

Report To: Cabinet
Lead Officers: Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development
Director of Housing

20 April 2017

Consultation Response on the Government's Housing White Paper 'Fixing our broken housing market'

Purpose

1. To agree a response to the Government's consultation on its Housing White Paper 'Fixing our broken housing market'.
2. This not a key decision because it relates to a Government consultation and it was first published in the March 2017 Forward Plan.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet agree:

- (i) the consultation response set out in Appendix A; and
- (ii) that where an identical response has been agreed by both this Council and Cambridge City Council in response to individual questions that these are included in a joint consultation response.

Reasons for Recommendations

3. The planning and housing changes proposed in the Housing White Paper will affect South Cambridgeshire and consultation responses are proposed which seek to ensure the changes are appropriate for this district. Cambridge City Council has already agreed its response to the 38 questions in the consultation and officers consider that where a common response is appropriate for both Council's it would be helpful to Government to indicate this through the submission of a joint response. The emerging Local Plans of each authority together provide a spatial framework to guide future growth across the Greater Cambridge area as a whole. Where a common response is not appropriate a separate consultation response will be submitted. Appendix A identifies where a joint response is proposed and where is separate response is proposed.

Executive Summary

4. This report summarises the main content of the Housing White Paper and proposes a response to the 38 questions included in the consultation.

Background

5. On 7 February 2017, the Government published the housing white paper *Fixing our broken housing market*. In this document, the Government sets out its plans to build more homes by:
 - a. Planning for homes in the right places, mainly through local and neighbourhood plan policies;

- b. Building homes faster, through better linkages of housing with infrastructure, addressing skills shortages and speeding up the development management process;
 - c.. Diversifying the housing market, focussing on different forms of tenure, encouraging more small and medium-sized builders, supporting housing associations and local authorities to build more homes and advocating modern methods of construction; and
 - d. Helping people now, but addressing a wide range of housing needs.
6. The white paper is a consultation paper, with the focus of the consultation on the first two of these priorities. The consultation runs from 7 February to 2 May 2017. A copy of the white paper can be viewed online at:
www.gov.uk/government/publications/fixing-our-broken-housing-market

Considerations

Key proposals – planning for homes in the right places

7. In order to plan for the right homes in the right places, the white paper puts forward the following proposals:
- Enabling spatial development strategies, produced by new combined authorities or elected Mayors, to allocate strategic sites (with agreement of all authorities);
 - Ensuring that every local authority has an up to date plan in place, with flexibility as to how the plan is set out. There would be no requirement for it to be a single local plan;
 - Introducing a standard approach to assessing housing requirements;
 - At least 10% of residential allocations in local plans should be 0.5 hectares or less;
 - Legislate to allow locally accountable New Town Development Corporations to be set up, enabling local areas to use them as a delivery vehicle if appropriate;
 - Amend national policy so that authorities should amend Green Belt boundaries only when they can demonstrate that they have fully examined all other reasonable options;
 - Local and neighbourhood plans and area action plans should set out clear design expectations and make clear that design should not be used as a valid reason to object to development where it accords with clear design expectations set out in statutory plans;
 - Amend national policy so that proposals should:
 - Make efficient use of land and avoid building homes at low densities where there is a shortage of land for meeting identified housing requirements;
 - Address the particular scope for high density housing in some urban locations; and
 - Ensure that the density and form of development reflect an area's character, accessibility and infrastructure capacity.
 - Review the Nationally Described Space Standards to ensure greater local housing choice.

Key proposals – building homes faster

8. In order to build homes faster, the Government plans to invest in making the planning system more open and accessible, tackling unnecessary delays. Key proposals include:

- Amending national policy to agree local planning authorities' housing land supply on an annual basis;
- Increasing nationally set planning fees;
- Consulting on the introduction of fees for planning appeals;
- Tackling unnecessary delays by prohibiting planning conditions that do not meet the national policy tests, and by ensuring that pre-commencement conditions can only be used with the agreement of the applicant;
- Requiring applicants to provide more information about the timing and pace of new housing as part of the planning application process. This is also intended to assist the monitoring process;
- Encouraging local planning authorities to consider how realistic it is that a site will be developed when deciding whether to grant planning permission for housing on sites where previous permissions have not been implemented;
- Amending national policy to encourage local planning authorities to shorten the timescales for developers to implement permissions for housing development from three years to two years, except where shorter timescales could hinder scheme viability or deliverability;
- Simplifying and speeding up the completion notice process, whereby if development on a site has stopped and there is no prospect of completion, the local planning authority can withdraw planning permission for the remainder of the site;
- Reviewing compulsory purchase powers to deliver stalled sites;
- Introduction of a new housing delivery test for local planning authorities, with the first assessment period being for the period April 2014 to March 2017. From November 2017, where delivery is below 95% of the housing requirement, an action plan would need to be prepared setting out actions to get delivery back on track, and if delivery is below 85% of the housing requirement, authorities would need to add a 20% buffer to their five year land supply if they have not already done so. From November 2018, if delivery falls below 25% of the housing requirement, relevant policies would be deemed out of date, and a presumption in favour of sustainable development would apply. From November 2019, the presumption would apply if delivery falls below 45% of the housing requirement, and from November 2020, the presumption would apply if delivery falls below 65% of the housing requirement.

