until September 2015. It will take a phased approach to exploring the following issues:

**Table 1: Borough-wide principles – Proposed timeframe**

| Timeframe            | Theme   | Questions for residents   |
|----------------------|---|---|
| Jan - March 2015     | Land-use designations                                       | How can we create more opportunities to build new homes?  |
| February – June 2015 | Sites for development                                       | Where could we build new homes?   |
| April - June 2015    | Tenure Mix<br>Design Standards<br>Health and wellbeing      | What kind of estates/communities to do we want in Southwark?<br><br>How do we create these estates/communities?<br><br>How should we ensure the highest standards of design and delivery? |
| May – July 2015      | Principles for decisions about investment in existing stock | How do we decide to invest or rebuild?  |

## **2.0 Approach to Community Engagement**

2.1 The borough-wide principles consultation will be conducted in line with the council's approach to community engagement, which was adopted in 2012 and sets out a new relationship between the council and our residents, built on trust, openness and transparency.

2.2 The approach states that we will:

- Be clear about what the scope of our engagement is, whether we are communicating, consulting, deciding together or acting together
- Engage when we know it will make a difference, when there is a real opportunity for people to have an impact and influence decisions on issues that local people care about
- Engage at the right time, at an early enough stage for there to be a opportunity to genuinely influence a policy or service
- Allow sufficient time for good quality engagement to take place
- Be clear about what we are asking, what opportunities there are to shape services and be honest about what can and can't be achieved
- We will ensure that our engagement is accessible and targeted to those it needs to reach using a variety of engagement methods to broaden participation and overcome any barriers people may have in engaging with us
- Aim to engage as widely as possible so that we increase engagement with those who are not already in touch with the council
- Tell people what has happened as a result of their engagement

2.3 The borough-wide principles consultation will be conducted in a series of phases, where different approaches to engagement will be required. These will be clearly communicated in each case. For example, the call for sites will be an open information-gathering exercise, which will involve resident proposals being considered, appraised and fed-back on. In contrast, discussion of design standards will take place within the context of proposals which have been developed by our planning policy team.

2.4 The council is also committed to fulfilling its obligations under the public sector equality duty, and will ensure it takes active steps to engage residents across the protected characteristics of the Equality Act.

### **3.0 Aim and Objectives**

- 3.1 Our aim to involve Southwark residents in decision-making around the borough-wide principles for development of 11,000 new council homes, in particular:
- sites for new council homes
  - design standards for new council homes
  - how we can work together to create healthy and sustainable communities
- 3.2 The objectives will be:
- To share information with residents about the progress of the 1,500 council homes which are part of the initial delivery phase of the 1,000 council homes
  - To provide a broad range of opportunities for residents to get involved in the borough-wide principles consultation
  - To provide residents with regular feedback and updates on the consultation – both in terms of data collected, and decisions taken
- 3.3 To be clear about when we are:
- A. informing residents about a decision or course of action
  - B. consulting residents in advance of a decision being taken
  - C. working in partnership to reach a joint decision (co-production)

## 4.0 Consultation Methodology

- 4.1 The borough-wide principles consultation will start in January 2015 and run until September 2015. It will take a phased approach to exploring the following issues:
- sites for new council homes
  - design standards for new council homes
  - how we can work together to create healthy and sustainable communities
- 4.2 All residents living in the borough are stakeholders in this consultation, and will have an opportunity to contribute to the conversation about the borough-wide principles, via community conversations, public meetings, online activity, dedicated mailings, and local and social media.
- 4.3 A significant portion of the activity will focus on people living in homes that are owned or leased by the council as those most likely to be directly affected by new council homes being built in the vicinity of their existing homes. This will include close consultation with housing based formal meetings, such as Area Housing Forums (AHFs), Tenants Council, Homeowners Council and the Future Steering Board (FSB).
- 4.4 All stages of the consultation will be open to residents to get involved in; however, the approach and method of engagement will be tailored to the specific theme of the borough-wide consultation.
- 4.5 For example, engagement around a **call for sites** is a relatively straightforward data collection project. It will require us to use a broad selection of online and offline engagement tools to deliver a high number of responses. This ideally will be done via online and hard copy maps of the borough that people add their suggestions to. The process needs to enable people to give their suggestions quickly and easily, and expect feedback if they are share their details.
- 4.6 In contrast, engagement on **land use designations**, is a more complex issue that requires explanation and interrogation of the advantages and disadvantages. This is an area that the planning policy team will be leading on. We would propose engaging residents in this theme via area-based community forums, workshops or focus groups to enable more detailed exploration of the issues which need to be considered, and obtain more in-depth and considered feedback. We would not be seeking or expecting such a high volume of responses in this case.



## **5.0 Consultation Activity**

5.1 The following table outlines how we propose to engage residents in the borough-wide principles consultation, across the various themes.

