



PRCC.61 16/17

Prosperous Communities  
Committee

21 March 2017

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**Subject:** To consider the implications of the Housing White Paper  
“Fixing our broken housing market with regards to WLDC’s  
Housing Strategy.

Report by:

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Purpose / Summary:

This report outlines the purpose of the forthcoming strategy and aligns this with the Housing White Paper “Fixing our broken housing market”.

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

That Members note the content of the Housing White Paper and implications under consideration for the WLDC Housing Strategy.

## IMPLICATIONS

**Legal:**

None - this item is for information

**Financial :**

None - this item is for information

**Staffing :**

The Housing Supply officer and team managers will develop WLDC Housing Strategy as part of the agreed work plan.

**Equality and Diversity including Human Rights :**

These issues will be addressed in the WLDC Housing Strategy

**Risk Assessment :**

None - this item is for information

**Climate Related Risks and Opportunities :**

None - this item is for information

**Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:**

**Call in and Urgency:**

**Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?**

*i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)*

Yes

No

**Key Decision:**

*A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications*

Yes

No

This report outlines the purpose of the forthcoming strategy and aligns this with the White Paper “Fixing our broken housing market”

## **Background**

West Lindsey District Council has commissioned Arc 4 to provide the framework for its housing strategy and are working closely with officers to ensure it can deliver our corporate aspirations in regards to housing and growth. The strategy will set out our vision across a variety of areas and provide a local context alongside the relevant national legislative and policy areas. It will also enable the Council to identify its key priorities and understand how best to position itself to develop, deliver and influence to best meet the needs and aspirations of our communities.

The strategy will broadly focus on the following areas: increasing housing supply and quality across all tenures; ensuring existing stock is safe, desirable and promotes health, wellbeing and independence; ensuring appropriate housing options and support for households in need to prevent homelessness and promote health, wellbeing and independence. Within each area the key challenges and barriers will be identified and following the completion of the strategy an action plan will be developed to enable the delivery of the strategy.

The strategy is currently in draft format and a tour of the district has been undertaken with Arc 4 alongside a number of progress meetings. Officers have provided information which will inform the evidence base and are liaising with Arc 4 to finalise the consultation process that will be carried out as part of the strategy development. This consultation will seek opinion on the key aspects of the strategy. As part of the work the Council is also exploring an option to carry out a district wide housing needs survey to inform future affordable housing provision.

### **1. Introduction**

1.1 The report sets out a short overview of the White Paper “Fixing our broken housing market” published in February 2017.

[www.gov.uk/government/collections/housing-white-paper](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/housing-white-paper)

1.2 This is the third wave of initiatives launched by Conservative Housing Ministers since 2010. The reference to a “broken housing market” is striking and, in echoing previous statements about “broken Britain” it indicates a continuing governmental concern about systemic problems with housing supply.

1.3 The White Paper and consultation on housing and planning reforms will (once legislated) provide a significant part of the policy background against which local authority housing and other strategies will be developed. The consultation process concludes on 2 May 2017.

## 2. Context

2.1 The three waves of housing initiatives since 2010 have been as follows.

- The end of the Labour administration and early part of the Coalition focussed on measures to support the construction industry during the global financial crisis. Whilst large elements of that support are still in place e.g. via Help to Buy, the Conservative Party also introduced attempts to increase the speed and quantity of housing delivery for example, through planning reforms, New Homes Bonus, etc.
- The 2015 Osborne Summer Budget and 2016 Housing and Planning Act added reversing most developed economies' trend away from home ownership to increasing housing supply. The government's goals were a "national crusade to get 1 million homes built by 2020" and transform "generation rent into generation buy." including the development of 200,000 Starter Homes up to 2020.
- Whilst retaining many of the broader concerns about housing under-supply (an estimated almost 50% shortfall in 2014/15), the latest White Paper has made a number of very clear breaks from the Cameron/Osborne approach in particular, home ownership is not defined as the overriding outcome. Market renting, often characterised as part of the (welfare budget) problem in the earlier years of the decade is now definitely regarded as part of the solution.

## 3. Planning for housing

3.1 The planning process should deliver the 'right homes in the right places' by:

- Requiring production of **up-to-date plans every 5 years** because 40% of local plans do not meet projected housing growth,
- **Simplifying plan-making** and make it more transparent so it will be easier for communities to produce plans and easier for developers to follow them
- Consulting both on a **simplified approach to defining Objectively Assessed Need** for new homes to ensure "plans start from an honest assessment of the need" as well as a **Statement of Common Ground** setting out how local authorities will work together with neighbouring authorities, where necessary, to meet their housing requirements.
- Legislating to allow **locally accountable New Towns Development Corporations** to be set up to better support new garden towns and villages.
- Revising the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to ensure plans deliver an "**efficient use of land and avoid building homes at low densities**". This may include revisions of space standards.

