

Swindon Borough Council

Cabinet

Wednesday, 10 September 2014

Committee Room 6, Civic Offices
(Anticipated meeting room)

At 6.00 p.m. or at the Conclusion of the Cabinet Open Forum

Conservative Councillors

David Renard (Chair)
Brian Mattock (Vice-Chair)
Russell Holland
Emma Faramarzi
Brian Ford
Fionuala Foley
Dale Heenan
Richard Hurley
Garry Perkins
Keith Williams

Committee Officer: Ian Willcox (Telephone 01793 463601)
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Swindon Borough Council can be contacted at the Civic Offices, Euclid Street,
Swindon, SN1 2JH (Telephone 01793 445500)

Access Arrangements - The venue is wheelchair accessible and an infrared receiver hearing system is provided. If you have any special requirements to enable you to attend the meeting or would like to receive any of the pages contained in this agenda in a larger print size, please contact the Committee Officer as soon as possible prior to the date of the meeting.

AGENDA

NOTE:

A Cabinet Open Forum is held at 6:00 p.m. prior to the start of each scheduled Cabinet Meeting. The Open Forum is similar to the 'public question time' that happens at most Council meetings but without the need for questions. It provides the chance to meet with Cabinet Members as well as Board Directors and Directors to discuss matters relevant to the Cabinet and its responsibilities. It provides an opportunity to raise issues and give views. The Forum will normally close at 6.30 pm and the Cabinet will then reconvene for the start of the formal Cabinet meeting. If the Open Forum completes its business earlier than anticipated then the Cabinet Meeting will commence at

6:15pm or at the Forum's conclusion.

- 1. Apologies for Absence.**
- 2. Declarations of Interest.**
Members are reminded that at the start of the meeting they should declare any known interests in any matter to be considered, and also during the meeting if it becomes apparent that they have an interest in the matters being discussed.
- 3. Minutes.** (Pages 1 - 10)
To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd July 2014.
- 4. Public Question Time.**
See explanatory note below. Please phone the Committee Officer whose name and number appears at the top of this agenda if you need further guidance.
- 5. Wiltshire and Swindon Fire Authority Consultation.** DLDS (CM: DR)
(Pages 11 - 28)
- 6. Budget Management 2014/15.** BDR (CM: RH) (Pages 29 - 42)
- 7. Capital Programme Monitoring - First Quarter 2014/15.** BDR (CM: RH)
(Pages 43 - 50)
- 8. Education Provision 2014-2017.** BDC (CM: FF) (Pages 51 - 64)
- 9. Housing Strategy 2015-2026.** HHS (CM: EF) (Pages 65 - 102)
Appendix 3 – is available on the Council's website alongside this agenda item.
- 10. Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership Governance.** HE&S
(CM: DR) (Pages 103 - 126)
- 11. Town Centre Car Parking Rationalisation.** HHT (CM: DH / GP) **CE**
(Pages 127 - 132)
- 12. Motion at Council - Traffic on Cricklade Road, Swindon.** HHT (CM: DH) **PS**
(Pages 133 - 138)
- 13. Invest and Save for a Low Carbon Swindon - Swindon's Energy Future - Motion at Council.** HE&S (CM: DH / RH) (Pages 139 - 142)
- 14. References from Other Council Bodies - Licensing Committee.** DLDS (CM: EF) (Pages 143 - 152)

Date of Despatch: 02 September 2014

Key:

Officers:

CE	-	Chief Executive
BDC	-	Board Director Commissioning (DCS/ DASS)
BDS	-	Board Director Service Delivery
BDR	-	Board Director Resources (Section 151 Officer)
DPH	-	Director of Public Health
DLDS	-	Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer)
HHS	-	Head of Housing Management and Community Safety

- HE&S - Head of Economy and Skills
 HHT - Head of Highways and Transport

Wards

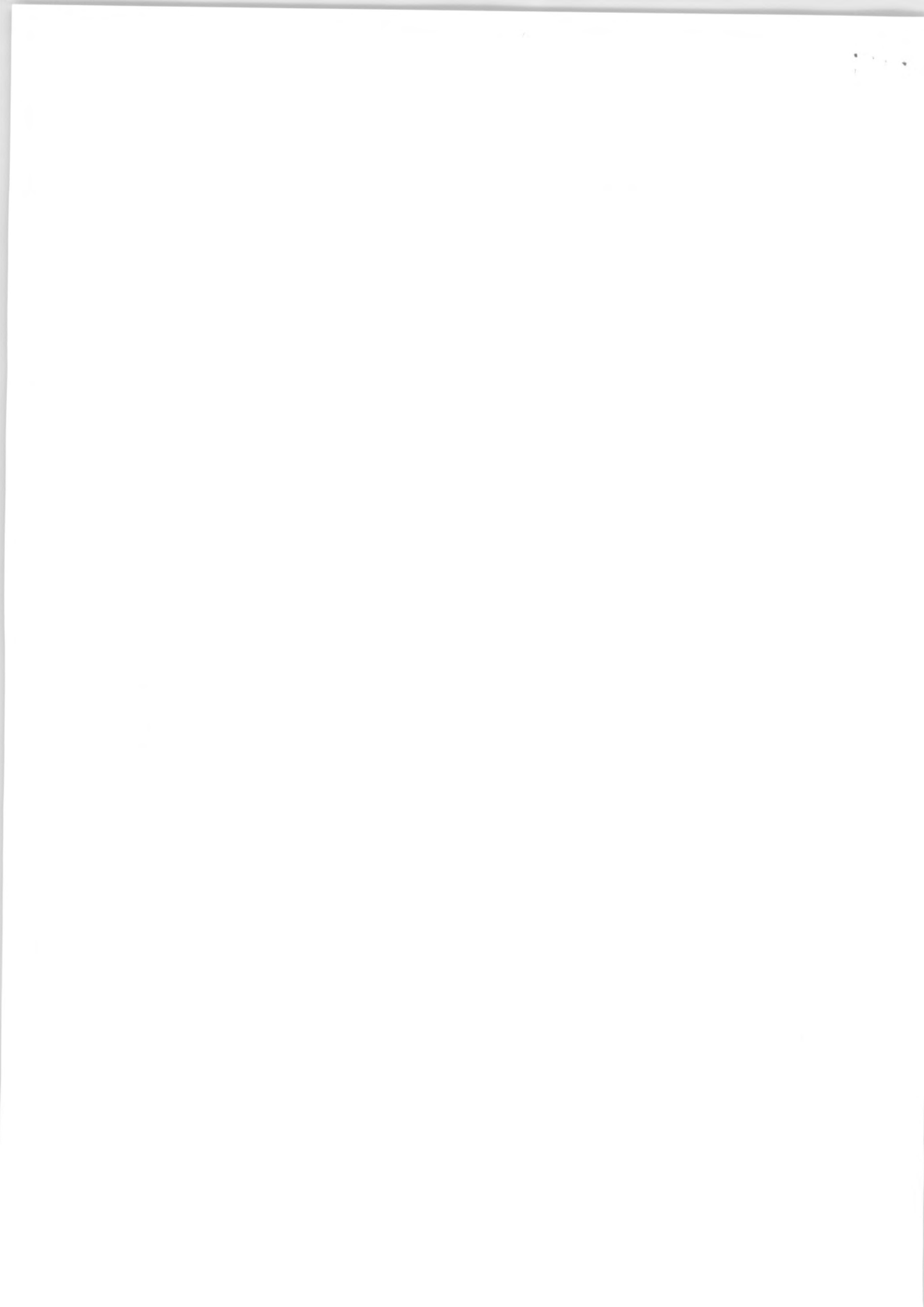
- CE - Central
 PS - Penhill and Upper Stratton

Cabinet Members Responsible for the Service Area concerned:

- | | | | |
|-----|---|-----------------|---|
| DR | - | David Renard | Leader of the Council and Chair of Cabinet |
| BM | - | Brian Mattock | Deputy Leader of the Council, Vice-Chair of Cabinet,
Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care |
| EF | - | Emma Faramarzi | Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Safety |
| FF | - | Fionuala Foley | Cabinet Member for Children's Services |
| BF | - | Brian Ford | Cabinet Member for Streetsmart |
| DH | - | Dale Heenan | Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Sustainability
and Transport |
| RH | - | Russell Holland | Cabinet Member for Finance |
| RHu | - | Richard Hurley | Cabinet Member for Communities and Volunteering |
| GP | - | Garry Perkins | Cabinet Member for the Economy, Regeneration and
Skills |
| KW | - | Keith Williams | Cabinet Member for Corporate and Leisure Services |

Public Question Time - Swindon Borough Council remains committed to increasing its accountability to the public and to promoting active citizenship. 15 minutes will be allowed at the start of all Council meetings for questions to the Chair from the public about the work of the Committee (except for confidential matters, and matters relating to planning and licensing applications). We will give priority to those who submit questions in writing at least two days before the meeting. Questions must be relevant, clear, and concise. You may not use Public Question Time as an opportunity to make speeches or statements.

