

Committee: Cabinet

Agenda Item

Date: 30 March 2017

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Title: Housing White Paper

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Susan Barker

Key decision: No

Summary

1. This Report provides an initial analysis of the Department for Communities and Local Government's (DCLG) Housing White Paper 'Fixing our Broken Housing Market' which was published on Tuesday 7 February 2017. Publication of the much-anticipated Housing White Paper provides significant statements on government policy and the approach to improving the supply and affordability of housing at a national level.
2. Locally, the potential measures announced within the Housing White Paper will not all have immediate effect and the majority are subject to further consultation. However, publication of the Housing White Paper is a milestone in terms of how local authorities may be required to approach plan-making (and also decision-taking on planning applications) in future years.
3. The summary provided by this report gives an initial assessment and overview of potential implications from the Housing White Paper, particularly in relation to the Uttlesford Local Plan

Recommendations

Cabinet note the publication of the Housing White Paper and the initial assessment of its potential future implications for preparation of the Uttlesford Local Plan.

Financial Implications

4. The White Paper proposes that local authorities will be able to increase planning application fees by 20% from July 2017 if they commit to invest the additional fee income in their planning departments. The Government is also minded to allow an increase of a further 20% for those authorities who are delivering homes.
5. Members are advised that any subsequent implications will be the subject of ongoing assessment. Subject to further government consultation and any implementation of measures introduced through the Housing White Paper funding implications may subsequently arise. The outcomes of this for Council funding streams and other sources of infrastructure funding cannot be directly identified at this time.

Background Papers

6 .The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

None

Impact

1.

Communication/Consultation	The measures proposed In the White Paper are subject to consultation
Community Safety	N/A
Equalities	N/A
Health and Safety	N/A
Human Rights/Legal Implications	N/A
Sustainability	There are proposals relating to climate change, flood risk, noise and onshore wind energy in the White Paper.
Ward-specific impacts	All
Workforce/Workplace	N/A

Situation

7. The Department for Communities and Local Government's (DCLG) Housing White Paper 'Fixing our Broken Housing Market' was published on Tuesday 7 February 2017. Officers have undertaken an initial analysis of the White Paper and its supporting evidence. The Council's assessment of the White Paper and its future relevance in the District has also benefitted from the recent meeting between Officers from the Planning Policy Team and advisors at CLG on 15 February 2017.
8. The White Paper clarifies the government's policy direction on a range of housing issues and refers specifically to earlier announcements and Written Ministerial Statements as well as existing policies. Decision-makers (and to some degree those preparing Local Plans) will need to quickly establish the weight they should give the White Paper as a material consideration.
9. The Paper identifies four broad (but interrelated) themes under

which to identify current problems with the housing market and through which it proposes certain solutions. These can broadly be summarised as follows

- Meeting housing needs, effective strategic planning and making land available for housing (“Planning for the Right Homes in the Right Places”)
- Improving the rates and pace of housing delivery (“Building Homes Faster”)
- Restructuring the housing market to provide increased supply (“Diversifying the Housing Market”)
- Improving affordability and meeting a wider range of needs (“Helping People Now”)

10. Strong protection for the Green Belt will be retained. The White Paper also emphasises the need for Local Plans to be kept up-to-date, subject to regular review, and able to justify housing targets against objectively assessed need. Exceptional circumstances to justify the release of Green Belt land will only exist where all other reasonable alternatives have been explored.
11. The document introduces only a limited range of measures that are intended to have immediate effect in looking to address the issues identified in the housing market. For local authorities this principally relates to a new ‘Housing Delivery Test’ from November 2017.
12. The way in which the ‘Housing Delivery Test’ will apply in Uttlesford is of great importance to the Council. The ‘test’ will be triggered where the number of new homes being built in a given district is below expectations. Introduction of this test does not depend on further consultation. It is a separate assessment to the calculation of Five Year Housing Land Supply and is designed to highlight which the delivery of housing is above or below identified requirements. From November 2017, if no up-to-date Local Plan is in place, the official household projections will form the base for the ‘delivery test’. Authorities that under-perform against the ‘Housing Delivery Test’ will be required to prepare an Action Plan to assist in improving supply.
13. For the Local Plan it is important to note the proposed introduction of a standardised methodology for calculating housing need. Consultation on the Housing White Paper seeks views on what ‘reasonable justification’ may be provided for departing from the standardised methodology. The government also proposes to make it possible for those preparing neighbourhood plans to obtain a figure for housing requirements in their local area directly from the local authority. Greater emphasis on the specific housing needs of older people is also intended to make sure the right type of supply is provided to meet these needs.
14. The White Paper reiterates a firm expectation that authorities will continue to co-operate on cross boundary matters and address the strategic priorities for plan-making. Measures are proposed that would require completion of Statements of Common Ground between authorities that set out how cross boundary matters will be approached.

15. The paper encourages Local Plans to bring forward a wide portfolio of sites, including smaller and medium-sized sites, to provide homes to help rural communities thrive, and to bring forward brownfield land. Proposals set out that Local Plans should contain policies to support 'windfall' provision and provide at least 10% of allocations as smaller sites. The HWP also reiterates support for new planned settlements.
16. The government is proposing to broaden the statutory definition of affordable housing as part of measures in the Housing White Paper. This retains a commitment to the delivery of 'Starter Homes', but as part of a broader mix of products including support for affordable private rented tenures.
17. A suite of documents were published alongside the Housing White Paper. These included "The value, impact and delivery of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)" and "A new approach to developer contributions: a report by the CIL review team". The former study concluded that CIL as currently configured is not fulfilling the original intention of providing a faster, fairer, simpler, more certain and more transparent way of ensuring that all development contributes something towards cumulative infrastructure need and that it has also disrupted and complicated the Section 106 arrangements which, though much criticised, actually worked reasonably well for many sites. There may well be a review of how the system as a consequence of these reports.
18. It is important to note that publication of the Housing White Paper has not in itself brought about any immediate change to national planning policy, although revision of the National Planning Policy Framework is expected to take place later this year. The extent of the proposals and scope of the HWP is less than some anticipated.
19. 'Fixing our broken housing market: consultation' has been launched alongside the White Paper and gives all interested parties an opportunity to comment on specific questions related to topics. This consultation runs until 2 May 2017 and is of significant importance. It is important that Uttlesford District Council submits a detailed response to this consultation.
20. Based on the broad approach set out in the White Paper it is important that the Council's consultation response sets out how the specific measures should be implemented so far as they affect the ability to better meet housing needs and support the housing market in Uttlesford.

Risk Analysis

21.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
3. That the Council does not meet the Planning Delivery Test.	3. That the Council does not meet the Planning Delivery Test.	3. Significant	Ensure sufficient deliverable sites are allocated in the Local Plan.

- 1 = Little or no risk or impact
- 2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.
- 3 = Significant risk or impact – action required
- 4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.