

| | |
|--|------------------------------|
| LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN | WARDS: All |
| REPORT TITLE: Housing Investment Strategy Update | |
| REPORT OF: Director of Property Management | |
| FOR SUBMISSION TO: Housing Scrutiny Committee | DATE: 15 July 2025 |
| <p>STRATEGIC CONTEXT</p> <p>We Make Camden is our joint vision for the borough, developed in partnership with our community. Its ambition is that everyone in Camden should have a place they call home Camden should be a green, clean, vibrant, accessible, and sustainable place with everyone empowered to contribute to tackling the climate emergency.</p> <p>This strategy sets out how the Council will meet this ambition for the homes it owns and manages. It will also contribute greatly to the delivery of the Estates Mission as it will consider the investment needed and the options available to either reduce investment need or generate resources for investment.</p> <p>The Way We Work is the Council's response to We Make Camden and the development and delivery of the Housing Investment Strategy is closely aligned to the housing and repairs transformation programme which looks at how services and outcomes can be improved for residents.</p> | |
| <p>SUMMARY OF REPORT</p> <p>This report provides an update on the implementation of the Housing Investment Strategy; this strategy outlined the Council's ambitions on the delivery and acquisition of homes with ambitions and on stock improvement. This is because these ambitions combine to meet our We Make Camden ambition that the borough has enough 'decent, safe, warm and family-friendly housing to support our communities'.</p> <p>The report presents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - an update on the capital investment programme, including new projects commissioned for the 25/26 financial year - an update on Decent Homes compliance and stock condition surveys - an update on the Quality Homes, Family Friendly and acquisition programmes. <p>Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information</p> <p>No documents that require listing were used in the preparation of this report.</p> <p>Contact Officer: Sinéad Burke, Head of Property Asset Management Sinead.Burke@camden.gov.uk</p> | |

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee notes and comments on the progress of implementing the council's Housing Investment Strategy.

Signed

Gavin Haynes, Director of Property Management

Date 3 July 2025

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 In January 2025, the Council approved a new Housing Investment Strategy setting out its approach to investing and growing its housing stock in the period 2025-2030 with the broad aim of ensuring that the borough has enough 'decent, safe, warm and family-friendly housing to support our communities'.
- 1.2 The Housing Investment Strategy set a common framework and ambitions for all the council's housing programmes including the Community Investment Programme, Camden Living, and the core social stock within the Housing Revenue Account. As part of that, the council also outlined a Housing Asset Management Strategy with a specific focus on the investment and management of this existing stock.
- 1.3 These documents are available on the Council's website: [Housing policies and strategies - Camden Council](#)
- 1.4 Within that, the document noted the urgent need to ensure the council satisfies the requirements of the new consumer standards under the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, despite the council facing a significant gap in its financial resources following several years of high investment in fire safety and below-inflation rent increases. The strategy established a Quality Homes programme to address this gap: the Quality Homes programme will also focus on options for poorly performing properties; the Council has a small number of homes which have investment needs which are unsustainable, and which do not produce good outcomes for residents.
- 1.5 The key aims of the Housing Asset Management Strategy therefore are to:
 - Make sure the Council can meet regulatory requirements
 - Generate resources for investment in Council homes
 - Identify the best option for homes that provide poor accommodation or have very high investment costs
 - Increase the number of better-quality homes for residents and meeting priority needs on the waiting list
- 1.6 This report provides an update on the implementation of this strategy since January 2025.

2. CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME

- 2.1 Supporting the Housing Investment Strategy, the Council also developed a Housing Asset Management Strategy 2025-2030; it sets out the Council's approach to investing in these homes to ensure that they are safe, warm and dry and can demonstrate compliance with all necessary regulations.
- 2.2 The Housing Asset Management Strategy sets out the Council's investment priorities over the next 5-years and sets a plan to invest £670m in its homes.
- 2.3 The funds will be used to ensure Camden can continue to make essential investments in its existing stock with the following outcomes expected by 2030:

- Complete all fire risk actions and make provision for further works which we anticipate will arise from the completion of Building Safety Case Files to high rise buildings.
- Ensure all tenanted homes fully meet the provisions of the Decent Homes standard.
- Make suitable investments in M&E systems, especially communal heating
- Attend to capital repair works which put homes at risk of disrepair.