Questions in writing should be sent to the Committee Officer whose contact details appear on the agenda above or to the Director of Law and Democratic Services, we will publish it, along with the answer, alongside the Minutes. The process associated with asking a public question is set out in the "Public Question Time at Council Meetings Protocol and Guidance" available on the Council's Website (<http://ww5.swindon.gov.uk/moderngov/ecCatDisplay.aspx?sch=doc&cat=13338&path=0>) or from the Committee Officer named above.



Housing Strategy 2015-2026

Cabinet

Date: 10th September 2014

Author: Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Safety,
Head of Housing and Community Safety

Wards: All

Locality Affected: All

Parishes Affected: All

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 The Council's Housing Strategy has been reviewed and approval is sought to commence a consultation exercise with interested parties on a Draft Strategy as set out in Appendix 2.
- 1.2 This Strategy, if adopted, will promote the corporate priorities of: "Working with residents to create well cared for neighbourhoods" and "Together, finding new ways to reduce vulnerability and improve health for all". It will complement the Council's Local Plan and Economic Strategy.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 2.1 Approve the Draft Housing Strategy and Action Points as set out in Appendices 1 and 2 for an 8week consultation exercise with interested parties to run from Monday 15th September 2014 to Monday 13th October 2014.
- 2.2 Note that the findings of the consultation to be reported to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Safety and authorise a summary of the responses and proposed amendments to the Strategy to be published within a Cabinet Member Decision Note once the consultation period has closed.
- 2.3 Note that the consultation will include conversations with housing developers and house builders on how Swindon can achieve greater depth to its housing market.

3. Detail

- 3.1 Swindon's Draft Housing Strategy 2015 – 2026, sets out the role the Strategy can make in helping the Council achieve its strategic objectives. Specifically the Strategy covers 4 key themes:
- Affordability – improving the offer,
 - Private rented housing – regulation and support,
 - Promoting and maintaining independence, and
 - Housing Growth – increasing the quality and diversity of housing.

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Michael Ash on Direct Dial No.464410, or Email mash@swindon.gov.uk.

Housing Strategy 2015-2026

Cabinet

Date: 10th September 2014

- 3.2 Housing has a key role to play in helping the Council to achieve a wide range of strategic aims. This varies from boosting local economic activity in construction and related industries, improving the wellbeing of all of our residents, providing sustainable communities where people want to live and work, providing opportunities for younger households to access home-ownership, and helping people to achieve and maintain independence and live healthily for longer.
- 3.3 The content of the Strategy also addresses the issues raised in the Council Motions of Housing, minute 49 on 20th September 2012, Housing, minute 111 on 21st February 2013, Housing Market Support, minute 130 on 11th April 2013, Affordable Housing, minute 62 on 7th November 2013, and Houses in Multiple Occupation, agenda item 8b on 17th July 2014.
- 3.4 For purposes of this strategy, "Affordable Housing" is defined as housing available for rent at 80% or less than the market value. The Strategy also identifies ways in which households can enter home ownership at levels below the market price.
- 3.5 Housing is a crosscutting theme in many key areas of the Council's work, and this is reflected in the Strategy.
- 3.6 Swindon continues to be one of the fastest growing urban centres in the UK, offering the opportunity to improve its housing offer and contribute towards higher standards in Swindon's built environment. Swindon's story is one of agricultural market town, to 19th century industrial town, to 20th century expansion. Swindon's position as a successful regional economic centre is now well placed to come of age and take its place alongside the UK's major towns and cities in the 21st century. Swindon's continued success will depend on having the right infrastructure in place and that includes a broader housing offer.
- 3.7 An opportunity therefore exists with the new Housing Strategy to provide Swindon's housing market with some direction to increase the depth of the housing market for those who wish to rent, buy or require their housing needs to be met by statutory intervention. Swindon will continue to be one of the fastest growing towns in the UK over the next 10 years with expansion at Middle and West Wichelstowe and in the Eastern Villages. Issues covered in the evidence base of the Strategy include:
 - Housing Need and affordability,
 - Private Rented Sector,
 - Stock Condition,
 - Home Ownership,
 - Links to the Local Economic Strategy, and
 - Links to the Adult Demand Strategy.

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Michael Ash on Direct Dial No.464410, or Email mash@swindon.gov.uk.

Housing Strategy 2015-2026

Cabinet

Date: 10th September 2014

3.8 Specifically Appendix 1 highlights what the Draft Strategy proposes to deliver, which includes the following.

- Deliver additional high quality housing in Swindon town centre.
- Seek to return 150 long-term empty properties back into use over the next 3 years.
- Complete a Design Guide to improve the quality and diversity of local housing development across all tenures.
- Following the Motion at Council 62 on 7th November 2013, seek to provide of 300 new council homes by 2020 including the redevelopment of Sussex Square in Walcot and part of the former Hawthorn Centre in Gorse Hill.
- Following the Motion at Council, 8b on 17th July develop the Council's policy in relation to Houses in Multiple Occupation in accordance with statutory powers to ensure that residents in shared accommodation of this nature can occupy safe and comfortable homes.
- Evaluate the benefits of establishing a Municipal Housing Company to add momentum and breadth to the affordable and private rented offer in Swindon.
- Produce new planning guidance on Affordable Housing by April 2016 setting out how developers will continue to provide affordable housing on qualifying sites.

4. Alternative Options

4.1 The Council does not have to produce a Housing Strategy, since it is no longer a statutory requirement. Other options would be to express the Council's intent for its housing offer through other plans such as the Local Plan and the Homelessness Strategy.

5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

5.1 A number of the action points detailed in this report will require some financial resource. The HRA financial business plan is updated at least annually and provides a framework for the annual budget conversation, and will need to take into account any action points relevant at that time. An HRA Medium Term Resource Plan will also be produced to support the annual business plan process. The amount of HRA resources available will be heavily impacted by the level of income available from tenant rents.

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Michael Ash on Direct Dial No.464410, or Email mash@swindon.gov.uk.

Housing Strategy 2015-2026

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Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.2 All legal and human rights considerations have been taken fully into account in compiling this report. It is considered that the recommendations of this report are compatible with Convention rights. There is no statutory requirement for a local Housing Strategy.

All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 5.3 There are no direct implications in this report.

Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.4 A thorough Diversity Impact Assessment has been carried out and identified the following.
- 5.4.1 It has become apparent through the development of the evidence base for the Housing Strategy that certain issues need further exploration. In particular, the rapidly expanding Private Rented Sector and the unique, associated challenges and opportunities it brings.
- 5.4.2 Affordable Housing is in short supply, and resources to increase the provision are limited. Affordable Housing is targeted at those households in greatest need. Households at or close to the threshold will have to wait a considerable time for affordable housing or not be housed in this way at all.
- 5.4.3 The evidence base also tested the wider impacts of welfare reform, within the resources available. For example, the majority of those impacted by the spare room subsidy have not moved for a variety of reasons. Currently the availability of Discretionary Housing Payments has enabled many to stay in the homes that they over occupy. Swindon's demographic make-up is challenging.
- 5.4.4 Our population relates well to Swindon's economy, there are high levels of low-skill, low paid work, however these households find it difficult to afford the market rate for housing. Economic growth needs to be matched by appropriate housing growth to mitigate this.

- 5.5 A copy of the DIA can be obtained from the report author.

Risk Management

- 5.6 No additional risks have been identified.

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Michael Ash on Direct Dial No.464410, or Email mash@swindon.gov.uk.

Housing Strategy 2015-2026

Cabinet

Date: 10th September 2014

6. Consultees

- 6.1 The Board Director, Resources (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.
- 6.2 Any consultation with the public or stakeholders will follow the Council's consultation guidelines (Cabinet Minute 89, 2013/14 refers).

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 None

8. Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1- Action Points
- 8.2 Appendix 2 – Swindon's Draft Housing Strategy 2015 – 2026
- 8.3 Appendix 3 – Evidence Base (available online from the Committee Services website) <http://10.154.104.226:9070/uuCoverPage.aspx?bcr=1>

9. Key Decision/Decision in Forward Plan

- 9.1 This is a Key Decision and is included in the Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan for September 2014.

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Michael Ash on Direct Dial No.464410, or Email mash@swindon.gov.uk.

