

Draft County Durham Housing Strategy

Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny 18 December 2023

Amy Harhoff
Corporate, Director of Regeneration Economy and Growth



The presentation sets out...

- Introduction
- Overview and scrutiny workshop comments and responses
- Vision
- Principles
- Priorities
- Next Steps

Introduction



Introduction

- Consultation undertaken on the Principles and Priorities Paper from 26 June to 18 August 2023 including:
 - Workshop with Overview and Scrutiny Members on 10 July
 - Presentations to Area Action Partnerships, County Durham Association of Local Councils, County Durham Partnership groups
 - Rural housing event
 - Online consultation events
 - Social media campaign
 - Resident, industry and young people surveys
- Detail of comments received set out in the Feedback Report
- Feedback has informed the draft strategy wherever possible

OSC Workshop Comments and Reponses

OSC Workshop Comments and Responses

Prevention of homelessness	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emphasis on access to early advice, support and assistance which is vital to ensure that homelessness is prevented as far as possible.	<p>A focus on early advice has been included in Priority 2 that incorporates homelessness prevention through the Homelessness strategy. (5.19/ 5.21/ 5.24/ 5.47).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider the use of empty homes to meet needs of vulnerable groups and those at risk of homelessness.	<p>Emphasis on bringing empty homes back into use where possible incorporated as part of Principle 2 (para 4.3) and Principle 6 (Para 4.9).</p> <p>The use of empty homes to meet need of those at risk of homelessness is further addressed in the Homelessness Strategy (para 5.16), the Housing Strategy has also identified, as an action, preparing a Temporary Accommodation Strategy that would consider the option of empty homes, where appropriate (para 5.23).</p>
Delivering a comprehensive range of housing options	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A need to have the right mix of housing to meet housing demand. It was considered that there are few housing options for single people, single young people, older people, vulnerable and disabled people, although these are all groups who have increasing housing demand. New homes should be adaptable over time to meet changing needs and existing stock should be adapted.	<p>Sustainable, mixed and balanced communities are part of the Housing Strategy Vision.</p> <p>Greater detail is included in Priority 1 regarding meeting specific housing needs through housing delivery (Para 5.5/ 5.7).</p> <p>Greater emphasis on a range of housing options for older and vulnerable people, children and young people, disabled people has been included(Para 5.38/ 5.39/ 5.40 – 47). This includes implementing the County Durham Plan policies regarding adaptation and M42 standards.</p>

OSC Workshop Comments and Responses

- Supported housing is essential for those people with multiple and complex needs. Supported housing requires wrap around services for vulnerable residents and families, including health services, education, welfare benefits and transport connectivity.

Support for people with multiple and complex needs is highlighted as a priority in the Homelessness Strategy that is identified as part of Priority 1 and actions for delivery (Para 5.21/ 5.24).

The link between housing and support and care and wrap around services are emphasised in the supporting text of Priority 4 (Para 5.38- 47).

Climate emergency

- Housing should be built to the best possible standard with new technologies but, consider that the traditional view of 'sustainable locations' may have been overcome by new technologies supporting a reduction in travel to some extent.

Further detail and emphasis regarding climate change is outlined in the alignment of the Housing Strategy with the CERP vision for new technologies to be used on new developments (Para 3.5).

Addressing climate change Principle 7 of the strategy. Greater detail has been added around the maximising of opportunities for new developments to contribute to energy efficiency targets including using new technologies (Para 4.10).

- Concern that insulation and newer heating technologies are not as affordable as gas. Retrofitting existing stock is key but is also expensive. Upskill the sector lined to IES to support provision and maintenance of new technologies.

The Housing Strategy sets out that it will compliment activities of other plans and strategies, including the CERP and the IES (Para 3.5).

As part of Principle 7, detail in the supporting text has been included to address maximising opportunities to address fuel poverty, heating improvements and carbon reduction. (Para 4.10).

OSC Workshop Comments and Responses

Housing and its relationship with the economy	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure developers are employing people with the correct skills to build the new homes we need. Including in relation to greener technologies and capitalising on local supply chains.	<p>The Housing Strategy sets out that it will compliment activities of other plans and strategies, including the CERP and the IES (Para 3.5).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Utilise Council House Programme to create housing for communities and reuse derelict buildings and empty homes to support renewal also support the provision of executive housing to attract entrepreneurs in suitable locations	<p>Priority 1 includes detail around the delivery of Council Housing. This includes both new build schemes and a programme of targeted acquisitions.</p> <p>Bringing Empty Homes back into use, where appropriate, is reflected as a key aim of the strategy and detailed in Principle 2 (Para 4.3) and Principle 6 (Para 4.9).</p>
Ensuring a warm, safe and decent homes to support improved education, health and wellbeing	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Note issues with mould through lack of ventilation/insulation, which can be an issue with the with design of buildings and older properties.	<p>Greater detail has been added to Priority 3 regarding housing stock standards and conditions. It is acknowledged that the county has a large percentage of older housing stock. Priority 3 sets out a requirement that new stock is delivered to the highest standard with a focus on sustainability and energy efficiency.</p> <p>There is further detail given regarding the continuous review of housing conditions, inspections and working with landlords to ensure that decent homes standards from the Social Housing Act 2023 are met. (Para 5.27- 5.32).</p>

OSC Workshop Comments and Responses

- **Need effective complaints / escalation procedure for tenants or a prevention procedure (such as regular inspections).**

The Housing Strategy will be delivered in the context of new legislation, including The Social Housing Act 2023 (Para 2.6).

