

Cabinet

12 July 2017

Durham County Council's Response to Housing White Paper Consultation



Report of Corporate Management Team

Ian Thompson, Director of Regeneration and Local Services

Councillor Carl Marshall, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economic
Regeneration

Councillor Kevin Shaw, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Strategic
Housing and Assets

Purpose of the Report

- 1 For Cabinet to be presented with Durham County Council's response to the Housing White Paper at the earliest opportunity owing to the cancellation of Cabinet meetings during Purdah. Comments were submitted in time for the closing date for comments on the 2nd May 2017 following consultation with relevant Cabinet Portfolio holders and the Corporate Director.

Background

- 2 On the 7 February 2017, the Government published a Housing White Paper entitled 'Fixing our broken housing market'. It set out four steps to achieving the objective of boosting new housing supply to deliver 'between 225,000 and 275,000 homes every year':
 - Planning for the right homes in the right places (principally by using local and neighbourhood plan policies);
 - Building homes faster (linking infrastructure with housing development, more efficient planning process and addressing skills shortages. It also includes holding house builders to account in respect of delivery by increasing the powers of intervention by local authorities);
 - Diversifying the housing market (focussing on increasing the numbers of small and medium-size builders, promoting more forms of tenure and encouraging 'modern methods of construction'); and
 - Helping people (identifying a range of measures to help people get on to the housing market and providing a fairer system in the private rented sector).
- 3 A copy of the response to the White Paper is in the Member's library and available to view at: <http://www.durham.gov.uk/article/7444/Documents-and-evidence-used-to-prepare-and-assess-the-County-Durham-Plan>

The White Paper and the County Durham Plan

- 4 Following consultation on the Issues and Options stage County Durham Plan in Summer 2016, the intention was to develop a preferred options plan for consultation. This process was 'paused' as the government signalled the imminent release of the Housing White Paper and what was considered to be fundamental changes to the plan making process which included housing need and Green Belt. It is expected that this will lead to a revised National Planning Policy Framework towards the end of the year.
- 5 The Council remains committed to delivering a Local Plan as quickly as possible and continues to monitor the position closely to identify an appropriate time when we have the necessary clarity to move forward. Unfortunately the White Paper also signals an intention for further consultations, including on the methodology for developing a housing requirement associated with a local plan and has not provided the clarity that was hoped, however we continue a positive dialogue with DCLG in working towards a solution.

Conclusion

- 6 The Council recognises the direction of travel set out in the white paper, however is concerned that the paper seeks to resolve many of the issues relevant to the south and in doing so misses or hinders many opportunities or issues relevant in County Durham and other parts of the north. The consultation responses identified a series of recommendations that could assist the economic and housing growth in the area as well as improve opportunities for our residents. The Council will continue dialogue with DCLG in order to ensure that the issues relating to the plan coming forward are resolved as quickly as possible and to that end a further meeting has been discussed with officers once the further consultation is available for comment.
- 7 The recent Queen's Speech made little mention of housing and there is no indication of when or if the proposals in the Housing White Paper may progress. Waiting for further detail before proceeding with the preparation of the Plan may therefore no longer be appropriate. Officers will review the position in the early autumn with a view to making recommendations to Cabinet on the way forward.

Recommendations and Reasons

- 8 It is recommended that:
 - a) Cabinet note and endorse the content of the Housing White Paper consultation response.

Background papers

White Paper Consultation Responses

Contact: Mike Allum Tel: 03000 261 906

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance – The full financial implications will not be certain until the White Paper progresses further through the parliamentary process.

Staffing – None identified.

Risk – The White Paper will inform planning policy and therefore housing delivery. There is a risk that if this does not reflect the delivery conditions in County Durham, it may hamper our abilities to meet the aims of the Sustainable Community Strategy and Regeneration Statement through the County Durham Plan.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty – None identified.

Accommodation – None identified.

Crime and Disorder – None identified.

Human Rights – None identified.

Consultation – The White Paper was subject to consultation with the deadline being the 2nd May 2017. Due to the wide range of issues included in the paper the report has been widely consulted on within the council and includes contributions from Planning and Assets Service, Housing Solutions Team, Housing Regeneration Team and Legal Services. Discussion took place with the relevant Cabinet portfolio holders prior to the despatch of the Council's response.

Procurement – None identified.

Disability Issues – None identified.

Legal Implications – The full legal implications will not be certain until the White Paper progresses further through the parliamentary process. Legal Services have contributed to the consultation responses.