

**The County Durham**  
**Housing Strategy**  
**Statement of**  
**Consultation**  
**2019**

*Altogether better*



# **County Durham Housing Strategy**

## **Statement of Consultation**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of the Housing Strategy Statement of Consultation is to provide an overview of comments received as part of the consultation on the Housing Strategy (2019) and the council's responses to these comments. Consultation on the Housing Strategy was undertaken between 25 January 2019 and the 8 March 2019.

During the consultation wider engagement was sought on the issues identified in the Housing Strategy. This was cast through a prism of conversation with the people of County Durham to gain their insight and feedback.

All representations submitted in response to the Housing Strategy have been considered and changes made where possible to reflect the comments made when preparing the Housing Strategy.

### **Methods of engagement**

A wide range of communication methods were used to inform and engage with County Durham residents and other interested parties. Methods of communication and engagement included:

- **Email / letter** – direct notification to relevant parties
- **Internet** - The Housing Strategy and other documents associated with the consultation were made available both to view and to download on the Housing Strategy consultation page <http://www.durham.gov.uk/article/19579/Consultations-2019> . The Housing Strategy consultation was also publicised on the council's website <http://www.durham.gov.uk/article/2813/Housing-strategies-and-policies> ,
- **Social Media** - Facebook and Twitter were used to widen publicity and awareness of the Housing Strategy Consultation.
- **Printed Media** A press release informing the public of the consultation was sent to printed media outlets to assist in promoting the consultation.
- **Direct Contact** – Specific meetings with groups or individuals were set up and tailored to meet specific areas of interest.
- **Community Venues** - Copies of the Housing Strategy were placed at all local libraries and at council customer access points across the County.
- **Attendance at meetings** - Council officers attended a range of pre-existing organised meetings where presentations were made or information provided to inform local communities and interested parties that the council was consulting on the Housing Strategy and to provide an overview of content.
- **Consultation drop in events** - Council officers attended a range of pre-existing organised meetings where presentations were made or information provided to inform local communities and interested parties that the council was consulting on the Housing Strategy.

### **Who was consulted?**

- **Residents**
  - 22 drop in events across the County to provide members of the public and other interested parties with one to one discussions and Q and A with officers. Documents

and information were available to review and forms were available to complete and to provide comments.

- **Elected Members**
  - Weekly members' drop-in events at County Hall.
  - An Overview and Scrutiny Committee workshop was held detailing the key messages of the Housing Strategy with workshop discussion on identified themes.
- **Letters to MPs**
  - Letters sent to MP's of County Durham to advise MPs of the consultation on the Housing Strategy and the dates times and locations of consultation events that would take place across County Durham.
  - The Housing Strategy was sent out with the letter
- **County Durham Partnership**
  - Attendance at Area Action Partnership meetings to provide a presentation supported by a Q and A session.
  - The Housing Development group is attended by representatives from registered providers. An overview of the Housing Strategy was provided to the Housing Development Group, with discussion and a question and answer session.
  - Meetings have been held with registered providers as members of the Housing Forum upon request.
  - A presentation was provided to the Health and Wellbeing Board with opportunity for discussion.
  - A presentation with question and answer session was provided to the Reducing Reoffending Group.
- **Parish Councillors**
  - Letter notifying CDALC members of the consultation on the Housing Strategy.
  - The Housing Strategy was presented to CDALC with a Q and A session
- **Specialist interest groups**
  - A presentation was provided to the Disability Partnership with an opportunity for question and answer.
  - A presentation was provided to the People's Parliament a group which comprises of people who have an interest in the issues that affect people with a learning disability.
  - The consultation was raised with the Private Landlords Focus Group and Landlords Forum.
  - As part of the consultation process a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) workshop was carried out in order to identify assess the Housing Strategy from a related health aspect.

## **Consultation outputs**

### **Meetings overview**

The following section provides an overview of meetings held as part of the consultation. Further information on discussions at meetings is set out at Appendix 1.

- **Overview and Scrutiny 4 February 2019**

**Attendees:** All Overview and Scrutiny members and co-optees were invited to the workshop with 28 members and 5 co-optees attending.

Method: Presentation, Question and Answer session and themed workshops.

#### Summary of the main issues raised

Focused group discussions took place on the following areas identified by the group contained in the Housing Strategy:

- Raising the standard of the private rented sector;
- Bringing empty homes back into use;
- Delivering high quality,
- Affordable homes;
- Infrastructure for communities;
- Homes in rural areas and
- Provide more housing to meet the needs of older people.

During the group discussion section of the workshop, notes were taken of the comments made by both members and co-optees in relation to these areas. The Housing Strategy was seen as generally positively received.

- **County Durham Partnership, 11/02/19.**

A presentation on the Housing Strategy with workshop sessions was undertaken with the County Durham Partnership. In this workshop the Partnership were given two questions to discuss and feedback on relating to: 1 The Key Messages of the Housing Strategy, 2 The delivery of the Housing Strategy.

#### Summary of the main issues raised:

Many elements of the Housing Strategy were welcomed, including prioritising older persons housing and the use of case studies to demonstrate 'best practice' the other main issues raised were: empty homes, quality of private rental stock, building design, and rural issues.

- **Area Action Partnerships 25/01/19-08/03/19**

#### Attendees meetings with 13 AAPs throughout the consultation period.

Attendance at 13 of the AAP's during the consultation period between 25 January and 8 March 2019; one AAP was unable to accommodate a meeting within the consultation period and members of the AAP were happy not to have a meeting regarding the Housing Strategy. The Housing Strategy was presented to the other 13 AAPs and attending public, with times for questions and feedback afterwards.

#### Summary of the main issues raised:

The Housing Strategy was positively received in the AAP meetings. In particular the 'key messages'- of affordable housing and housing for older people as a priority were welcomed. The AAP's regarded it as a good this that the Housing Strategy was being consulted on alongside the CDP. There were queries regarding how the Strategy would be enforced.

- **Housing Development Group, 06/03/19.**

**Attendees** Representatives from: Northstar, Livin, CDHG, Homegroup, Karbon, Riverside, Bernicia, Homes England.

An overview of Housing Strategy was provided to the Housing Development with updates on the progress of the consultation process up until the meeting. This was followed by an informal Q&A session where attendees could also give feedback.

Summary of the main issues raised:

The Housing Strategy was positively received. Registered Provider's discussed up the issues of internet connectivity in relation to rural activity in terms of receiving service, and the implications of internet access to new builds and existing dwellings for RP houses.

• **County Durham Housing Group, 20/02/19**

The Housing Strategy was presented to the County Durham Housing Group (CDHG) with discussion amongst the group.

Summary of the main issues raised

The main issues raised were:

- Flexible and innovative delivery of housing products for older people
- Housing for people with disabilities rather than just older people with disabilities
- Affordable homes
- Narratives around homelessness
- Centralisation of housing products in County Durham
- Housing Strategy Action Plan.

• **Disability Partnership, 29/01/19**

**Attendees-** 5 members of the Partnership, 2 policy officers, 1 highways officer.

The Housing Strategy was presented to the Disability Partnership on 29/01/19. There was then a session afterwards where the Disability Partnership could ask further questions and give feedback.

Summary of the main issues raised

The Housing Strategy was viewed generally as a positive document the main issues raised were:

- Internal accessibility of a dwelling
- Accessible housing shouldn't just be for older people; homes should be lifetime homes so they can adapt when the resident's needs change through-out their lives.
- Housing need for bungalows
- People shouldn't have to leave their homes and communities.
- Consideration needs to be given to other disabilities beyond wheelchair user, for example those who are blind.

• **People's Parliament, 06/02/19**

**Attendees** 5 Members of the Parliament, 2 policy officers, 1 Equality officer

The Housing Strategy was discussed with the members of the People's Parliament followed by a question and answer session. The group gave feedback and suggestions about the Housing Strategy.

Summary of main issues raised.

- There is a need for more supported housing, specialist housing and bungalows so more people can live independently.
- Affordable housing should have wider halls and doorways and space for wheelchair users to move around.
- There should be better outdoor space around houses.
- Parking outside supported and specialist housing, for grocery deliveries and for carers to visit is a problem.

**Health Impact Assessment workshop, 18 February 2019**

**Background**

As part of the consultation process a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) workshop was carried out in order to identify and assess the Housing Strategy from a related health aspect and to feed into any recommendations and subsequent modifications to the Housing Strategy. Registered Providers, Health officers, Housing Officers, and Policy officers, were amongst the attendees who informed the HIA report and analysis.

**Scope**

The associations between health and housing are well established. The homes in which people live are a key determinant of their health and an important factor in safety, independence and wellbeing. Public health and housing priorities within County Durham include social isolation, fuel poverty, childhood accidents and smoke-free settings.

