

Housing Strategy

Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee

22 April 2024



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Background



Background

- 2nd consultation on the Draft Strategy took place between October 30 to 18 December 2023
- Following consultation, Draft Strategy modified as necessary, including development of delivery plan for first 6-12 months—workshop held with partners on 13th March
- Cabinet in Summer 2024 to be adopted
- Preparation of longer-term delivery plan and monitoring framework following adoption

Consultation Feedback



Main messages from consultation

- Continued strong support for the vision, principles and priorities
- Strong emphasis on the importance of partnership working with partners keen to be involved in the development of the strategy and the delivery plan
- New development should be focused on brownfield sites to stop building on greenfield sites or in the countryside
- Ensure appropriate infrastructure is built alongside new housing to support new housing development
- Support for strong focus on affordable housing. Affordable housing should be recognised as a product of choice, with affordable rental a tenure of choice.

Main messages continued...

- Better access to affordable housing, including social housing and private rented, in particular for single people, younger people and larger families
- Support for the links between housing on health and well being
- More emphasis needed on impact of poor housing on health
- Continue to improve partnership working with RPs to enable further regeneration of communities and high quality placemaking
- More focus needed on provision of suitable affordable housing for students
- Concerns about the impact of student housing in and around the city centre
- Explore the need for additional licensing in Durham

Main messages continued...

- Concerns about the cost of living and poverty and affordability of housing
- Energy efficiency and reducing carbon emissions should continue to be a focus in the delivery of the Housing Strategy
- Housing standards in the private, social and student rental sector was a concern, particularly regarding damp, mould and condensation
- Need for more meaningful engagement with members of the community and harder to reach groups in decision making
- More clarity needed on how priorities will be achieved and timescales

OSC Workshop Comments and Reponses



OSC Workshop Comments and Responses

Priority 1 – Increase the delivery of new homes, including secure, affordable housing to meet housing needs together with the infrastructure required

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Concern that Registered Social Housing Providers are building new market cost housing, using land which had been transferred from local authority control as part of LSVTs and which was to be used for Social Housing. There is a need to look at whether potential restrictions were applied at the time of transfer.	<p>The team will look into this issue but is not something that is within the scope of the housing strategy.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Need to review areas of land held by DCC, that could be released for development, if there is local demand for housing in that particular area.	<p>When CPAL are bringing together their housing site disposal list they contact relevant services to obtain an understanding of housing needs in the areas where the potential sites are located.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognised that there is a significant need for housing for the elderly and that this demand will continue to grow in the county. There was concern that current and future demand is so great that the actions identified within the strategy and the delivery plan will not be able to meet the identified need across the county because of increases in the aging population demographic.	<p>No strategy can guarantee addressing this issue in full but the importance of meeting the need for older persons is now clearly stated in the supporting text under Priority 4.</p>

OSC Workshop Comments and Responses

- Concern that in relation to Durham City, family homes are being transferred into Homes of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) for use as student accommodation which reduces the ability for local residents to access family housing. There is a need to establish future demand for student accommodation within Durham City and to monitor the impact on the mix of housing available within the City by working closely with the University, particularly identifying the potential for bespoke student accommodation developments on land in the University's ownership.
- Need to monitor the increase in charities purchasing multiple properties within a particular location for use by clients with complex needs and support requirements. This is having a significant impact on the local community in relation to house prices in that area and the ability to sell homes.

Additional text under Priority 1 now recognises that the student accommodation market is a uniquely functioning part of the private rented sector and that we need to work with partners, including Durham University, to produce a safe, healthy, affordable, secure and good quality student housing stock to ensure the needs of students are met and the impact on residents is minimised.

The Housing Strategy now includes reference to Implementing the Supported Housing Improvement Programme (SHIP) to improve the standards of accommodation and support provided by non-commissioned supported housing providers.

OSC Workshop Comments and Responses

Priority 2 – Ensure that everyone has access to appropriate, safe and secure housing that support health and wellbeing

- Members made no comments that fall to this priority.

Priority 3 – Ensure high quality, energy efficient homes and effective landlord services

- Concern that Durham County Council is not represented on the Boards of the various Registered Social Housing Providers in the county which results in the County Council having no influence in the standard and management of housing provided to local residents by these providers. It was felt that this needs to be addressed in the strategy including the development of a process to monitor RSP performance and enable Councillors to feed in constituent concerns to the providers.

This is not a matter for the Housing Strategy or the council as Registered Providers are independent organisations and able to determine their own rules of governance within their legal and regulatory framework.

OSC Workshop Comments and Responses

Priority 4 – Ensure a comprehensive range of housing options for older and vulnerable people, disabled people and children and young people, including specialist accommodation and support

- Previously Planning Policy stated 10% of homes built needed to be for the elderly and disabled with the figure of 10% being the starting point. However, this figure has not been delivered and it was felt that the Housing Strategy needs to identify a higher figure to be delivered within the county that matches the emerging need for these developments.

A housing strategy cannot set planning policy, this must be in the local plan where it will be tested by independent examination. When we come to revise the Plan we may be able to potentially increase the requirement if this can be supported by robust evidence and shown to be viable.

Latest figures in the recently published Annual Monitoring Report show that in last year 16% of new approved housing were suitable for older persons, exceeding the 10% target.

