
COUNCIL HOUSING NEW BUILD PROGRAMME

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. This report provides an update on progress in respect of the Council Housing New Build programme.

Summary

2. The current new build programme began in 2015 and by December 2017 we will have completed 160 additional dwellings. The total cost of £23.3m has been funded from the Housing Revenue Account in addition to £3.2m grant funding from the Homes and Communities Agency's Affordable Homes Programme.
3. A total of seven sites have been developed with a mix of houses and flats. All of the properties have been designed to be energy efficient and to meet lifetime homes standards. Ground floor flats have flat floor showers and are designed to higher levels of mobility.
4. A new programme is now being developed that will cover the period 2017- 2020. A total of £17.7m has been identified within the Housing Revenue Account to support the programme and additional funding from the Homes and Communities Agency will be sought to support the programme.

Recommendation

5. It is recommended that the contents of this report be noted.

**Paul Wildsmith
Director of Neighbourhood Services & Resources**

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

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S17 Crime and Disorder	No direct impact
Health and Well Being	The designs adopted will help some people with mobility and other health problems
Carbon Impact	The properties have a high level of energy efficiency
Diversity	No direct impact
Wards Affected	Areas where new build will take place
Groups Affected	Anyone who is able to apply for Council Housing
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not recommend a change to the Budget or Policy framework.
Key Decision	No
Urgent Decision	No
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The new build programme will help to build sustainable communities by providing much needed good quality housing.
Efficiency	The new build programme will ensure more people are better housed reducing the risks of poor health and social problems. They will also support a range of needs helping to reduce costs to Social Care by avoiding more expensive alternative forms of accommodation.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

6. The demand for social housing has always significantly exceeded supply but a number of factors combined to result in the Council identifying a need to build additional Council dwellings. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment completed for Darlington in 2015 identified that there is a need for 160 affordable dwellings for rent across the Borough of Darlington each year. Not only is there a need to build affordable dwellings to meet local need, it is also a business need for the Housing Service. The Business Plan is underpinned by the rents received from Council properties and the loss of rents as a result of regeneration works and right to buy sales would significantly reduce income for the Housing Service if these properties were not replaced. Similarly the impact for New Homes Bonus of overall reductions in property numbers needs to be taken into account.

7. The implementation of the Government's Self-Financing Initiative introduced from April 2012 enabled the creation of an Investment Fund which is currently being prioritised on the development of new Council housing for affordable housing for rent. In 2015/16 the Council agreed a programme of new development making use of new opportunities to bid for grant funding from the Homes and Communities Agency.

8. The following development programme is now moving towards final completion:-
- (a) Deepdale Way, Red Hall - 8 two bedroomed apartments. (Complete)
 - (b) Badminton Close, Red Hall - 12 two bedroomed apartments. (Complete)
 - (c) Mickleton Close/Fenby Avenue, Lascelles Park - 24 two bedroomed apartments and 4 three bedroomed houses. (Complete)
 - (d) Hammond Drive, Skerne Park- 18 two bedroomed apartments. (Complete)
 - (e) Sherborne Close, Branksome -12 two bedroomed apartments and 6 three bedroomed houses. (Complete)
 - (f) Aintree/Anfield, Red Hall - 8 two bedroomed apartments, 11 large family houses (Complete)
 - (g) Earl Carlson Grove, Lingfield - 42 two bedroomed apartments and 20 three bedroomed houses. To be completed December 2017
9. The properties are designed for modern living with generous space standards allowing for flexibility of use to meet a range of needs. For example, houses can easily accommodate a through floor lift and have additional ground floor WCs which could be converted into a shower room. Ground floor apartments all have flat floor showers, generous space standards to allow for wheelchair turning circles, and easy future provision of a ceiling hoist between the bathroom and bedroom . One property has been purpose built and fitted with a range of adaptations to accommodate the specific needs of a larger family with a child who has disabilities.

Future Housing Programme

10. The total Housing Investment Fund identified from the Housing Revenue Account as indicated in the Housing Business Plan approved by Council in 26 March 2017 was £17.7m. The Homes and Communities Agency are now encouraging Registered Providers like ourselves to make bids to the Affordable Housing Programme on a rolling basis as and when schemes have been worked up in sufficient detail. This helps with respective organisations workflow and helps us maintain a steady supply of new homes provision. Bids still need to demonstrate key objectives such as strong deliverability and value for money, particularly in relation to grant levels.
11. Two new schemes at Branksome comprising of 16 units have already been worked up and funding from HCA sought. One scheme comprising of 8 two bedroomed apartments at Jedburgh Drive has already had grant allocation confirmed and the second scheme comprising of 8 two bedroomed houses at Whitby Way is awaiting a decision. Account has been taken of overall housing demand in Darlington and the relatively low numbers, in particular of 2 bedroomed flats in our current housing stock. Two bedroomed accommodation has the additional benefit of being suitable for a wide range of ages and household mixes.
12. A number of grant conditions apply to the HCA funding, including a requirement to let the properties at affordable rents, which are 80% of open market rent. For comparative purposes the charge for two bedroomed homes at Branksome will

be around £92 per week at an affordable rent compared to £82 for a social rent.

Outcome of Consultation

13. Each scheme is subject to the same rigorous process. The key elements are:

- (a) Ward Member Briefing
- (b) Public consultation letters and event
- (c) Submission to Council's One Stop Shop for early input from Planners
- (d) Consideration of feedback and appropriate changes where relevant
- (e) Reply to consultees informing them of next stages
- (f) Submission for planning approval