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Appendix 1: Housing Strategy 2014 -2026

Delivering the Vision

Actions for the next 5 years:

Responding to the changing housing market: Improving standards in private rented housing	
Action:	<p>The Council will work alongside stakeholders to improve standards in private rented housing.</p> <p>The Council will engage with stakeholders and implement any changes that are necessary to improve the private rented sector in Swindon especially around the potential of longer tenancies and quality of homes. The Council will develop its policy to ensure that Houses In Multiple Occupation are appropriately regulated in accordance with its statutory powers.</p>
Action:	<p>The Council supports the idea of institutional investment in open market rented housing.</p> <p>The Council will evaluate the benefits of an equity stake private rental model during 2015.</p>
Action:	<p>The Council will act to reduce the blight on neighbourhoods from homes that have been empty for 6 months or more.</p> <p>Swindon Borough Council will bring at least 50 private sector empty homes per year, that have been empty for 6 months or more, back into use each year. In April 2014 there were just below 500 long term empty properties in the Borough, this action will bring the total empty for over 6 months to below 400 by 2018.</p>

Affordability: Improving the Offer

Action:	<p>The Council will ensure that there is a balance between the need for affordable housing and maintain delivery of new housing.</p> <p>Swindon Borough Council will produce new planning guidance for Affordable Housing by April 2016 setting out how affordable housing will be provided on qualifying sites, how viability concerns will be addressed and the type, form and tenure of the provision.</p>
Action:	<p>The Council is committed to delivering affordable housing for those priced out of open market housing.</p>

	<p>Swindon Borough Council will ensure that there is a range of affordable housing options on offer to people in the town. By March 2016 the Council will renew the Affordable Housing Development Partnership to work with and support Housing Associations to increase housing supply in Swindon especially in the areas of affordable housing and private rented housing as well as maximising their contribution in other relevant areas. Housing Association partners currently estimate they will deliver 885 new affordable homes by March 2020</p>
Action:	<p>The Council is committed to improving the residential offer in town centre, as well as protecting the heritage of the Railway Village.</p> <p>Swindon Borough Council will support the regeneration of housing in the town centre to support office to residential changes of use and continuing the development of new town centre living opportunities. The Council will ensure its investment in the housing it owns in the Railway Village will improve the energy efficiency and thermal comfort of these historic homes. The Council will establish a task group including colleagues working on the Economic Strategy to take forward this work by September 2015.</p>
Action:	<p>The Council will build its own affordable housing.</p> <p>Based on its successful bid to the Affordable Housing Programme 2015-18 Swindon Borough Council will establish a Council housing development programme and deliver 300 new homes by March 2020. The Council will consider whether to establish a Municipal Housing Company the purpose of which would be to add momentum and breadth to the affordable and potentially the private rented housing offer in Swindon. The Council will develop a medium term resource plan to guide its investment plans in line with the principles set out in this strategy.</p>
Action:	<p>The Council will continue to deliver services to the settled Traveller community as well as the wider Traveller community.</p> <p>In line with the Local Plan the Council will facilitate delivery of an additional 15 plots for Travellers in Swindon by 2018.</p>
Action:	<p>The Council is committed to minimising the impact of homelessness within the Borough.</p> <p>The Council will refresh the current Homelessness Strategy in 2014, and will achieve the Department of Communities and Local Government's Gold Standard for Homelessness Services in 2015.</p>

Managing demand: Promoting and maintaining independence	
Action:	The Council will work to ensure that the housing stock in the Borough supports individuals to live independently for as long as possible.
	Swindon Borough Council will work to promote older person's housing at the centre of new large housing schemes incorporating HAPPI principles ¹ as part of the s106 affordable housing package. Swindon Borough Council will establish a housing model to develop innovative housing to support people with specific health needs, such as older people, or people with disabilities.
Action:	There will be a diverse range of options for people with specific housing needs due to medical circumstances. This will assist the Council in the delivery of its Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
	Swindon Borough Council will plan effectively and well in advance for the long term future of young people with complex physical, mental, and learning disabilities and provide local, supported living solutions through s106 agreements or existing/new affordable housing stock. To assist with this Swindon Borough Council will look to use the Council Housing development and acquisition programme, existing stock and s106 properties to offer improved housing solutions to those with specialist needs as well as reducing costs. These options will be considered in the assessment of those individuals with learning disabilities currently placed out of Borough.

Supporting economic growth: Increasing the quality and diversity of our housing stock	
Action:	Swindon Borough Council wants higher quality development to support economic growth.
	The Council will work alongside house builders through the use of the Swindon Design Guide to improve the quality and diversity of local housing delivery. Furthermore, it will encourage developers and land owners to enable self-build as part of local housing supply and support such provision.
Action:	Housing will be developed to meet the needs of groups who have been

¹ Please see page 21 of the Strategy for explanation or *Housing Our Ageing Population*:

	overlooked in the past.
	Housing has been targeted too narrowly, and to support growth the housing offer needs to be more diverse. The Council will work to deliver a wider range of housing choices for people in Swindon. Groups such as high-earners, self-builders, key-workers will have a greater choice to create a more diverse housing offer. The Council will support the creation of an Urban Community Land Trust for those interested in self build by September 2015.
Action:	Maximum benefit will be derived from Swindon's assets.
	By September 2015 the Council will have undertaken a review of its own land assets, and develop a plan to use those land holdings to support economic and housing growth in partnership with the private sector.

Key Milestones

Council house development 1st completion by September 2015

Specialist housing design guide by December 2015

Affordable Housing Policy by April 2016

Homelessness Strategy reviewed during 2014

Wichelstowe:

2014 - Joint Venture established with a private sector partner to develop the rest of the site

2026 – Around 4,000 properties completed in Wichelstowe

Affordable Housing

March 2020 – 1600th Affordable Home built

Eastern Villages:

2026 – 8000 new homes delivered to the east of Swindon

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Why does Swindon need a Housing Strategy?

In the words of the Economic Strategy: To Deliver the Right Homes in the Right Place.

Housing has a key role to play in helping the Council to achieve a wide range of strategic aims. This varies from boosting local economic activity in construction and related industries, improving the wellbeing of all of our residents, providing sustainable communities where people want to live and work, providing opportunities for younger households to access home-ownership, and helping people to achieve and maintain independence and live healthily for longer.

Housing is a cross-cutting theme in many key areas of the Council's work, and this is reflected in the Strategy.

About this Housing Strategy:

- This strategy sets out the role of housing in helping the Council to achieve its strategic aims, with the following priorities based on the evidence:
 - Responding to the changing housing market - Improving standards in private rented housing
 - Affordability – improving the offer
 - Managing demand - promoting and maintaining independence
 - Supporting further economic growth – increasing the quality and diversity of our housing stock
- The Strategy covers the period from 2014 to 2026, matching the timeframe for the Local Plan.
- This is a working draft for consultation.
- Once in place, the Council will then undertake high level strategic reviews at 4 year intervals.

This Strategy has been developed alongside senior Planning Officers, and aims to not only set out the role of housing in meeting the Council's strategic priorities, but also provide a vision of how the Local Plan can be implemented to maximum benefit of the town in the future.

Until the recession in 2008 Swindon had a track record of delivering high numbers of new housing. Swindon is still the 5th fastest growing Local Authority in the country¹, and this high level of housing supply means that nearly 40% of dwellings in Swindon have been built after 1980. Following this rapid pace of delivery, the Council's view is that future housing growth must be more carefully managed to ensure that it contributes to the town's wider ambitions.

Swindon's Economic Strategy of 2013 identifies the provision of the right housing in the right locations as a key objective in underpinning economic growth. Swindon's housing offer is not sufficiently developed at higher income levels to support the types of jobs that the town needs in terms of continued growth and bolstering the regeneration of the town centre. This is evidenced by analysis of recent housing supply which shows that the housing market in Swindon has almost ignored higher earners over the past 2 decades. This lack of offer also hampers our ability to sell Swindon more widely and convince both employers and employees that Swindon can meet their aspirations in terms of opportunity and lifestyle.

Like much of the country Swindon is experiencing substantial growth in our older population. Public sector resources will remain constrained, which combined with increasing demand on our services makes the role of housing critical in responding to demographic change. The Council recognises that it must maximise all the assets at its disposal to reduce dependency and improve health outcomes for its citizens. The role of housing in achieving this is critical, both in terms of ensuring that sufficient choice is available, but also in terms of making it easier for people to remain independent for longer.

The role of future housing development must be accompanied by a renewed focus on the part that existing housing provision has to play, especially the 10,500 units of social housing stock in Swindon. It is essential that such a sizeable asset contributes to the overall objectives and success of Swindon, whilst continuing to look after our existing tenants.

This Housing Strategy brings these diverse priorities together and outlines how the existing and future housing stock of the Borough will maximise its contribution to the overall success of Swindon economically, environmentally and socially.

¹ ONS

Chapter 2: The Council's Vision: What is Housing in Swindon Like in 2026?

Swindon is a large town with over 115,000 homes, and 250,000 people and is no longer associated with bland urban sprawl.

Companies are no longer put off investing in the town by a poorly designed public realm. Thanks to its strategic location and improved housing stock the town is securing new investment driving further improvements in the built environment, as well as improved employment opportunities for the growing population.

Run down areas have been regenerated, and a more commercially confident population no longer accepts poorly designed housing. The town is more ambitious, and people are attracted to the town because of its excellent education, affordability, employment opportunities, and great cultural and leisure activities.

