

**Date:** Monday 14 October 2024 at 4.00 pm

**Venue:** Jim Cooke Conference Suite, Stockton Central Library, Stockton-on-Tees  
TS18 1TU

**Cllr Richard Eglinton (Chair)**  
**Cllr Jim Beall (Vice-Chair)**

Cllr Kevin Faulks  
Cllr Sufi Mubeen  
Cllr Marilyn Surtees  
Cllr Sylvia Walmsley

Cllr Stefan Houghton  
Cllr Andrew Sherris  
Cllr Hilary Vickers

## **AGENDA**

- |          |   |                 |
|----------|---|-----------------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>Evacuation Procedure</b>   | (Pages 7 - 8)   |
| <b>2</b> | <b>Apologies for Absence</b>  |                 |
| <b>3</b> | <b>Declarations of Interest</b>   |                 |
| <b>4</b> | <b>Minutes</b>  |                 |
|          | To approve the minutes of the last meeting held on 9 September 2024               | (Pages 9 - 12)  |
| <b>5</b> | <b>Scrutiny Review of Affordable Housing</b>                                      |                 |
|          | To receive evidence from Housing Action Teesside and Northern Housing Consortium. | (Pages 13 - 58) |
| <b>6</b> | <b>Chair's Update and Work Programme 2024 - 2025</b>                              | (Pages 59 - 60) |

**Members of the Public - Rights to Attend Meeting**

With the exception of any item identified above as containing exempt or confidential information under the Local Government Act 1972 Section 100A(4), members of the public are entitled to attend this meeting and/or have access to the agenda papers.

Persons wishing to obtain any further information on this meeting, including the opportunities available for any member of the public to speak at the meeting; or for details of access to the meeting for disabled people, please

Contact: Scrutiny Officer, Michelle Gunn on email [michelle.gunn@stockton.gov.uk](mailto:michelle.gunn@stockton.gov.uk)

**KEY - Declarable interests are:-**

- Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI's)
- Other Registerable Interests (ORI's)
- Non Registerable Interests (NRI's)

**Members – Declaration of Interest Guidance**



**Table 1 - Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation</b>	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain
<b>Sponsorship</b>	Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the council) made to the councillor during the previous 12-month period for expenses incurred by him/her in carrying out his/her duties as a councillor, or towards his/her election expenses. This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.
<b>Contracts</b>	Any contract made between the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners (or a firm in which such person is a partner, or an incorporated body of which such person is a director* or a body that such person has a beneficial interest in the securities of*) and the council — (a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and (b) which has not been fully discharged.
<b>Land and property</b>	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the council. 'Land' excludes an easement, servitude, interest or right in or over land which does not give the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/ civil partners (alone or jointly with another) a right to occupy or to receive income.
<b>Licences</b>	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the council for a month or longer.
<b>Corporate tenancies</b>	Any tenancy where (to the councillor's knowledge)— (a) the landlord is the council; and (b) the tenant is a body that the councillor, or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/ civil partners is a partner of or a director* of or has a beneficial interest in the securities* of.
<b>Securities</b>	Any beneficial interest in securities* of a body where— (a) that body (to the councillor's knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the council; and (b) either— (i) the total nominal value of the securities* exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or (ii) if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the councillor, or his/ her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners have a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.

\* 'director' includes a member of the committee of management of an industrial and provident society.

\* 'securities' means shares, debentures, debenture stock, loan stock, bonds, units of a collective investment scheme within the meaning of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 and other securities of any description, other than money deposited with a building society.

## Table 2 – Other Registerable Interest

You must register as an Other Registrable Interest:

- a) any unpaid directorships
- b) any body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority
- c) any body
  - (i) exercising functions of a public nature
  - (ii) directed to charitable purposes or
  - (iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management

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## **Jim Cooke Conference Suite, Stockton Central Library** **Evacuation Procedure & Housekeeping**

If the fire or bomb alarm should sound please exit by the nearest emergency exit. The Fire alarm is a continuous ring and the Bomb alarm is the same as the fire alarm however it is an intermittent ring.

If the Fire Alarm rings exit through the nearest available emergency exit and form up in Municipal Buildings Car Park.

The assembly point for everyone if the Bomb alarm is sounded is the car park at the rear of Splash on Church Road.

The emergency exits are located via the doors between the 2 projector screens. The key coded emergency exit door will automatically disengage when the alarm sounds.

The Toilets are located at the front of the Library where a security code will be required to access them. Please ask a Member of Library staff for the security code.

### **Microphones**

During the meeting, members of the Committee, and officers in attendance, will have access to a microphone. Please use the microphones, when directed to speak by the Chair, to ensure you are heard by the Committee.