**Approach**

A Health Impact Assessment (HIA) was used to assess County Durham's Housing Strategy in relation to available evidence and stakeholder's expertise. Public Health and Policy colleagues conducted a scoping exercise of the draft strategy and identified i) support for older and vulnerable people; ii) access; and iii) standards of housing stock and wider-environment; for prioritisation. A workshop with colleagues from spatial policy, housing providers, the CCG and public health was facilitated. During this workshop colleagues considered the implications of these areas on health, equity and specific populations in County Durham.

**Outcomes**

The HIA process produced 53 recommendations to support health through the County's housing policy and practice. This included a range of actions such as approaches to improve access to affordable housing and training housing officers in MECC. It noted the positive work already underway and identified areas for development including identifying elderly people in their own homes who required support to maintain their property as part of effective falls prevention. Colleagues from both health and housing disciplines reported the process created a unique opportunity to collaborate.

**Table with representations made as part of the consultation and council responses**

<b><u>Comment Made</u></b>	<b><u>Response</u></b>
<p>Over the past 15 years there has been a reduction in accidental dwelling fires (ADFs) due to a significant amount of home fire safety prevention work conducted by the Fire and Rescue Service with support from our partner agencies. However, more recent in the last two years we have seen an increase in ADFs and we continue to see common trends in those who are injured or die in dwelling fires. The main cause of ADFs and associated injuries are cooking related fires with other common factors for deaths and injuries being linked to those who are elderly, live alone or are vulnerable for various reason.</p> <p>Could I please ask that under your objective: “To provide housing advice, assistance and support for older and vulnerable people” with the outcome to “Provide care and support for older vulnerable people including adaptations to properties”, you consider additional adaptations to improve fire safety in the home which will support people to live longer in safety at home, these could include but are not limited to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hard wired smoke alarms with detection extended into the kitchen and connected to care link;</li> <li>• Cooker automatic shutoff which either shut off automatically after a period of time when left unsupervised or shuts off automatically on activation of the fire alarms;</li> <li>• Domestic sprinklers.</li> </ul> <p>These adaptation would off course be beneficial to any property redevelopment, however if they cannot be installed in all properties due to budget restraints, please consider them in those being developed for older and vulnerable people.</p> <p>I and my team would be happy to discuss these options further.</p>	<p>Comments noted. As part of the Housing Strategy consultation process a Health impact Assessment has been carried out to identify and assess the Housing Strategy from a related health aspect. This has included identifying opportunities to address accidents in the home.</p> <p>The additional adaptations cited are not presently included as requirements for new builds, although the council would welcome these additional adaptations being included by developers in their developments.</p> <p>The building regulations do take into account the elderly when new housing is constructed. Part M of the regulations state the minimum and maximum height of switches and sockets, each dwelling must have an accessible ground floor W.C. and a level entrance. It should also be ‘future proofed’ with the inclusion of an electricity point near the stairs for a stair lift. Your comments have been passed on to Building Control, who are happy to discuss the options mentioned further.</p>
<p>In response to the Consultation Document on Page 7: ‘Develop an approach to selective licencing in County Durham’ we should be consider Option 4: Consider a designation to cover 100% of the geography of Durham and 100% of all PRS stock.</p>	<p>Comment noted. The council are in the process of developing an evidence base to inform the Selective Licensing approach.</p>

<p>All the other Option will only more the problems in other parts of County Durham. As Chairman of 'New Shildon Residents Ass.' we have been asking for Landlord licencing for a number of years.</p>	
<p>Living fully supports the view that more housing products are needed for older people through building and acquiring homes. The size of this growing demographic is such that we are unable to "build our way out of it" therefore consideration should also be given to using existing suitable properties such as low demand properties and ex Right to Buy properties to meet the housing needs and preferences of older people.</p> <p>Living supports the Council's policy of 10% provision for homes for older persons on sites of over 10 units. A preference for bungalow or level access would require strategic support from the Council with regards to land availability via developers, who strive for density. Living believes it is also necessary to look at whether multi-generational houses would also meet this requirement.</p> <p>Living supports the Council's strategic aim to provide care and support for older and vulnerable people. The support provided to older and vulnerable people is a key part of Living's Business Strategy and is delivered via our emerging Living Well offer which aims to provide an enhanced service to enable older and vulnerable customers to sustain their tenancies and remain in their homes for longer.</p> <p>Recognising that a Housing Market Position Statement is still emerging, Living would welcome involvement in developing and shaping the offer for older and vulnerable people.</p> <p>Living agrees there is a need to bring viable vacant housing back into use and is interested in working with the Council on this through our designated person who will attend the Development Group. Registered providers play a key role in sustaining communities and neighbourhoods and Living believes it is important to ensure that balance is maintained and that bringing empty properties back into use does not negatively impact on the delivery</p>	<p>Support and comments noted. The Housing Strategy is a collaborative working document aimed at joint working with its partners in its delivery.</p> <p>The council are in the process of developing an evidence base to inform the Selective Licensing approach. Which will be consulted on. The Housing Market Position Statement is still emerging and will be developed in discussion with the Housing Forum. The council welcomes working with providers, including regarding bringing viable vacant housing back into use. This is a positive discussion area for the Housing Development Group.</p> <p>We are aware of Living's interest in furthering accessibility. As a partnership we have agreed to an upgrade to mobile enabled sites, which is scheduled to go live in the summer. We are aware of the issues Living have had with interface between Living and DKO and a meeting has been arranged between Living and Housing management for June 2019.</p>



of affordable housing. We also believe careful thought needs to be given to where/how S106 funds are to be directed.

Livin supports this aim and is already committed to buying back previous Right to Buy properties where there is a business case. Livin also supports the use of grant and S106 agreements to accelerate this and to ensure the viability of schemes. Livin currently has 32 affordable homes being developed aimed at meeting affordable housing need in County Durham and we are currently looking at purchasing 14 former Right to Buy properties from April 2019.

Livin welcomes the approach to achieving mixed and balanced communities and already has evidence of this in our own communities. We would welcome working with the Council to address the issues we have in our local communities, as well as identifying the funding opportunities to tackle this. Livin supports buy back of properties and also recognises there are a range of solutions that can be deployed in terms of maintaining a balance of rented stock with other tenures. Another key factor is the inter-linkages with other socio-economic regeneration and Livin has a strong record of the successful delivery of employability, financial wellbeing and social wellbeing support and projects.

Livin supports this objective, particularly as the welfare reforms are a key issue for our customers. Livin is also a large employer in County Durham and employs a number of county residents. Livin welcomes the opportunity to play a lead role on this support group

Livin supports the objective of improving access to housing by ensuring Durham Key Options is accessible and easy to use. Livin has been driving this for some time and recognises the value of having a mobile enabled and app based seamless customer journey between the DKO system and the systems of partnership members. Problems with the DKO website have previously resulted in Livin having to create its own 'front-end' which is an additional layer in the process, which a fundamental redesign would negate the need for.

This transformation requires time, effort, collaboration and financial investment to make

<p>it happen. It is important that the current barriers to access are understood including process/system barriers as well as the needs and preferences of different customer groups such as younger people who expect an instantly accessible and responsive service. Digitisation of housing access through a redesigned, enhanced and streamlined Durham Key Options platform would be a key enabler for the Council and housing providers within the County. Again, we would welcome an opportunity to play a lead role in this.</p> <p>Livin supports the development of a Local Lettings Agency and wishes to work with the Council to make this a success, recognising that it can play a key role in the prevention of homelessness through maximising the use of existing stock that is available and where there is a support network in place. Livin already supports the recently introduced Commitment to Refer.</p> <p>Livin welcomes a flexible approach to the Housing Strategy and an annual review which is particularly useful as circumstances do change which requires a flexible and adaptable approach to strategy delivery. Livin acknowledges the support required through different partnership groups to ensure the strategy is delivered effectively and is prepared to commit Senior staff to making an effective and meaningful contribution to these groups.</p>	
<p>I am a private landlord with tenanted properties both in County Durham and in several other counties. I have read the plan and would like the following observations to be taken into consideration.</p> <p>On page four, I object to the breakdown of properties being classified as owner occupied, affordable or private rented – and the percentages given totalling 100%. Our properties, and those of many other private landlords are high quality and both affordable (in that they can be afforded at or near the local housing allowance level) and they are private rented. The fact that the three distinct categories total 100% implies that there is no housing falling into more than one category. We have Durham tenancies that have lasted for 5 years with no rent increases so are very comparable on all generally used criteria.</p>	<p>Comments noted, the breakdown of properties on page four relate to the different tenure of properties rather than a judgement on private sector rents. The definition of Affordable Homes align with the definition in NPPF. Information on Private Rented properties is based on evidence in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2016; this also reflects the broad perceptions of the PRS market based on a stakeholder survey. There is also evidence in the Housing Survey 17/18 which found nationally 25% of private rented stock to be so failing to meet minimum housing standards.</p> <p>Wherever possible the council try to work informally to engage landlords to improve management practices. Our housing team can take forward prosecutions for breach of a selective licence (which would indicate poor</p>

Licensing across the board would have a detrimental effect. We are accredited landlords providing high quality affordable accommodation. Our tenant turnover is low as most tenants stay a very long time – indeed we have only ever had the need to advertise one property on Durham Key Options. We have a business to run and if forced between increasing rents to long term tenants, reducing the quality of our properties or leaving the accreditation scheme in order to fund licensing money, we may well opt for leaving the accreditation scheme. We may also opt for selling if the property went into void and are aware that if the void was six months it could be sold with empty homes grants available – thus removing it from the reach of tenants who will only ever be able to afford to rent.

