

We should all have the opportunity to live in a home that meets our needs and aspirations – that's the simple but crucial message behind our new Housing Strategy which is now out for public consultation.

Our Cabinet Member for Safer, Stronger Communities Cllr Jeanie Bell has led on this issue with our fantastic team of council officers and partner agencies and I thank Jeanie and everyone involved for their work.

The Housing Strategy sets out the future housing needs for St Helens, the council's commitment to building quality and accessible homes for everyone, and to improving and strengthening neighbourhoods over the next five years.

There are five key objectives which include a commitment to support our journey towards net zero carbon emissions.

Tackling climate change doesn't mean 'stop building new homes' as some would have you believe (we need new homes, as the Housing Strategy spells out) – it means doing things such as working to retrofit existing homes to make them more energy efficient, helping both residents and the environment, and making sure that all new homes built meet the Future Homes Standard of environmental impact, with high design quality and sustainability so they're fit for the future.

The challenge of achieving net zero carbon by 2040 won't just affect the homes we live in, but many of the ways we live our lives, including the way we travel, the energy we use, and the way we work.

These challenges were set out in the Pathway to Net Zero document agreed by the City Region last week. The plan sets out our record of delivery in the region so far – including on housing retrofit, investing in green transport, supporting major projects like Glass Futures and more – and the opportunities we have to not just create a cleaner, more sustainable environment, but also a fairer, more prosperous economy.

There's no doubt we've got the political determination, the natural resources and the skills here in St Helens and our region needed to reach net zero carbon by 2040.

The Housing Strategy consultation is open now and I encourage everyone to read the document for yourselves and have your say. You can find out more at [www.sthelens.gov.uk/housingstrategy](http://www.sthelens.gov.uk/housingstrategy) or ask in your local library, and you can find out more about the Pathway to Net Zero at [www.sthelenslabour.org](http://www.sthelenslabour.org).

Best wishes to all Star readers.