

**WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**EXECUTIVE**

**7<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2021**

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**Title: Report of the working group on Housing Design Standards**

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**Portfolio Holder: Cllr Anne-Marie Rosoman, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Safety**

**Head of Service: Andrew Smith, Head of Housing Delivery & Communities**

**Key Decision: No**

**Access: Public**

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**1. Purpose and summary**

- 1.1 To inform the Executive of the findings of the Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee's Working Group on Housing Design Standards.
- 1.2 To ask the Executive to consider the Working Group's recommendations.

**2. Recommendation**

- 2.1 That the Executive agrees the report included as Annexe 1 and adopt its recommendations.
- 2.2 The Working Group's recommendations which this Committee is asked to endorse are:
  1. Retain the standards set out in Annexe 1, Appendix A
  2. New homes shall be built with alternative heat sources to gas boilers.
  3. The design standards should be mindful of facilitating parcel deliveries and reducing the strain on those making deliveries of parcels and letters.
  4. Set standards for the future and explicitly connect the Council's housing design standards and its asset management plan in order to avoid retrofits.
  5. The Council implements the SAP 10 assessment methodology as part of the assessment process to deliver net zero carbon homes.
  6. The Council should align its plans for future developments with the timeframes contained in the "LETI Climate Emergency Design Guide".
  7. The Council should work with our contractors and their supply chains through the tender process to work to achieve carbon neutrality as measured by a RICS whole life carbon assessment by 2030.

8. All new properties developed by the Council should receive a SAP rating of 100 to enable them to be Energy Efficiency A-rated with an Environmental Rating 99A (CO<sub>2</sub> emission rate 0 tonnes/year) – net zero carbon in operation.
9. The Council should make the budgetary provision necessary to achieve the standards outlined in this report to deliver a net zero home in operation measured using Part L 2021.
10. That the Council should not pursue Passivhaus accreditation unless there is a compelling additional reason to do so, for example, if grant funding is conditional upon achieving it.
11. New occupants of any mechanically ventilated properties should be provided with sufficient information and training to ensure the property performs in operation as in design.
12. The Council should build homes such that renewable energy can be generated on-site whenever feasible.
13. The Council should build homes using modern methods of construction, for example, timber frame.
14. The Council shall update the standards for new build properties in light of Building a Safer Future: Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety (Final Report) [May 2018] by Dame Judith Hackitt.
15. The Council should seek and apply best practice in the design of space for refuse and recycling containers.
16. Addition of further in-use sound test sampling as part of the Employer's Requirements.
17. All new Council properties should be built on the assumption that during their lifespan electric vehicles will entirely displace those powered by internal combustion engines. This means providing charging infrastructure on parking spaces provided on land owned or controlled by the Council. Where parking spaces are provided elsewhere, the Council should ensure the necessary conduits are installed to allow for the easy installation of charging infrastructure if the demand arises.
18. Where the scale of provision on a given site makes it feasible, the development should make a contribution to improving walk- and cycle ways in the area.
19. For properties with good access to public transport, the Council should assess the feasibility of planning policies that provide a degree of flexibility for the minimum number of parking spaces to include pull-in or visitor spaces for short stays by emergency and delivery vehicles in place of residents parking.

20. Developers design in an arrangement for tenants without in-curtilage parking provision to be charged for electricity supplied to communal parking areas for vehicle charging points.
21. That for any future Council-lead development, an assessment in light of the considerations in Building for a Healthy Life should be undertaken and published.
22. The Council should work with appointed architects, contractors and Designing Out Crime Officers to improve the securing of buildings and adopt crime prevention measures across the site.
23. For new builds to continue to achieve <105 litres of water per person per day.
24. The Council should facilitate rainwater harvesting through the provision of water butts and for larger sites consider the larger systems such as underwater storage tanks.
25. The Council should, as a matter of routine, survey tenants of new homes about their experience of living in them within six months of them moving into the property.
26. The Council should explore the possibility of engaging external expertise to use qualitative research methods including depth interviews and focus groups to gain a more nuanced understanding of the experiences of new tenants.
27. The Council should implement a co-design process for new homes with a representative from the Tenants Panel.
28. Officers should produce a user-facing brochure and update the technical employer's requirements based on the recommendations of the Group. The user-facing brochure should be considered and agreed upon with the Tenants Panel.

### **3. Reason for the recommendation**

To ensure that the Council has current design standards for the homes it is building which reflect changes in legislation and its declaration of a climate emergency.

### **4. Background**

- 4.1 The Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee approved a previous review of housing design standards produced by a working group in July 2018. The report in Annexe 1 represents an update of those standards.
- 4.2 In November 2020, the Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee approved a scoping document setting out the terms of reference for this review. In June 2021, the Working Group presented its findings to the Committee, which accepted and commended them to the Executive with minor modifications.

## **5. Relationship to the Corporate Strategy and Service Plan**

The Corporate Strategy makes the delivery of “*good quality housing for all income levels and age groups*” a strategic priority. To reflect this, Objective 1 of the Housing Delivery and Communities Service Plan 2021-2024 is to “*Increase delivery of well designed, well-built affordable housing.*”

## **6. Implications of decision**

### **6.1 Resource (Finance, procurement, staffing, IT)**

The cost implications of raising the energy efficiency and carbon neutrality standards for Council homes are discussed in Annexe 1.

Officer time in the housing development team would be required to implement the standards and produce the assessments recommended.

### **6.2 Risk management**

Delivering new Council homes to the proposed design standards, using greener renewable energy sources and enhanced fabric specification, will increase the cost of development. This may impact on the number of schemes which can be delivered. Therefore, the funding of the development programme through the HRA Business Plan will need to be reviewed.

At present, heating a home with electricity rather than gas is more expensive. Therefore, the move away from gas boilers will need to be managed carefully to avoid increasing bills for tenants.

### **6.3 Legal**

As discussed in Annexe 1, housing regulations are changing and will alter the legislative environment in which the Council develops homes. The Council must ensure that it remains compliant with the changing statutory and regulatory environment.

### **6.4 Equality, diversity and inclusion**

An equality impact assessment will need to be conducted of the individual measures within the report.

### **6.5 Climate emergency declaration**

A major aim of the review is to ensure the energy efficiency and sustainability standards including housing insulation and heating standards align with the objectives of the September 2019 Climate Emergency declaration by this Council.

## **7. Consultation and engagement**

As discussed in Annexe 1, the review was informed by a survey of the experience of tenants, who had moved into recently built Council homes.

## **8. Other options considered**

The option of recommending the adoption of a Passivhaus standard was considered by the working group. However, for reasons discussed in Annexe 1, a decision was taken against using this as a default standard.

## **9. Governance journey**

This is detailed in the Background section.

### **Annexe:**

Annexe 1 – Report of the Housing Design Standards: report from Housing Overview & Scrutiny Task & Finish Group

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### **Background Papers**

There are no background papers, as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972).

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