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## PLACE SELECT COMMITTEE

A meeting of Place Select Committee was held on Monday 9 September 2024.

**Present:** Cllr Richard Eglington (Chair), Cllr Jim Beall (Vice-Chair), Cllr John Coulson (sub Cllr Andrew Sherris), Cllr Kevin Faulks, Cllr Stefan Houghton, Cllr Marilyn Surtees and Cllr Hilary Vickers.

**Officers:** Jane Edmends, Simon Grundy (AH&W), and Michelle Gunn (CS).

**Also in attendance:** Ian Worgan (Keepmoat Housing) and Richard Poole (Michael Poole Estate Agents).

**Apologies:** Cllr Sufi Mubeen, Cllr Andrew Sherris and Cllr Sylvia Walmsley.

### **PLA/23/24 Evacuation Procedure**

The Committee noted the evacuation and housekeeping procedure.

### **PLA/24/24 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **PLA/25/24 Minutes**

AGREED the minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### **PLA/26/24 Scrutiny Review of Affordable Housing**

The Committee received evidence from the Regional Managing Director of Keepmoat Homes which included:

- An overview of Keepmoat Homes
- The type of partnerships with housing associations and local authorities they were involved in
- Examples of ways the Council could work with private developers to increase their supply of affordable housing
- Reasons why a development may get stalled or not go ahead
- Challenges for delivering the number and types of affordable housing set out in SBC's local plan.

The main issues highlighted and discussed were as follows:

- It was noted that Keepmoat sourced more challenging sites that may have technical issues and transformed them to developable sites. They were able to apply for different types of funding for these types of sites such as brownfield site funding. They had growth plans to build an extra 200/300 affordable properties per year.

- Members questioned if Keepmoat had always worked with Local Authorities and Registered Housing Providers to build affordable housing. It was explained that previously there was a commercial part of the business, but this had been sold and the business now operated a capital light model. It was noted that the Keepmoat would work in partnerships with other private developers, building the affordable housing and infrastructure for a development.
- The different schemes that Keepmoat had been involved in were noted, including a project in partnership with another local authority and registered housing provider whereby the site was financially unviable, and a housing grant was secured to build 66 houses in 12 months via the Homes England Grant. It was noted that Homes England Grant funds were only rewarded if the properties were not built via 106 agreements, and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was waived if a developer was building 100% affordable housing on a site.
- The number of affordable properties being built on developments was discussed, with members noting that this was much lower than the current need. Keepmoat noted that they could not build more than 750 on one site as the business would then become too big to replenish the land.
- Lead in times for building was discussed and costs to build a property was raised. It was noted that the land could cost £10,000 - £15,000 per plot, before other costs were even considered. A scheme could take 3 – 4 years to come to fruition and Keepmoat were currently planning schemes to be built in 2027.
- Keepmoat highlighted that the number of skilled workers in the labour market was a big issue for developers. There were not enough trained workers in the different trades in the building sector, and not enough people being trained in the sector. There was a shortage of scaffolders and roofers in particular.
- Another issue highlighted by Keepmoat was the biodiversity planning laws that came into force on 12 February 2024, whereby developers had to deliver a minimum of 10% increase of the lands biodiversity value. If it was not possible to do so on a site, they had to buy biodiversity credits from a company registered with Biodiversity Gain Site Register, although it was noted that there were very few companies registered at the present time. It was suggested that an impact of this was that agriculture land was now worth more, with landowners able to put their land to fallow and sell it for biodiversity credits at £100,000 per acre. The registration process for credits took six months and the law applied to every type of site, including brownfield sites. It was noted that there was a housing development site near the Metrocentre which required 6,000 credits which would affect the viability and value of the development.
- Keepmoat Homes noted that in their experience SBC officers were very pragmatic and pro-development and would work with developers. When question by members officers confirmed that SBC did not have a builder which they preferred to work with.

The Committee also received evidence from the Managing Director of Michael Poole Estate Agents (MP) on the type of properties on the market and average market rents. The main issues highlighted and discussed were as follows:

- The private rental stock had reduced significantly in the past few years, however the number of landlords leaving the sector had slowed down recently. It was noted that MP were losing 4 – 5 rental properties a month, whereas previously it was 25 properties a month. As a result of this, there were not enough properties

to meet demand, and in particular there was a shortfall in properties for young people and families.