- Need to consider the Council New Homes Building Programme including the delivery of bungalows.

The Council New Homes Building Programme will deliver bungalows, but this will be subject to site viability. Bungalows tend to be land hungry and expensive comparative to houses and flats, which impacts on viability. If a site can incorporate bungalows and remain viable – and the site is suitable for bungalows in terms of topography, proximity to local services and transport routes etc – we will provide bungalows.

OSC Workshop Comments and Responses

Priority 5 – Ensure high quality placemaking, creating safe, accessible, prosperous and sustainable places to live

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to ensure that the strategy and the resulting delivery plan highlight digital connectivity as a requirement with the targeting of hard to reach and rural areas within the county. 	<p>A paragraph has been added under Priority 5 recognising that high-quality digital infrastructure, including in rural areas is now essential for inclusivity, including accessing training and employment.</p>
<h3>General comments</h3>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a need to include a delivery plan within the draft strategy, to avoid any resulting delays in the delivery of actions identified within the strategy. 	<p>The strategy is a long-term document and many external factors can (and likely will) impact on delivery over time. As a consequence, delivery plans will be developed over time to allow us to address emerging issues. In recognition that delivery plans do take time to develop, a delivery plan covering the first six to 12 months has been included in the strategy.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is important that the strategy is flexible and can respond to change at a national, regional and local level. 	<p>This is why the delivery plan will be developed over time and regularly updated.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concern that the strategy is referred to as a county wide strategy and not a DCC strategy, there needs to be accountability for the delivery of actions identified within the strategy and resulting delivery plan. 	<p>Accountability will be clearly shown within the delivery plan, including where DCC is the lead but also where partners will be responsible for delivery.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accountability needs to be clearly identified with the delivery plan together with timescales for delivery of actions. Examples include accountability for bringing empty homes back into use and the delivery of affordable homes within the county together with targets and deadlines for delivery. 	<p>Accountability and timescales will be included in the delivery plan.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a need for empathy to be clearly visible within the strategy. 	<p>Agreed. The document is aimed as much at professionals (e.g. RPs, Developers, Homes England etc) as it is local residents, so we hope it strikes the right balance and tone.</p>

Draft Delivery Plan



Priority 1: Increase the delivery of new homes, including secure, affordable housing to meet housing needs together with the infrastructure required

- Deliver the Council House New Build Programme
- Deliver the Registered Providers affordable homes pipeline
- Identify additional resources from planning fee income
- Council and partners to work together to feed into the North East Housing Partnership
- Deliver the vision of the County Durham Plan
- Identify sufficient, suitable housing land to support economic growth and provide quality housing for the residents of the county
- Develop a housing delivery pipeline
- Deliver homes to meet housing needs in rural areas
- Work with Durham University and developers to deliver allocations in the County Durham Plan
- Deliver community led housing
- Work with NEMCA regarding empty homes

Priority 2: Ensure that everyone has access to appropriate, safe and secure housing that support health and wellbeing

- Review the current allocations and lettings policy
- Deliver the Supported Housing Improvement Programme (SHIP)
- Prepare a temporary accommodation placement strategy
- Work with health colleagues to understand needs
- Deliver the Housing Poverty Group Actions
- Adopt Housing Needs SPD and IPS First Homes
- Work with the University to develop student hub that highlights council services

Priority 3: Ensure high quality, energy efficient homes and effective landlord services

- Explore need for additional licensing in Durham City
- Prevent fuel poverty and reduce carbon emissions in domestic households
- Prepare guidance on keeping homes free from damp and mould
- Registered Providers to ensure compliance with the Safety and Quality Standard (Consumer standards 1 April 2024)
- Ensure effective processes for property inspections
- Respond to the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023 consultation
- Prepare guidance on preparing for Ofsted inspections relating to supported housing particularly for children and young people

Priority 4: Ensure a comprehensive range of housing options for older and vulnerable people, disabled people and children and young people, including specialist accommodation and support

- Work jointly with commissioning to consider housing for specialist groups including older people, children and young people, homeless and people with Learning Disability and Mental Health
- Ensure effective delivery of Disabled Facilities Grants to enable people to stay in their own homes
- Acquire properties to meet housing needs
- Deliver the Supported Housing Improvement Programme (SHIP)

Priority 5: Ensure high quality placemaking, creating safe, accessible, prosperous and sustainable places to live

- Develop and implement a programme of Targeted delivery plans (TDPs)
- Feed into regional infrastructure Plan
- Adoption of design code SPD
- Delivery of Horden Masterplan
- Create digitally enabled towns and villages to increase technology uptake, encourage innovation, and improve access to digital services
- Identify pipeline of estate regeneration
- Review of Durham County Council Durham University Memorandum of Understanding
- Explore ways to improve engagement with communities, including students and tenants in relations to placemaking and how they access services
- Consider role of housing regeneration supporting Town Centres
- Establish a collaborative approach between social housing providers to support local place making
- Reduce digital exclusion of those living in social housing and in rural communities

Next steps



Next steps

Approval of Housing Strategy including Twelve Month Delivery Plan

- REG MT – 16 May 2024
 - CMT – 12 June 2024
 - Cabinet – 10th July 2024
 - Full Council – July 2024
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- Development of a five-year delivery plan