

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 13th November 2025

REPORTING OFFICER: Executive Director Environment and Regeneration

PORTFOLIO: Housing and Environmental Sustainability

SUBJECT: Approval of the Borough wide Housing Strategy

WARD(S) Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval from Executive Board to make a recommendation to Full Council for the approval of a Borough wide Housing Strategy. A verbal summary of the public consultation exercise will be provided at the Executive Board Meeting.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Board:

- 1) Note the progress on the production and consultation of the draft Housing Strategy for Halton 2026 – 2031 (Appendix A) and supporting evidence document (Appendix B);**
- 2) Provides delegated approval to the Executive Director Environment and Regeneration, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Environmental Sustainability to agree any final revisions to draft Housing Strategy; and**
- 3) Make a recommendation to Council to approve the revised Housing Strategy.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 At the meeting on the 18th April 2024, Executive Board endorsed the commissioning and production of a new Borough wide Housing Strategy and supporting evidence base.
- 3.2 Production commenced in September 2024 and was anticipated to take around 12 months. Throughout this process the Council have been supported by Arc4 a housing research and policy specialist. Production has broadly been split into two stages:
- Stage 1 – The identification, gathering and analysis of supporting evidence base. This is called the “Housing Needs Assessment” (HNA) and is contained in Appendix B.

- Stage 2 – Strategy Production. Based on the findings and analysis of the HNA, a draft Housing Strategy has been prepared (contained in Appendix A).

3.3 **Housing Needs Assessment**

3.4 The main purpose of the HNA is to provide the Council with an up-to date evidence on the housing needs across all sections of the local community. This includes getting a better understanding of current and future housing requirements of existing and newly forming households in Halton. It also covers matters such as the need for adaptations, level access and supported housing; and assessing the affordability of purchasing and renting a home in Halton.

3.5 The HNA achieved this by:

- Undertaking a household survey of residents in Halton. An invitation to complete the survey was sent to 16,530 households (about 1 in 4 households) between November and December 2024, with 1,620 useable responses received. This provided a 9.8% response rate and is considered as a robust data source.
- Analysis of existing (secondary) data including 2021 census and demographic analysis.
- A survey of a range of stakeholders including housing associations, developers, supported housing and care providers, charities and third sector groups. A total of 12 responses were received which are summarised in Appendix E of the HNA.
- Engagement with seven estate and letting agents who operate in all or part of the Borough. The results of this are summarised in Appendix F of the HNA.

3.6 A summary of the findings and policy recommendations are set out on pages 9 to 11 in the HNA. These cover the period 2024 to 2042. The evidence from the HNA has been used to underpin the strategic approach and specific policies within the draft Housing Strategy and inform its implementation.

3.7 **Draft Housing Strategy for Halton 2026 – 2031**

3.8 The aim of the draft Housing Strategy is for “Homes that Drive Growth, Opportunity, and Fairness for all” in Halton. The Strategy seeks to achieve this through a Vision and four Priorities:

- Driving Economic Growth through housing-led investment.
- Creating inclusive housing markets to promote fairness.
- Supporting Independent Living, Empowering People, and Strengthening Communities.
- Promoting Healthy Homes, Thriving Communities and Resilient Neighbourhoods.

3.9 Appendix C provides a summary of the main policies and actions within each Priority. The final published version of the Housing

Strategy will include a visual “Housing Strategy on a Page” executive summary to help make the document more accessible.

- 3.10 The draft housing strategy has been shaped by a continuous process of consultation and engagement. In addition to that undertaken as part of HHA (over last 6 months), this has included:
- Holding a seminar for all Elected Members.
 - A series of dedicated sessions with the Borough’s largest and most active Housing Associations via the Halton Housing Partnership.
 - Presentations to a number of the Council’s Policy and Performance Boards.
 - Stakeholder consultation on an early draft strategy.
- 3.11 On Friday 3rd October, a six-week public consultation exercise commenced on the draft strategy. With the draft strategy available online and printed copies made available at the Council’s libraries and Direct Links. Consultation activity includes:
- An online survey and freephone number to gather comments.
 - Social Media and articles in the local press.
 - Online presentation, available via YouTube, summarising the Housing Strategy.
 - Two virtual online sessions for interested parties to attend and ask questions.
- 3.12 Public consultation exercise closes on 16th November 2025. A summary of the responses (received to date) will be provided at the Executive Board meeting. Following close of the public consultation exercise, comments will be reviewed, and any final changes will be made to the Strategy. To expedite this process, and given the prior engagement outlined in para 3.10, it is recommended that Executive Board provides delegated approval to the Executive Director Environment and Regeneration, in consultation with Portfolio Holder for Housing and Environmental Sustainability to agree any final revisions to draft Housing Strategy.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The draft housing strategy is aligned to achieve priority six of the Corporate Plan: “Valuing and appreciating Halton and Our Communities – Supporting Halton’s residents to live in decent and affordable homes, surrounded by safe and thriving communities”.
- 4.2 The 18th April 2024 Executive Board Report acknowledged that the previous Borough wide Housing Strategy was adopted in 2013 and covered a period up to 2018. A lot has changed, both at a national and regional level in terms of policy and funding; as well as local priorities and challenges. The draft strategy seeks to recalibrate and coordinate local housing policy and actions by the Council (and influence our partners) to realise these new opportunities and meet

new priorities.