- MP could not foresee a change in the market due to a change in the demographic of private landlords over the last 5 years. There were less landlords with one or two properties and more portfolio holders with a large number of properties. Many of these portfolio holders were based outside of the area, and buying properties to rent in the borough as the yield was so good. This meant that they were more professional and had more money to invest in a property, therefore the standards of their properties were higher.
- Reasons for landlords leaving the market were discussed and MP suggested that these included interest rates, the threat of Rental Reform, and Section 21 abolishment. Selective licensing was raised with members questioning whether this was a reason for landlords leaving the sector. MP explained that this was not an issue as landlords had experience of working with selective licensing in other areas.
- Members questioned what was happening to the properties of the landlords leaving the market, and informed that these were often sold to owner occupiers as they would get a better price than selling to another private landlord.
- Average rent was £800 a year ago, it was now £872 and rents for some properties were creeping over the £1000 mark. Landlord were requesting yearly increases in rent from their tenants, and in some cases requesting 10% each year. MP would negotiate with landlord for lower increases where they could, but the demand for more money was still there. As the demand was so high, if a sitting tenant was unable to meet the rent increase then there would be approximately 30/40 other people applying to rent the property.
- Members questioned the number of properties available to rent at the housing benefit rate. They were informed that there were no houses in the borough where the rent would be solely covered by housing benefit and tenants would have to find approximately £200 - £300 to make up the shortfall.
- A scheme that MP had been involved in was raised, whereby they worked with another Council to let flats at an affordable rent. The demand for the properties was so high they stopped advertising them after a short period of time.
- A discussion took place regarding tenants moving to home ownership, and it was noted that some people preferred to rent due to their lifestyle and priorities. It was also noted that raising a deposit and securing a mortgage for buying a property may prove difficult for some first time buyer due to the amount that needed to be raised and/or their credit rating. While the percentage of deposit needed was coming down, it was still high and influenced the mortgage rate the buyer was able to secure.

The Committee Chair thanked Keepmoat Homes and Michael Poole Estate Agents representatives for their contributions.

The Committee noted the government press release and letter to all local authorities regarding housing building that had been circulated. Officers informed that a report would be considered at the next Cabinet meeting outlining an option appraisal that

would take place to ensure SBC was prepared to respond to any future funding announcements. The report referenced the work of the Committee and highlighted the current need, with an average of 113 bids per property on Tees Valley Homefinder. Officers also noted that there was a consultation on planning reform which included questions on building affordable housing. The Committee questioned whether the consultation included consideration on planning rules regarding biodiversity and neutral neutrality and informed that this was not included. The conflict between these rules and house building was noted.

The Committee also considered the feedback from site visits to the Nominations and Lettings Team in July 2024. Members commented on the low supply of properties and felt reassured that those on the register were treated fairly. The banding system and waiting times were discussed, with members highlighting how the increase in demand had affected the prospect of those not in band one being successful in bidding on a property. Officers noted that the website (<https://www.stockton.gov.uk/social-housing>) had been updated to include information on waiting times, average properties advertised, and average numbers of bids on properties. The website would be reviewed and updated every three months. Officers also noted that a review of the banding system was due to be carried out, which would include a consultation, and this would be shared with the Committee in October. House in Multiply Occupation (HMO) were raised, and it was noted that these needed to be managed correctly to ensure community cohesion.

Drawing the session to a close, the Committee Chair thanked all SBC officers for their contributions.

AGREED that information be noted.

**PLA/27/24 Progress Update - Scrutiny Review of Planning (Development Management) and Adoption of Open Space**

Consideration was given to assessments of progress on the implementation of the recommendations from the Committee's previously completed review of Planning (Development Management) and Adoption of Open Space. This was second update following the Committee's agreement of the action plan in January 2023.

It was noted that actions were in place to progress the gaps in data layering for Map@stockton and a further update would be provided in the next quarter.

AGREED that the progress update be noted and assessments of progress be confirmed.

**PLA/28/24 Chair's Update and Select Committee Work Programme 2024-2025**

Consideration was given to the Work Programme.

The next meeting would be held on Monday 14 October 2024.

AGREED that the work Programme be noted.

Place Select Committee

14 October 2024

## SCRUTINY REVIEW OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

### Summary

Housing Action Teesside will attend the fourth evidence gathering session to present their report "Council Housing in Stockton's Future". In addition, Northern Housing Consortium will be attending to give a presentation regarding best practice in other areas.