The town centre has benefitted from regeneration, and a more economically diverse population supports a lively town centre. Run down, empty office blocks have been demolished, and replaced with well-designed homes for a growing community who call the town centre home.

The Kimmerfields office development offers employment opportunities for people who want to live and work in the town centre. The new Art Gallery is the hub for a broader cultural offer in the town.

Wichelstowe is a desirable neighbourhood, home to a thriving intergenerational community. Its high quality housing and facilities have created a place where local people and those working in the town choose to visit and aspire to live.

Targeted investment has delivered a great transport network, enabling our larger population to move freely about the Borough.

Swindon's has safeguarded its excellent green spaces, which contribute to improved wellbeing for the larger town population.

Swindon has attracted higher earners who work in the town to live in the town, ensuring that money earned in the Borough is spent locally.

There is a diverse offer for people looking for housing across the Borough. Swindon has a wide range of properties to buy, a well-managed private rented sector, and a range of affordable housing options to meet everyone's needs.

Housing acts as the base for strong communities where people feel safe, have opportunities to work and where people want to remain.

There is a range of housing options to support people through life, and older people who wish to downsize from their family homes. This includes a community at the heart of Middle Wichel. As a result older people live independently and healthily for longer. This has boosted the volunteering capacity of the town.

Nobody with a disability is accommodated out of the Borough for want of appropriate housing. People with disabilities feel part of communities, and there is a range of housing to meet people's needs irrespective of age, and disability.

The high level of development means that Swindon is still comparatively affordable, and is recognised as a great place to move to for work and to start a family. Swindon is a place where young people can feel optimistic about their chances of setting up their own home.

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Chapter 3: Housing Strategy 2009 to 2014

The previous Housing Strategy was focussed largely on the council's statutory housing role, containing the following priorities:

- Delivering affordable homes within a balanced housing market
- Tackling homelessness and worklessness
- Supporting people, promoting choices, improving health and social care
- Optimising existing housing stock
- Getting the best from social housing in Swindon

The Strategy set a target of 300 affordable homes a year. This target was not always achieved following the economic difficulties after 2008. However, a strong partnership with Housing Associations maintained momentum and ensured delivery was maximised. The Swindon Strategic Housing Market Assessment was updated, and has formed the main evidence base for this Strategy. The number of affordable homes delivered is as follows:

2009/10 = 395

2010/11 = 181

2011/12 = 309

2012/13 = 168

2013/14 = 212

There was a spike in 2009/10 where excess privately developed housing was absorbed by social housing providers to maintain delivery and prevent ghost estates, and a subsequent large fall in 2010/11. Some of this is due to negotiations with developers, where to ensure that stalled sites can be brought forward the delivery of Affordable Housing will be towards the later stages of development.

In spite of the recession the number of homeless households in Swindon has reduced dramatically, showing how with the right interventions and partnership working can help to improve outcomes even in the toughest of circumstances. The number of households in temporary accommodation fell from a high of 881 in December 2005 to 182 in June 2013.

The Council's housing stock underwent a detailed options review in 2011/12. Significant investment shortfalls were identified despite the change from pooled Housing Revenue Accounts to self-financing for council housing nationally. Following the appraisal the Council balloted tenants on whether to transfer to a purpose made Housing Association. Council tenants voted to retain the current model.

Chapter 4: Strategic Drivers

The Housing Strategy is part of the wider context to which it will both contribute and respond. The table below summarises the major strategic drivers and the implications for the Housing Strategy. It focuses on the relationships between the strategies and how housing provision will contribute to their implementation.

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<p>The National Housing Strategy</p> <p>In 2011, the Government announced a new Housing Strategy for England setting out a package of reforms to address the deficiencies of the housing market. The areas of focus in the strategy are :</p>	<p>The Local Plan</p> <p>Swindon's draft Local Plan is the main planning policy document for the Council, providing the planning policy framework to deliver sustainable growth up to 2026 and beyond. It sets out how much development Swindon needs and identifies when, where and how it will take place. The plan is currently in draft form. A Planning Inspector has been appointed to determine its soundness. The draft Local Plan sets out 10 strategic objectives:</p>	<p>The Corporate Strategy</p> <p>The Corporate Strategy is the key strategic driver within the Council. It is a 3-year strategy adopted by full council in November 2012. The Strategy details the council's response to the challenge of addressing rising demand for its services whilst available resources are reducing. It has five priorities:</p>
<p>Improve environmental standards and design quality</p>	<p>To provide a network of multi-functional green spaces linked to the surrounding countryside To ensure that development respects, protects and enhances to existing built environment and heritage of Swindon</p>	<p>Work with residents to create well cared for neighbourhoods</p>
<p>Get the housing market moving again</p> <p>Lay the foundations for a more responsive, effective and stable housing market in the future</p>	<p>Meet the education need of a growing population High quality, sustainable development to improve image of Swindon Meet the infrastructure needs of the Borough To improve the local economy To support Swindon's growth through the provision of a comprehensive and sustainable transport network offering choice to users</p>	<p>Right skills, right jobs, in the right places</p>
	<p>To promote healthy lifestyles and meet the need for community and health facilities</p>	<p>Together, find new ways to reduce vulnerability and improve health for all</p>
<p>Support choice and quality for tenants</p>	<p>Meet the Borough's housing needs</p> <p>To enable provision of cultural and leisure facilities commensurate with a town growing such as Swindon as and enable it to become a regional leisure destination</p>	<p>Work with people and families to help them fulfil their potential</p>
		<p>Make the best use of Swindon's resources inside and outside the Council</p>

<p>The Economic Strategy.</p> <p>Swindon's first Economic Strategy was adopted in 2013 and clearly sets out the priorities for Swindon's future growth focusing on creating 19,600 additional jobs up until 2026 through its 6 priorities:</p>	<p>The Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2013-2016</p> <p>The Health and Wellbeing Strategy was commissioned by Swindon's Health and Wellbeing Board and developed by a steering group of key stakeholders. The strategy sets out the vision and the long-term improvements in local people's health and wellbeing that we want to achieve in Swindon. These are:</p>	<p>How will the Housing Strategy Contribute?</p>
	<p>Creation of sustainable environments in which communities can flourish</p>	<p>The development and maintenance of quality housing stock including rented housing in well-designed neighbourhoods makes a significant contribution to the care and appearance of local neighbourhoods. The Housing Strategy will reflect the need to create neighbourhood, which are good places to live and work.</p>
<p>Developing Swindon's higher education provision</p> <p>Position Swindon as a hub of technology and advanced manufacturing</p> <p>Revitalise Swindon's town centre</p>		<p>The Local Plan sets out the provision of future housing in terms of numbers of homes required their type and design.</p> <p>Housing is a key component of economic growth both through maintaining and increasing the supply of affordable and rented housing in Swindon and through improving the offer for the upper end of the market to encourage people to live and spend their money in the town.</p> <p>The Housing Strategy will support the delivery of the vision of the Local Plan and focuses on both of these aspects and hence seeks appropriate housing provision to support economic growth</p>
	<p>Every child and young person in Swindon has a healthy start in life</p> <p>Adults and older people in Swindon are living healthier and more independent lives</p> <p>Improved health outcomes for disadvantaged and vulnerable communities</p>	<p>Housing has a significant impact on health and wellbeing. Research shows the link between poor housing and poor health outcomes including asthma, respiratory infections and increased hospital admissions.</p> <p>The Housing Strategy will specifically focus on improving health outcomes through appropriate housing interventions in the existing owned and rented housing stock and new homes. There will actions to maintain and promote independence for adults and older people. This will include increasing the number of adults with learning disabilities who live in supported accommodation rather than residential care</p>
<p>Creating a place of opportunity for young people</p> <p>Establish Swindon as a regional leisure destination</p>	<p>Improved mental health, wellbeing and resilience for all</p>	<p>The Housing Strategy will recognise that a regenerated town centre offering an enhanced cultural and leisure offer will support both the current and future populations to thrive in Swindon.</p>
<p>Create Low Carbon Swindon</p>		<p>The Housing Strategy will address the need to maintain and improve the quality of the existing housing stock including rented housing, alongside high quality new sustainable development and an enhanced rental offer as the best chance to optimise use of all available existing resource. This will also contribute to delivering the low carbon agenda.</p>

Chapter 5: Evidence summary

This section explores some statistics behind the key housing issues in Swindon. It highlights key trends relating to the housing market, housing need, housing conditions and homelessness. The section also highlights some key statistics regarding the housing needs of vulnerable groups, including those with disabilities and older persons.

