

Cabinet

14 June 2023

**County Durham Housing Strategy
Principles and Priorities Paper**

Ordinary Decision



Report of Corporate Management Team

Amy Harhoff, Corporate Director of Regeneration Economy and Growth

Councillor James Rowlandson, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Resources, Investment and Assets

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 For Cabinet to agree the Housing Strategy Principles and Priorities Paper (attached at Appendix 2) for public consultation.

Executive Summary

- 2 The County Durham Housing Strategy is being developed to consider housing issues across County Durham. The Strategy will provide a strategic framework to inform the actions and investment of the council and its partners and has been developed to ensure the council is well positioned to maximise future opportunities for funding support. The new Housing Strategy 2024 will replace the current Housing Strategy adopted in 2019.
- 3 The Principles and Priorities Paper is the first stage in the preparation of the Housing Strategy, and we are seeking views on a draft vision, eight principles and five priorities.
- 4 If the Principles and Priorities Paper is agreed, consultation will be undertaken on the document for eight weeks, rather than the usual six, from 26 June 2023 to 18 August 2023, to recognise that the consultation takes place partly in school holidays.
- 5 Consultation will be undertaken with residents of County Durham and other stakeholders with a potential interest in the content of the document. The Council will make use of its partnership structure to

assist in disseminating information about the Housing Strategy. This will also provide a means to ensure engagement with the providers of specialist housing products and services.

- 6 The outcome of the consultation will then inform the drafting of the Housing Strategy which will then be consulted on again. The Strategy will then be modified as necessary and presented to Cabinet and Full Council for adoption in Spring 2024.

Recommendation

- 7 Cabinet is recommended to:
 - (a) agree the Housing Strategy Principles and Priorities Paper for consultation from 26 June 2023 to 18 August 2023;
 - (b) delegate authority to the Corporate Director for Regeneration Economy and Growth in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Investments and Assets to prepare and consult on a draft Housing Strategy based on the outcome and feedback received from the consultation on the Housing Strategy Principles and Priorities Paper; and
 - (c) request that a report is presented to a future meeting of the Cabinet in Spring 2024 advising of the outcome of the consultation on the draft Housing Strategy and seeking approval of the final Housing Strategy.

Background

- 8 The County Durham Housing Strategy is being developed to consider housing issues across County Durham. The Housing Strategy will be delivered in partnership through the Housing Forum and in discussion with the county's residents, the private sector and other agencies as appropriate. It will also provide a strategic framework to inform the actions and investment of the council and its partners.
- 9 The Housing Strategy will ensure Durham County Council is well positioned to maximise future opportunities for funding support. In this context, the Housing Strategy provides the evidence to identify issues within a housing context and a clear approach to address these issues.
- 10 The Housing Strategy will be a comprehensive document that aligns with existing or emerging strategies including the County Durham Vision, County Durham Plan and the new Homelessness Strategy. Together with the Homelessness Strategy, the Housing Strategy will set out the Council's approach to Housing First as a way of tackling street homelessness. It will also support the Council's Climate Emergency Response Plan and Inclusive Economic Strategy.
- 11 The Housing Strategy will be informed by impact assessments including an Equalities Impact Assessment, Health Impact Assessment, Wellbeing Assessment, and Rural Proofing¹, which will be prepared alongside the Strategy as it develops. This ensures the Strategy reflects to the differing needs of our communities.
- 12 The Principles and Priorities Paper is the first stage in the preparation of the Housing Strategy, and we are seeking views on a draft vision, seven principles and five priorities.

The Principles and Priorities Paper

- 13 The vision sets out the overarching ambitions of the Housing Strategy to inform the principles and priorities. The proposed vision is:

‘By 2035 County Durham will be a place that has good quality homes that meet the needs of existing and future residents that they can afford. The provision and quality of housing will support economic growth, contribute to improved health, and create and maintain sustainable, mixed and balanced communities. People will live long and independent lives within connected communities.’

