

Draft North Yorkshire Housing Strategy

Executive Summary



Introduction

The Local Government York and North Yorkshire Housing Board (formerly the North Yorkshire Strategic Housing Board), has agreed to develop the first Single Housing Strategy for North Yorkshire.

Housing plays a fundamental role in everyone's life and influences people's access to opportunities. The authorities joining together in partnership to produce this Strategy are committed to responding to the diverse needs of the communities of York and North Yorkshire.

The Vision for the Strategy is:

“To make York and North Yorkshire an inclusive place where everyone can have access to decent affordable homes and effective support when they need it.”

Context

North Yorkshire is one of four sub-regions within the Yorkshire and Humber region. The North Yorkshire Sub-Region comprises the seven Borough/District housing authorities of North Yorkshire and the City of York Council. North Yorkshire County Council, the North York Moors National Park and the Yorkshire Dales National Park are also partners on the sub-regional housing partnership.

The North Yorkshire sub-region is one of the country's most beautiful and varied places with stunning countryside and coast and a rich heritage. It includes:

- the historic yet forward thinking City of York
- two of England's nine national parks - the Yorkshire Dales and the North York Moors
- the Heritage Coast, three Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, over 12,000 listed buildings and many thousand more monuments and archaeological sites, including a World Heritage Site at Fountains Abbey

North Yorkshire is an area of high demand for housing and buying a home on the open market is not an affordable option for many local people.

Historically, the need to increase joint working and the pooling of resources has been a key strategic aim and sub-regional partnership working will be a fundamental mechanism in terms of ensuring delivery of this strategy.

The strategy will be used to obtain and direct future housing investment across North Yorkshire and will provide a common framework for the participating authorities to develop their housing policies and initiatives. It will therefore affect the lives of residents across York and North Yorkshire.

North Yorkshire is very different to other parts of the Yorkshire and Humber Region. Whilst recognising the need to align with regional objectives, stakeholders were keen to develop a strategy that reflects North Yorkshire's unique identity to ensure it retains a voice and continued funding for its priorities.

Whilst there are some clear regeneration challenges in some parts of the sub-region, North Yorkshire does not have the scale of growth, renewal and regeneration issues associated with some of the larger conurbations in the Yorkshire and Humber Region. Nevertheless, sustained but comparatively modest investment can, will and does make a huge impact in North Yorkshire in respect of delivering locally significant outcomes which substantially improve our residents' quality of life.

Purpose of this Strategy

This draft strategy sets out how York and North Yorkshire will contribute towards delivery of the Regional Housing Strategy and the Sustainable Community Strategies for North Yorkshire and the City of York Council. It will also help to achieve delivery of actions contained in the Leeds City region Housing and Regeneration Strategy for those local authorities that are within the Leeds City Region.

The draft strategy sets out overarching priorities and does not detail specific projects within the North Yorkshire Sub-Region. Nor does it set out plans for the numbers or distribution of housing generally - this is covered within the current Regional Spatial Strategy and will be covered in the forthcoming Integrated Regional Strategy.

To provide more detail at a local level, the final strategy will be underpinned by local action plans produced by each of the participating authorities. These will be tailored to balance each authority's own local circumstances and priorities against the challenges and opportunities to deliver against wider strategic targets.

This is essentially a six year strategy, covering priorities identified in the current 2008-2011 investment period and the following investment period, which it is anticipated will run from 2011 - 2014. It will be subject to regular review by the partners responsible for its development.