Demographic analysis

According to the most recent projections the population of Swindon in 2011 is estimated at around 209,700 with this figure due to increase to 253,490 by 2026 (SBC, 2014). In addition to a general increase in the overall population, a series of significant changes in the population profile of Swindon are also projected, most notably the proportion aged 75 plus is projected to increase by 65% by 2026. In addition to changes to the age and size of the local population, the average household size in Swindon is expected to decline from 2.35 persons to 2.29 persons over the same period. The combination of a growing and ageing population and declining household size will bring a series of significant challenges for future housing provision in Swindon.

Housing tenure

As is the trend nationally, the most common tenure in Swindon is owner occupation with a mortgage, which makes up around 40 per cent of all households. This and those living 'rent free' are the only tenures that have reduced in size in Swindon since 2001, with significant increases in the number of social and private renters, and owners without a mortgage.

Stock profile

Terraced housing, both Victorian and modern, makes up the highest proportion of Swindon's housing stock and is 10 per cent higher than the region. The proportion of detached homes is 9 per cent lower than the regional average. The implications of this upon Swindon's growth ambitions are discussed later in this strategy.

Since 2001, Swindon has outperformed the region and England in terms of net additions to its housing stock and has had a significantly larger growth in purpose built flats than the Region or England.

In terms of age, Swindon has a relatively new housing stock when compared with the rest of England and the region as a whole. There has been continued growth and between 1981 and 2010 a total of 33,992 new dwellings were completed, averaging 1,172 per year, most of which have been in the urban area.

House prices

House prices in Swindon tend to be below national and regional averages. In January 2011 taking into account sales and valuations over the previous three months, was £187,000. This compares to a regional average of £239,500.

Housing need and affordability

In 2011, the Borough Council commissioned an update to the 2006 sub-regional Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). One of the core outputs of this study is an analysis of the level of housing need in Swindon, based on issues such as affordability and specialist housing requirements. The key affordability and housing need findings and recommendations of this study were as follows:

In 2010 35 per cent of first time buyers in Swindon were unable to afford a to buy a lower quartile priced flat, 55 per cent were unable to afford a local quartile terrace house and almost 64 per cent a semi. (These figures assume a mortgage based on three times salary).

Housing affordability is worse for families than other household groups. Lone parent households are likely to experience greatest problems of affordability and are expected to grow by 67% in Swindon between 2008 and 2033, a total of 4,000 additional households or 160 per year.

There is significant unmet demand for affordable rented housing from one person households and couples. Almost two thirds of households on the Council's housing register need one bed accommodation

DCLG estimates indicate a further 1,300 additional households between 2011 and 2021 containing a person aged over 85. This will have implications for care services, the suitability of existing housing in the private sector and demand for social housing. At the current rate of household formation, housing supply and backlog waiting lists there will be a shortfall of affordable housing for an average of 800 households each year in Swindon

There is evidence to suggest that intermediate tenure products, such as shared ownership and intermediate rent, have a role in meeting some of the identified housing need in Swindon

Housing demand

The SHMA update also featured an analysis of current and future demand for market housing, the key findings and recommendations are as follows:

In the longer-term demand for housing will outstrip supply as a result of demographics. CLG estimate an additional 232,000 households per year in England. Average net additions to the housing stock in England over the last two decades average 160,000 per year.

Population growth in Swindon is likely to increase demand from all household types although the greatest growth will be from one-person households, and those over the age of 85. According to ONS projections approximately 1300 new homes per year

will need to be delivered to meet the need from new households. Almost half of these will be for older people downsizing from family houses. If only a small proportion of these actually downsize, the difference will need to be made up by new family housing.

The Borough Council has revised its housing targets to 2026 to 25,000 dwellings, or 1,188 new homes on average per year, as a result of lower economic growth resulting in fewer new jobs, fewer economic immigrants, lower population growth, and lower rates of household formation. In the early years to 2016 the proposal is to limit the annual target to 850 homes. This is likely to reduce the amount of affordable housing being delivered through s106 agreements.

Housing supply

Since 2008 the numbers of houses built in the Borough has fallen every year to the point that during 2012 / 2013 just 520 houses were completed in Swindon. This represents just 26% of the completion rate that was being achieved in 2007/2008. There were 42 Council houses built during the last 3 years and house building by housing associations has also remained at a minimal level so the bulk of new construction remains within the private sector.

In terms of future housing growth, the Council have set out in their emerging Local Plan a level of proposed housing growth for the period 2011 to 2026 for 22,000 houses. In terms of the five year housing land supply (2013-2018), the Council have demonstrated there is sufficient land to meet anticipated growth, with supply of approximately 8,311 houses which mainly comprises of sites that have planning permission, proposed strategic allocations and potential sites identified through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (published in 2013).

Empty homes

Despite housing shortages across Swindon, a certain proportion of the housing stock has been vacant for periods longer than six months, often for reasons that include repossession, legal disputes over ownership and inheritance, and a lack of funding for repairs.

Housing stock condition

In April 2011, the Building Research Establishment (BRE) prepared an assessment of the condition of private sector housing stock in Swindon. The results indicate that the Swindon private sector housing stock is better than the national average 15% per cent of private sector dwellings in Swindon have a category one hazard as defined under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System. A category one hazard is such that it may cause death or serious injury. The national average is 24%.

The most common hazard amongst the private housing stock in Swindon is excess cold, with single pensioners and lone parents most likely to live in hazardous conditions.

The results also show that the proportion of non-decent homes is highest in the town wards of Eastcott, Central, and Gorse Hill and Pinehurst, and the rural wards of Blunsdon and Ridgeway.

The highest distribution of vulnerable households in non-decent homes is in Central, Penhill, Gorse Hill and Pinehurst, Parks, and Eastcott.

The BRE study indicates that there are 7,595 properties with thermal comfort failures requiring a total of £36,680,000 to make decent.

The highest distribution of thermal comfort failures and associated Category 1 hazards are in the wards of Parks, Penhill, Blunsdon, Central and Eastcott. 4,200 households are in 'fuel poverty' across Swindon

Homelessness and rough sleeping

The causes of homelessness are hugely varied; leaving the armed forces, fleeing domestic violence, being evicted or repossessed (many times through no fault of their own), and family and relationship breakdown. All of these situations can lead to people suddenly finding themselves in need of housing advice and assistance. The council has a legal duty to secure accommodation for some individuals who find themselves in this situation and meet certain criteria.

Official figures collected by Swindon Borough Council show that a total of 32 households were registered and accepted as homeless during 2012/13. This represents a decrease of 72% on the figure for 2004/05 and 76% for the period 2005/06.

The current figures show a consistent downward trend as prevention work has increased. The main recorded reasons for homelessness in Swindon are: parents no longer willing to accommodate, relationship breakdown (violent and non-violent), and loss of private sector tenancy

Numbers of homeless have reduced significantly over the past ten years however; this masks significant on-going demand for assistance with access to housing from the Council. The continued numbers of 'acceptances' to the housing register is indicative of the future challenges that the council is posed with when preventing homelessness, given the present economic climate.

Demand for Council Housing

As of July 2014 there were 7378 households assessed as being in housing need on Swindon's Housing Register and this figure has been rising steadily over recent years.

Concealed households, i.e. those staying with friends, family or other relatives, made up approximately 44% of the total, and flats for single people and couples along with 2 and 3 bed houses are the most in demand. Those housed from Band B on the Housing Register (categorised as those in urgent need of accommodation) were

waiting an average of 1 year longer in 2013 (over 3 years) before being housed than similar households in 2008

Specialist housing needs

Swindon Borough Council owns approximately 1,500 units of sheltered housing for older people, and a further 1,000 approximately are owned by Registered Providers. Data indicates that one and two-bedroom bungalows are in greatest demand but the greatest supply is of one-bed flat

There are currently 1,809 households on the Council's Common Housing Register for sheltered housing, of whom 504 have been assessed as having a priority need for housing. We do not know how many of these can afford to resolve their housing need through the market as Council does not take into consideration income and savings when allocating housing.

In 2011 approximately 298 older person households on the Housing Register were in receipt of Disability Living Allowance and 105 of these already living in Council housing. In 2011 there were 986 households registered on the Council's Housing Register where a member of that household was in receipt of Disability Living Allowance, 298 of these required older persons housing.

In terms of supply, 4 fully wheelchair accessible affordable properties have been delivered since 2008/9. This appears to be low, but adapted properties are generally low demand. Ensuring that supply and demand is matched for households in need of adaptations is vital, to ensure that households are supported to live as independently as possible. Depending on individual circumstances accommodation needs range from houses with downstairs bedroom and bathroom facilities to ground floor flats and wheelchair-adapted bungalows.

Chapter 6: The Council's priorities:

The Housing Strategy responds to the strategic drivers of the national and local strategies as outlined. It needs to help bring jobs to Swindon, support economic activity through increased housing supply and providing sustainable communities, promote independence, reduce revenue liabilities in the public sector and ensure the most vulnerable are protected. However, in the current financial situation the strategy balances resources against outcomes when formulating actions.