¹ Rural proofing is a means to assess policies and strategies to ensure they do not disadvantage rural areas

14 Principles establish the foundation and rationale underpinning decisions and actions to deliver the vision. The Council is seeking views on the following core principles:

- Principle 1: Everyone has a right to a warm, safe, and decent home;
- Principle 2: Everyone should have access to a home that is affordable to them;
- Principle 3: Housing is the cornerstone of communities and should support improved health, educational attainment, and the local economy;
- Principle 4: The strategy will be for the County, not the Council, and will promote local solutions underpinned by community engagement;
- Principle 5: All new homes should be accessible, tenure neutral and provide flexible living for different stages in a person's life, always aiming to allow people to be independent, including remaining in their home for as long as they desire;
- Principle 6: Existing and new communities should be physically, digitally, culturally, and economically connected to support the creation of mixed and balanced communities, including bringing empty homes back into use;
- Principle 7: The strategy will support energy efficiency and carbon reduction in existing and new housing and contribute towards the Council's Climate Emergency Response Plan.

15 The proposed priorities set out the key areas where we will focus activity to deliver the vision. The Council is seeking views on the following priorities:

- Priority 1: Increase the delivery of new homes, including secure, affordable housing to meet housing needs and to provide a Housing First approach, along with the infrastructure required;
- Priority 2: Ensure that everyone has access to appropriate, safe and secure housing that meets their needs;
- Priority 3: Ensure high quality homes and landlord services;
- 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;

- Priority 5: Ensure high quality placemaking, creating great and sustainable places to live.

Timescales and Next Steps

- 16 If the Principles and Priorities Paper is agreed, consultation will be undertaken on the document for eight weeks, rather than the usual six, from 26 June 2023 to 18 August 2023, to recognise that the consultation takes place partly in school holidays.
- 17 Consultation will be undertaken with residents of County Durham and other stakeholders with a potential interest in the content of the document. As part of the consultation the Council will use a wide range of approaches including:
 - Presentations to Area Action Partnerships (AAPS) and County Durham Partnership thematic groups including the Housing Forum, Health and Wellbeing Board, Economic Partnership etc;
 - A survey for residents and a separate one for young people;
 - Online events;
 - Workshop for all Members of Scrutiny;
 - Briefing note for town and parish councils and a presentation to County Durham Association of Local Councils (CDALC);
 - Presentations to protected characteristic groups such as Age UK, Youth Council, Disability Partnership;
 - A social media and communications campaign;
 - Briefing for elected members; and
 - A Rural Housing Event.
- 18 The outcome of the consultation will then inform the drafting of the Housing Strategy which will then be consulted on again (including further input from the Members of Scrutiny). The Strategy will then be modified as necessary and presented to Cabinet and Full Council for adoption in Spring 2024.

Background Papers

- County Durham Housing Strategy – Adopted 2019

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Section 8 of the Housing Act 1985 requires local housing authorities to consider housing conditions in their area and the needs of the area with respect to the provision of further housing accommodation.

Finance

The Housing Strategy is not associated with a specific budget. The final Housing Strategy will identify a series of actions. Each action will be associated with a project, which may require a funding bid once the scope of the project is determined. The Housing Strategy does not guarantee funding for projects listed.

Consultation

If the Principles and Priorities Paper is agreed, consultation will be undertaken on the document for eight weeks from 26 June 2023 to 18 August 2023. Consultation will be undertaken with residents of County Durham and other stakeholders with a potential interest in the content of the document. The council will make use of its partnership structure to assist in disseminating information about the Housing Strategy. This will also provide a means to ensure engagement with the providers of specialist housing products and services.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

The Housing Strategy will be subject to Equalities Impact Assessment as it develops and a full Equalities Impact Assessment will be undertaken for the draft Housing Strategy.

Climate Change

Principle 8 in the Principles and Priorities Paper states that the strategy will support energy efficiency and carbon reduction in existing and new housing. This Principle will inform the drafting of the Housing Strategy.

Human Rights

Protocol 1 Article 1: Every natural or legal person is entitled to the peaceful enjoyment of his possessions, including their property. The Housing Strategy will provide a framework to deliver housing to meet housing needs. Article 8: provides a Right to respect for private and family life. Everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence. There shall be no interference by a public authority with the exercise of this

right except such as is in accordance with the law and is necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security, public safety or the economic well-being of the country, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. We will ensure the Housing Strategy will be consistent with the council's Human Rights obligations.

Crime and Disorder

None.

Staffing

Resource required to progress the production, monitoring, review and implementation of the Housing Strategy.

Accommodation

None.

Risk

Detailed risk assessments will be undertaken at the project level and as part of delivering against the Housing Strategy.

Procurement

None.