

North Derbyshire and Bassetlaw Private Sector Housing Strategy

Executive Summary

Introduction

80% of the housing market in the North Derbyshire and Bassetlaw Housing Market Area¹ is in the private sector. This strategy provides a clear framework for action to address or correct priority issues² in this market, whilst contributing to our wider vision for the housing market area.

Our vision

The North Derbyshire and Bassetlaw Housing Market Area will be characterised by vibrant towns and smaller centres, accessible to major employment centres and transport routes, where resident and new arrivals can access housing which meets the needs of their circumstances at all stages of their lives based on housing choice attractive urban and natural environments and a quality of life which matches the best in the region.

Our *Housing Market Area (HMA) Joint Housing Strategy 2009* describes how this vision will be achieved, and how we will meet the housing needs and aspirations of all our communities. Our private sector housing strategy aims to achieve four outcomes that will contribute:

1. Homes are affordably warm and their impact on the environment is minimised
2. Vulnerable people are able to sustain independent living
3. Private homes provide additional good quality housing options
4. Private rented homes are safe and well managed

Homes provide a springboard for people to lead healthy, happy and productive lives. In deciding how we will achieve these outcomes we have considered how action can improve health and wellbeing, and contribute to the growth of a sustainable and resilient economy.

How we have developed the strategy

This strategy has been developed by a partnership of the four councils, housing associations, private landlords, and other housing service providers and agencies such as the two County Councils.

It involved considerable research and analysis, involvement in workshops and discussions with officers. This can be found here www.XXXX.

Our action plan provides the detail of how we will deliver this strategy together. This can be viewed here www.XXXX

¹ NDB HMA local authorities: North East Derbyshire, Chesterfield, Bolsover, Bassetlaw

² Priority issues are those that have major influences on the market as a whole and on customers who occupy or want to occupy homes in the private sector

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The challenges we will overcome

Our research identified six challenges common in the housing market area that we will need to overcome if we want to achieve our vision and outcomes.

Our key housing challenges are:

1. A growing older population
2. Vulnerable and low income households living in poor quality homes
3. Hidden needs amongst private households in rural areas
4. Insufficient housing and choice of housing to meet needs
5. Growth in the private rented sector is needed
6. There are areas where needs are concentrated

Our strategy, and the supporting evidence base, provides more detail about these challenges. We also considered the wider environment and how this affects how we achieve our ambitions. This included:

1. *The government's ambitions for the future*

- *Grow a sustainable and resilient economy* that is 'rebalanced' across regions, public and private sectors.
- *Reduced health inequalities and improved health outcomes* through proposals for NHS, public health and social care reform at a time when the population is ageing and health and social care challenges arising from this are increasing.
- *Achieving carbon-reduction targets and tackling climate change*, with proposals for how this will be achieved described in the Energy Bill.
- *Empowered people and communities*, capable and willing to participate and contribute to society, to take responsibility for their decisions, to take control and to hold others to account (expected outcomes of Localism, Big Society and personalisation agendas).
- Underpinning all ambitions and priorities is the government's main aim to *reduce the deficit 'in a fair and responsible way'*. This is driving government expectations of how we will deliver services.

2. *Specific housing ambitions particularly relevant to the private housing sector strategy*

- Deliver 150,000 new affordable homes by 2015
- Bring more empty homes back into use
- Increase mobility amongst social housing tenants
- Increase fairness in the use of social housing
- Reduce homelessness and tackle overcrowding

3. *Other drivers specific to our four outcomes*

These included:

- Welfare reform and social housing reform
- The growing older population living in the private sector
- The growing importance of the private rented sector within the market
- The likely increase in demand for smaller sized accommodation
- The quality and design of homes in the private sector.

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Our outcomes in more detail and priorities for action

Outcome 1 – Homes are affordably warm and their impact on the environment is minimised

In more detail we will see:

- People who live in and are vulnerable to cold homes have information and advice to improve their living conditions
- All homes are affordably warm and as energy efficient as practicable

To achieve these outcomes we will take action to:

1. Identify those most at risk and target our action
2. Improve access to information about how to improve affordable warmth, energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions
3. Ensure that those who need it can access financial help to improve affordable warmth and energy efficiency
4. Develop the planning system approach to new carbon neutral homes and retrofitting

Outcome 2 – Vulnerable people are able to sustain independent living

In more detail we will see:

- A consistent and reliable pathway to services and sources of help ensures that people who are vulnerable to losing their independence are given the right advice and help at the right time
- Vulnerable people on low incomes are able to keep their homes in good repair
- Vulnerable people are able to adapt or change their homes as their needs change
- Vulnerable people are supported to maintain independence in their homes

To achieve these outcomes we will take action to:

1. Provide the right information on how to access help and assistance
2. Enable access to, and assist with, value for money repairs and adaptations
3. Enable homeowners to access resources to pay for home repairs
4. Help those who can't use release sufficient home equity to pay for repairs
5. Ensure customers understand all their options and can make informed choices
6. Improve alternative housing options, where practicable, for those seeking adaptations
7. Enable the maximum possible number of people to have adaptations they need, with value for money throughout the whole system
8. Help people to improve their ability, and confidence in their ability, to live independently

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Outcome 3 – Private sector homes provide additional good quality housing options

In more detail we will see:

- Customers have access to private sector housing options
- There are no long term empty homes across the area
- There is a comprehensive range of private sector housing options

To achieve these outcomes we will take action to:

1. Improve customers' knowledge about the housing options they have eg, by developing common on-line information and advice and working with First Contact
2. Enhance customers' choices of private rented homes, for example by including homes in the Choice Based Lettings scheme
3. Identify and bring empty homes back into use, encouraging owners to invest in their homes through information and advice
4. Open up home-ownership options to a wider range of people
5. Increase the supply from the private sector of good quality smaller and/or shared homes that are affordable for single person households, and particularly younger and older households

Outcome 4 – Private rented homes are safe and well-managed

In more detail we will see:

- Partnership working with private landlords supports a good range of safe and well-managed homes
- Private tenants experience good quality and well managed homes

To achieve these outcomes we will take action to:

1. Develop effective landlord engagement and partnership working
2. Support landlords in good management practices to keep homes safe and in good repair
3. Improve the standard of tenancy management

How we will manage delivery

The governance and direction for this private sector housing strategy will build on our existing arrangements. A private sector housing steering group will ensure that the strategy action plan is delivered. It will monitor progress and performance; take action to address poor performance and shift activity if opportunities or threats arise. It will report regularly to the HMA Executive on performance, issues and trends in the sector, opportunities and threats, and will seek input and decisions to inform the direction of the strategy and action plan.

For more information on this strategy see www.XXX