- 4.3 As summarised in Appendix C, the draft strategy seeks a broad range of new policies and actions across the four priorities to be implemented over the next 5 years. Given the level of change required the draft strategy will be accompanied by a detailed implementation plan. Four policies are likely to be a short term (first year) focus for delivery:
1. Establishing an Affordable and Specialist Housing Fund, through committed sum to invest in meeting local housing need.
 2. Implementation of selective licensing in parts of the Borough to raise standards in the private rented sector for the benefit of private tenants and their neighbours.
 3. Creation of a Local Connections Policy for intermediate housing (such as shared ownership) delivered through planning obligation (s106) to improve access for local people to affordable routes to home ownership.
 4. Publication of a Specialist Housing Prospectus, to improve the local housing offer for people most at need, such as survivors of domestic violence and abuse, young people leaving care and those experiencing homelessness.

- 4.4 Implementation of the detailed policies within the Housing Strategy will, where required, be subject to separate corporate governance and approval processes. Oversight of the Housing Strategy will be provided by the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Environmental Sustainability; and, via an annual progress report to the Housing and Safer Policy and Performance Board.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Overall, the draft Housing Strategy has been prepared to make a positive impact on the Council's financial position. There is an awareness of the challenging financial situation within the guiding principles for delivery set out in the implementation and monitoring chapter of the draft Strategy:

- As a civic leader, The Council will set clear direction, drive innovation, and use its assets effectively to deliver housing that meets local priorities.
- Delivery will be achieved in partnership, building on trusted relationships to co-design and deliver the ambitions of this Housing Strategy.
- We will prioritise early intervention and smart investment, preventing problems, improving outcomes, and ensuring value for money.

- 5.2 Examples of what this means in practice, can be seen in the first year priorities outlined in 4.3 above:

1. The Affordable and Specialist Housing Fund will be financed through s106 contribution by private developers in lieu of (all or

part of) on-site provision of affordable housing. It can be prepared using existing in-house resources. It will create a new capital pot for housing delivery.

2. Implementation of selective licensing will be brought forward on a cost recovery basis. Resources for administration of licencing, including inspection and enforcement will be funded from a licence fee paid by the landlord. Some initial forward funding of revenue may be required to provide specialist support to prepare and consult and establish selective licencing.
3. Local Connection Policy can be prepared and consulted upon using existing in-house resources.
4. The Specialist Housing Prospectus will provide a means for the Council to secure provision of supported housing within Halton and reduce the need for more costly out-of-borough or temporary accommodation. Where this involves use of Council owned land any revenue saving may need to be considered against a reduction in Capital Land Receipt.

- 5.3 A priority of the draft Strategy is driving economic growth through housing-led investment. Through creating a one-stop-shop within the Council for residential developers. This builds on the work of the Accelerated Growth Programme to increase the Council Tax base within Halton.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

Priority four of the draft Housing Strategy "Promoting Healthy Homes, Thriving Communities and Resilient Neighbourhoods" seeks to better integrate Housing and Health.

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

Priority one of the draft Housing Strategy "Driving Economic Growth Through Housing-led investment" seek to accelerate delivery of housing in the Borough, particularly on brownfield site and to support regeneration of Halton's town centre.

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

Priority four of the draft Housing Strategy "Promoting Healthy Homes, Thriving Communities and Resilient Neighbourhoods" seek to ensure homes that are safe, healthy and efficient; and neighbourhoods that enable people to flourish.

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

Priority three of the draft Housing Strategy "Supporting Independent Living, Empowering People, and Strengthening Communities" seek to improve the supported housing offer and choice in the Borough, including to support an aging population.

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

The draft Housing Strategy includes continued support to promote grants to improve the energy efficiency of homes in Halton.

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

The draft housing strategy has been prepared to align and reach this priority by supporting Halton's residents to live in decent and affordable homes, surrounded by safe and thriving communities"

7.0 Risk Analysis

7.1 There are no significant risks associated with the approval of a new Housing Strategy. Risk analysis of individual policies will be undertaken as they are brought forward for implementation.

7.2 Some aspect of the draft strategy will require external funding for implementation.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 The draft Strategy aims to improve the supported housing offer and choice in the Borough for older people and people with a disability.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Heating and energy use in homes accounts for approximately 15% of carbon emissions within the UK. The draft Housing Strategy seeks to support delivery of the housing matters set out within the Climate Change Action Plan. This will include securing funding to improve the energy efficiency of existing homes in Halton. The draft Strategy also supports a housing offer which gives residents choice to live more environmentally friendly and sustainable lives. For example, through opportunities to improve the choice and quality of housing offer within the borough's town centres.

10.0 REASON(S) FOR DECISION

10.1 Approval of a new five-year borough wide Housing Strategy for Halton to allow implementation

11.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

11.1 Not applicable.

12.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE

12.1 Five Year Strategy 2026 – 2031.

13.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

13.1 'None under the meaning of the Act.'