

North York Moors National Park Authority Planning Committee

23 July 2015

York, North Yorkshire and East Riding Housing Strategy 2015 to 2021

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide an overview of the York, North Yorkshire and East Riding Housing Strategy 2015 to 2021 and seek guidance from Members on clarifying the future planning role of the National Park Authority in relation to its involvement in the delivery of affordable housing, in the context of further core grant reductions and planning reforms.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 The Authority will need to make some difficult decisions over the next nine months as it develops its next Business Plan. Further reductions in core funding are highly likely and given the reductions in staff that have taken place already, it will not be possible to cover all the areas of work that were hitherto seen as essential. The Members' seminar on Monday 13 July will have given Members the opportunity to discuss the broad issues of prioritisation and the timescales for decision taking. This paper concentrates on housing and has been brought forward at this point because of the proposed launch of the Housing Strategy in two months' time.
- 2.2 The York, North Yorkshire and East Riding Housing Strategy covers the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) area. The Housing Strategy sets out the priorities for housing growth and delivery from 2015 to 2021 and will replace the existing strategy for 2010 to 2015. The strategy has been prepared through ongoing consultation between the York, North Yorkshire and East Riding Housing Board, the LEP and a number of partners. A full copy of the Housing Strategy can be viewed at <http://www.nycyerhousing.co.uk/housing-strategy/>. It is hoped that the strategy will be presented to Members of all the Housing Authorities for approval before being officially launched at the Housing Board Meeting on the 14 September.
- 2.3 Alongside the Housing Strategy the Chief Executives of the York, North Yorkshire and East Riding LEP area (including the NPA Chief Executives) have commissioned consultants to draft a (non-statutory) Spatial Plan, which will set out the spatial implications of the Strategic Economic Plan and help inform work on new Local Plans, particularly in relation to the duty to cooperate. Further information on this plan will be reported to Members in due course.

3. Background

- 3.1 The National Park Authority is not a Housing Authority; however the delivery of affordable housing to meet the needs of local communities has in the past been a priority for the organisation due to the great local concern about the issue and because of the Authority's role as a Planning Authority. Maintaining the National Park as a place where people can work as well as live can in some cases be seen as essential to the achievement of National Park purposes.

For this reason Officers and Members have worked closely with the constituent Housing Authorities through involvement in the York, North Yorkshire and East Riding Housing Board/Forum and the North Yorkshire Rural Housing Enabler Partnership. Since the adoption of the Authority's Core Strategy in 2008, a pro-active approach has been taken to affordable housing delivery and over the past five years a total of 89 new homes have been built in 10 villages across the Park.

3.2 The Housing Strategy 2015 to 2021 is largely based on the priorities set out in the YNYER LEP Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) which aims to deliver 3,000 new jobs and 4,000 new homes. Whilst this strategy reflects the government agenda for significantly increasing house building as part of the economic growth agenda, it does not specifically relate to the government vision for housing in National Parks as set out in the extant National Parks Circular, or NPPF for example, that development should be restricted in National Parks, or that they shouldn't be areas for accommodating general market housing. The SEP housing priorities are set out below:

- Support housing and employment growth ambitions by investing in major strategic development sites in Northallerton, Catterick Garrison, Middle Deepdale in Scarborough and Olympia Park, Selby, creating over 4,000 new homes
- Double house building (compared to 2012-14 build rates) and triple delivery of affordable housing.
- Deliver local strategic housing priorities and outcomes in response to priorities identified in the SEP and Local Growth Deal Implementation Plan, including work on older persons and rural housing.
- Get up-to-date Local Plans in place, deliver effective strategic planning by working together and across boundaries and ensure delivery of housing in Local Plans.

3.3 The aim for doubling housing delivery is based on relatively low completions rates in 2012/13 and 2013/14 compared with the rates of completions which could be delivered if targets set in Local Plans across the LEP area are reached. The figure for trebling affordable housing delivery is again based on the targets set in Local Plans, which if met will increase threefold the rate of 600 units per year within the whole LEP area. In order to deliver these aspirations significant improvements will be required to infrastructure as well as appropriate levels of funding. The YNYER LEP has secured £110.1m from the Government's Local Growth Fund to support economic growth in the area, which will facilitate some of these aspirations.

