

## **Cabinet**

**4 December 2008**



### **County Durham Local Development Framework: Annual Monitoring Report Key Decision Env/EN/13/08**

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**Report of John Richardson, Corporate Director, Environment  
Cabinet Portfolio Member for Environment - Councillor Bob Young  
and Cabinet Portfolio Member for Economic Regeneration –  
Councillor Neil Foster**

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#### **Purpose of the Report**

- 1 This report seeks Cabinet approval for the Annual Monitoring Report for County Durham and the District Councils for submission and publication. All local planning authorities are required to submit an Annual Monitoring Report to the Government and publish it on their website before the 31 December 2008. The full document is available in the Members' Resource Centre.

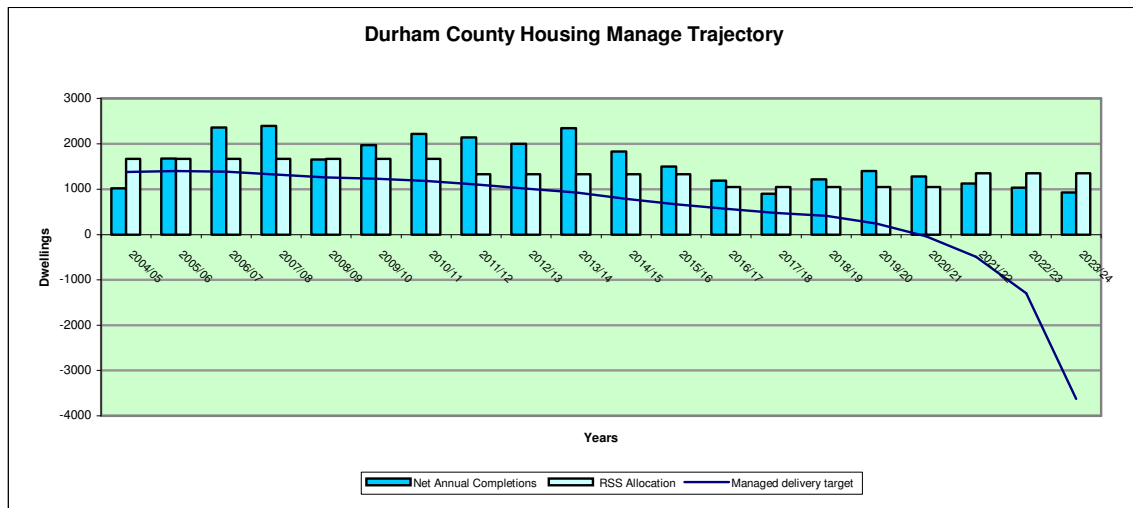
#### **Background**

- 2 In accordance with the provisions of the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, every Local Authority must submit an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) to the Secretary of State and publish it on their website before the end of December. The monitoring period is from April 2007 to March 2008 and the document must address both progress in delivering economic, social and environmental benefits against national and local indicator measures, and also progress on the timetable and milestones for the preparation of Local Development Framework documents set out in the Local Development Scheme.
- 3 During this monitoring period, the District Councils were the relevant planning authority. However, given the impact of Local Government Review on plan preparation, and that most authorities ceased any further work on their Local Development Framework early in the year, it has been agreed with GONE that a joint AMR for all of the Durham councils would be more appropriate for 2007/2008. As the outcome of the AMR has implications for development management decisions which currently continue to be the responsibility of the individual planning authorities, the AMR has also been put on the agenda for each of Districts' Cabinets and Executives in December for information.

## Current Position

- 4 The Durham planning authorities are to be amalgamated into a single unitary authority from April 2009. Within this context, progress on preparation of District development plans has ceased and the planning policy function of these councils is already integrated. Consequently, this AMR reports jointly on key economic, social and environmental trends to identify the County's contribution to national and regional objectives, and to set a baseline for the spatial objectives of a future County Durham Local Development Framework.
- 5 Monitoring and analysis in the AMR identifies the County's spatial strengths and weaknesses, reporting against national and regional indicator sets which over time will be expanded to also include local indicators to measure progress in achieving local objectives and responding to the challenges County Durham faces in the future.
- 6 The Profile section of the AMR highlights the diverse and distinctive characteristics that make up this part of the North East region. Challenges are arising from an ageing and declining population, where there are pockets of severe deprivation and associated low levels of productivity, but decades of reclamation have contributed to a restructuring of the economy and the development of assets that will shape a successful future for the county.
- 7 Improvement to the County's economic performance is supported by the availability of a total of over 515 hectares of employment land for future development, more than 300 of which is available in the short term. The spatial distribution of employment land supply and annual take-up largely correlates to the strategic transport corridors of the A1 and A19 which dissect the County between the Tyne and Wear and Tees Valley City Regions. Over 85,000 square metres of employment floorspace was developed in the County in 2007/08, the majority on previously developed land to accommodate a mix of business, general industry, and storage and distribution uses. Proposals approved at Heighington Lane West in Sedgefield and at Hawthorn Business Park in Easington account for significant employment land supply for the future.
- 8 Housing trajectories for each of the seven Districts demonstrate a significant improvement in housing performance from the low levels at the start of the plan period in 2004, supported by a strong housing market in the intervening period. All of the Districts can demonstrate that they have a 5-year deliverable housing land supply, as required under the terms of Planning Policy Statement 3, Housing, which is a material consideration in development management decisions on residential applications. When taken together, this represents 50% housing land supply over and above the minimum 5-year requirement for the County.