On page six, the statement “Private rented properties are often older types of housing, in poor condition and failing to meet the minimum condition standards” is based on what evidence? It also begs the question, at what point in the process of returning the property to the housing stock does this comment apply? When the property has been purchased and before work starts? If so, then that is the way the previous owner left the property and the new landlord can’t be held responsible for such conditions; if it is after the new landlord has rented the property out, then that is an enforcement matter, which can be addressed using existing powers.

To make such a statement without providing supporting evidence makes it subjective at best; indeed the accusation regarding this statement of “playing to the audience” and being used as another “justification” for introducing selective licencing, would be fair.

Also on page six, the section starting “however a small number operate poor management...” is interesting; if you know of such cases, then that is an enforcement issue and you already have very strong powers for dealing with such landlords, selective licensing will not increase the powers you have nor how you choose to use them.

It would be interesting to know how many prosecutions of the landlords who, in your words, “operate poor management” there have been in the last five years; if you know of such

management) and non-compliance with Selective Licensing requirements. In the last five years the housing team have undertaken 9 prosecutions, 6 for non-compliance with a licence and 3 for breach of licence condition. 14 formal and 17 informal warnings have been issued.

Whilst there is legislation for local authorities to tackle poor property condition, illegal eviction and harassment, Selective Licensing can set out specific conditions which aim to specifically address poor management by private landlords. The council are in the process of developing an evidence base to inform the Selective Licensing approach

The private sector housing team work proactively across the county to bring long term empty properties back into use and to support the private rented sector. Whilst the condition of empty properties can deteriorate having an adverse effect on the neighbourhood and surrounding area we acknowledge that properties are empty for a number of reasons. We recognise that private landlords play an important part in the provision of accommodation and believe they should be recognised and supported. One way of doing this is through our Private Landlord Accreditation Scheme.

The statement that PRS is “the tenure of choice for some” is based on a recognition that PRS can meet the needs of some tenants, including students and contract workers.

The Housing Market Position Statement has identified older persons as a group for particular consideration. As part of the SHMA a survey was undertaken regarding the housing options of older persons, the evidence suggests there is a need to continue to diversify the range of older persons’ housing provision. This includes renting from a housing association to meet their housing needs and living at home for as long as they wish with support needed, such as home adaptations and at home care.

landlords and have taken no action to address the issues you allege, then that could be argued to be a dereliction of duty and you need to clarify how selective licensing will help address such issues.

According to the latest information we've seen, there have been no entries made on the "rogue landlords" database; if that is the case and yet you are aware of such landlords within your area, why haven't you taken the necessary steps to address this and add the delinquent landlords?

On page seven – I believe that this report is biased when it passingly states that the PRS "is the tenure of choice for some". This should in fairness go on to state that there are very valid reasons why it should be. Much is said in press and campaigns about the unfairness of the "bedroom tax" – how many people are forced out of much loved homes in communities where they feel well-established as they are deemed to only "need" a smaller house. How people as they get older are penalised if they want a spare bedroom where family can come to stay. This is not an issue with the PRS. I am currently in the process of renting out a two-bedroom property to a single person at the one-bedroom rate of local housing allowance. Similarly there is not the problem of succession which currently exists in social housing – where bereaved people who can afford the rent (and may indeed have been actually paying the rent) for many years are automatically evicted because the person on the agreement has died. In many ways these two factors point to quality, affordable PRS being the tenure of choice for many people. We live in a changing world – more things are done online than ever before and things are no longer appropriate just because of it having been done that way in the past – but education on the benefits of change is always needed. I believe that the PRS now provides more housing than the traditional social housing sector – and people need to learn the benefits that it can bring.

On page eight when a decision as to the manner of selective licensing being considered – it should be remembered that accredited landlords who have had properties inspected are known to exceed the Durham standard. Forcing them to pay licensing fees can only

reduce their ability to maintain those high standards at an affordable level of rent. It is impossible to see a justification in imposing license fees to accredited landlords when they have already been inspected and confirmed as not being part of a problem.

As a landlord I cannot see how selective licensing can help an area known to have a lot of empty properties. Since the license is effectively a tax on renting a property out, a property not rented out does not need a licence. If anything – a license in a problem area would deter me from renting a property as the tax would then become payable. I would be much better to try to sell – possibly under the empty homes grant scheme and invest elsewhere.

The reason for homes being empty needs to be investigated and these may be different on a location by location basis.

Widespread selective licensing would be an attempt at revenue raising – effectively a landlord tax – but in my opinion it would compromise the provision of affordable quality housing by the PRS. It would exacerbate a problem that it claims to be attempting to address.

Special initiatives may be appropriate in a very targeted manner for key districts focussing on the problems of specific locations.

On page eight there is an implied but in no way proven correlation between the PRS landlord operations and the quantity of empty properties. Also an implication that a high number of PRS properties is in itself a problem! There is never in your report an implication that a high level of owner occupation in an area is a problem or a high level of affordable housing in an area being a problem. It is simply another category of property ownership. Since it is my understanding that across the country as a whole the PRS is as large as the social housing sector – it is hardly surprising that there will be areas where there is a high incidence.

It has to be remembered that a lot of owner occupied properties become run down – especially as owners' age, their income declines or expenses rise. Many such owners live in properties with a low EPC band which would actually now be illegal to rent out. These properties in fact often make their way to

auction and are modernised and brought back to good use by the PRS. When the visibly most dilapidated house on a street is improved in this manner it can improve the tone of the whole street.

Problem areas are far more often created by the actions of a bad element in the tenant community. There are tenants whose behaviour is unacceptable to both their landlords and the average good tenant as a neighbour. There are tenants who do not pay rent (which is a form of theft), damage property, act in an antisocial manner or turn to crime. Professional landlords have needed to become ever more vigilant in taking references and possibly using guarantors – which means that some tenants find that their only option is the tiny minority of bad landlords. Thus a ghetto is formed and good people who do not want these neighbours move away. I am fully in favour of properties in a bad condition being closed down and those landlords prosecuted and penalised severely. In an area with a reasonable amount of vacant affordable housing, I have to say that in my opinion most good quality tenants would have voted with their feet and moved away from a bad landlord or property.

If money needs to be raised from the housing sector to pay for closer inspection of suspected problem housing, it is much fairer to fine bad landlords heavily than to make all landlords pay by selective licensing.

Page nine is devoted to housing older people. It has to be remembered that the “bedroom tax” is a major driver behind the problems of the older person. Empty nesters suddenly find that they need a smaller property if they rent from social landlords. Whilst some elderly people aspire to living in a bungalow, this is far from a requirement. My own 96 year old mother lives in an Edwardian four-bedroom house. Stairs are perfectly manageable with a chairlift. I suspect that the survey of tenants preferred options highlights a lack of education on the benefits of renting from the private sector. Many people mistakenly believe that the “bedroom tax” is applicable across the board in rented housing. If more people understood that the “bedroom tax” was not an issue they would have probably expressed a

<p>much greater interest. Many people bemoan not being able to have family stay with them as they get older due to the bedroom tax. The biggest issue here is education.</p>	
<p>Housing for senior citizens: numbers. Special attention is paid to older people's housing; very good. But what is the ratio? If you are building 100 units of housing to general public how many for older generation? I did not see any ratio in the planning document: I could have missed in the tome. The current opinion is that older people's numbers are said to increase in the future. Therefore, more housing units may have to be considered than before.</p> <p>4. Housing for senior citizens: kitchen gardens. I propose you include some kind, or some level of garden plots for the seniors to engage in 'kitchen gardening'. Here I am not thinking of allotment gardens – they may be too big for the older generation to handle well. But smaller plots (say, 1 x 3 meter plots, one or two per person/family) should do. If they are raised beds, so much the better.</p> <p>I suggest you consult Age UK Durham County – who have been engaged in such activities for the benefit of older people for a few years under their flagship project called Come-Eat-Together (CET). 'Grow-you-own food' is an integral part of CET. Besides growing their own food there is a raft of more benefits: outdoor activities, fresh air, more sunlight plus Vitamin D, friendship and fellowship with fellow gardeners, reduced loneliness and social isolation, improved social &amp; emotional wellbeing, improved health &amp; physical wellbeing, etc. All these anticipated outcomes could ultimately reflect in reduced medical bills for the local NHS Trust. As a layman I would assume that every £1000 spent on kitchen gardens could return £5,000 benefit. Please ask the medicos.</p> <p>5. Housing and youth. When you build a housing estate for, say, 100 families – have you planned for children's after-school activities? Yes, I have seen small playgrounds for under-10s. How about for 11-15's? Where do they go? The olden day club houses, community centres are largely reduced in numbers or lost completely. Please bring them back into new housing estates, so that these children are kept occupied in their free time. The physical</p>	<p>Support and Comments noted. The County Durham Plan includes a policy to meet housing needs of older people. The policy requires that a minimum of 10% of the housing on sites of over 10 units, in relation to their design and house type, serve to increase the housing options of older people.</p>