## 4. Brown land and Green belt

4.1 The White Paper aims to make more land available for homes by **maximising the contribution from brownfield and surplus public land**, regenerating estates, releasing more small and medium sized

sites, allowing rural communities to grow and making it easier to build new settlements.

- 4.2 It also reaffirms that the existing protections for the green belt remains unchanged and emphasises that authorities should make **exceptional amendment to green belt boundaries** only when they can demonstrate that they have examined fully all other reasonable options for meeting their identified development requirements.
- 4.3 It should be noted that many authorities will find it difficult to retain existing green belt along with the requirements to ensure the required long term pipeline of housing land.

## 5. Building homes faster

5.1 The 1 million homes target drives this key section of the White Paper, the proposals *set out in the consultation* include:

- Amending the NPPF to give local authorities the opportunity to have their **housing land supply agreed on an annual basis** and fixed for a one year period, in order to create more certainty about when an adequate land supply exists. Authorities taking advantage of this will have to provide a 10% larger buffer on their 5 year land supply.
- **Increasing nationally set planning fees**, and consulting on allowing authorities to increase planning fees *where they are performing well on housing delivery*.
- Deterring “unnecessary planning appeals” and reduce delay via the introduction of a **fee for making a planning appeals** (refundable if appeal successful).
- Examining the **reform of developer contributions** (Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 obligations) for an announcement in the autumn Budget
- To encourage delivery, requiring large housebuilders to publish **aggregate information on build out rates** which will local authorities to press for quicker supply
- Seeking views on whether an applicant’s **track record of delivering previous similar housing schemes** should be taken into account by local authorities taking decisions on housing development.
- **Simplifying the completion notice process** so that a local authority to serve a completion notice to dissuade developers from making a token start on a site to keep the planning permission alive.
- Changing the NPPF to introduce a **housing delivery test** for local authorities. If delivery then falls below specified thresholds extra land would be added onto the five-year land supply as well as further thresholds would then allow the presumption in favour of sustainable development to apply automatically.
- **Coordinating Government infrastructure investment** through the targeting of the £2.3bn Housing Infrastructure Fund including more timely connections by utilities

## 6. Enhancing & diversifying the supply of housing

6.1 The Government intends to

- Help small and medium-sized builders to grow through the Home Building Fund and supporting development on small sites.
- Support custom-build homes with greater access to land and finance, giving more people more choice over the design of their home.
- Bring in new contractors on the Accelerated Construction programme on public land.
- Encourage more institutional investors into housing, including for building more homes for private rent with family friendly tenancies.
- Support housing associations to deliver more homes.
- Ensure the public sector plays its part by encouraging more building by councils and reforming the Homes and Communities Agency.
- Speed up build out by encouraging modern methods of construction
- Take steps to grow the construction workforce

## **7. Aspirations to help owners and tenants**

- 7.1 In addition to reaffirming commitments to Help to Buy and Starter Homes programmes, there are aspirations (rather than proposals) for longer private sector tenancies, mandatory electrical checks for the private renting and resolving the problem caused by proposed welfare reductions making supported housing unviable for many providers.

## **8. Reactions to the White Paper**

- 8.1 Reactions to the White Paper have been mixed. Many of the broad aspirations are endorsed. The reversing away from the single target of home ownership is generally regarded as sensible and more conducive to delivering more homes. However, the lack of any large scale social rent programme will have long term implications for housing policy and will undermine efforts to deliver the million homes.
- 8.2 Many of the proposals are not objected to. However, there is a sense from commentators that the outcomes of the White Paper may well fall short of the radical changes necessary to fix a broken housing market.
- 8.3 West Lindsey is currently preparing a revised Housing Strategy which will align with the overarching objectives of the authority but also work within the framework being presented by Government. We will ensure that our Strategy provides the flexibility to support and take advantage of the final outcome of the White Paper following consultation.
- 8.4 Our initial draft Housing Strategy underpins the White Paper; West Lindsey recognises the need to build more homes, more quickly and links this directly to economic growth. We are working to better understand local needs so that we can ensure that the housing offer is diversified and meets local demand and we are actively working to improve the quality of housing and see that improving the private rented sector will have a positive impact to our housing markets.
- 8.5 Putting people first is at the centre of our strategy and our plans over the next 5 years will continue to do so to all sectors of the community which recognises those trying to get onto the housing ladder, those looking for

a better quality property in the private rented sector and vulnerable households.