- 9 In terms of their 15-year land supply, this is consistently above planned targets in the Regional Spatial Strategy, but making efficient use of brownfield land. All but one of the seven Districts have contributed significantly to Regional targets for 65% of development to be on previously developed sites, collectively achieving over 80% in County Durham in this monitoring period.
- 10 There are ambitious plans for future housing delivery in every District. The effect on meeting the overall sub-regional housing target is demonstrated in the following trajectory, which takes surplus or shortfall in from both previous and future years in all the Durham Districts into account. The key measure is the remaining annual requirement, represented by the 'manage' line in the trajectory which represents the housing needed at any point in time to meet targets and get the projection back on track. The Durham sub-region is projected to provide over the RSS target until 2019, after which surplus allocation will rapidly accumulate:



- 11 The trajectories in the AMR do not reflect the announcement in September 2008, designating South and East Durham as a Growth Point with a comprehensive delivery strategy for some 11,500 additional homes across defined areas of Easington, Sedgefield and Wear Valley in pursuance of a commitment to regeneration of the towns and villages of the former coalfield. Further work is being undertaken to manage and monitor this provision.
- 12 Of more than 2,500 new homes delivered this year in the County, only 118 have been affordable units. This is due in part to the historic lack of an appropriate policy in Local Plans for Derwentside and Easington, and also to the number of residential sites being developed in the County which are too small to meet the minimum threshold for an affordable requirement. This will need to be addressed in the new County Durham Local Development Framework, along with the impact of the current economic climate which is delaying larger schemes where affordable housing provided through Section 106 planning agreements would be expected.

- 13 The Regional Spatial Strategy sets out a sub-regional renewable energy target for County Durham of 82 MW to 2010, with the aim of generating at least 10% of the region's consumption of electricity from renewable sources, rising to 20% by 2020. As at 31 March 2008, County Durham had exceeded targets with 16.22 MW of operational onshore wind energy capacity and a further 135 MW of renewable energy capacity.
- 14 There are currently inconsistencies in data collection for minerals, but available information suggests a shortfall in production against the annual requirement for both sand and gravel and crushed rock.
- 15 No new landfill capacity for waste was permitted in the monitoring period, although there was an increase of over 5% in the percentage of municipal waste that was land-filled. However, the overall reduction of municipal waste arising has increased from the previous year, and additional waste recovery and green composting capacity was added to expand the County's capability to recover greater volumes of waste in accordance with policy aims.
- 16 Preparation of all development plan documents in the County and District planning authorities ceased following the announcement of re-organisation to establish a single unitary authority for County Durham. Work has already commenced on a new Local Development Framework for the County, incorporating as far as possible the work already undertaken both individually and jointly by the Districts and County Council, to support an appropriate policy approach. This includes evidence on housing needs and supply, employment, flood risk, matters concerning environmental and open space provision, and conservation. Significant further work is identified in the AMR which will be required to ensure consistency between work undertaken at District level for it to be sufficiently robust and comprehensive to support a new county-wide development plan.
- 17 Adoption of documents in a Local Development Framework for County Durham will unavoidably be delayed until at least 2011 as the unitary planning authority commences new document preparation. A Local Development Scheme with a programme for document preparation will be published by the end of 2008. In the meantime, Local Plan policies extended by District and County authorities on Direction of the Secretary of State are collectively reported in this AMR and will remain effective to support development management decisions across the County area until policies in the new Local Development Framework for County Durham are adopted to replace them.
- 18 The full AMR for 2007/2008 is available in the Members' Resource Centre.

## **Next Steps**

- 19 Once the content of the Annual Monitoring Report has been agreed by the County Council and District Councils, it will be submitted to the Government Office for the North East by the 31 December 2008 deadline and published on the websites.
- 20 The AMR will be used by the local planning authorities to support development management decisions and to identify matters to be addressed in the preparation of a new County Durham Local Development Framework. The Department of Communities and Local Government also use the information contained in the report for the purposes of calculating Housing and Planning Delivery Grant awards.

## **Risk**

- 21 The AMR is a technical report which carries no risk provided that the local authority meets its requirements for a 5-year housing land supply. All of the Durham authorities have demonstrated that they meet this obligation.

## **Recommendation and Reasons**

- 22 That Members approve the Annual Monitoring Report for submission to the Government by the 31 December 2008 deadline.

## **Background Papers**

Planning Policy Statement 3, Housing  
Regional Spatial Strategy  
County Durham Local Development Scheme

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Local Government Reorganisation**

#### **(Does the decision impact upon a future Unitary Council?)**

The AMR is a measure for the production of a LDF for the new County Durham unitary authority.

### **Finance**

There are no financial implications.

### **Staffing**

There are no staffing implications.

### **Equality and Diversity**

None.

### **Accommodation**

None.

### **Crime and Disorder**

None.

### **Sustainability**

Sustainability issues are measures addressed in the report.

### **Human Rights**

None.

### **Localities and Rurality**

The impact of planning policy on all areas of the County including rural areas are addressed in the report.

### **Young People**

The impact and affects of planning policy on young people are addressed through measures addressed in the report.

### **Consultation**

The AMR will be published on the website of all the local planning authorities.

### **Health**

The impact and affects of planning policy on the health of residents are addressed through measures addressed in the report.