



Directorate: Housing and Regeneration

Service: Strategic Housing

Policy / function / activity being reviewed: Housing Strategy 2013 - 2018

Supporting Directorate Support Officer:

Date completed and by whom: February 2013, Isabel Connolly, Team Leader Strategy, Policy and Private Sector Housing

Review date: February 2014

Step 1 – Identifying the Purpose / Aims

1. What type of policy, service, activity or function is this?

- Adopting a new strategy for 2013 - 2018

2. What is the aim and purpose of the policy, activity, service or function?

- To provide the overall strategic direction to guide investment and service delivery across all the Council's housing services. A number of other key policies and strategies will support the success of this strategy in the delivery of target outcomes.

3. Outline any proposals being considered.

- This Housing Strategy commits the Council to meeting six Strategic Objectives.
 - To plan and deliver a good supply and mix of housing;
 - To improve the quality of housing in Dacorum;

- To meet housing needs;
- To maximise the delivery of affordable housing;
- To improve prevention of homelessness and the available range of temporary housing options; and
- To foster the private sector as a housing option.

4. Who is the policy, activity, service or function intended to help / benefit / serve?

- The objectives have been developed to help / benefit / serve:
 - People seeking a home within the Borough;
 - People in housing need, including the homeless and people threatened with homelessness;
 - Older people and other vulnerable people who require special accommodation and services to live independently;
 - People who own accommodation in the Borough, including owner-occupiers and private landlords; and
 - Developers, private investors and other providers of housing and housing related services within the Borough.

5. Does the policy, activity, service or function have any specific aims or objectives in relation to equality, social inclusion or community cohesion?

- In its implementation and on-going monitoring the Housing Strategy will explicitly consider the impact across a range of differing needs, with specific reference to people with disabilities, older people, vulnerable groups and other people needing housing with support or specific requirements.

Step 2 – Considering existing information and what this tells you

6. Summarise any data / research or performance management information about the policy, function or activity that is available.
This could include equalities monitoring information; surveys; complaints or grievances.

Data / Information

In 2012 the Council commissioned a desk-top Housing Market and Needs Assessment of the Borough, which highlighted key affordability and supply side issues with the housing market in Dacorum, and a summary of the key findings is both provided below and included as Appendix 2 of the Housing Strategy 2013 – 2018:

Housing Market Change

- *Over the three year period Q3 2008 to Q4 2011, the average property price in Dacorum increased by 36%.*
- *All property types had increased in price, with larger property types seeing the greatest increases. Detached properties were found to have increased in price by 43.8%, followed by terraced properties (30.2%) and semi-detached properties (25.8%).*

- Sales levels in the Dacorum area increased by 13.4% from 2003 to 2006, reaching a peak in 2006, in contrast to the County which peaked in 2004.
- The average property price in Dacorum is £312,681, higher than the County average, regional and national averages.
- Nationally, loans to first-time buyers were up by 4% from November 2010 to November 2011. The typical first time buyer in September 2011 needed a deposit of 20% and borrowed 3.23 times their income.
- If funding could be secured at 90% mortgage an average deposit of around £11,595 to £12,000 would be required to buy one and two bedroom flats, and £17,900 to £20,000 for two and three bedroom terraced houses in the 2012 Dacorum market.
- The need for up to a 20% deposit is the key affordability problem for those wishing to buy - 93% of concealed households forming within parental homes will not be able to afford a deposit for a 1 bed flat without significant parental assistance.
- Entry rental costs in the private rented sector vary by location within the Borough.
- 58% of new households forming cannot afford to rent in the private market.

Income Change

- 2011 data shows a median income of £30,858 for Dacorum, a 53.7% increase on the 2003 figure of £20,079.

Population Projections

- Demographic projections for Dacorum predict an increase in the population of Dacorum of 19,500 people (+13.9%) over the forecast period to 2033. There is an increase in all age groups.
- The most significant growth is in the over 65 age group with an increase of 14,400 people (+65.8%), compared to an increase of only 4.3% for the whole population aged under 65.
- Within the older age group, numbers of people aged 85+ are projected to grow by 4,500 (+150.0%). Given the resource demands and specialist accommodation needs often associated with very elderly people, these are significant figures.

Property Types Needed

- Meeting the backlog of affordable housing need over 5 years would require 653 units a year.
- There is substantial housing need for all types of unit sizes that will not be met by the immediate identified supply.
- The provision of smaller units for older people, particularly Extra Care, will be important for initiatives to free up under-occupied three bedroom social rented stock.
- Making best use of the existing stock is now even more important as a means of addressing needs for larger family size properties.

