



To: Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Transport
Report by: Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development
for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire
Relevant scrutiny Development Plan Scrutiny 22 March 2017
committee: Sub- Committee
Wards affected: All Wards

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

Non Key Decision

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 On 7 February 2017, the Government published its housing white paper *Fixing our broken housing market* for consultation. In this document, the Government sets out its approach to plan for the right homes in the right place, build homes faster, diversify the housing market and helping people access the housing market.
- 1.2 This report seeks a decision on the Council's response to the white paper to be submitted to the Government. Given the implications for the Greater Cambridge area, it is proposed to submit a joint response from both Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Councils. As the South Cambridgeshire Planning Portfolio Holder report is not likely to be discussed until April 2017, any consequent changes to the consultation response will be agreed with the Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Transport, Chair and Spokes.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 This report is being submitted to the Development Plan Scrutiny Sub- Committee for prior consideration and comment before decision by the Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Transport.

2.2 The Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Transport is recommended:

- To agree the comments set out in the consultation response attached to this report at Appendix A and that these are submitted to the Government as Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Councils' formal response to the consultation.
- To agree that any subsequent changes to the consultation response as a result of the South Cambridgeshire District Council Planning Portfolio Holder meeting be agreed with the Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Transport, Chair and Spokes prior to submission.

3. Background

3.1 On 7 February 2017, the Government published the housing white paper *Fixing our broken housing market*. In this document, the Government sets out its plans to build more homes by:

1. Planning for homes in the right places, mainly through local and neighbourhood plan policies;
2. Building homes faster, through better linkages of housing with infrastructure, addressing skills shortages and speeding up the development management process;
3. Diversifying the housing market, focussing on different forms of tenure, encouraging more small and medium-sized builders, supporting housing associations and local authorities to build more homes and advocating modern methods of construction; and
4. Helping people now, but addressing a wide range of housing needs.

3.2 The white paper is a consultation paper, with the focus of the consultation on the first two of these priorities. The consultation runs from 7 February to 2 May 2017. A copy of the white paper is provided at Appendix B for information. It can also be viewed online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fixing-our-broken-housing-market>

Key proposals – planning for homes in the right places

3.3 In order to plan for the right homes in the right places, the white paper puts forward the following proposals:

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

Key proposals – building homes faster

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

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

Key proposals – diversifying the market and helping people now

3.5 In order to open up the housing market to smaller builders and those who embrace innovative and efficient methods, the Government is proposing to:

- Support small and medium-sized builders in growing, including through the Home Building Fund;
- Support housing associations to build more, and explore options to encourage local authorities to build again;
- Amend the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to introduce a clear policy expectation that housing sites deliver a minimum of 10% affordable home ownership units. It will be for local areas to work with developers to agree an appropriate level of delivery of starter homes, alongside other affordable home ownership and rented tenures;
- Promote Building for Rent through changes to the NPPF;
- Amend the NPPF to allow more brownfield land to be released for developments with a high proportion of starter homes. This will be on employment sites that have been vacant for a long period of time (5 years) and are not strategic employment sites; on some leisure and retail uses; and on the Green Belt in certain circumstances;
- Introduce a new statutory duty through the Neighbourhood Planning Bill on the Secretary of State to produce guidance for local planning authorities on how they should be meeting the housing needs of older and disabled people; and
- Clarification that Starter Homes, with appropriate local connection tests, can be acceptable on rural exception sites.

Issues for response

3.5 The draft consultation response for consideration is set out in full in Appendix A. These responses relate to the consultation questions posed in Appendix B, the housing white paper. The questions are focused on the changes to planning policy and legislation needed as well as other proposals set out in Chapters 1 (planning for the right homes in the right places) and 2 (building homes faster) of the housing white paper.

Next Steps

- 3.6 Following consideration of this report by Development Plan Scrutiny Sub Committee and agreement by the Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Transport, and taking into account any subsequent changes as a result of the South Cambridgeshire District Council Planning Portfolio Holder meeting in April 2017, the consultation response will be submitted to the Government by 2 May 2017.
- 3.7 Many of the changes proposed in the white paper involve changes to the NPPF. The Government intends to publish a revised Framework later this year, which will consolidate the outcomes from previous and current consultations, for example the report of the Local Plans Expert Group. It will also incorporate amendments to reflect changes made to national policy through Written Ministerial Statements since March 2012. These are:
- Support for small scale developers, custom and self-builders (20 November 2014);
 - Sustainable Drainage Systems (18 December 2014);
 - Starter Homes (2 March 2015);
 - Parking: helping local shops and preventing congestion (25 March 2015);
 - Housing standards: streamlining the system (25 March 2015);
 - Local Planning, which covers onshore wind farms (18 June 2015);
 - National Planning Policy Framework: technical adjustment (22 July 2015);
 - Green Belt protection and intentional unauthorised development (17 December 2015); and
 - Neighbourhood planning (17 December 2015).

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

4. Implications

(a) Financial Implications

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

(b) Staffing Implications (if not covered in Consultations Section)

There are no direct staffing implications arising from this report. The review of the Local Plan has already been included in existing work plans.

(c) Equality and Poverty Implications

There are no direct equal opportunity implications arising from this report. The Local Plan has been subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment, which demonstrates how potential equalities issues have been, and will be addressed.

(d) Environmental Implications

There are no direct environmental implications arising from this report.

(e) Procurement

There are no direct procurement implications arising from this report.

(f) Consultation and communication

The housing white paper is a Government consultation, and we have consulted with a wide range of Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council officers.

(g) Community Safety

There are no direct community safety implications arising from this report.

5. Background papers

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

- National Planning Policy Framework:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>
- National Planning Practice Guidance:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>

6. Appendices

- Appendix A: Proposed Consultation Response to the Housing White Paper
- Appendix B: Housing White Paper: *Fixing our broken housing market*, February 2017

7. Inspection of papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact:

Author's Name: Joanna Gilbert-Wooldridge
Author's Phone Number: 01223 457183
Author's Email: Joanna.Gilbert-Wooldridge@cambridge.gov.uk