

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to the Executive Member for Planning and Development for Decision

Portfolio:	Planning and Development
Subject:	Response to Consultation: Housing White Paper
Report of:	Director of Planning and Regulation
Strategy/Policy:	Local Plan/Housing Strategy
Corporate Objective:	Protecting and Enhancing our Environment Maintaining and Extending Prosperity A Balanced Housing Market

Purpose:

To consider and approve the Council's consultation response to the Government's Housing White Paper (February 2017).

Executive summary:

The Report details the Council's response to the Government's Housing White Paper (February 2017). This is focused on the inadvertent adverse impact of the 'housing delivery test' proposed within Government's Housing White Paper on planned strategic sites such as Welborne Garden Village.

Recommendation:

That the Executive Member agrees the following Council response to be submitted to the Government's consultation on the Housing White Paper (which closes on 02 May 2017).

Reason:

To raise the Government's awareness of specific issues which the Government's Housing White Paper presents to the Council, and potentially to influence future Government policy through responding to this consultation.

Cost of Proposals:

Officer time in preparing consultation response can be met within existing operational budgets.

Risk Assessment:

There are no significant risks.

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Executive Briefing Paper

Date: 02 May 2017

Subject: Response to Consultation: Housing White Paper

Briefing by: Director of Planning and Regulation

Portfolio: Planning and Development

BACKGROUND

1. On 7 February 2017, the Government published '*Fixing Our Broken Housing Market*', the Housing White Paper. The consultation on the Housing White Paper will run for 12 weeks and closes on 2 May 2017 (23:45).
2. In the introduction to the document, the Government state that the '*housing market in this country is broken, and the cause is very simple: for too long, we haven't built enough homes*'. The document then explains what the Government intends to do about the situation, focusing on the following four key areas:
 - '*First, we need to plan for the right homes in the right places...*
 - '*Second, we need to build homes faster...*
 - '*Third, we will diversify the housing market...*
 - '*Finally, we will help people now...*'
3. Whilst there are a number of existing Government policies or funding initiatives cited within the document, it is largely focused on explaining emerging policy directions (i.e. coming through legislation) or future policy directions the Government is seeking views on now (i.e. through consultation on the Housing White Paper) or in the future (i.e. through further consultations). The Government consultation poses a number of direct questions (38 in total) for consultees to respond to.

RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION: HOUSING WHITE PAPER

4. Whilst the Council support the Government's Housing White Paper in terms of the recognition of the need to tackle the 'housing crisis' and its overall intentions, some of the unintentional implications of specific measures are not supported. In answer to the Government's Housing White Paper overall and more specifically Questions 28, 29 and 30, the Authority is particularly concerned that the 'housing delivery test' will inadvertently undermine the 'plan-led' approach and strategic site development at Welborne. The following paragraphs explain why.

5. Fareham Borough Council are a progressive local authority who is focused on delivering a significant green-field strategic development, Welborne Garden Village, through planning and building a new community that will sustain for generations to come. Welborne Garden Village is a new distinct community, a settlement of 6,000 homes, which now forms an essential and significant part of the Council's adopted Local Plan. The Council is also proactively progressing regeneration sites throughout the Borough and a Local Plan Review will need to plan for a number of additional smaller-scale developments (urban extensions) on green-field sites. However, the Borough is a small authority geographically, and Welborne Garden Village offers the single opportunity to deliver homes at scale over a long period. The Council therefore has a high dependency on the successful delivery of Welborne in order to meet a significant proportion of its identified housing needs.
6. Unfortunately whilst Fareham Borough Council has proactively planned for a strategic development at Welborne, in turn the Local Planning Authority have become vulnerable to continual challenge from hostile planning applications on alternative unallocated green field sites elsewhere in the Borough, which are advanced on housing land supply grounds.
7. Strategic sites, such as Welborne do not sit well with annualised housing targets, especially in the early years of an Adopted Local Plan, and in the light of five-year housing land supply implications. This is because strategic sites tend to build up from a low base, as well as require significant infrastructure planning and provision. However, once established, they are able to deliver a high level of housing and diverse range of housing products over long period, in the case of Welborne 6,000 homes over approximately 20 years. Measures in relation to the 'housing delivery test' and associated five-year housing land supply however penalise a local planning authority, such as Fareham, who has taken both challenging and significant steps to allocate a strategic site at Welborne. The Council are also trying to facilitate delivery in the face of land assembly issues through the Council's Delivery Strategy. The Government however could put in place measures to address this particular and unique situation. For example, the Government could allow only local planning authorities with Garden Villages or Cities (strategic developments) in adopted local plans to effectively 'step' their five-year housing land supply targets. This would mean that Fareham Borough Council could reflect the realities of strategic site delivery at Welborne within their overall 'stepped' five-year housing land supply position, without undermining strategic allocations which have undergone significant community consultation and engagement. This allows authorities such as Fareham to effectively undersupply in relation to if a simple annualised target was in place, however over supply and accelerate delivery once, for example, significant infrastructure is in place to support housing delivery on a strategic Garden Village development site. If this approach was to be endorsed by Government, it would ensure realistic housing delivery trajectories on allocated Garden Village and Garden City sites, whilst achieving the high levels of housing envisaged on such sites and within Local Plans.
8. This approach would also enable the Council to focus its efforts and resources on delivering Welborne and other sites in the existing and emerging Local Plan, rather defending planning decisions at appeal inquiries, which is clearly the intention of the Government's Housing White Paper.

9. Further technical responses are included in Appendix A to this report for submission to the consultation on the Housing White Paper.

Appendices: Appendix A – technical responses