Responding to the changing housing market – Improving standards in private rented housing:

The private rental market is largely a collection of small scale enterprises. There are no notable large scale institutions offering a private rental service across the country, unlike countries such as Germany and France where renting is seen as a long term option for families and is backed by a legislative framework that supports such a choice. In the UK, the Montague Review was commissioned to explore methods of increasing institutional investment into the private rented sector through build to let. Montague's recommendations included better using the affordable housing requirements of the Planning system on larger sites to enable private rented housing to come forward and using public land to pilot such an approach.

The Council's own land holdings, including Wichelstowe, offer the possibility of undertaking a pilot project for an enhanced private rental offer aimed at working households, and based on the principles of good quality homes, long term tenancies, predictable rent rises based on inflation allied with a reliable and high quality management and maintenance service. Analysis of the English Housing Survey of 2012-13 shows that only 13% of private sector tenants who moved that year were able to buy a home, and furthermore that 78% of new private sector tenancies that year were people moving from other private sector tenancies.

Whilst the provision of a new form of institutional private rent will be an asset to the town, such provision will be relatively small in early years compared to the 16000+ private sector homes already in existence. The support for the establishment of a new private rented sector offer as stated in the Action Plan would be expected to drive up standards across the sector in Swindon through the action of normal market competition. However, it is clear that the normal market dynamics do not always operate in the private rented sector in the way we may expect. In the internet age, it is expected that potential customers are able to discover what other consumers have experienced in terms of customer service from product and service providers. However, potential tenants have little way of obtaining legitimate feedback on their prospective landlords meaning that normal market mechanisms and incentives do not operate as they should. Furthermore, initiatives such as the Stable Rental Contract from Shelter that offer opportunities for both landlords and tenants are unable to be disseminated effectively through a lack of widespread engagement. The Council should therefore investigate the possibility of implementing certain changes within the local private rental market to address this market failure. Landlords that we have spoken to are broadly supportive of reasonable steps being taken to promote

good standards in private rented housing, whilst reminding us that tenants can cause them serious financial distress.

The most extreme intervention would be a comprehensive licensing system. This has been implemented in other areas for example Newham. Such a licensing scheme is self-financing from landlord's registration fees. Such fees should not be onerous and be used only for the cost of running the scheme including monitoring of standards. Such licensing should cover areas including contact details for landlord, tenancy deposit arrangements, property standards (including safety checks) and complaints procedure. There is a risk that this will deter landlords from investing in Swindon. Also, there is little evidence to support such an intervention, which would be necessary to secure the statutory approval from the Secretary of State.

A less intrusive approach is reputational regulation. This could be through several methods including offering landlords the opportunity to sign up to a standards charter that commits them to certain standards of service in their lettings. This is similar to the service Unipol offer in Leeds, Bradford and Nottingham. Another option would be to consider the provision of web-based feedback site for tenants to allow the market to operate better through allowing tenants information on prospective landlords akin to the information that landlords can access on prospective tenants through services such as TenantVet. This could be alongside the establishment of separate private sector tenant and landlord groups to allow better intelligence to be gathered on the operation of the sector.

A number of Local Authorities have replaced their in house Landlord Accreditation schemes with a formal endorsement of credible national schemes, such as that provided by the National Landlords' Association. Such a scheme is able to offer greater benefits to landlords, for example professional training and advice. This is the advisable route for the Council to take.

Finally, it is clear that the Council's enforcement team that ensures that properties meet certain standards with regard to safety, amenity, repair and management cannot be expected to keep pace with the growth in the private sector without additional resources. Although the Council currently runs a Landlord Accreditation scheme, there are only 30 landlords currently registered and with the Law Commission estimating that only 2.2% of landlords belong to a professional body it can be argued that voluntary regulation has not moved the sector to the professional footing that it needs.

Swindon has a large amount of inward migration of working age households, for whom the private rented sector provides an opportunity for a place to live. To attract and retain economically active households Swindon should seek to improve standards in the private rented sector.

Affordability: Improving the Offer

Affordable Housing is housing made available at less than the market level. Newly built affordable housing will either be rented at 80% of market rent, or one of a

number of low-cost home ownership schemes allowing people to leverage up their earnings to purchase a home.

Of the 92,620 dwellings in Swindon approximately 15,170 are social rented homes owned by the Council and Housing Associations. Swindon Borough Council is by far the largest social landlord in the town owning two thirds of the affordable rented stock. The recent vote by tenants to stay under Council control has focussed the Council on achieving the best it can from the freedoms offered by the Housing Revenue Account reforms. Where there were central controls, there are now new flexibilities, so local direction for the existing and future Council owned housing stock must be established.

Over two thirds of Council tenants receive welfare benefits. Clearly, it is important to ensure that incentives exist for tenants to engage in economic activity (including volunteering, training and education) and all potential disincentives are removed. The recent adoption of the Tenancy Strategy and its changed prioritisation around allocation reflects this approach. Further work is necessary to maximise the benefit of national initiatives for Council tenants such as the Work Programme and opportunities to increase skills. The large scale construction of homes, employment buildings and regenerated areas of Swindon offer significant opportunities for local people. The size of the Council's stock holding results in a significant footprint in the local economy supporting shops and businesses on estates.

Affordable rented housing performs a vital function for those who either have no wish to own their own home or cannot afford to do so. The number of households assessed as being in need on the Housing Register and the estimated shortfall of affordable housing as measured by the Strategic Housing Market Assessment evidence the on-going need for more affordable housing to rent.

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) has a borrowing headroom of approximately £31m (with an overall debt of £150.4m) as of April 2014 alongside a capital programme of expenditure for improvements upon the stock of £14.8m (up by over £10m compared to when the notional HRA was in place). A programme of Council house building is achievable, subject to viable business plans being assembled particularly in relation to rent revenue. Previous work has demonstrated that homes let at Affordable Rents can be constructed within the HRA and generate a surplus for the HRA after servicing debt charges and other management and maintenance costs. This approach would be supported by the Council's significant land holdings suitable for residential development both within the HRA and the General Fund. The Council will seek support for this from the Homes and Community Agency. It is unlikely that all £31m of headroom can be spent on development though, because there are significant works required on our existing stock which have yet to be accounted for in the Business Plan.

Land is a limited resource and whilst opportunities may exist for future land purchases to support Council house building, there will also exist opportunities to procure new homes on larger sites through the s106 process and one off purchases of homes that meet wider strategic benefits such as large, adapted bungalows for example.

Regardless of its own objectives around building more Council housing, the Council needs to continue to work with Housing Association partners to deliver more affordable housing across the Borough, maximising the resources they have available and better understanding their business plans. It will be essential for the purposes of maximising housing supply that housing associations will be able to offer high valuations of s106 affordable housing on larger sites. The Council will also encourage housing associations that are willing to act as master developer on larger sites by offering the same freedoms and flexibilities that would be available to private sector house builders. Furthermore, the Council will encourage housing associations to actively pursue private rent as part of their offer in Swindon to support improvements in that sector. Another potential area of housing association action is that of estate management of communal areas on large housing sites where the Council would like housing associations to consider providing these services and consider extending their offer into property maintenance for all residents irrespective of tenure.

The Town Centre

The Council Housing development programme will also offer regeneration opportunities in Swindon, and in particular the town centre.

The Town Centre Master Plan identifies a need for a greater offer of retail, and cultural activities. To support more economic life in the town there is a need to develop the housing offer in the town. A full list of the opportunities in the town centre can be found at Forward Swindon's website www.forwardswindon.co.uk.

The Railway Village is a key asset for the Council. It was a planned village constructed by the Great Western Railway Company in the 1840s to house the workers for its railway works recently constructed in Swindon. It was the birth of modern Swindon being two miles from the market town of the same name located where Old Town now stands. There are 320 homes built mostly of Bath Stone originally consisting of small two storey cottages along with communal facilities including the now derelict Mechanics Institute, a school (now demolished), church, park, shops (now closed), pubs, public baths, doctor's surgery and a community centre that formerly housed the GWR Medical Fund Hospital which is regarded as the inspiration behind the establishment of the NHS. It has recently been considered for World Heritage status and is central to Swindon's heritage and identity with its location between the town centre and the Outlet Village and its striking combination of materials and design. It is an almost perfect example of a model village designed to provide an industrial workforce with all of their physical, medical, moral and educational needs with virtually all of its significant features intact and predating other notable examples such as Saltaire.

In the 1960s the Railway Village was under British Rail's ownership and becoming run down and derelict. The Council bought the Railway Village and undertook a huge regeneration programme throughout the 1970s updating the properties for modern living standards and winning several awards along the way and saving the Railway Village from potential clearance.

In 2014, the Railway Village is still predominately owned by the Council and let to Council tenants (304 properties out of 320) with 85 bedsits and 18 x 1 bed flats. There has recently been a sensitive lets policy implemented in response to concerns raised by tenants and police about anti-social behaviour from alcohol abuse, increased drug activity and noise complaints. It has twice the amount of anti-social behaviour recorded than other areas around the town centre. It has by far, at 95%, the highest concentration of social housing in the town in properties that are difficult to heat, maintain and manage. The Council should work towards the next phase of the Railway Village and the area be put on a sound footing for the next century.