<p>environment has to change to a caring and inclusive environment to protect the youth from trouble. This could go a long way in reducing teenage troubles, violence, crime, etc. The benefits are many times more valuable than the financial cost involved. Please as the police.</p> <p>6. Housing: individual house front and back yards. I see front yards paved into driveways in diverse ways. Such hardscaping is done using bricks, pavers, flagstones, concrete, tarmac, asphalt, bitumen, etc. Similarly back yards. All the precipitation falling on these driveways is drained away into roadside drains, and ultimately into North Sea.</p>	
<p>The Parish Council welcomes the document regarding housing related activity. The document contains useful and up to date statistical information which may be useful to the Parish Council in the preparation of its Neighbourhood Plan.</p> <p>The Parish Council supports the document.</p>	<p>Support noted</p>
<p>Ferryhill is a traditional mining community with many terraced houses which at the turn of the century support the coal mining community, the coal mining community is long since gone, we are now left with rows of terraced housing which over the years have been neglected and deteriorated. In many cases this housing has been "snapped up" by private landlords and housing associations.</p> <p>Ferryhill is now being left behind in new housing developments, similar sized towns in nearby areas are "awash" with new builds, the consequences for Ferryhill is a demographic switch where young families are moving to areas nearby (Spennymoor, Chilton, Shildon) The effects of this are a declining town centre.pupil numbers reducing in the majority of primary schools.</p> <p>Ferryhill needs investment urgently to stop its decline, most in need is the Dean Bank area and Ferryhill Station/Chilton lane area of Ferryhill Planning permission to build new homes was granted at the area south of Southside Ferryhill, which borders the A-167, since the</p>	<p>Comments noted. Empty homes and raising quality standards within the private rented sector are both key messages within the objective to maintain and improve standards across County Durham's housing stock and wider environment in the Housing Strategy. There are a range of activities that the council is involved in to address empty homes. As part of maintaining and improving standards in the PRS, the council are in the process of developing an evidence base to inform the Selective Licensing approach, which will be consulted on.</p>



<p>approval of the build (2016) no further progress has been made.</p> <p>Planning permission to build homes was also granted a number of years ago on the "Old NECOL" site (Brownfield site), no progress has been made also here.</p> <p>Ferryhill has a number of homes which have stood empty for a number of years, despite continuously requesting action from DCC these houses have been allowed to fall into disrepair,</p> <p>Often the landlords cannot be traced, Ferryhill has excellent transport links within the area, situated on the A-167, easily accessed with neighbouring larger towns, the A1 motorway is only 2 miles away.</p> <p>The main east coast railway line runs on the outskirts of Ferryhill with the former Leamside line an option to consider for future development of a rail link between Ferryhill and surrounding towns.</p> <p>All of the above must show Ferryhill in a positive light when considering new developments and regeneration of Ferryhill Close links to the private sector are essential, Compulsory purchase must be a considered option</p>	
<p>I think the reliance on the private rental sector is throwing our (councils) money away unnecessarily. It may be an outdated view but you tend to find these things are cyclical anyway but the council should be investing in its own land and building its own property and thinking about a 10 year plan rather than what this year's budget allows.</p> <p>You could easily put together a business case that sees new council stock being built, borrowing the money and paying back in under 10 years' time. I would do this as a council operation rather than using a not for profit like livin.</p> <p>If you think about the long term of housing that has seen a shift from people buying their own to people renting, what happens when the</p>	<p>Comments noted</p> <p>Affordable housing will be determined in line with policies in the local plan and in line with related evidence and will be informed by viability constraints. The proportions of affordable housing will be sought as part of planning applications for more than 10 units: The proportion will depend on the land value. It will range from 25% affordable housing provision on the highest value land down to 10% on the lowest value land.</p> <p>Livin is a Registered Provider of social housing, and a registered social landlord, providing affordable homes in County Durham.</p>

<p>current rental generation comes to retire? They will all be looking for council properties as they cannot afford the private rental, when the council doesn't have enough stock who forks the bill for the difference?</p> <p>Why is the council continuing to fund private landlord's profits rather than re-investing that money in itself?</p> <p>New build estates which have 'affordable housing' do not work either, there was one plan I saw that had over 100 new properties on it with 8 affordable housing.</p> <p>The council has enough of its own land so use it to build new council houses.</p> <p>I would also take not for profits (lavin) back into council ownership as they are the ones that have been running down all of the stock? How is it cheaper to pay a private landlord rather than running the facilities yourself?</p>	
<p>I understand that you are constrained by a sub-optimal national Government Policy. I agree with the 12 priorities set out.</p> <p>Given the light level of vacancies and poor quality housing especially in Shildon and Dene Valley I think you should go for option 4 - a designation of the whole county for selective licencing</p> <p>The statistics for Coundon Grange and Eldon lane are shocking. A neighbourhood planning approach would be welcome. I acknowledge that the regeneration of social housing at York Hill in Spennymoor was spectacularly successful. How easy is this where housing is private? What funds could you arrange for demolition in rundown neighbourhoods with high levels of PRS? This was done in Wheatley Hill, could it be extended?</p> <p>Looking at the maps - I am concerned at the high level of greenfield development in ribbon development, instead of in fill to improve and focus communities.</p>	<p>Support and comments noted</p> <p>Statistics on empty homes have been updated since the consultation.</p> <p>Empty homes and raising quality standards within the private rented sector are both key messages within the objective to maintain and improve standards across County Durham's housing stock and wider environment in the Housing Strategy. There are a range of activities that the council is involved in to address empty homes. As part of maintaining and improving standards in the PRS, the council are in the process of developing an evidence base to inform the Selective Licensing approach, which will be consulted on.</p> <p>Unfortunately, at the present time there are no funding streams available from central government departments or any government agency to assist with acquisition and demolition programmes. Previously central government provided resources for such initiatives through the Housing Market Renewal programme, however this is no longer the case. Infill and regeneration developments will continue to be supported, with the Policy</p>

This is one reason people are depressed about the state of our towns. A great deal of investment is on the outskirts while the centres remain rundown and even decrepit.

This is particularly evident at: Middlestone Moor and Merrington lane (Map 28) and Etherley and Auckland Park (Map 35).

I also think you should require higher standards of public spaces in the new developments. I have had many complaints from Burton Woods, Ourhamgate, Canney Hill and Sterling Way. I attach a speech made on this topic.

relating to 'Development on Unallocated Sites in the Built Up Area' within the emerging CDP permissive of such proposals.

The Local Plan provides the means to deliver open space in line with the Green Infrastructure Policy. In determining whether it is appropriate for open space to be provided on or offsite, the council will have regard to the Open Space Needs Assessment (OSNA).which clarifies the types of provision considered to be appropriate, including open space, sport and recreation facilities to the scale of the development.

Whilst we encourage developers to seek adoption from the Council we are unable to insist on this if they wish to go to a management company instead. In an effort to address concerns raised about the standards of maintenance carried out on open space of some of the developments, the Development Management Team have recently introduced a new planning condition that requires developers to submit and agree future maintenance specifications for the open spaces.

# **Appendix 1**

## **Minutes of consultation meetings**

Overview and Scrutiny County Durham Plan/ Housing Strategy Workshop	21
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## Economy and Enterprise OSC

### Overview and Scrutiny County Durham Plan/ Housing Strategy Workshop

4 February 2019

#### Overview and Scrutiny Response to the Housing Strategy

The following members and co-optees attended the workshop:

Members: Councillors E Adam, J Atkinson, A Batey (Chair), M Clarke, J Considine, G Darkes, D Hall, T Henderson, P Howell, I Jewell, P Jopling, L Kennedy, R Manchester, L Maddison, J Makepeace, O Milburn, J Nicholson, A Patterson, S Quinn, A Reed, E Scott, A Shield, J Stephenson, K Thompson, J Turnbull, A Willis, C Wilson and M Wilson.

Co-optees: D Balls, G Binney, S Errington, P Holding and R Morris.

