

<b>Title of Report:</b>  <b>Item 9: DfC Call for Evidence on a Housing Supply Strategy for NI</b>	<b>Officer Presenting:</b>  <b>Senior Planning Officer</b>
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## **1 Purpose of Report / Recommendations**

- 1.1 To inform Members of the Call for Evidence by the Department for Communities (DfC) which represents their first formal stage in the process of developing a Housing Supply Strategy. The Call for Evidence was launched on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2021 and closes Friday 16<sup>th</sup> July 2021. Members are asked to agree to the issuing of the draft response (attached at Appendix 14) to the Call for Evidence.

## **2 Background**

- 2.1 DfC issued the Call for Evidence on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2021 and seek responses by 16<sup>th</sup> July 2021. The necessary documents can be accessed here: <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-new-housing-supply-strategy-call-evidence>
- 2.2 The Call is the first formal stage in the process of their development of a Housing Supply Strategy. They seek the submission of evidence, data and views on a selection of high-level issues that could help shape housing supply. They seek to publish a formal consultation (Stage 3) in July 2021 and to have a draft Strategy for presentation to Ministers by March 2022.
- 2.3 Their document states that housing is a policy area devolved to the NI Executive and is explicitly recognised as a priority area under three of the outcomes on the Programme for Government (PfG) draft Outcomes Framework. Addressing housing need and more specifically housing stress was also acknowledged in New Decade, New Approach (Jan 2020). It is intended that the Housing Supply Strategy will be an Executive Strategy.
- 2.4 The document seeks to put people at the centre of supply and has developed a proposed Vision and Objectives for the Strategy (p 10). It proposes that the Strategy will cover an approximate 15-year timeframe and will be underpinned by a high-level Delivery Framework supported by multi-year action plans.

- 2.5 The Call for Evidence document acknowledges that when looking at the drivers of demand and the levers adopted to address demand, it is apparent that housing supply is a complex and multifaceted issue. DfC stresses that while the new strategy will naturally focus on supply, it will be important not to lose sight of the importance of understanding the needs of people, places and communities when developing the supply strategy and thus its role in supporting people, shaping places and building communities.

### **3 Key Issues**

- 3.1 Pages 15 and 16 of the main document set out the relevant Housing need and demand drivers and levers. A short chapter on Planning (p 40-41) is provided. It acknowledges the important role Planning plays in the delivery of all forms of housing and how it provides the ability to shape and change the character, look and feel of the places where we live, work or visit.
- 3.2 The chapter also acknowledges that the Planning system frequently attracts criticism mostly focussed on the 'process'. However, it is considered that the process will not transform the quantity, quality, sustainability, viability and/or suitability of housing supply in NI.
- 3.3 The chapter refers to a number of Planning-related issues which need to be resolved:
- Land banking;
  - Bonds, agreements & bond reductions;
  - Appropriate resourcing to expedite applications;
  - Rural single dwelling applications;
  - Locations & sustainable travel modes;
  - Planning Pre-Application Process;
  - Developer Contributions; &
  - Conditional Planning approval.
- 3.4 A number of questions in relation to Planning are posed on p 42 of the document seeking evidence-supported responses.

- 3.5 Members will be acutely aware of the serious housing need issue within our District, and in particular, within Derry City. The Housing Growth Indicator (DfI 2019) for the District proposed approximately 4,500 new houses as being appropriate up to 2032. The Social Housing need for the District for the same period is 4,500 in itself. While the Council is currently developing its LDP through which we will endeavour to supply policy and lands to meet this need, it is recognised there also needs to be additional wider and more focussed actions to fully deliver appropriate housing (quantity, location and quality) for this District.
- 3.6 It is therefore recommended that the Council responds to this Call for Evidence before the 16<sup>th</sup> July 2021 deadline as above, reiterating the serious housing need within the District and Derry City in particular, and requiring suitable delivery mechanisms in the short and medium timescales. A proposed response is attached at Appendix 14. The Council can make a further submission in response to the formal Strategy Consultation stage, expected later in 2021.

#### **4 Financial, Equality, Legal, HR, Improvement, Data Protection, Rural Needs, Climate Change and other Implications**

- 4.1 There are no financial, equality, legal, HR, Improvement, Data Protection, Rural needs, Climate change or other implications arising directly from this report.

#### **5 Recommendations**

- 5.1 It is recommended that Members note the current Call for Evidence invitation and its associated deadline and agree to issue the attached response, to be submitted before the 16<sup>th</sup> July 2021.

#### **Background Papers**

Appendix 14 – Proposed Council response to DfC Housing Supply Strategy - Call for Evidence invitation