Ambitions

In order to deliver the vision, the draft strategy signals a number of ambitions that stakeholders share in respect of delivering housing and housing services across the sub-region notably to:

- Develop a better understanding of the housing needs of the communities across York and North Yorkshire including vulnerable groups and those with particular needs such as Gypsies and Travellers and Migrant Workers
- Support the development of a wider range of housing choices and facilitate customer access to these choices through the provision of universal, clear and transparent advice about existing housing and housing support services
- Directly invest in and encourage private investment in existing housing stock of all tenures within North Yorkshire, to ensure its sustainability and availability to meet the sub-region's current housing needs
- Strengthen linkages to strategic economic development and regeneration priorities and maximise opportunities for additional affordable housing delivery through joint working with planning colleagues
- Ensure that the homes and services we deliver are of an excellent quality, are efficient, represent good value for money and reflect a culture of continuous service improvement

North Yorkshire's Strategic Priorities

Four key strategic priorities have been identified for York and North Yorkshire. These are:

- Enabling the provision of more affordable homes
- Reducing homelessness
- Improving access to housing services
- Making best use of the existing housing stock

Strategic Priority 1: Enabling the provision of more affordable homes

North Yorkshire needs more affordable homes for local people. The latest forecasts suggest the sub-region will fall well short of its targets. The sub-region recognises that it cannot rely on new build housing provision alone and we must explore more innovative ways of increasing affordable housing delivery.

In order to achieve this, the sub-region proposes to:

- Gain a better understanding of the housing market in North Yorkshire and the opportunities it affords to deliver more affordable housing
- Target owners of public land to potentially increase availability of land for affordable housing
- Maximise opportunities for delivery through the Planning system

- Offer specific support for rural affordable housing delivery via the North Yorkshire Rural Housing Enabling Partnership
- Develop new affordable housing products and innovative delivery mechanisms

Strategic Priority 2: Reducing homelessness

Homelessness continues to be a problem in York and North Yorkshire. The emphasis on this part of the strategy is on homelessness prevention.

The sub-region proposes to:

- Work more collaboratively to offer a greater range of homeless prevention services across all parts of the sub-region.
- Specifically improve services aimed at reducing youth homelessness

Strategic Priority 3: Improving access to housing services

The sub-region wants to put the customer at the heart of decision making and to increase choice. The sub-region proposes to:

- Develop a sub-regional Choice Based Lettings scheme in participating authorities
- Offer improved housing services and assistance for specific vulnerable groups including women who have experienced domestic abuse; young people, ex-offenders; people with mental health problems, people with learning disabilities and single people moving from temporary accommodation to sustainable housing.
- Increase housing choices for its ageing population, for example by planning appropriate housing and advice
- Better understand and address the housing and support needs of Gypsies and Travellers, Black and Minority Ethnic groups and migrant workers
- Begin to address issues of financial inclusion and worklessness

Strategic Priority 4: Making best use of the existing housing stock

Our existing homes are our most valuable resource, so it is important that we look after them and make best use of them. The strategy proposes to place greater emphasis on the maintenance and improvement of existing stock and its sustainability

The sub-region proposes to:

- Improve housing conditions and services for private rented homes
- Ensure financial assistance packages are available to enable people to improve their own homes
- Support targeted regeneration in areas which require it such as Scarborough and parts of York
- Offer support and help to match people with homes that are the right size and type to meet their needs
- Offer services and grants to make sure that people with disabilities can live comfortably within their existing homes
- Improve the energy efficiency of existing and new homes to help people run them more cheaply and efficiently and to reduce the risk of climate change

Resources

The North Yorkshire sub-region initially secured £63 million resources from central Government for housing investment to deliver its ambitions from 2008-2011. However, due to the national economic climate, the funding for the period 2010-11 has been reduced by approximately 20%.

As national economic recovery is unlikely to take place in the short term, the sub-region is aware that future Government housing funding may continue to be limited. We therefore need to make sure that the investment that is available is targeted in areas where we can deliver and make the most difference, as well as exploring other funding options to tackle the sub-region's housing priorities.

Timetable and process for adopting the final strategy

The strategy is now in its final stages of development with a target timetable to agree sign off by the Local Government York and North Yorkshire Housing Board by 31st March 2010.

This final stage of consultation will be done in three ways: an interactive web site, a series of targeted focus groups on specific themes and locally based events in different local authority areas.

If you want to know more about the consultation process please visit the North Yorkshire Housing Strategy Website on www.northyorkshirehousingstrategy.co.uk

or contact:

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