

Housing in County Durham

Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee

6 March 2023



In Today's Presentation

Cover 3 Areas of Interest

- The Role of Registered Providers and how the Council works with them on key housing issues across the County
- The Selective Licensing Scheme that was introduced in April 2022 and how we are progressing with the implementation plan.
- Empty Homes covering the number of empty homes, why homes stand empty and what action is being taken to bring long term empty homes back into use.

An opportunity for discussion and questions at the end

Working with Registered Providers of Social Housing

Housing Roles – the Council (1)

Local Plan*

Spatial context and policies for all future development.

Housing strategy

Sets out the vision and priorities for housing and housing related services across the county, including the steps needed to get there.

Homelessness strategy*

Sets out strategic approach and key priorities and actions towards preventing homelessness across the County.

Allocations scheme (DKO)*

Sets out how the council (and its partners) allocate properties and ensures “reasonable preference” is given to certain categories of applicant (Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996).

Private sector housing (Enforcement)*

Address tenant complaints and ensure properties are fit for habitation and meet minimum standards, taking enforcement action against those who fail to comply

Housing Roles – the Council (2)

Selective Licencing

Selective licensing gives certain powers to a local authority to regulate landlords and managing agents of private rented property but only in designated areas.

Empty homes

The Empty Homes team are responsible for bringing residential empty properties across the county back into use, working proactively with the owners of empty homes.

Disabled Facilities Grants*

Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) assist people to live independently by helping to fund suitable adaptations to their properties.

Energy efficiency

We assist with grants for boilers, heating sources, and insulation; reducing energy bills and switching tariffs; new central heating schemes; and funding to acquire and improve properties.

Housing Roles – the Council (3)

Gypsy & Roma travellers

The GRT Site Management Service is responsible for the six permanent sites owned by Durham County Council. Responsibilities include allocation of pitches, void management, income recovery, addressing anti-social behaviour, health and safety, along with repairs and maintenance of amenity blocks and communal areas.

- **Asylum and humanitarian support**

We provide a multiagency approach ensuring that all services deliver a co-ordinated response to the needs of the individual families from Afghanistan, Syria, and the Ukraine. We act as the lead professional for the family and provide intensive and tailored packages of support.

Housing Roles – Registered Providers

Registered Providers (Housing Associations) are organisations that provide housing and housing related support services to local people. Their role is varied, with some providing accommodation and services to specific service users (e.g. older persons) but generally their role includes:

- Allocate empty homes and work with the council to meet local housing need
- Collecting rent
- Repairing and maintaining their stock
- Ensuring tenants comply with their tenancy agreement (e.g. pay rent and don't cause a nuisance)
- Taking enforcement action when tenants (or their family or visitors) break tenancy conditions
- Engaging with tenants to ensure their services meet their needs
- Providing new homes
- Dealing with complaints from their tenants

Partnership Working

- Work together developing key strategies
- RPs provide nomination rights to the Council
- New Development requires Council Support
- Housing Forum meets quarterly
- Task and Finish Groups
- Regular Liaison Meetings

Registered Providers in Durham

*Believe (Durham City, East Durham Wear Valley)

*Karbon Homes (Derwentside & Chester Le Street)

*Livin (Sedgefield)

*North Star (Teesdale)

Accent

Anchor Hanover

Bernicia Homes

Castles & Coasts Housing

Durham Action Single Housing

Durham Aged Miners

Hellens Residential

Home Group

Housing 21

Johnnie Johnson

Places for People (Divesting Stock)

Railway Housing Association

Riverside North East

Sherburn Housing Charity

Thirteen Group

The total homes managed by RP's is 45,000

*Livin, Believe, Karbon and North Star (LSVTs) have 39,000 homes

Regulation of Registered Providers

- Registered Providers are independent bodies
- Overseen by their Boards
- Regulated by Regulator for Social Housing
- Must meet Regulatory Standards
 - Economic Standards
 - Consumer Standards
- Subject to Regulatory Judgements
- Under Jurisdiction of Housing Ombudsman
- Scrutiny by tenants
- Oversight by Homes England on funded schemes