The objectives of the Housing Strategy have been developed to tackle a number of local challenges facing Dacorum, which have arisen from the changes at national and local level:

- An overall shortage of homes, particularly affordable, and a prohibitive cost of owner occupation;
- A need to improve the availability and range of housing, as an integral part of attracting and retaining employment in the Borough;
- Growing numbers of households experiencing homelessness;
- The impact of an ageing population and the contribution that good housing can make to the health agenda; and
- Energy efficiency and quality of housing, particularly in the private sector.

7. Is there any evidence of negative differential impact on any of the following? (Some equality categories may be more relevant than others)

Age; Disability; Race or ethnicity; Religion or belief / faith communities; Gender and transgender; Sexual orientation

- In its implementation and on-going monitoring the Housing Strategy will explicitly consider the impact across the range of differing needs, with specific reference to people with disabilities, older people, vulnerable groups and other people with a need for housing with support or specific requirements.
- This strategy has a broad remit - its strategic objectives refer to a number of other strategies and policies, and it guides the overall strategic direction for investment and service delivery across all the Council's housing services. Some of the strategies and policies referred to have already been adopted by the Council and have Equality Impact Assessments, some are in development stages, and others are yet to be developed.
- Due to the number of other strategies and policies shaping actions and investment required to ensure the success of this strategy, this Equality Impact Assessment will not duplicate the detail in assessments that have already been carried out, or remove the need for individual Equality Impact Assessments for the strategies and policies that Council has committed to developing in this strategy.

Step 3 – Assessing the Impact

8. Is there any evidence of higher or lower take-up of the service, facility or opportunity by any group /community and if so, is there an explanation for this?

- This strategy does not set out the detail of services, facilities, or opportunities, but rather guides the overall strategic direction for investment and service delivery across all the Council's housing services. This overall direction is based on a vision to promote access to housing for all equality groups, and commits the Council to specific pieces of work to improve access for some specific groups (e.g. commitment to an Older Persons' Housing Strategy)
- The Council is committed to providing staff training in Equality and Diversity for all back office and front line staff within the Housing Service and those other teams who are involved in delivering this strategy. By maintaining a commitment to training the Council intends to prevent any unforeseen negative consequences for any of the equality categories.

9. Could any of the associated rules, requirements or regulations of the function, activity or policy affect the accessibility of the service/ activity to any groups or communities?

- There are no directly associated rules, requirements or regulations. Where rules, requirements or regulations are associated with underlying policies or strategies these will be dealt with in the specific equality impact assessments.

10. If the impact or effects are adverse for any community or group, can they be defended i.e. in order to provide equality for another community under legislation or policy?

- Please see answer to question 9.

Step 4 – Dealing with adverse or unlawful impact

11. What can be done to improve the policy, service, function or any proposals in order to reduce or remove any adverse impact or effects identified?

- Staff across the Council's Planning and Regeneration teams, incorporating the Housing Service, will have training in all the equality categories. Where front line staff are dealing with specific customer groups this may also include: mental health and substance misuse; domestic abuse; religious, ethnic and cultural minority groups.

12. What would be needed to be able to do this? Are the resources available?

- Resources to assess and analyse the impact of the strategy across the range of differing needs, with specific reference to people with disabilities, older people, vulnerable groups and other housing with support or specific requirements.
- Commitment to training.

Step 5 – Consultation and Feedback

13. Outline your proposals to consult with those affected on proposed changes.

- Consultation on the Housing Strategy 2013 - 2018 is due to commence in March 2013 for a six week period.

Step 6 – The decision

14. What needs to be done?

- Complete the consultation process and consider all feedback.
- Adoption of the strategy in summer 2013.

Step 7 – Monitoring, review and evaluation

15. What monitoring and review mechanisms are in place or will be developed?

- Assessments and analysis of the impact of the strategy on an annual basis.

- Equality Impact Assessments to be completed for related policies and strategies.
- Training to be reviewed on an annual basis.

Step 8 – The service plan

16. What needs to be included in the Service Development Plan?

- Implementation and monitoring of the Housing Strategy.
- Staff training

17. Does an Action Plan need to be put together to ensure everything is actioned?

No

Step 9 – Publishing the Results

The EqIA will be published on the Council's website; therefore as the author of the document it is your responsibility to ensure that it is written in an understandable way, free from Council jargon.

In order for the EqIA form to be published it must be reviewed and signed off by the relevant Head of Service. It is the service manager's responsibility to ensure that this is done.

Once the form this has been completed an electronic copy should be sent to Anne Stunell / Emma Harvey – Human Resources, ext. 2089 / 2258