- 2.4 The 2025/26 capital programme has been finalised; this is the first programme of works which will be funded through the new Asset Management Strategy. The provisional capital programme set out in an appendix to the Asset Management Strategy (Appendix B.1 Capital Programme) is the baseline for external programmes, but as noted in the document all properties would be subject to additional surveys to ensure that the Council is best focussing its funds on the properties in greatest need. This has led to some blocks being deferred to later years. By contrast, based on various sources, officers have investigated the need for some blocks to have works done earlier; all these are recorded in a schedule to ensure there is consistency and accountability in decision making.
- 2.5 The net impact on the external works programme of these initial changes is for 22 additional blocks comprising 122 homes to be added to the 2025/26 programme, with further additions will follow for future years as analysis continues.
- 2.6 This is in addition to ongoing work programmes commissioned previously; capital projects need to go an increasing set of pre-site processes which means they often take over a year between initiation and works on site. The key stages involved are scoping and resident consultation, planning, building control (including Gateway for HRBs), procurement and Section 20 leasehold consultation.
- 2.7 Officers have established regular meetings to review properties and ensure that where necessary due consideration is given to making amendments to the original programme. This is to ensure the programme remains a live document and can respond to changes in our understanding of building condition.
- 2.8 The other major projects to be added are several district heating systems. The Council is planning to commission detailed feasibility studies and options appraisals to the following systems in 2025/26. These will inform the scope of works and allow projects to be prioritised. Note that these are in addition to several major district heating systems already well underway in terms of design development but not yet started; these include Rowley Way.

| District Heating System | No. Homes | No. Blocks |
|---|------------------|-------------------|
| Curnock St - Heating upgrade | 283 | 12 |
| Templar House - Heating upgrade | 112 | 2 |
| Silverbirch Walk - Heating upgrade | 32 | 2 |
| Seymour House - Heating upgrade | 69 | 1 |
| Newton St - Heating upgrade | 50 | 1 |
| Bacton - Heating upgrade | 120 | 1 |
| Brunswick – Foundling and O'Donnell Court - Heating upgrade | 394 | 2 |
| Casterbridge / Snowman - Heating upgrade | 204 | 2 |

| | | |
|--|-------|----|
| Tonbridge House 1-23 - Heating upgrade | 53 | 1 |
| TOTAL | 1,317 | 24 |

- 2.9 Internal works programmes and other programmes of fire safety, mechanical and electrical works will be commissioned throughout the year based on ongoing internal stock condition surveys, fire risk assessments, the development of Building Safety Case Files and M&E testing programmes. Budgets have been provisionally set aside for this work.

3 DECENT HOMES and STOCK CONDITION

- 3.1 This section sets out some key performance information in relation to the Council's stock.
- 3.2 In March 2024 the Council reported 9.1% of its social homes did not meet the Decent homes standard. In March 2025 this figure has reduced to 6.0%.
- 3.3 In March 2024 the Council had 11,095 outstanding fire risk actions. By 26th March 2025 this had reduced to 4,447, of which 3,286 were overdue. The Council is working to complete this programme of overdue actions by December 2025.
- 3.4 In March 2024 the Council had internal stock condition information on 20% of its social homes. By March 2025 this has increased to 40%, and a programme is underway to ensure this figure reaches 100%. This will allow the Council to better understand its stock and plan internal capital works accordingly. These surveys also include a Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) survey, and the Council is acting on these findings to ensure homes are free of hazards.

