

COUNTY COUNCIL

22 FEBRUARY 2017

PUBLIC QUESTIONS

QUESTION FROM MR T CLARK

Given that the Housing White Paper has now been published, how is it envisaged that its proposals on calculating housing demand and on Green Belt protection might alter current thinking on the County Plan, and when does our Council expect to be able to make public its "Preferred Options" for a final draft of the plan?

RESPONSE

Thank you for your question regarding the impact of the Government's new Housing White Paper on the progress of the County Durham Plan.

The Housing White Paper, 'Fixing our broken housing market', has a range of proposals covering many aspects of housing policy.

In your question you specifically ask about how the issues around the calculation of housing demand and the protection of Green Belts might alter thinking on the County Plan.

With regard to the former, the White Paper identifies a future consultation on options for introducing a standardised approach to assessing housing requirements which will ultimately be included in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The White Paper gives no details of what these options may look like or exactly when the consultation may be published. As set out in the Cabinet report on the 14 December 2016, the council had anticipated that the standardised approach would be in the White Paper rather than be subject to separate consultation.

The Council has always recognised the importance of the Green Belt and, of course, we will need to consider proposals in the White Paper as we move forward with the Preferred Option version of the Plan.

The Council had hoped the white paper would give us clarity on the key issues, particularly around housing numbers, so we could continue to make speedy progress with the Plan. As we read it, that clarity has not been forthcoming, and we will be discussing with government the best way for us to proceed. We will keep members and all those involved in the County Plan briefed on progress.