Below are the issues raised by Overview and Scrutiny members and co-optees during the themed group work focusing on the Housing Strategy.

#### Group 1– Private Rented Sector

##### Issues/messages

- Issues identified at Ferryhill regarding absentee landlords and housing standards in the private rented sector. Concern about blight, absence of prosecutions for ASB and disrepair. Suggestions that demolition of such properties could be considered and that more council action was needed.
- Similar issues experienced at Pelton/Grange Villa but with CAT intervention and multi-agency involvement the issues were addressed with engagement of members and the local residents.
- Does the Council have registers of all empty properties in the County and also absentee landlord details? We need a register of private sector properties. There was reference to the information of this nature being pulled together as part of the application for a private sector selective licensing scheme.
- More use of estate walkabouts needed to identify empty housing or housing/environmental blight. Support for more enforcement powers and a county wide selective licensing scheme for private sector rented housing.
- Under a selective licensing scheme breach of licensing conditions or failure to register would be and has been prosecuted.
- Concern about falling/inadequate housing standards within the private rented sector.
- Where properties are inspected they need to be subject to formal inspection.

- Concerns about the number of private sector landlords that are in fact merely speculative investors.
- Concern expressed that the Council needs to tackle problem tenants in the private rented sector and their movement from 1 settlement to another.
- This is not just about landlords but also tenant responsibilities and lettings agents also.
- Lettings agents are as responsible as Landlords.
- A selective licensing scheme for County Durham should be introduced which gives the Council and Partners the appropriate opportunities for enforcement action/prosecutions.
- The Council will only know who all property owners are when the preparatory work is done for the Selective Licensing scheme.
- The selective licensing scheme needs to include the appropriate staffing resource to support and manage the scheme.
- Does the housing team have the capacity to inspect private sector rented properties?
- The Council should adopt a targeted approach to those areas which have the most obvious issues associated with private sector rented properties.
- The selective licensing scheme must adopt this approach and needs to note and manage potential tenant dispersal.
- The selective licensing scheme must be evidence based and will be a fee based scheme when introduced.
- The Council should ensure that all prosecution/enforcement action is pursued to the fullest extent and across all services. The Council and partners need to be proactive in the use of enforcement powers and ensure that statistics and information regarding such work is published and made available to Local Councillors and the public.
- What can the Fire Service do regarding fire safety standards – This can only be applied to Houses in Multiple Occupation.
- We need multi agency work addressing private sector rented properties and the work done to combat blight.

- Concern at the time taken to address ASB/Housing blight/environmental issues when reported to the Council and Service groupings.
- Concern at the siting of caravans on private sector and RSL properties.
- Important to protect tenants against illegal evictions/unacceptable behaviour by landlords.
- Problems associated with transient tenants and the associated environmental blight/ASB. Who is responsible? Landlords? Need enforcement powers to ensure that landlords remove such environmental waste.
- The landlord accreditation scheme is to be welcomed but experience of the service is not good.
- Will a fee based approach add to the risk of Landlords not registering under the scheme?
- Concern that the level of fees must be appropriate and not a disincentive for private sector landlords registering under the scheme.
- Reference made to a teams around properties approach to address associated Environmental, health ASB and Neighbourhood problems.
- It is important that assistance is available to landlords under both the Selective Licensing Scheme and the landlord accreditation scheme.
- It is important that inexperienced landlords are supported.
- Illegal evictions and unscrupulous landlords are a concern.
- Could private sector rented properties be offered to RSLs to manage? – Buy to lease/rent schemes.
- What can the LA do to attract funding to address private sector housing standards and empty homes?
- LA should take more advantage of “buy back” for private sector rented properties.
- Could a private sector landlord’s forum be established to share best practice and information across the sector?
- It is important that the County Council secures pledges of support from landlords in the private rented sector for its Selective Licensing application.

## Group 2 – Empty Homes

### Issues/messages

- New builds mean people no longer want to live in old terraces; even though the terraces may be better built and actually the rooms bigger. This results in terraced housing being by-passed and no longer used as starter homes. The progression from these old starter homes “up the housing ladder” has gone, aspirations have changed.
- There is a lack of infrastructure around homes that are empty so bringing them back into use can be an issue.
- New developments can cause village and community conflict as people move into the area and take the new developments.
- The decrease in desirability of old terraces means that they go to landlords and then further problems with absent landlords and empty homes can occur.
- Need to look at whether there is any legislation to make owners bring back empty homes. The problem can be that there are whole streets empty so where do you start? Legislation may be more effective with the odd house in the street that is empty rather than whole streets.
- Legislation should look at enforced sales where there are empty homes as a result of absent landlords.
- Selective Licensing will be a positive- welcomed by all.
- The strategy focus is on long-term empty homes, which is seen as a move in the right direction.
- CPO takes a long time and that is if the owner wants to work with the council so this may not be an option to tackle all empty homes.
- There is concern that the accreditation scheme will be misused if checks aren't robustly made. The scheme is voluntary so this can be open to abuse. We need selective and focused targets to show that the council will make sure landlords adhere to it. There is the danger that the private sector will attach to this good scheme and then the good landlords will leave because of what it has become, without checks.
- There are concerns with people who have lived in their house for a long time and find themselves living next to undesirable tenants. They can't move and can't do anything.
- Empty homes have an impact on neighbours such as where an empty home has drainage issues with waste seeping into the neighbouring houses or pointing issues. If the landlord is absent then how can it be rectified and so the landlord of the neighbours have to constantly do repairs.



- How do we help housing groups and associations? There is a buy back scheme but they may not be picking it up if it is off their radar.
- What about homelessness and empty homes, could that be a solution? There is an accommodation project with this in mind as housing people in b&b's as temporary accommodation is expensive.
- Some areas are impossible to bring back and so can't be saved and the only option is demolition but some are viable. How do we decide what houses to address and not waste money on areas that are beyond saving?
- Need to be careful that initiatives don't just displace the problem rather than address it.
- Regeneration needs to be of good quality to ensure sustainability including the management of the process. Integrity of the process is key.
- DCC has 3 enforcement officers so the authority is moving forward in the right direction.
- One problem with empty houses is that they tend to stay empty for a relatively long period which brings associated problems such as anti-social behaviour.
- It is felt that another issue is that the owners of the empty properties can be difficult to contact and when you do contact them it is difficult to get them to do anything about their houses. Enforcement needs to be stepped up to combat the blatant manipulation of policies and regulations that are in place.
- Need to look at why homes are empty too- is it that there are landlords who can't afford to refurbish or let them out or is it that there are absent landlords bulk buying and sitting on cheap stock. There is a problem with finding suitable tenants, if landlords have bad tenants who damage the property, landlords won't necessarily have the money to refurbish to rent out again and so it stays empty because the landlord just can't afford to do anything with it.
- Problem with rows of terraced housing in former pit villages sold off to private landlords.
- We should look at what the breakdown of empty homes in the county, what type of houses and what condition the properties are in such as are they deemed uninhabitable etc.
- There is also the issue of low demand in areas, which explains empty homes and would question if we should bring these homes back into use and the cost and whether they are viable.

- The Accreditation Scheme is a good thing as it sets minimum standards. Selective Licensing should also help with the rental sector.
- Most landlords are desperate for tenants, a lot will let them out to people who fail credit checks and don't have good references.
- CPO could reward the worst if there is the situation whereby the council buys back at market value.
- An area based approach is not a bad thing- those that need it most should get it because it could be our area next. We need a multi-agency approach in areas with large proportions of empty homes and then regarding the odd house that is empty we can have an intervention on singular empty homes.
- We need to work with housing associations to ensure best practice with this strategy on empty homes including groups with large housing stock.
- 106's - offsite affordable housing is a positive so that areas in need of quality affordable housing get it.
- Identify hotspots and incorporate this multi-agency working.
- Share best practice - including between authorities.
- Look at the wider aspect - areas on the margins not just solely on hotspots so that we can also see progress from our investment rather than black holes.
- We should also investigate what impact new developments have on an area- with new developments do people from the terraces move into them leaving the terraces empty or are the new developments filled with people migrating to the area meaning those in the terraces can't move up?- Is this a problem or not?

### Group 3 – Affordable Homes

#### Issues/messages

- Support for the percentages of Affordable Homes proposed in the emerging County Durham Plan (varies across county from 10% to 25%).
- Need to ensure that the distribution of Affordable Homes is equitable across the county that it varies in type of housing offered and payment options including intermediate or social rent. The Affordable Homes offer needs to meet the needs of the local communities.
- Need to consider that the Affordable Homes being developed meet the needs of County Durham residents.