Regulator of
Social Housing

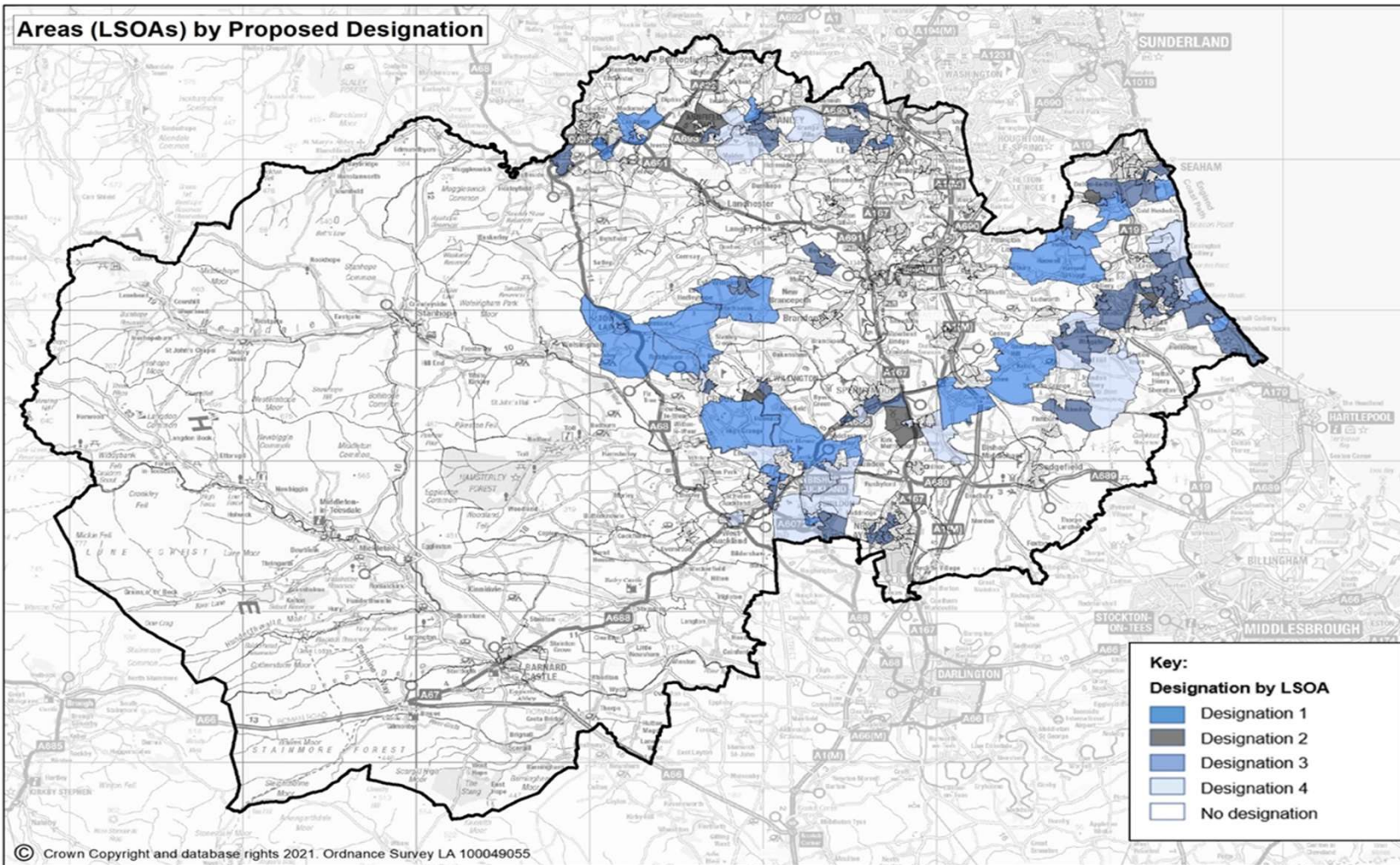


Selective Licensing

Selective Licensing Scheme

- Approved by Secretary of State on 30th November 2021
- In force 1st April 2022 lasts for 5 years
- Covers 42% of the private rented stock 29,000 properties
- Covers 103 Lower Super Output Areas across 4 designations
 - (i) ASB
 - (ii) Deprivation
 - (iii) Low Demand
 - (iv) Areas that satisfy all 3 criteria

