

Enterprise & Economy Overview & Scrutiny

4 November 2024



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Introduction



Introduction

- The County Durham Housing Strategy (CDHS) provides a strategic framework to inform the actions and investment of the council and its partners
- On 10 July 2024 Cabinet agreed to recommend to County Council that they adopt the CDHS
- At the meeting of County Council on 17 July 2024 the adoption of the CDHS was deferred. The concerns of members principally related to how the CDHS dealt with:
 - The Council House Build Programme and particularly the delivery timeframe and the composition of the proposed 500 units
 - The proliferation of HMOs in the county and the potential use of Article 4 Directions
- Two reports, one for each issue, were prepared and discussed at a meeting of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee (E&EOSC) on 11 September 2024
- As a result of the discussion at the meeting a number of amendments to the CDHS are proposed

Council House Build Programme – Proposed Amendments



Amend Paragraph 5.8

5.8 Delivering affordable housing by:

- Delivering 500 new build council houses and associated infrastructure as part of the Council House Delivery Programme. ~~This~~ The new build properties includes both new build schemes and will be complemented by a programme of targeted acquisitions.
- The original intention was to deliver these 500 houses by 2026, however, the impact of covid 19 and wider economic conditions including inflationary pressures and rising interest rates have presented delivery challenges for the programme. As a result, we are ~~intending to~~ rolling the programme forward commencing from the approval of the cabinet report in July 2023 with a six-year delivery plan to 2029. In reality, if building council houses proves a viable proposition, it is likely that the programme will extend beyond 2029 and the number of new houses built will exceed 500.

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) – Proposed Amendments

New Paragraph 5.35

5.35 Well managed Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) form an important part of the private rented sector, often providing cheaper accommodation for people whose housing options are limited. Whilst larger HMOs require planning approval, smaller ones (those with fewer than six occupants) are classed as permitted development and therefore, do not require the Council's approval. Evidence from Council tax records and HMO Licences show that most HMOs in the County are located in Durham City and are primarily occupied by students however, HMOs are beginning to appear elsewhere in the County. Most HMOs are well managed, however, some can cause issues for neighbouring residents and local communities. In those cases, the council can use its licensing and other powers to ensure landlords are meeting their obligations relating to the management of the property and the wellbeing of their tenants. The County Durham Plan also includes a policy to manage the proliferation of HMOs to maintain mixed and balances communities. This is complemented by a number of Article 4 Directions which require landlords proposing smaller HMOs to apply for planning permission.

Added to the 'what we will do' section

In preparation for the next iteration of the County Durham Plan we will assess the effectiveness of the approach to HMOs set out in the current Plan and will undertake a county wide public engagement exercise to inform a future review and advise residents of what actions are available to local authorities to manage the numbers of HMOs in specific localities. We will therefore also explore the availability of evidence relating to the location of HMOs and the potential need for further Article 4 Directions relating to smaller HMOs outside of Durham City.

Other Amendments

Other Amendments

Other amendments made as a result of the time difference are:

- Section 2, National Context, as a result of the general election and the proposed changes to the legislative programme set out by the new Government
- The 12-Month Delivery Plan has been updated to reflect that some of the original actions have now been completed and others have been given new dates. A small number of additional actions have also been added including:
 - New milestones relating to the Council House Delivery Programme
 - The review of Durham Key Options
 - Preparing a temporary accommodation placement policy
 - Deliver Local Authority Housing Fund Round 3
 - New milestones relating to the regeneration of Horden

Next Steps



Next Steps

- Following any feedback from the E&EOSC we will finalise the amendments to the CDHS and accompanying 12-Month Delivery Plan
- Once agreed the amended CDHS will then return to Cabinet and County Council for adoption as soon as possible