- Need to look at how we can increase the delivery of Affordable Homes completed on an annual basis. The Housing Strategy will help ensure that the framework is in place to ensure that we deliver more than just reliance of private developers.
- As well as the Housing Strategy, an opportunity to explore develop an Affordable Housing Strategy or Action Plan for the delivery of Affordable Housing across County Durham. This could provide a greater understanding regarding different models of delivery to be explored. Including whether DCC could look at Chapter Homes model of delivery and consider building own affordable homes in the county for both sale and rent.
- In relation to 'Right to Buy' properties providers should be encouraged to buy back however there is the issue of additional cost to the provider as they would be required to buy the property back at full market value. Recognised that we need to control what happens to these properties and restrict the numbers going to private landlords.
- Need to look at community led development in the county and build upon work currently being done, provides a 'bottom up approach' to housing, ensuring that future development meets the needs of the local community.
- The CDP and the Housing Strategy need to have a flexible approach in relation to Affordable Homes so that it can react to the changing needs of local communities.
- Suggest comparing our performance in relation to the delivery of Affordable Homes with other local authorities in the North East.
- Agreed need to explore whether financial contributions from developers can be used to bring empty homes back into use in the county and ensure that they are affordable.
- Need to look at creating Affordable Homes in the county for people to live in for the long-term not just to get residents on the property ladder.
- Work with registered providers to provide more affordable homes for rent. In addition, look at how we can work with registered providers to bring more homes which are in disrepair back into use allowing social housing providers to take over the management of these homes.
- Need to lobby Government in relation to requiring student accommodation to pay Council Tax via Business Rates.
- Concern that Affordable Housing is often high density which creates issues in relation to parking, need to ensure that design principles are adhered to.
- Need to ensure that the running costs of Affordable Homes such as energy costs are affordable to reduce fuel poverty.

- Challenge in increasing the number of affordable homes in rural areas of the county, issue with young people leaving rural areas as they cannot afford to rent or buy property.
- Need to consider growing further the tourism offer in our rural areas such as B&B accommodation which would result in more jobs in our rural areas and increase the ability of residents to either buy or rent Affordable Homes.
- Important to continue to develop skills in the county. If residents have skills desired by employers even if they are made unemployed they will find another job quickly but need housing in place to help them.
- Need to promote the support DCC currently provides to bring empty homes or homes requiring repair and modernisation back into use.

#### Group 4 - Infrastructure Issues/messages

- The Western relief road is key to the infrastructure of County Durham and it was suggested that the road should incorporate a cycle track. Members were advised that the road will be accompanied by a cycling route. Discussion arose around the number of vehicles moving from developments to areas of employment and the impact this would have.
- The employment sites will be centred on the A19 and A1 and it was suggested this should also include the A68. Members were concerned about the congestion had hoped that the relief road would help to ease this especially around the Neville's Cross area and in Durham City Centre too. Members inquired how the relief roads were financed and were advised that this was through developer contributions and funding pots.
- Members advised that while this plan would provide comfort to some with a reduction in the number of housing sites there would be others who would challenge the sites still included. Members discussed that there had to be housing to get jobs, but it was a chicken and egg situation.
- There are issues with school places especially primary schools which had resulted in some cases children could not get into the local school and would have to travel further distances to attend school. Development was maxing out capacity at the nearest schools and parents were then directed to schools further away. The number of developments and parents' freedom of choice impacted upon the availability of school places, but members suggested that the 2 mile radius for primary schools was too big and in some cases where village schools had closed children could be travelling more than 2 miles. Members suggested that the decision should be based on the density of the area. Members were advised that guidance was given by colleagues in Education Services.

- There are threats to GP's surgeries in the county with approximately 30% under threat due to lack of staff and this would impact on infrastructure. Members were advised that the authority was in discussion with CCGs. Members were concerned that GP surgeries do not comment on planning applications as the consultation is done with a communication officer of the CCGs and GPs themselves do not get a chance to comment. Members suggested there should be stronger relationships and more engagement with CCGs.
- Members were concerned that houses are being developed in the county with no supporting infrastructure e.g. a school closed but planning permission was given to build family homes and arrangements were made for children to attend schools elsewhere. 'It feels like the infrastructure is not planned'. Members were advised that infrastructure is being planned but the challenge for officers at DCC and partners is 'how do you deliver the infrastructure?'
- Members highlighted the importance of schools, GP surgeries, retail developments and amenities especially in rural areas.
- There was discussion about how to attract GPs to work in rural locations as there was a preference from GPs to live in urban areas. It was not only about GP surgeries but accident and emergency provision in rural areas were also under-provided and too far to travel. Members suggested that a potential solution was to train nurses as nurse practitioners. Members were concerned that CCGs do not respond to planning applications although engagement has taken place there was more work to be done, there were 70 GP practices in County Durham covered by 2 CCGs.
- There were concerns in relation to transport links to schools, colleges and places of employment and suggested that infrastructure should follow development. Members highlighted issues with public transport in areas where the last bus was before 8pm and in some rural areas there was only one bus per week in each direction. Sunday service was also a problem for people who worked on a Sunday as public transport started later and was not as regular as weekdays.
- It was suggested that the amount of parking on developments should be addressed to create more parking. Members were advised that the parking standards have been revised recently to allow more parking at residential locations. Members discussed the width of roads on new developments and it was also highlighted that older estates cannot cope with the amount traffic today as they were developed in an era when there was little traffic.
- Issues with car parking in Durham City and that when the new DCC HQ is built there will be a reduction in available parking and suggested an extension of the park and ride scheme to enable shoppers and tourists to park. Members were advised that there would be an extension at Snipely and Belmont park and ride venues and Stonebridge would be added as a park and ride venue. Members suggested that Durham City needs further regeneration to become more vibrant and increase employment in the city. Members also commented that the Bus Station on North

Road was inadequate and should be more welcoming. Members were advised that work is ongoing to improve the North Road bus station on its current location.

- Members suggested that the impact of schools and GP services were inter authority/cross border issues and that we had a duty to co-operate with neighbouring authorities.

#### Group 5 – Homes in rural areas

##### Issues/messages

- Infrastructure an issue including bus routes and schools etc. together with Wifi, Internet and mobile phone connectivity. Need to ensure that the infrastructure including transport and broadband connectivity is in place to retain people within their area and support the sustainability of local businesses and services.
- Sufficient land and land value, transport and accessibility.
- Affordability of housing – Young people are unable to stay within rural communities.
- Support the focus on homes for elderly and affordable housing.
- Exceptions policy for affordable housing in rural areas supported.
- Ageing population and a need to meet needs.
- Improve quality of jobs and transport infrastructure.
- Lack of older person housing, in particular bungalows means that there are limited opportunities for older people to downsize. This means that existing housing is not available to young families. Need opportunities for young people to get on the housing market but also housing for the elderly people.
- Lack of housing and opportunities means that young people move away and then don't return. This leads to an ageing demographic within villages.
- Commuter villages/towns - Not the local employment or work for owners within recent housing developments.
- Not sufficient mix of housing within rural communities. Need sustainable mixed developments that are affordable, accessible and meet the needs of all (.local need).
- Transport links in rural communities need improving as difficult to travel between rural villages to larger areas eg Middleton-in-Teesdale.
- Transport and accessibility particularly an issue for young and older people.

- High number of 2<sup>nd</sup> home or holiday rentals.
- Resident pressures against development within rural areas
- Affordable Housing – 10% minimum, need to be more proactive to meet people’s needs.
- Social Landlords – Buying houses on estates can cause conflict with short term rentals and not sustainable. Welcome the potential to address these issues.
- Within Weardale and Teesdale where there is farming heritage there has historically been generations of families operating what was the family business but now younger people seeking wider opportunities away from the area and do not return.
- Consideration needs to be given to the density of houses and car parking infrastructure, it is noted that this will be addressed through policies within the CDP.
- Concerns about the suitability of properties for retirement homes.
- Consideration of mix of developments and assisted schemes for bungalows.
- Need to understand the nature of the area in relation to design. Design needs to be attractive.
- Private landlords with short term rentals risk decline and disruption with communities.
- Use of CPOs to develop existing empty or derelict plots.
- Access to GP and Health Services.

#### Group 6 – Homes for older people

##### Issues/messages

- Lack of suitable accommodation for older people – no-one wants to build bungalows and there is little rented accommodation for older people particularly if they require improved access eg wider access for wheelchairs etc.
- It was felt that changes to age limits within the lettings policy have meant that housing which was previously limited to being older people’s accommodation is now available to a wider age group – sometimes to the detriment of older people and their established community. Younger people tend to have different lifestyles and this can cause issues locally leading to older people wanting to move and losing their sense of community and facing isolation. Example given of a street where a younger person was housed amongst a group of older people bungalows. The older people used a local community centre but after the young neighbour moved in, the older people moved out and the community centre eventually closed.