**Table 2: Borough-wide principles – proposed engagement approaches and themes**

| Month  | Theme                                 | Questions/issues for residents  | Specific tools   |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| January<br>February<br>March<br>April<br>May<br>June | Where can we build new council homes? | <p>What are your suggestions for where we can build new homes?</p> <p>[This is the call for sites in the New Southwark Plan]</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing based formal meetings</li> <li>• Area-based community forums</li> <li>• Interactive digital map of borough for people to post suggestions online</li> <li>• Develop online discussion forum (non-council site) and twitter feed (e.g. #11k council homes Southwark) to start to generate debate and link in with other national initiatives investing in social housing</li> <li>• Online e-form</li> <li>• Community conversations</li> <li>• Resident Service Officer and Manager workshops to explore options and promotion</li> <li>• Community Councils</li> <li>• Social &amp; print media</li> <li>• Libraries and leisure centres</li> <li>• Mailing to residents with rent statements (Feb 2015)</li> <li>• Mailing to leaseholders (Feb 2015)</li> <li>• Youth participation event (Feb 2015)</li> <li>• Workshops with hard to reach groups</li> </ul> |
|  |                                       | <p>Sharing options for making more land available for building new homes (as per New Southwark Plan)</p> <p>[This relates to land-use designations in the New Southwark Plan]</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing based formal meetings</li> <li>• Area-based community forums</li> <li>• Focus groups/ workshops with key stakeholder groups</li> <li>• Online e-form</li> <li>• Online discussion forum posts</li> </ul>  |

|                               |  |   |   |
|-------------------------------|--|---|---|
| <p>April<br/>May<br/>June</p> | <p>What kind of homes should be built?</p>                         | <p>Sharing council proposals for types of homes to be built across the borough (as per New Southwark Plan)</p> <p>Sharing proposed design standards (as per New Southwark Plan)</p> <p>Sharing proposals for energy efficiency and environmental sustainability</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing based formal meetings</li> <li>• Area-based community forums</li> <li>• Development of council show home in one of new developments</li> <li>• Show-home materials and visuals available digitally and in hard-copy for meetings</li> <li>• Community conversations/outreach programme using housing bus to share visuals of show home and design standards</li> <li>• Online e-form</li> <li>• Social &amp; print media</li> <li>• Online discussion forum posts</li> <li>• Workshops with hard-to-reach groups</li> <li>• Youth-led outreach strand</li> </ul> |
| <p>April<br/>May<br/>June</p> | <p>What kind of communities do we want to create in Southwark?</p> | <p>What makes an area/estate a great place to live in?</p> <p>How can we make sure our new homes are built in such areas/estates?</p> <p>Sharing plans for creating mixed tenure communities (as per New Southwark Plan)</p> <p>Key themes – health and wellbeing, community safety, transport and infrastructure</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing based formal meetings</li> <li>• Area-based community forums</li> <li>• Interactive digital map of borough for people to post suggestions online</li> <li>• Community conversations</li> <li>• Community Councils</li> <li>• Social &amp; print media</li> <li>• Libraries and leisure centres</li> <li>• Mailing to residents with rent statements (Feb 2015)</li> <li>• Mailing to leaseholders (Feb 2015)</li> <li>• Youth-led outreach strand</li> </ul>   |
| <p>May<br/>June<br/>July</p>  | <p>How do we decide to invest or rebuild?</p>                      | <p>Further discussions are required to decide how to approach this crucial final stage of consultation.</p>   |   |

- 5.2 As outlined in the table above we will be ensuring we consult both through our existing network of formal housing-based meetings, and with a broader constituency of people via community conversations, bespoke online tools and discussion group, dedicated area-based meetings and workshops to ensure we include hard to reach groups.
- 5.3 Following on from the council's recent support of #Housing Day on 12 November, which was a twitter campaign to promote the positive value of social housing, the council should continue to actively contribute to such national level debates. It is proposed that we set up a **dedicated twitter feed** for the 11,000 council homes campaign, as well as starting an **online discussion forum** (hosted externally to the council site) to facilitate debate and enable people to post interesting ideas and innovations.
- 5.4 As part of the New Southwark Plan consultation, a number of **area-based consultative meetings** will take place from November 2014 – February 2015. Starting from January, there will be the opportunity to incorporate some of the above themes in these meetings, as an opportunity to explore some key issues with residents in more detail. It is highly likely that we will reconvene these area-based consultative forums one or more times during the consultation period.
- 5.5 **Youth participation** will be critical to this stage of the consultation, and work has been ongoing during 2014 to conduct a survey of young residents of the borough and the barriers and enablers to them becoming more informed and active around their housing and broader council decision-making. Some 400 young people have been involved to date, and we will be sharing and developing youth-led strategies to tackling these barriers at an event in February 2015. This event will be the launch-pad for a strand of engagement activity on the borough-wide principles, which is developed and run by young people living, working or studying in the borough.
- 5.6 Another element of the engagement plan which is worth highlighting, are plans to develop a **council show-home** on one of the first new council home developments which will be available in 2015. This will be an important tool in demonstrating the kind of design standards that the council will deliver for new council homes, and overcoming some of the concerns people have. A virtual show home and visuals should also be developed to be posted online and shown at meetings. A broader communication strategy around the new homes being delivered in 2015, and the responses of those going to live in them, will also be a valuable tool in encouraging people to get involved in the consultation.
- 5.7 The borough-wide principles consultation has a quite important theme underpinning it around the new homes being **"more than just bricks and mortar"**. It is therefore suggested that we start a **debate** about not just the homes themselves, but the broader neighbourhoods and communities needed around them to support residents.
- 5.8 Clearly, it will be critical not to create unrealistic expectations of what can be delivered by the 11,000 council homes project. The aim would more be to explore issues such as infrastructure, green space, health and wellbeing and community resilience - and start a discussion around the co-productive strategies residents, community organisations, businesses, the voluntary sector and the council can take to deliver this vision.

## **6.0 Communications**

- 6.1 A Communications Plan will be developed in December 2015 in consultation with the council Communications team. A draft Frequently Asked Questions is currently being prepared.