4. **Housing Strategy Challenges and Priorities**

4.1 The Housing Strategy sets out a number of the challenges which are faced by the LEP area and most rural areas throughout England. Many are true for the North York Moors such as high house prices compared to low wages and changing population demographics – but the extent to which these issues can be tackled effectively with the existing range of policy proposals is unclear. Moreover, Members need to agree to what extent these are issues which should be tackled in a National Park and whether there are other pressing housing issues which are not referred to in the Strategy such as under-occupancy, which is a key matter in both the region's National Parks. The housing strategy highlights the issues which are facing the LEP area in relation to the aging population and is clear that a mix of different types of accommodation is needed to meet the needs of an older population including extra care facilities. Conversely the strategy highlights the issues posed by a smaller working age population which means that there are less younger working people to support the economy and provide services, both formally and informally.

4.2 Alongside helping to deliver the strategic housing aims of the YNYER LEP the Housing Strategy sets nine priorities:-

1. Work with partners to increase the supply of good quality new housing across all tenures and locations (in line with Local Plans/site allocations).
2. Ensure that housing stock reflects the needs of urban, rural and coastal communities.
3. Ensure that our housing stock meets the needs of our population at all stages of their lives.
4. Via policy guidance and negotiation, ensure new homes are of good design and environmental quality regardless of tenure.
5. Continue to make best use of our existing stock and ensure that it is of a decent quality to meet the needs of our communities
6. Ensure all homes have a positive impact on health and well-being and are affordable to run.
7. Continue to reduce homelessness.
8. Ensure housing is allocated fairly and on the basis of need.
9. Provide appropriate housing and support for those with specific housing needs.

5. **Key Implications for the North York Moors National Park**

- 5.1 The Housing strategy sets out a number of proposals which will help to meet the priorities outlined above. The expectation is that each Housing Authority will establish their own action plans to deliver these priorities and proposals. The key proposals which officers consider relevant for the North York Moors National Park are:-
- Getting up to date Local Plans in place;
 - Support the delivery of affordable housing via S106 and exception sites;
 - Increase diversity and choice in terms of size, type and tenure to meet the needs of our communities;
 - Continue to support the Rural Housing Enablers Programme;
 - Address falling populations in the National Parks (the population of the North York Moors fell by 2.7% between the 2001 and 2011 Census) and use housing to sustain balanced communities; and
 - Increase the number and range of homes suitable for our aging population.
- 5.2 To ensure these challenges were met the National Park Authority would need to continue to focus on the delivery of affordable housing to meet a range of housing needs and ensure that the changing demographics of the population become an integral part of the design of new housing developments. The joint working with the Rural Housing Enablers has proven extremely successful in the delivery of affordable housing, however without the active engagement of planning officers it is unlikely that significant levels of affordable housing will be delivered in the future.
- 5.3 As set out earlier in the report the Authority has in recent years been proactive in the delivery of affordable housing schemes in the Park and this is reflected in the number of dwellings completed each year. This commitment has included financial contributions towards the Rural Housing Enabler Programme and the active engagement of officers in the programme. This has in the past involved lengthy pre-application discussions relating to schemes, participation in searches for suitable sites with Members of Parish Councils and attendance at public open day events.
- 5.4 As Members will be aware the District Authorities have benefited from significant sums of New Homes Bonus funding for affordable housing completions which have taken place in the National Park.

During this time the National Park has continued to face significant reductions to its Core Grant and as there are likely to be further cuts in the next couple of years, this means that the Authority needs to carefully prioritise future work programmes. The priority for the depleted Planning Policy Team in the immediate future is the completion of the Joint Minerals and Waste Plan. Members will be asked to consider the need to prepare a new Local Plan at the NPA meeting in October while the Management Plan is also due for review in 2017 and a Business Plan/Medium Term Financial Strategy is needed within a year.

