

Housing Supply – ‘Options Appraisal’ meeting, 8 June 2016

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Freemans Hall, 2 – 6 The Cross, Prestwick, KA9 1AN

Housing Supply

Attendees

David Anderson, Estates Co-ordinator, South Ayrshire Council
Stewart Gibb, Director of Housing Services, West of Scotland Housing Association
Arlene Goodwin, Co-ordinator (Housing Services), South Ayrshire Council
James Hall, Development Planning, South Ayrshire Council
Mary Hepburn, Senior Housing Officer, West of Scotland Housing Association
Fiona Lynch, Housing Management Officer, South Ayrshire Council
Ross Morris, Policy Officer, South Ayrshire Council
Colin Sunderland, TCS Construction Consultants, Partner
Shirley Watson, Senior Development Officer, West of Scotland Housing Association

Introduction

The LHS Housing Supply steering group met on Wednesday 8 June 2016 at County Buildings, Ayr (Ayr Room). This followed on from the previous steering group 'Options Generation' meeting in April 2016. The purpose of the 'Options Generation' session was to develop a range of possible actions to achieve the group's agreed outcomes while giving consideration to the comments given throughout the LHS consultation process thus far. Separate sessions were held for the Access, Advice and Support and Housing Quality and Neighbourhoods steering groups. The Housing Supply steering group 'Options Generation' session produced 24 possible options for discussion

The meeting of 8 June, then, was designed to give delegates the chance to discuss and reflect on these options, and to appraise them based on a number of criteria. Ross Morris began the meeting by welcoming everyone before giving a short presentation on the LHS development process so far and the purpose of the session.

AIM: To review the range of actions suggested at the previous meeting, in order to influence the strategic direction taken by South Ayrshire Council and its partners over the next five years.

Delegates were then advised of the Options Appraisal process, and how this would work in practice. The group was to discuss each possible action in turn and rate the extent to which it met various criteria. These criteria were as follows, and were given the following weighting based on their agreed importance to the development of the LHS;

PRIORITY	Score out of 5	Weighting
Meets agreed LHS Outcomes		20%
Addresses local needs		30%
Deliverability		30%
Potential cost effectiveness		20%

The group wouldn't move on from a question until a consensus on scores for each category was reached. The scores were entered into a specially developed Options Appraisal Tool that calculated the relative scores for each outcome

out of 5, using the system of weighting highlighted above. This allowed for direct comparison between outcomes on their relative merits.

Options Appraisal

HS1: X number of affordable houses built or acquired per year to meet need

OPTION	SCORE
Review procedures for ensuring structured discussion between private and social sector partners at the pre-application stage.	4.20
Review the calculation of Commuted Sums to ensure this is a more realistic payment	4.00
Continue the buyback and acquisition of high demand and strategically important properties, supported by Scottish Government funding.	3.70
135 units of affordable houses built or acquired per year to meet need	3.40
150 units of affordable houses built or acquired per year to meet need	3.10
100 units of affordable houses built or acquired per year to meet need	3.00
Review Open Spaces throughout South Ayrshire to determine whether these still serve the intentions of the policy.	2.30
Explore options for supporting the development of mid-market renting opportunities by private and social sector partners.	2.00
Explore feasibility of developing low-cost homeownership opportunities as part of future social housing development.	2.00
Continue to explore options for development on Council-owned sites.	2.00

Discussion for this outcome centred on the Housing Supply Target for new affordable housing supply, revisiting some of the comments made at the previous 'Options Generation' meeting. Three options were considered by the group, primarily to aim to build or acquire 100 affordable housing units per year, 135 units per year and 150 units per year. The steering group discussed how likely it would be that it would be possible to achieve this based on current levels of production. There was agreement in the group that it would be difficult to meet a target of 150 units per year given current capacity in the private and social sectors, and that as development would to a large extent rely on private sector development (and the Section 75 arrangements in place) this was a target it would be difficult to achieve. A more achievable target was 100 units, and this was seen as a good option by some delegates as it would take into account the current development conditions in the area. Nevertheless, there was a recognition that, as the HNDA had calculated the requirement for affordable housing at a level of around 150 units, it would be preferable to set a target that was aspirational and set out our ambitions for increasing the overall housing supply in the area. Following discussions, it was agreed to proceed on the basis of 135 units of affordable housing per year to be built or acquired.