The Railway Village occupies a strategic location close to existing major regeneration taking place at the Mechanics Institute and Carriage Works. The Council will work with local residents and stakeholders to ensure that the Railway Village supports and benefits from this economic and physical regeneration.

Empty Homes

At a time of acute housing need, having properties empty for long periods of time is a waste of a valuable resource. At their worst they are a magnet for anti-social behaviour that can blight neighbourhoods. Swindon Borough Council has a positive track record of bringing empty private sector homes back into use through close engagement with owners where possible but also through direct intervention including Compulsory Purchase Orders when necessary. Whilst not actually obtaining an Empty Dwelling Management Order, the threat of their use has been a positive tool in our engagement with the owners of empty homes.

The inclusion of empty homes in the New Homes Bonus Incentive scheme ensures that resources remain available for this work. Each empty home brought back into use generates £7,764 in additional New Homes Bonus for Swindon (£9,864 if it used for affordable housing). This not only funds the intervention work itself but supports loans to empty property owners for small works to bring properties back into use.

Disrepair, Energy Efficiency & Improvement

Whilst the condition Swindon's private sector housing stock is better than the national average, there are still a significant numbers of homes falling below this standard. The council remains committed to improving conditions wherever these could affect the health or wellbeing of occupiers. Poor housing is known to be a key determinant of health and the council has a key role to play in reducing its effects through the various means at its disposal.

There is a need to assist our most vulnerable and disadvantaged owner occupiers keep their homes safe and suitable. We will continue to do this through a regime of advice, support and targeted financial assistance in the form of grants where this is the most appropriate and effective course of action. These will be aimed particularly at: Older housing in a hazardous condition; Improvements in energy efficiency; and to make sustainable use of our existing housing stock. Enabling older and vulnerable households to remain in their homes will remain a high priority as will be helping

households in fuel poverty or living in cold and damp housing. This can have a significant impact on the health, wellbeing and achievement of residents.

Private Rented Sector & Houses in Multiple Occupation

Swindon has a growing private rented sector and the council increasingly relies on this to accommodate those who are homeless or who present with other un-met housing needs.

Whilst the market demands that much of the private rented sector is of a good standard and meeting tenants' needs, there remains a significant proportion that is not. Many private sector tenants have little choice over their housing and the council has an important role in driving up standards wherever this is found necessary.

Particular focus is given to Houses in Multiple Occupation where some of the worst housing conditions are seen, but the council is committed to enforcing standards of safety and amenity wherever intervention is needed. Landlords will always be encouraged to improve their properties before formal action is considered, but the council will not shy away from taking appropriate formal action where tenants are in hazardous accommodation and landlords fail to address concerns. This is backed by a regime of support for landlords in the form of Accreditation which recognises good standards of management and encourages engagement through Forums.

Disabled Adaptations

Wherever possible the council will assist disabled occupiers to remain living in their own homes. This approach is taken regardless of tenure and assistance is given in the form of adaptations to the homes of our own tenants, along with means tested Disabled Facilities grants to others. In all cases it is recognised that disabled occupiers need responsive and informed assistance to best determine what is needed and to achieve the best possible outcome. This can include options for alternative more suitable housing as well as assistance in having their current home adapted. In all cases the process requires a holistic approach across council departments and a continued commitment to provide the funding necessary.

Meeting Housing Need

Swindon Borough Council is committed to maximising the affordable housing provided on qualifying sites through the s106 process. This helps us meet the high housing need in the town, including the households assessed as being in need on the Housing Register as well as those who are unable to afford to purchase their own home. It is important to recognise that this has to be balanced against the need to increase housing supply and must not act as a brake on development. The Council will always be prepared to discuss viability problems on sites on an open book basis to facilitate and accelerate delivery. However, the Council expects developers to recognise that the provision of 30% affordable housing on qualifying sites is a development cost and should be factored in when valuing land. It will not accept the affordable housing contribution being used as a buffer when bidding for

land on the assumption that a higher price can be offset against the amount of affordable housing provided.

It is accepted that local land values place added pressure on sites with regard to viability and the Council will work with developers to ensure that the affordable housing contribution attracts the highest possible value from purchasing organisations. Whilst not seeking to specify individual affordable housing providers for s106 affordable housing, the Council believes that those organisations which are part of the local affordable housing development process and have demonstrated high standards of management and maintenance offer the best chance of success. On larger sites, the Council would wish to see the number of affordable housing providers kept to a minimum and the developer to consider transferring estate management responsibilities to those organisations.

Affordable housing is provided on sites larger than 0.5 Ha or providing more than 15 homes. For larger sites the costs involved can be significant. For instance, on East Wichel, approximately 250 affordable homes were provided, out of a total of over 800, with an open market value of over £40m. Whilst the standard affordable housing provision of rented homes plus low cost home ownership meets existing housing need it does not always meet the most pressing social needs. The Council needs to identify specialist housing needs as early as possible through close work with the clinical commissioning groups. This will allow bespoke solutions to be offered as part of the s106 provision especially in areas such as Learning Disability accommodation. It will better meet emerging needs locally through supported living and hence avoid unnecessarily expensive residential care placements out of the Borough.

The number of households in temporary accommodation has dramatically reduced in Swindon. This mirrors national performance, although numbers do not seem to be rising yet in Swindon. Swindon does seem to lag national trends here, so it is not advisable to extrapolate the current trend line. This fall should not hide the fact that there is still considerable demand for housing assistance, so much as greater success in preventing homelessness and using alternatives to temporary accommodation.

The Local Plan evidences a shortfall of 15 plots for Gypsies and Travellers in the Local Authority area. In order to reduce the likelihood of illegal encampments as has been seen elsewhere, it is prudent for the Council to plan for a site to meet the needs of Gypsies and Travellers who live in the Borough.

Promoting and Maintaining Independence

The contribution of good housing, support services and technology to enable active ageing and improved wellbeing has been convincingly established over recent years and in many studies. Much of what has been achieved in the housing sector has been born out of the public health movement of the 19th century as the link between disease and housing conditions was established. Swindon Borough Council recognises the contribution that well-designed, safe and warm accommodation can

make to enabling and maintaining independence in potentially vulnerable groups. The Council is facing the same financial pressures as other local authorities, especially from increasing demand for social care services such as support for the elderly and people with learning disabilities and must use the current and future assets at its disposal as intelligently as possible to promote independence and improve health outcomes.

Older People

Demographically, Swindon has an ageing population but less so than neighbouring areas and has a high proportion of home owners. However, for many, these homes no longer meet their needs due to their design as homes for young families, exacerbate isolation and may not hold sufficient asset value to enable the occupants to have real choices and options. Furthermore, these under-occupied family homes are a brake on the local housing market as they would be the equivalent of new supply if they became available.

One of the blockages to this process is the lack of affordable and attractive choices and clear pathways to navigate through them. Superficially, Swindon has an excess of supply of sheltered housing (2700 against a calculated requirement of 1800) but this does not address the quality of the offer and its ability to attract a new generation of downsizers. Furthermore, these bricks and mortar considerations cannot be divorced from the services that are needed alongside whatever accommodation is required. The support and care offer must be more closely integrated into the design of future development so that it can add to the choices available.

The All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Housing and Care for Older People points out that meeting the housing needs of the older generation leads to solutions for the younger age group. Local Planning Authorities should play a key role to ensure delivery of desirable housing in great places, tuned in to local need and demand.

Underpinning these recommendations, the HAPPI Panel stressed the importance of design, identifying ten elements that are critical to achieving age-inclusive housing:

- Generous internal space standards
- Plenty of natural light in the home and in circulation spaces
- Balconies and outdoor space, avoiding internal corridors and single-aspect flats
- Adaptability and 'care aware' design which is ready for emerging telecare and telehealthcare technologies
- Circulation spaces that encourage interaction and avoid an 'institutional feel'
- Shared facilities and community 'hubs' where these are lacking in the neighbourhood
- Plants, trees, and the natural environment
- High levels of energy efficiency, with good ventilation to avoid overheating
- Extra storage for belongings and bicycles
- Shared external areas such as 'home zones' that give priority to pedestrians

The HAPPI exercise concluded with four key recommendations:

- The time has come for a national effort to build the homes that will meet our needs and aspirations as we all grow older.
- We should all plan ahead positively, creating demand for better choice through a greater range of housing opportunities.
- Housing for older people should become an exemplar for mainstream housing, and meet higher design standards for space and quality.