- 5.5 Although the Housing Strategy aims to increase the provision of affordable housing across the LEP area Members need to consider whether the National Park Authority should continue to resource an area of work which is not a statutory function (not being a housing authority). Members need to consider whether the Authority should continue to take such a proactive role in the delivery of affordable housing or leave this responsibility to the relevant housing authority. As part of this shift Members may conclude that the Authority withdraws from active engagement in the Rural Housing Enabler Programme and membership on the North Yorkshire and East Riding Housing Board. This would reduce the Authority's role to a more reactive planning one and officers from the Development Management Team would still continue to be available for pre-application discussions on new proposals but this will be on the same basis as an other developers where charging is incurred. It is suggested that a final decision on these issues is best taken alongside a consideration of other demands in the autumn, particularly in view of the issues discussed in the section below.

6. **Future Reforms to Planning and Housing Delivery**

- 6.1 Recent national housing projections indicated that 220,000 additional households will be formed each year up to 2022, whilst only 117,070 houses were built. A number of policies to boost housing supply were set out in the Conservative Party 2015 Manifesto and the Queen's Speech announced that a Housing Bill will be introduced this Autumn. The Housing Bill will make the following changes to planning legislation:

- To introduce a statutory register for brownfield land, to help achieve the target of getting Local Development Orders in place on 90% of suitable brownfield sites by 2020.
- Placing a new duty on councils to help allocate land to people who want to build their own home by introducing a requirement from April for councils to hold a register of custom and self-builders who require land in the area and must make sure they look to provide land to meet their needs.
- To simplify and speed up the neighbourhood planning system, to support communities that seek to meet local housing and other development needs through neighbourhood planning.
- To give effect to other changes to housing and planning legislation that would support housing growth.

In addition the Government has set out its intention to take action on Authorities that have failed to produce a plan for the homes their community needs, although it is not yet clear what form of action this will be. How these policies will be introduced in relation to National Parks is not yet clear, nor is the impact of the introduction of Right to Buy on Housing Association properties which will apply to all affordable housing delivered in the Park over the last decade.

7. **Monitoring the Strategy**

7.1 An Action Plan for each year will be prepared and progress against this will be reported to the Housing Board.

As part of its commitment to double house building and triple the delivery of affordable housing the Housing Board is aiming to receive 6 monthly performance updates on the delivery of market and affordable housing in terms of completions and planning permissions granted. This will inevitably increase the workload of the Planning Policy team and although it may be difficult to provide precise figures it will be possible to provide estimates of completions on a 6 monthly basis. The main purpose for increased monitoring is to enable the Housing Board and its partners to intervene to bring forward developments which are stalled.

8. **Financial and Staffing Implications**

8.1 At present the Planning Policy Team monitors the completion of dwellings through a combination of discussions with the Authority's compliance officer, Development Management Officers and site visits. This is currently carried out on an annual basis in order to inform the Annual Residential Land Availability Survey and the Authority Report. The request from the Housing Board to report figures on a six monthly basis will mean that this work will need to be conducted twice a year. As the collation of figures is reliant on site visits it is anticipated that the mid-year figures should be provided as an estimate rather than a final figure, which will continue to be provided on an annual basis.

8.2 The National Park Authority currently contributes £2,500 each year to the Rural Housing Enabler Programme, (which was reduced by 50% in 2013) which employs a Rural Housing Enabler for Ryedale and Scarborough and one for Hambleton. If Members decide to leave the programme a period of 12 months must be given to Hambleton District Council.

9. **Contribution to National Park Management Plan**

9.1 The delivery of affordable housing contributes towards meeting Policy C9 of the Management Plan, which seeks to provide opportunities for schemes to meet the needs of local people.

10. **Legal Implications**

10.1 None

11. **Recommendation**

11.1 a) That Members consider the Authority's future role in the delivery of affordable housing in the National Park as set out in paragraphs 5.5 and 6.1; and

b) That Members endorse the 2015 to 2021 York, North Yorkshire and East Riding Housing Strategy subject to the Strategy recognising that the delivery of housing in the North York Moors must be done so in the context of National Park purposes.

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