In line with these discussions, the group also discussed proposals to review arrangements for ensuring structured discussion takes place between private and social sector partners at the earliest opportunity within the Section 75 process. There was consensus among social and private sector colleagues alike at the meeting that more, better quality co-operation would be a positive step for improving relations and securing increases in housing supply locally. On a related point, the group agreed that the calculation of Commuted Sums should be reviewed to ensure this offers a realistic price that reflects market conditions.

The group was less convinced by the existing demand for mid-market renting or low-cost homeownership options (such as shared ownership or shared equity), however there was recognition that there was still value for considering these options as a means of meeting a wider range of needs.

The group felt that while there was some value in reviewing Open Spaces in South Ayrshire, it was noted that a recent review had found only limited opportunities for development. Delegates noted that any review would need to be carried out in concert with the Local Development Plan.

HS2: A sufficient and flexible supply of temporary accommodation is available to meet the needs of people in South Ayrshire

OPTION	SCORE
Continue to explore innovative private sector options for providing temporary accommodation.	4.70
Continue to develop Private Sector Leasing scheme as required for use as temporary accommodation.	4.70
Utilise social housing stock owned by both South Ayrshire Council and RSL partners as necessary for temporary accommodation.	4.70
Consider the development of ‘core and cluster’ temporary accommodation as a means of effectively supporting homeless households.	4.00
Develop supported interim accommodation to support homeless households in transitioning from temporary accommodation into mainstream tenancies.	4.00

The group next turned to discuss the provision of temporary accommodation to people in housing need. The group discussed the need for temporary accommodation and the ways this need is currently met – including innovative uses of the Private Rented Sector (PRS) through a Private Sector Leasing scheme and a Bulk Leasing scheme. The group agreed that the local authority should continue to explore innovative private sector options for providing temporary accommodation and that the PSL scheme should be developed as necessary in line with changes to demand for homelessness services. This should be supported by use of SAC and RSL accommodation as required.

The group also agreed there was a clear identified need to consider alternative options for providing supported interim accommodation for people leaving homeless accommodation in order to ease the transition towards mainstream housing. This included consideration of the development of ‘core and cluster’ temporary accommodation that would provide a degree of both support and independence for this client group. While it was recognised that the concentration of vulnerable households

HS3: There is an adequate supply of housing to meet a variety of needs.

OPTION	SCORE
Review South Ayrshire Council’s Scheme of Assistance, taking into account the changing needs of an ageing population.	5.00
Review provision for Gypsy/Travellers in South Ayrshire.	5.00
Develop a South Ayrshire design guide for social sector/section 75 developments that sets out clear common standards and requirements – including Housing for Varying Needs.	4.20

Consider the development of specialist 'core and cluster' type accommodation for older people and people with disabilities.	4.20
Introduce incentives to encourage people to downsize where their existing property is no longer required to meet their needs.	3.40

Going on to consider housing for varying needs, the group agreed that a review of the local authority's Scheme of Assistance would be prudent given the ageing population and the need to make the best use of existing resources. On a similar note, the group also found consensus that a South Ayrshire design guide for social rented sector developments would allow for clarity about what is expected for private and social providers alike and would support the needs of an ageing population. The group agreed that there was also value in reviewing the possibility to develop 'core and cluster' type accommodation for older people and people with disabilities in the area. The group also agreed there should be incentives and support in the social rented sector to assist people to downsize to alternative accommodation that better meets their needs, in order to make best use of existing accommodation.

There was also a recognised need to review provision for Gypsy/Travellers in South Ayrshire to ensure these met the needs of this client group.

HS4: South Ayrshire's existing housing stock is used efficiently

OPTION	SCORE
Review Empty Homes Strategy.	5.00
Continue to bring empty homes back into use through our Empty Homes policy.	5.00
Continue to work in partnership with Ayr Renaissance and other partners to identify and support opportunities for development, conversion and regeneration in our Town Centres.	5.00
Review allocations processes and procedures to ensure these continue to make best use of stock that has been adapted	5.00

The group was in broad agreement about the remaining options for making best use of existing stock – both private and social – in South Ayrshire, including steps to continue our work to encourage the owners of long-term empty homes to bring them back into use, to continue work to regenerate town centres and to ensure social housing stock is used efficiently.