- It was recognised that some people may wish to live in a mixed age community rather than all older people living in one area.
- Reference was made to small projects in Langley Moor for the deaf and visually impaired that provides specialist facilities for all age groups and are successful.
- Dementia friendly housing – specialist housing to cater for increase in numbers of the population expected to be diagnosed with dementia. Also need to make outside areas dementia friendly too.
- Housing should be designed for people with their future needs in mind - as people age their housing needs change and they may require e.g. a downstairs bathroom. If housing could be designed to be flexible people could stay in them longer.
- Older people are often reluctant to move from their homes and they need to be able to stay in them longer with necessary adaptations. It was recognised that these could be costly and social landlords are reluctant to make adaptations unless they receive funds from the local authority.
- Aged Miners homes are recognised as being very good – large, well designed and maintained. They have room for family members to stay to assist with any caring.
- There was concern that Universal Credit rules had in some instances lead to younger people being asked to leave the family home and subsequently being allocated bungalows reducing this stock for older people.
- The suitability of bungalows size and number of bedrooms was discussed, as rooms could be very small and it was suggested that two bungalows could be developed into one larger.
- Members suggested that properties should be built which can then be adapted which would make the most of the existing housing stock in the future.
- Extra Care Homes were seen as a good option for some as residents could keep their own furniture, have own space, with some meals provided and cleaning included in the rent. The Elms in Chester le Street as an example. Also recognised that some people don't want to move from their villages and communities and as people get older they are generally more reluctant to leave their homes and communities. This means facilities should be delivered across the county to cater for need.
- Transport and general accessibility to facilities is key. Not just homes to be accessible but the surrounding locality – dropped kerbs is a key issue.
- Concern that developers insist that building bungalows is not economically viable for them. DCC needs to be much firmer with them. Members suggested that in only Registered Housing Providers (Livin was identified) are prepared to build bungalows and it was commented that DCC should offer them land to build more. Importance



to enforce planning policy to ensure that developers build 10% older people housing on their developments.

- It was recognised that not all older people want bungalows as they might have difficulties with maintaining a garden.
- Important to consider the wider infrastructure – transport, access to GP surgeries, local shops etc.
- Importance of succession planning for older properties.
- People do not want to move out of a bungalow into a house once they have lived in a bungalow.
- Difficulties around ensuring who is let a property. Issues with anti-social behaviour which produces conflict with surrounding residents.
- Not just older people that may require adaptations to properties – younger people with disabilities may also need wider door frames, adequate turning circle in bathrooms etc.
- The needs of a person determines what type of property they require. Specialist facilities could be supported housing or extra care. The OT assessment determines what the needs are.
- The 10% element for older people means meeting their needs – this could include additional rooms to enable multi-generational living, level access flats, or housing for specialist needs such as extra care in Chester le Street.
- It was confirmed that level access flats do not pose more of a fire risk. A fire risk is more likely due to issues such as mental health challenges, drugs and alcohol misuse, smoking and those living alone. Domestic sprinklers can be fitted to properties where there are vulnerable people.
- Members highlighted their concerns that the viability of sites is seen as a problem and how this is determined. Members were keen to stress they could be trusted to know their own communities and felt they had to challenge the planning service. County councillors and parish councillors had a wealth of local knowledge in terms of the needs of their community.
- It was queried why the Fire & Rescue Service were not statutory consultees on planning matters apart from the location of hydrants. It was confirmed that building regulations covered safety matters etc.

- The Council needs to be stronger with developers around affordable homes and it was confirmed that all allocations in the Plan have been tested against the policies to ensure they are viable.

## County Durham Housing Strategy Consultation

### County Durham Housing Group Presentation

#### Notes of discussion 20/02/19

#### **1. Older persons housing**

- a. Are bungalows always appropriate?
- b. Would a more flexible housing product be more suitable to apply to changing needs of residents?
- c. Concern over any approach to conditioning occupation based on age.
- d. Focus on the occupiers rather than the product.
- e. Consider reference to telecare in the Strategy and other modern technologies.
- f. Important to note many people will want (and should be assisted) to stay in their own home for as long as possible.
- g. Is some of the language about old people old fashioned - lots of older people are active?
- h. Too many homes for older people but they are often in the wrong place i.e. on the hilly part of a site or away from a bus route.
- i. Understanding local needs is important to ensure homes for older people are in the right location.
- j. Consider new and innovative approaches, rather than just bungalows. E.g. a campus of needs.
- k. Emphasise needs of those people with a disability who also need specialist housing products or adaptations to their home (2 bedroom bungalows may not be appropriate for this group).
- l. Strategy focuses on older people – other groups have housing needs which do not feature as prominently in the Strategy.

#### **2. Younger working people**

- a. Consider under 35s in the Strategy. This is a key group with housing needs.
- b. Registered Providers homes could be the tenure of choice for under 35s.

#### **3. Private Rented Sector (PRS)**

- a. A countywide designation preferable rather than designations for specific locations.
- b. There has been a growth in PRS properties in former right to buys.
- c. Income generated from licencing could be used to undertake enforcement / address complaints on anti-social behaviour etc.

#### **4. Park Avenue Close Case study**

- a. This is also owned by County Durham Housing Group (CDHG).
- b. Is this the best case study example to use, or are there any more recent examples?
- c. The features and facilities could be reworded in the case study - note difference between descriptions at Park Avenue Close and the Elms
- d. CDHG to assist with finalising this case study.
- e. Consider a case study which brings together a multi-agency approach (e.g. Health / housing etc.)
- f. To note - emphasise up front in the document the role of the case studies is to reinforce best practice in addressing highlighted issues.

## **5. Empty homes**

- a. The section title should be more rounded to reflect a range of activities, bringing empty homes back into use is only one option.
- b. In some circumstances, empty homes will be in locations where people don't want to live. Demolition may be the appropriate option in these circumstances.
- c. The funding resources to bring empty homes back into use are limited, this should be acknowledged so as not to raise expectations.
- d. The Mixed and Balanced Communities section would sit better ahead of the Empty Homes section - bringing empty homes back into use should be part of a wider approach to achieving mixed and balanced communities.

## **6. Affordable homes**

- a. Consideration of options around Registered Provider 'Buy Back' options. Including buy back and rent back to an individual (release the equity). Consideration of a range of options and blended approaches is appropriate.
- b. Is there a role for the DCC LLA in respect of considering Buy Back options?
- c. Worthwhile to run through a business case model to understand when buy back is / isn't viable. This could be a role for Development Group here to consider opportunities and challenges?
- d. Certain locations will provide stronger opportunities for buy back than others.
- e. To note some properties that were subject to right to buy may be of a poorer standard than those still in the affordable sector or new build affordable products - will these properties meet needs?

## **7. Estate regeneration in Wheatley Hill case study**

- a. The case study needs context that this is ongoing.
- b. Partnership working between DCC and housing providers is key in areas like Wheatley Hill and the Strategy should go further in noting the role and opportunities of partnership working.
- c. A joined up approach is beneficial which reflects the full range of DCC functions (e.g. environmental, ground works, schools). Could a pilot be considered?
- d. Consider impact of new development in Wheatley Hill as part of any housing renewal and regeneration approaches. Also consider impact of affordable housing delivered as part of new housing on existing communities.
- e. Consider travel options associated with settlements.

## **8. Homelessness**

- a. The narrative in the section relates to 2016/17 data but, the graph indicates more up to date information is available (2017/18). Can the narrative be updated?

## **9. Centralisation of housing products in County Durham**

- a. The diagram is hard to interpret - could it be made clearer?
- b. The aims are too broad - on what scale will the LLA achieve these?
- c. What is the intended scale of the LLA?
- d. Important to consider impacts of LLA approach on existing estates e.g. potential for anti-social behaviour.
- e. Consider how the LLA connects to existing projects e.g. Family Intervention Project, New Start Pilot.
- f. Temporary accommodation - crash pads are useful.

## **10. Action Plan**

- a. Could further detail be added around the timescales for delivery of actions?
- b. The partnership groups (Housing Forum, Development Group and Support Group) should not lead actions – it is for DCC to lead with support from partners.
- c. Clarification sought on the DCC Housing Board.

## Disability Partnership Meeting 29/01/2019

**Attendees:** Len Shield Margaret Wilsham, Jim Wilsham, Cara Mcnare, Ben Newton, Dave Lewin, Steph Rich, Michelle Robinson.

### Sustainable Design-

LS- How do you equate to SD

MR- Last time round the focus was on selling the character or id of an area, that buildings were done so to minimise green house gases etc. The challenge from this group was from a people and accessible point of view so people with mobility or sensory needs are embedded in this policy.

Developer need to consider health impacts and needs of existing and future development, dementia and other sensory impairments. Developers need to produce HIA to consider their scheme against a ranges on HIA so that

LS- So who assesses this (able and capable of) are you just rubber stamping it?

MR- We have been having talks with Public Health and there has been training on HIAs and that needs to be widened so that our officers can say for sure if what developers are saying would work. This is what we are exploring.