Areas (LSOAs) by Proposed Designation



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Licensing so far

- 8681 Applications received
- 7337 Licences issued
- £3.4 million received
- Ringfenced to SL activities
- 800 inspections carried out
- Enforcement Action underway
 - Improvement Notices for Disrepair
 - PACE interviews being conducted (no application or non-compliance with Improvement Notices/Licence Conditions)



Enforcement and Compliance

- 731 Inspections carried out
- 146 follow up inspections for remedial work which have lead to
 - 11 Improvement Notices
 - 1 Emergency Remedial Action
 - 1 Prohibition Order
- 8 interviews under caution scheduled for no licence
- 1 licence revoked after landlord not “fit and proper”



Penalties

- Prosecution (unlimited fine) or a civil penalty of up to £30,000
- Management Order
- Rent Repayment Order
- Banning Order
- Entry on Rogue Landlord Database
- No S21 Notice (no fault eviction)



Future Activity

- Identification of properties without a licence using Council Tax and Housing Benefit data
- Landlords written to advise that they need to apply for a licence to avoid enforcement action
- Delivery Plan - Enforcement and Compliance teams working through all LSOAs in first 3 years of the scheme
- Review data in years 4 and 5 to consider areas that may be included in extension of the scheme

Empty Homes

Roles and Responsibilities

- Various Teams involved
 - Housing – Bringing property back into use
 - Community Protection – Wardens, Enforcement and ASB
 - Council Tax – Premiums for empty homes
 - Building Control – Safe and Secure
 - Planning Enforcement – Where property is detrimental to local area

Empty Properties

Year	Private Sector & RSL combined data			Private Sector only			RP only		
	LTE	STE	Total	LTE	STE	Total	LTE	STE	Total
2015	6851	4826	11,677	6530	4445	10,975	321	381	702
2016	6301	4329	10,630	6034	4054	10,088	267	275	542
2017	6299	4163	10,462	6069	3860	9929	230	303	533
2018	6286	4261	10,547	5984	3812	9796	302	449	751
2019	6804	4811	11,615	6401	3976	10,377	403	835	1238
2020	6864	3951	10,815	6423	2927	9350	441	1024	1465
2021	6306	3564	9870	5851	2710	8561	455	854	1309
2022	6455	3739	10,194	5923	2913	8836	532	826	1358