The revenue costs associated with different housing solutions is a major determinant of the policy position decided upon. A report for the Homes and Community Agency in 2010 demonstrated that specialist housing provision for older people can save £444 per older person per year. Recent Extra Care housing research in East Sussex and Dorset has consistently demonstrated considerable savings against all other forms of provision including domiciliary care in the recipients' own home as well as improved outcomes for the service recipients. Demonstrating the enhanced value using HAPPI principles can enable care and health partners to invest in services that will, in the medium to long term, tackle the challenge of the increasing demand for intensive interventions resulting from the changing population.

Extra Care is housing designed with the needs of frailer older people, or people with complex disabilities in mind and with varying levels of care and support available on site. People who live in Extra Care Housing have their own self-contained homes, their own front doors and a legal right to occupy the property. Extra Care Housing is also known as very sheltered housing, assisted living, or simply as 'housing with care'. It comes in many built forms, including blocks of flats, bungalow estates and retirement villages. It is a popular choice among older people because it can sometimes provide an alternative to a care home.

It is likely, due to the weight of evidence available, that the extra care housing model will include the provision of large extra care villages consisting of up to 250 homes in a single complex offering facilities such as a shop, restaurant, bar, library, gym, events space, and more as part of the overall scheme. The expansion areas at Wichelstowe and the New Eastern Villages offer the opportunity to integrate such provision into the district centres for such schemes offering a range of benefits:

- Ensuring older people are at the centre of new communities and promoting intergenerational activity and reduced isolation
- Supporting local shops and services
- Improving the ease of access for essential services such as GP surgeries and pharmacies
- Offering co-located and shared facilities between the extra care scheme and the local community – e.g. community space, library etc. allowing reduced costs and better community cohesion.

The Council owned expansion area at Wichelstowe is already planning to deliver on this agenda and has secured a HCA grant to support the new provision.

Learning Disabilities

Swindon has a low proportion of adults with learning disabilities who live with their own family and a high spend on residential care compared with comparator

authorities. However, the evidence also shows that this has been changing and that younger people are far more likely to be accommodated in supported living arrangements. Evidence shows that specialist housing solutions can offer savings of £6,764 per year for commissioning authorities through such arrangements.

There is a particular challenge for the transitions process where young people with learning disabilities move into the remit of adult social care. It is essential that such individuals are planned for in terms of future accommodation needs so that the right solution can be provided when needed rather than crisis solutions being provided at the last minute which can be both unsuitable and expensive. Furthermore, local solutions planned well in advance with the service user and their family can offer significant savings in both capital (if provided through a s106 agreement or existing/new Council stock) and revenue if the family can offer some support that otherwise would be paid for by the commissioning authority.

It is more difficult with some of the expensive out of Borough placements that already exist as people may be settled into accommodation and it may prove far too disruptive and upsetting to relocate them to Swindon. However, this must be looked at on a case by case basis to examine whether local services could be designed to bring people back to Swindon, improve their experience and reduce expenditure. This group, along with other specialist housing groups such as mental health and physical disabilities, should be part of determination process when the Council establishes its own HRA development programme and decides upon appropriate s106 affordable housing provision as these offer the potential to address significant housing need at minimal cost to the Council whilst offering bespoke solutions to the client involved. This should also be part of considerations for the re-letting of void affordable housing stock and any HRA acquisition programme.

Clearly new technology changes how homes are managed and therefore how customers can be supported. The Council will continue to investigate how technology can be used both inside and outside homes to promote independence and reduce isolation.

Supporting economic growth - increasing the quality and diversity of our housing stock:

Construction of new homes is a significant contributor to the local economy, and this is a clear objective of national and local policy. The draft Local Plan seeks an average of 1,625 homes per year from 2016-26, a figure only achieved 6 times in 32 years despite Swindon being a town of high growth. The Housing Strategy supports the high level of delivery outlined in the Local Plan, this will help to meet projected household growth plus every home built adds £77,000 to the economy and creates 1.8 jobs both directly and indirectly².

² Economic Impact Database, CEBR, 2013

In recent years affordable housing has made up a high proportion of the output (at a high of 42% in 2010) reflecting the reduced mortgage availability following the credit crunch. With a second hand market consistently running at just over 2,000 homes sold from 2009-12 and a little higher at about 2,700 in 2013, overall transactions will need to rise by about 4,500-5000 taking into account affordable housing completions in order to achieve the level of new build required. However, the last time transactions were running at that level, gross mortgage lending was approximately twice the current level prior to the credit crunch (according to Council of Mortgage Lenders statistics) whilst prices have recovered to similar or higher levels in general.

Help to Buy is a national initiative from Government to help households who are in a position to afford mortgage repayments but are struggling to assemble the higher deposits that have become the norm following the credit crunch. The scheme allows households to purchase with a 5% deposit through an equity loan or a mortgage guarantee and access favourable lending rates. Recent figures show that 17,395 households have bought a home using Help to Buy in the first 9 months of the scheme, with 140 equity loans being taken out in Swindon. This is an annualised rate of about 23,200 (Swindon annualised rate – approx. 187) against annual residential property transactions in 2013 of 1,071,220. About 88% of purchasers were first time buyers and 86% were purchases of new build homes. The Government have announced that the equity loan scheme will be extended to 2020 for new build homes by which time they hope that a further 120,000 households will have purchased.

Research carried out with employers for the Economic Strategy and from the latest figures from the Government's Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings indicates that the average pay of those who work in Swindon is over £2,000 higher than those who live in Swindon. The data suggest there is a large group of people who earn their money in Swindon during the week but spend it elsewhere. Much anecdotal evidence has been suggested for this from employers and suggested issues include the design of new communities in Swindon not being attractive enough, the poor town centre offer, competition from attractive and historic towns and villages in Oxfordshire, Wiltshire and the Cotswolds and the lack of executive housing offer as illustrated above.

In order to improve the executive housing offer it will be necessary to incentivise the market to deliver the type of homes that are sought should the current market dynamics not support this. One possible method would be to reduce or remove the affordable housing requirements for sites below a certain density and allow any contribution to be in the form of a contribution towards delivery off-site. Furthermore, this could be a time limited policy further incentivising early delivery.

There are other segments of the market that can support a consistent high rate of house building including private rented homes and homes for older people which will be covered later. Typified by the role that affordable housing can play in supporting new delivery at times where the market may not be strong such as happened in East Wichel during 2008-10.

The key risks to increasing housing supply are the costs and timing of key enabling infrastructure and the related issue of site viability. Whilst some of the loan covenants of major house builders are easing in terms of profit required, it is still the case, and will continue to be the case, that margins play a key role in decisions around what to build and what pace to build at. Clearly any assistance to these issues that can be secured from the Local Growth Fund or Local Infrastructure Fund will be a major boost to delivery by de-risking larger sites and removing potential constraints allowing the market to deliver according to demand rather than other limiting factors.

Improving design can be a contentious issue with house builders who contend that their homes wouldn't sell if they weren't designed to meet the needs of the market, and that they are closer to their potential customers than anybody else. Swindon, as a Planning authority, shouldn't be prescribing arbitrary design standards that will impact upon costs and therefore margins and ultimately delivery. The Deregulation Bill requires that Local Authorities cannot stipulate design standards in excess of building regulations. However, that is not to say that design can't be improved but it will need to be done in a collaborative and continuous fashion using the Design Guide that is being produced by the Planning team as a basis for discussion and learning from how other areas have achieved this without impacting upon delivery.

Another method of increasing diversity and improving design is the custom or self-build route allowing large-scale involvement in the building process as happens more widely on the continent, in places such as Almere in the Netherlands, where serviced plots are purchased on planned streets and purchasers are free to then construct the home they want. This can break up the perceived monotony of urban expansions but conversely, the lack of uniformity can also come in for criticism. In the Netherlands 30% of homes are provided in this fashion with over 800 alone in Almere and the practice is even more widespread in other parts of the continent such as Belgium where it accounts for over 60% of new supply. Clearly there are other benefits for the self-builder as it typically costs significantly less than purchasing the equivalent home from a house builder.

Clearly the Council's position as land owner for one of the strategic urban expansion area sites in Swindon at Wichelstowe (capacity of 3,800 homes) offers a unique opportunity to deliver many of the Housing Strategy's objectives and demonstrate its underlying principle of maximising housing delivery whilst improving the quality of the offer. The Council intends to select a private sector joint venture partner to help deliver the Wichelstowe scheme and is already planning to diversify the offer to maximise delivery rates on site through private rented housing and housing for older people.

Chapter 7: Summary

The Council's Housing Strategy sets out its vision that the whole market for housing in Swindon will help deliver key aims for the town.

The Strategy sets out a number of actions, and the following key priorities:

- Responding to the changing housing market - Improving standards in private rented housing
- Affordability – improving the offer
- Managing demand - promoting and maintaining independence
- Supporting further economic growth – increasing the quality and diversity of our housing stock

The future, large scale growth planned for the town is a real opportunity to help Swindon become a key town in the region which can benefit residents in the Borough.

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