LS- You need a specific officer. Looking at sensory perception side I wouldn't have a clue so you need Someone for that.

MR We are working with A. Ball and the dementia society to work on this as one element of the HIA and sensory impairment. If you have any suggestions for other places we would take them all on board

CM- Autism is something you could address, Metro Centre has poor lighting and acousitics. Layout too for people with dementia getting confused about where they are if things look the same.

***MR- Action- We will have a look on our consultation database but it is a really good suggestion and if not we can add that.***

CM- meetings with service users and leaders.

LS- (To MR) - Give me your email and I may have a contact. Newton Aycliffe has a school there.

CM- For those with autism they can give experience of environments they prefer so would be good consultants. People with learning developmental disorders too.

JW- Has it been mentioned in the past for blind people regarding kerbs because the contrasting kerbs aren't always present.

LS- if you are visually impaired orange is the last colour you lose in your spectrum could you use certain colour routes. But the developer will always come to cost BUT all I'm saying is that there re things you can do but this scheme (policy) is going to be such a tall order.

MR It is about meeting the needs according to different people and needs of users.

CM- more people with profound disabilities due to more babies surviving with these disabilities so there will be an increase in wheelchair users.

MR- In our consultations with teen mums was their concerns were same as older people.

LS- Durham access for all changed its name for this reason.

LS- There is design criteria for glass doors and bus stations to break up glass but this is not policy.

LS- The sustainable development is a good one so I will be interested to see how it pans out.

CM- Tactile paving as well as etching is something needed just enough on the end of the cane.

MR- We do require well designed, navigable well connected streets, green spaces etc as part of that.

JW-If people have an unpleasant experience will they come back again? No they won't. If they feel they can manage it then they will come back

CM- With people on a spectrum they get into a habit and won't change it so if you get it right then these people get into a habit of going to where the design is good for them and stick to it, with their money. Also lighting is an issue for people's experiences. In BA Market place is appalling so I won't go out.

LS-This is inclusiveness again.

### **Housing- Regarding proposals for housing/ specialist housing and M24/M23s**

LS- We need more bungalows.-Bungalows- are better than flats

CM- you could make ground floor flats M43 and then rest M42?.

LS- You should make flats with a lift otherwise it's not equality.

MW- bungalows are better.

JW- They also need to include wheelchair accessible doors but also what is the point if the rooms aren't good big enough to get a wheelchair into let alone around?

MR- Houses now have minimum requirements. We have tracked size decline, in particular bed rooms and second bedrooms. This is now something we have included in this plan.

CM- What about buildings that are retrospectively fitted. My second bedroom isn't big enough for a bed. If I had a wheelchair it would have to be my equipment room.

JW- Housing developments are getting smaller.

MR-These specific requirements aren't unique to wheelchair users.

JW- What about bigger wheelchairs for bigger people. So then how many people need bigger ones- how will they get through?

CM- Is housing looking at people with morbid obesity and need bigger wheelchairs?

JW- it is ok getting me into a building but what about H AND S emergency evacuation. Bungalows here would be better.

Cara- agrees. Design of design of doorways and doors to be easy for use for all.

Cara- Would evacuation process be incorporated.

MR outside of the planning remit it may fall into planning regs-

**MR- Action- we will make a note to explore this in the HIA.**

JW- Dale Valley Homes were considering new homes and disability accessibility homes. I said if you are talking of internals make all disability appropriate. And as far as I know they did so.

CM- If you make specialist housing accessible now they know they can live there for as long as they wish.

JW- If the basis, the foundations are there to make is accessible should it be needed. Getting out is not focused on as clearly on as it should be.

CW- It is better to build houses (BUNGALOWS) as if accessibility needs were needed now so people don't have to move home and leave their communities.

**Housing strategy- once work has been done we can report back to the group**

MR- Issuers such as: Green spaces- mental health, getting out and about, dog walking. We have a policy that any new housing developer has to contribute or provide an open green space/infrastructure.

Larger housing developers can do that in the housing development. But with smaller developments it is a contribution to improvement or expansion of another open space [s].

CM- where does the care lie (for these spaces)?

MR- Contributions for 15 year period and DCC will maintain open spaces.

CM- Dog mess bins are an issue in these areas.

JW- Green spaces are important for exercise too. If there is no green space where can kids play? We need green spaces for exercise. People who take dogs out for a walks are friendlier and people are less isolated and this helps community.

JW- Another issue with new developments is more people and so overcrowding at the health centre in crook.

MR- With new developments there are requirements for infrastructure allowances- covering: schools; health; green space. In terms of schools, builders are now charged to an



upgrading on schools (primary or secondary). Extending school or a new school, which is ring-fenced for education.

Following consultation at Crook- with our health team, CCGs and GPs, we will develop something very similar to what we have in place for education. Whether new doctor space, funding of nurses or GPs. We are hoping this will go through cabinet process in April.

***MR Action- we will pass on details of Graham Wood to Joanne for CM in relation to seating taking up pedestrian level areas.***

Public Spaces

JW- speed limits in public building for mobility scooter

***MR- Action- we will enquire about speed limits for mobility scooters in public areas and internally. (SEE DL)***

CM- What about a scheme like best practice like the breast feeding signs- shop policy; or like a Star scheme (like hygiene rating) it could help sell an area.

JW- 'Disabled Go' has been to disability partnership. Could work in partnership with them?

***MR Action – we will speak to Joanne about this.***

## People's Parliament 6<sup>th</sup> Feb 2019

**Attendees:** Helen Smith, Ben, Mel, Clive, Gary, Joanne Kelley, Steph Rich, Michelle Robinson

**Issues Discussed regarding the CDP and Housing Strategy by the People's Parliament**

### **Transport**

HS- When I try to get on the bus it sometimes pulls away before I can get on it. Also when I am on the bus it has happened where I was on a double decker and it took me a while to get up and the bus took me half a mile too far along and I had to walk back, which is a long way for me. Something needs to be put in place. The Link Too doesn't always come on time and I use that a lot.

The Traffic lights through the city centre are also very bad, it is bedlam.

MR- If there weren't any buses that you could access would you be able get out and about another way?

HS- I could get about another way if there was no bus, I can book a driver to take me places like to get here I book a driver or to go to Tesco in Newton Aycliffe but when I go there are cars always parking in the drop off areas which cause a problem and so the driver has to drop me off across the road and its dangerous

MR- What about parking outside your homes?

HS- Staff can't park outside our houses and so it is dangerous when we get picked up or if they come over. It is dangerous, in Newton Aycliffe it is a problem.

### **Town Centres**

MR- what about your town centres, what do you think about them? Are they easy to get to and move around? Do you think they are attractive?

Gary- Stanley and Consett are not bad to get around.

MR- Is there anything you would do to make them better?

HS- More shops in Newton Aycliffe.

Mel- More shops in Bishop Auckland.

HS- there is a new Costa for Newton Aycliffe but why not more shops? If there were more shops we would go more.

Gary- Burger King in Stanley is not a good idea as the school is round the corner.

MR- There is a policy in the plan to prevent this so school children don't go to places like that on the breaks and after school, to address the problem of children getting fatter.

## Housing

HS- I live in supported housing. We need more housing for people like us to live independently.

Gary- Builders build where they can get the most though.

MR- in the plan we have a policy that states a certain amount of housing needs to be affordable housing and with partners for specialist housing.

HS- What about wheelchair users, will they get affordable housing?

MR- We are working with builders to ensure that they do build wider doorways, halls, rooms so people can live independently.

## Parks

Mel- the parks are all full of rubbish and people just dump things.

HS- The ponds are dirty too and it looks horrible.

MR- Would you prefer more parks or a focus on park clean ups?

HS- A bit of both. (Rest agree)

Heather- the park at Bishop Auckland looks rough and the swing is broken and there is broken glass. I won't take my daughter back. At mickey moor there are the sports courts that are fenced off and a new play park that is being done.

MR- What do you think of Festival Walk?

Heather- Rough, it would be nice to get more shops.

MR- We are hopeful to get more shops in the area.

Heather- we end up going to Tindal

MEL & HS- We really like it.

Mel- There are more shops, which means there are less in the town centre.

Heather & HS- We have to travel further because there aren't the shops in the town centres.

Heather- A Primark or Wilko or Matalan would be good in Spennymoor.

HS- Or a SportsDirect

MR- Big retailers won't put a shop in an area if they don't think enough people will shop there which can mean more empty shops in town centres.

Heather- My grandad is partially blind so he can't shop online so we need to travel further for him and then parking can be tricky.

Mel- it depends on what vehicle you have. If you have a minibus there might not be a space big enough.

**Any other feedback?**

HS- in bad weather the gritters don't come down our road and it is dangerous in the bad weather. We want to go out but we can't. Can DCC get those road gritted?