Empty Homes Back Into Use

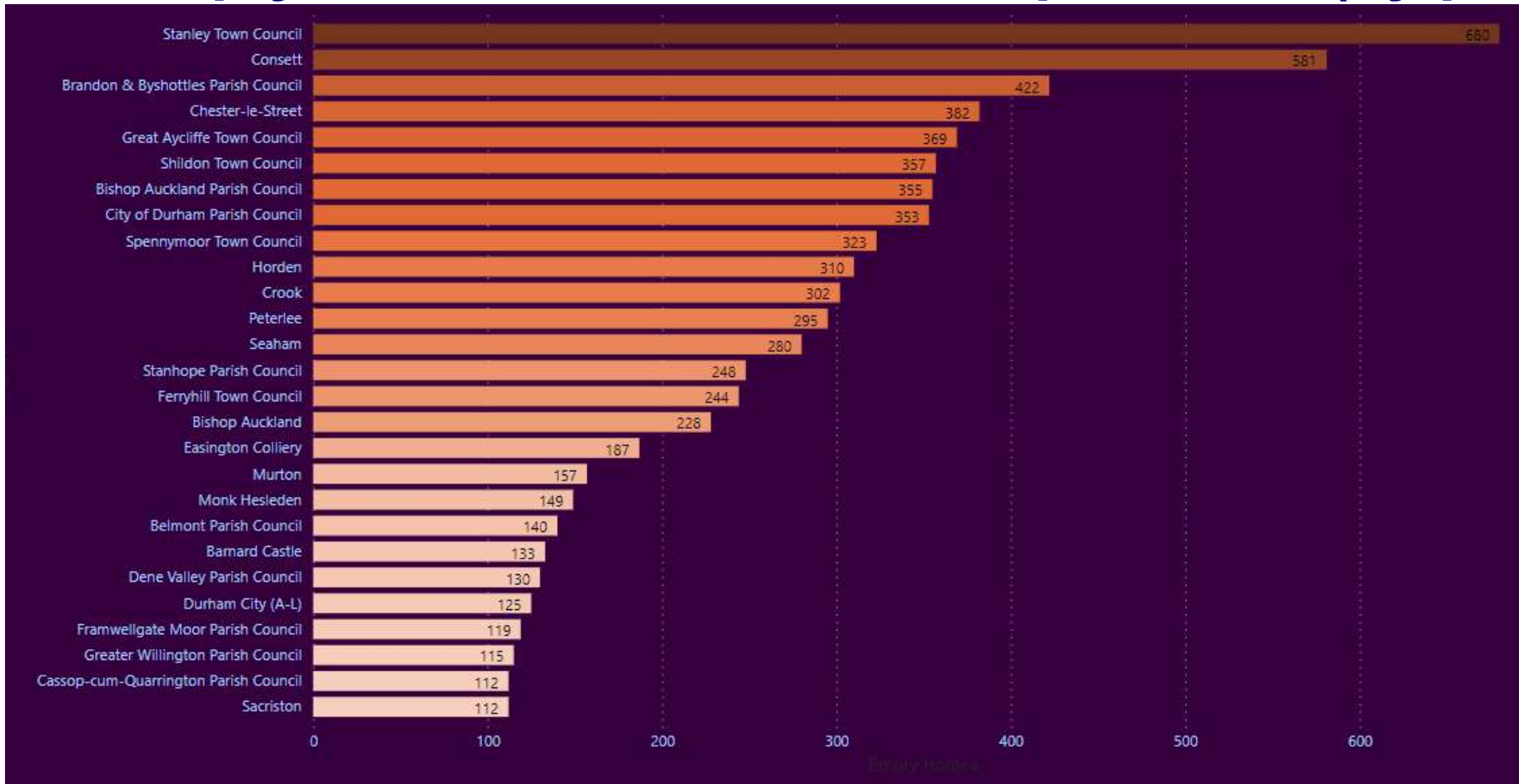
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Achieved	Target
16/17	29	27	38	42	136	120
17/18	45	68	40	45	198	120
18/19	56	55	31	44	186	120
19/20	73	43	48	48	212	200
20/21	59	40	35	37	171	200
21/22	24	53	40	37	154	200
22/23	55	68	54			200

Regional And National Data

- Information from “Action on Empty Homes” website and sent to all LAs
- Does not include second homes:

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Durham	1.69%	1.70%	1.87%	1.56%	1.63%
Regional	1.38%	1.46%	1.66%	1.39%	1.43%
National	0.89%	0.92%	1.08%	0.95%	1.02%

Empty Homes Numbers - Hot Spot areas (by parish)



Why are homes left empty?

- Lack of finances to refurbish
- Property for sale – Chain or unrealistic selling price
- Second Homes
- Awaiting planning consent
- Legal dispute – i.e. divorce settlement
- Complications with probate
- Owner in residential care, hospital or prison
- Lack of demand
- Pending Regeneration



Action

- Provide advice, support and assistance
- Empty homes loans
- Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme
- Respond to complaints
- Council Tax Premiums
- Enforcement where informal action fails
 - Enforced Sale
 - Empty Dwelling Management Order
 - Compulsory Purchase



Action Plan

- Targeted proactive work
 - Targeted Delivery Plans
 - Selective Licencing
 - Community Action Team
- Database in development
- Working with legal on enforced sale
- Better Enforcement
 - Delegated powers
 - Agreements in place with EHCP/Neighbourhoods/Planning/Building control
 - Notices / joint working
- Council Tax non payers / High payers
 - Joint working with CT on complex/ long term empty properties

Time for Questions?