Key proposals – diversifying the market and helping people now

9. In order to open up the housing market to smaller builders and those who embrace innovative and efficient methods, the Government is proposing to:
 - Support small and medium-sized builders in growing, including through the Home Building Fund;
 - Support housing associations to build more, and explore options to encourage local authorities to build again;
 - Amend the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to introduce a clear policy expectation that housing sites deliver a minimum of 10% affordable home ownership units. It will be for local areas to work with developers to agree an appropriate level of delivery of starter homes, alongside other affordable home ownership and rented tenures;
 - Promote Building for Rent through changes to the NPPF;
 - Amend the NPPF to allow more brownfield land to be released for developments with a high proportion of starter homes. This will be on employment sites that have been vacant for a long period of time (5 years) and are not strategic employment sites; on some leisure and retail uses; and on the Green Belt in certain circumstances;

- Through the Neighbourhood Planning Bill introduce a new statutory duty on the Secretary of State to produce guidance for local planning authorities on how they should be meeting the housing needs of older and disabled people; and
- Clarification that Starter Homes, with appropriate local connection tests, can be acceptable on rural exception sites.

Next Steps

10. The draft consultation response for consideration is set out in full in Appendix A. These responses relate to the consultation questions posed in Appendix B, the housing white paper. The questions are focused on the changes to planning policy and legislation needed as well as other proposals set out in Chapters 1 (planning for the right homes in the right places) and 2 (building homes faster) of the housing white paper.
11. Many of the changes proposed in the white paper involve changes to the NPPF. The Government intends to publish a revised NPPF later this year, which will consolidate the outcomes from previous and current consultations, for example the report of the Local Plans Expert Group. It will also incorporate amendments to reflect changes made to national policy through Written Ministerial Statements since March 2012. These are:
 - Support for small scale developers, custom and self-builders (20 November 2014);
 - Sustainable Drainage Systems (18 December 2014);
 - Starter Homes (2 March 2015);
 - Parking: helping local shops and preventing congestion (25 March 2015);
 - Housing standards: streamlining the system (25 March 2015);
 - Local Planning, which covers onshore wind farms (18 June 2015);
 - National Planning Policy Framework: technical adjustment (22 July 2015);
 - Green Belt protection and intentional unauthorised development (17 December 2015); and
 - Neighbourhood planning (17 December 2015).

A number of modifications have already been proposed to the emerging Local Plan as a result of these statements.

Options

12. With reference to the proposed consultation response Cabinet could:
 - (i) Approve it;
 - (ii) Reject it;
 - (iii) Amend parts of it;
 - (iv) Decide to submit a response to some or all of the questions from this authority only.

Implications

13. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk management, equality and diversity, climate change, community safety and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered: -

Financial

14. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The costs of preparing the Local Plan has already been budgeted for and included in the budget.

Legal

15. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

Staffing

16. There are no direct staffing implications arising from this report.

Risk Management

17. There are no direct risk management implications arising from this report.

Equality and Diversity

18. There are no direct equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

Climate Change

19. There are no direct climate change implications arising from this report.

Consultation responses (including from the Youth Council)

20. This report has been prepared jointly by South Cambridgeshire Planning and Housing Officers. Cambridge City Council officers were also consulted.

Effect on Strategic Objectives**Objective1 – Living Well**

21. Access to good housing is important to good health. The Local Plan seeks to meet housing needs whilst protecting the natural and built environment.

Objective 2 – Homes for our Future

22. The Housing White Paper is intended to help secure the delivery of a wide range of housing to meet the needs of existing and future communities across England.

Objective 3 – Connected Communities

23. There are no direct implications for this strategic objective.

Objective 4 – An innovative and dynamic organisation

24. The Housing White Paper is likely to result in wide ranging changes to the planning and housing functions of this Council which will require innovation and dynamism in order to deliver the best possible services to resident at the best cost.

Appendices

Appendix A: Proposed Consultation Response to the Housing White Paper

Background Papers

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

National Planning Policy Framework:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planningpolicy-framework--2>

National Planning Practice Guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practiceguidance>

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