4. QUALITY HOMES, FAMILY FRIENDLY and ACQUISITION PROGRAMMES

- 4.1 Family Friendly: The Family Friendly programme was approved in December 2022 and launched in 2023. It aims to tackle overcrowding in the borough by increasing the supply of social rent council homes with two or more bedrooms so that overcrowded families with children on the housing register can move to a more spacious home.
- 4.2 The programme has increased the number of bedspaces by 21 through 17 acquired properties and 10 disposals. Numbers of transactions are still relatively low as the team works through sales of some complex properties.
- 4.3 There are 6 properties in the conveyancing process to acquire. The homes for sale are typically studios and 1-bedroom properties, with acquired properties being 2 or 3 bed family sized homes.
- 4.4 Quality Homes: This programme includes the sale of some poorly performing homes, which will be used to fund capital investment. It is currently in mobilisation stage and officers have focussed in the past quarter on setting up various new procedures and implementation arrangements. At present, 6 homes have been approved for sale, with a total estimated value of £4.4m. A further 41 homes with high investment needs are being investigated.
- 4.6 SHAP: The Single Homeless Accommodation Programme (SHAP) has recently completed, securing 10 new homes and bringing back into use 10 one-bedroom voids for a Housing First initiative supporting single homeless people.

- 4.7 Freehold Sales: The Council has initiated the sale of freeholds to blocks where there are only leasehold homes. This is as per a decision in the Cabinet Report which also established the Family Friendly programme. At present no sales have been completed as they are quite complex, but three are at an early stage.
- 4.8 The value of the freeholds is not significant, but it reduces the risk of the council encountering costs which are not recoverable from the leaseholders and ensures the council can focus its resource on management of social homes. Officers have had constructive discussions with the Camden Leasehold Forum on the progress of the programme.

6.0 COMMENTS OF THE BOROUGH SOLICITOR

- 6.1 The Housing Investment Strategy is a new overarching council strategy and incorporates the new Housing Asset Management Strategy (and other relevant appendices to the Housing Asset Management Strategy). The overarching Housing Investment Strategy provides a framework for the effective use and management of the Council's housing property assets from 2025-2030.
- 6.2 Industry guidance recommends the publication and review of an Asset Management Strategy as good practice and the new overarching Housing Investment Strategy (and related appendices) sets out how the council demonstrates this.
- 6.3 The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 and the Building Safety Act 2022 are just a few of a large number of recent legislative changes which require compliance by the Council. These include new Consumer Standards set out by the Regulator for Social Housing and Building Safety Standards set out by the Building Safety Regulator. The Council must actively demonstrate how it can fund investment and ensure homes are maintained to the right standard.
- 6.4 Section 120 of the Local Government Act 1972 makes clear that the Council may acquire by agreement any land inside or outside its area for the purposes of (a) any of its statutory functions or (b) the benefit, improvement or development of its area. The acquisition will be subject to such detailed terms as may be negotiated with the owner as part of the acquisition process.
- 6.5 The Council has a duty under Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 to obtain best consideration when it disposes of or grants leases for over seven years or more of land and property.

7.0 COMMENTS OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES

- 7.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the implementation of the Housing Investment Strategy - the capital investment programme, Decent Homes figure and stock condition surveys and Quality Homes, Family Friendly and acquisition programmes.
- 7.2 There are currently no financial implications arising from this report.

- 7.3 Finance will work with the service to monitor and ensure as much as possible that associated costs are funded from existing resources

8.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The recommended programme will improve the energy efficiency of Council homes. It will see windows and roofs replaced and significant investment in communal heating systems. The Council will also continue delivery of its grant supported retrofit works which tackle some of the Council's least efficient homes. Construction works undertaken consequent to the investment programmes proposed, will be subject to strict environmental controls as set out in legislation and specific contract terms.
- 8.2 It is anticipated that homes that require significant investment and are released through the asset review process, will be refurbished and become more energy efficient in doing so. This will help reduce emissions within the borough.
- 8.3 While the strategy does propose to defer some investment in decarbonisation, the Council is also developing its Retrofit at Scale pilot which is looking at how institutional investment can help meet the cost of decarbonisation. The initial pilot will look at installing solar panels and battery storage in up to 3,000 Council homes, saving 943 tonnes of carbon per annum.
- 8.4 As the delivery of the strategy progresses, it will be possible to report on the impacts and outcomes of these in more detail.

ENDS