In Priority 3 the supporting text outlines that the Act gives more rights for tenants (Para 5.27).

Further detail is given regarding how we will ensure high quality landlord services and high-quality homes. This includes continuous housing condition reviews, inspections, powers under the selective licensing scheme and HMO licensing requirements (Para 5.31- 5.37).

Meeting the need for affordable homes

- **Needing to make sure people can afford housing and have sufficient disposable income to enjoy lives as well.**

The impact of affordability and the cost of living is a key theme of the Housing Strategy.

Measures to address poverty through the Housing Strategy are laid out in Priority 5 (Para 5.51-59).

Addressing Fuel Poverty is detailed in Principle 7 (Para 4.10) regarding energy efficiency and Priority 3 regarding high quality homes in the rented sector (Para 5.28).

Issues regarding the cost of living and the impact of this on affordability of homes and keeping a home warm are identified as part of the Homelessness Prevention in Priority 1 (Para 5.16).

- **Integrate affordable homes into developments in a ‘tenure blind’ manner**

Ensuring affordable homes are tenure blind on developments is part of Principle 5 (Para 4.8).

OSC Workshop Comments and Responses

Housing issues in communities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure a high standard of maintenance in housing, gardens and open spaces, use of S.215 notices where appropriate.	<p>Further text regarding the standard of housing in the rental sector is included in Priority 3 (Para 5.30/ 5.31).</p> <p>Greater emphasis has been added to green and open space as part of quality placemaking in Priority 5 (Para 5.48/ 5.49, 5.51-58).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Concerns about property investors / developers acquiring properties. A concern especially in former mining communities but also in Durham City in the context of student HMOs and the impact on communities. Important to work to prevent ASB.	<p>The Housing Strategy incorporates how the County Durham Plan will be utilised to meet housing needs and ensure mixed and balanced communities. This includes student accommodation (Para 5.7).</p> <p>The licensing of HMOs and enforcement for non-compliance are detailed in Priority 3 (Para 5.32/ 5.33/ 5.35/ 5.56).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Need to ensure that existing stock is maintained and kept up to required standards.	<p>This is addressed in Priority 3 regarding housing stock standards and condition (Para 5.30/ 5.31/ 5.38).</p>

OSC Workshop Comments and Responses

- **Ensure that infrastructure is in place to support new housing, and ensure affordable housing is affordable, including Durham City.**

Additional supporting text has been included under Priority 1 to ensure the provision of infrastructure that supports new housing (Para 5.4/ 5.6/ 5.13).

The importance of Infrastructure in high quality place making is emphasised under Priority 5 (Para5.51/ 5.53).

- **Second homes are an issue in some parts of the county such as Weardale.**

It is recognised in the Housing Strategy that rural areas have issues that are unique to them. The provision of housing in rural areas is incorporated in the supporting text of Priority 1 to deliver housing to meet housing needs. (Para 5.4/ 5.7).

- **An emphasis on actions and local level actions required, with a timeline for delivery communicated to members and the community.**

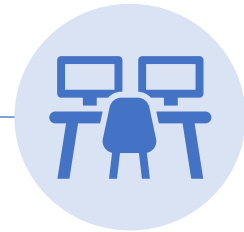
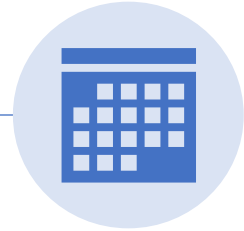
The steps for the delivery and monitoring of the strategy are detailed in the final section of the strategy (Para 6.1-6.4).

Vision



Housing Strategy: Vision

‘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.’



Principles

Housing Strategy: 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, **community safety**, 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~~ **blind** 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 **sustainable, safe**, 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

Priorities

Housing Strategy: 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 **together** with the infrastructure required



Priority 2: Ensure that everyone has access to appropriate, safe and secure housing that ~~meets their needs~~ **support health and wellbeing**



Priority 3: Ensure high quality, **energy efficient** homes and **effective** 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~~ **safe, accessible, prosperous** and sustainable places to live

Next Steps

Next Steps

- Consultation on the Draft Strategy is currently under way between October 30 and 18 December 2023
- Following consultation, Draft Strategy modified to reflect comments received
- Adoption Spring/Summer 2024
- Preparation of delivery plan and monitoring framework following adoption