### Detail

1. Housing Action Teesside (HAT) is a tenants union and housing campaign representing hundreds of tenants from across Teesside who are campaigning for decent, secure and affordable homes. They have submitted a report, "Council Housing in Stockton's Future", attached, for the Committees consideration in the scrutiny review of Affordable Housing. A representative from HAT will be attending the meeting to present the report.
2. The Senior Policy Advisor from Northern Housing Consortium, who were identified in the scope as a key contributor to the review, will also be in attendance to share how other areas and Local Authorities are meeting the challenge of increasing the supply of affordable housing. This will be in the context of Government reforms to deliver more affordable homes.
3. As noted in the minutes of the meeting for 9 September, a review of the current Common Allocations Policy has been carried out and a consultation on the proposed changes is now taking place. All Council members have received notification of the consultation via email, along with a copy of the consultation documents, and these are attached for information.
4. A copy of the scope and plan for this review is also included for information.

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# Council Housing in Stockton's Future

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## Housing Action Teesside

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## **SUMMARY**

This submission will address the scale of housing need in Stockton-on-Tees. It is the view of Housing Action Teesside that the scale of Stockton's housing challenges can only be addressed sustainably in the long term through the reintroduction of local authority-owned, democratically accountable council housing stock, eventually built on a large scale.

This submission will cover the extent of housing need in Stockton, summarise the history and context of social housing in the UK, the resumption in council housing in other parts of the UK today, and the barriers and next steps if Stockton Borough Council was to begin building council housing again.

## **HOUSING ACTION TEESIDE**

Housing Action Teesside is a tenants' union and housing campaign representing hundreds of tenants across Teesside, in both social and private rented housing. Our organisation is united around the belief that the housing crisis was created by political choices over many decades which put private profit ahead of people's needs, and the commitment to organise alongside our neighbours for real change in our community to fight housing injustice.

As a group, we support individual tenants with housing issues and campaign collectively to improve housing conditions.

Many of our members are trapped in desperate housing conditions or have been on housing waiting lists for years. Other members, including vulnerable people, are forced into exploitative private rented housing they cannot afford leaving them in a cycle of homelessness, because there is no possibility for them to access social



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housing. We have come to the conclusion that solving the housing crisis in Teesside and across the country requires large-scale council housing-building.

## **HOUSING NEED IN STOCKTON**

### *Housing affordability*

Although housing in Stockton-on-Tees, along with the rest of the North East of England, is generally less unaffordable than elsewhere in the country, dramatically rising housing costs across the country over the last three decades have been affecting Stockton as well.

Housing in Stockton today is 85% less affordable than it was in 1998 (as calculated by the ratio of house prices to median workplace earnings, *Office for National Statistics*). The private rented sector, which includes many former council homes sold under Right to Buy, is seeing even faster increases. Average monthly rents in Stockton today are £649, which increased by 7.9% since July 2023 (higher than the 6.1% rise across the North East). The highest rent increases were in one bed properties, with average private rents rising by 8.4% in a single year. Of course, these average rent statistics mask the fact that some private tenants saw small or non-existent rent rises, while others have seen dramatic increases in their rent which have placed them in significant hardship.

### *Homelessness*

As many residents are priced out by growing housing unaffordability, increased housing costs alongside the broader cost of living crisis is forcing growing numbers into homelessness.

The number of households seeking homelessness support in Stockton in March 2024 was 9.6% higher than in March 2023, and 82.7% *higher* than in 2019. Of the

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833 households assessed by Stockton Council in January-March 2024, 526 were assessed as being owed some form of homelessness support under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, but only 191 were owed the “relief duty” meaning that the council had to help them secure accommodation.

Of those who were not accommodated, many were not considered “priority need” or could not establish a strong enough local connection, or could not be confirmed to be homeless due to their private landlords being uncontactable (so they would be advised by council housing officers to sleep rough on the streets until outreach teams spotted them). Many have given up on hope of finding permanent accommodation and have been left in cycles of sofa surfing or sleeping rough.

The increasing scale of need, and limited temporary accommodation available, is placing pressure on many local authorities to deny more applicants the “relief duty”. While in April-June 33% of initial homelessness assessments in Stockton resulted in the “relief duty” being applied and an offer of accommodation, this fell by January-March 2023 to 29% and has fallen again in January-March 2024 to 23%. More people experiencing homelessness in Stockton are being left in substandard accommodation, or forced to sofa-surf, sleep rough or squat.

For those left in private rented accommodation, rent rises and the continuing use of Section 21 (no fault) evictions makes their lives constantly insecure. Section 21 evictions in January-March 2024 were at 138% higher than in 2019. In the last year Section 21 evictions have risen by 38%.

Social housing waiting lists, including both those currently homeless and those in inappropriate private accommodation who are seeking a social tenancy, are continuing to grow. Shelter estimates that in 2023 1,921 people in Stockton were on social housing waiting lists.

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## *Experiences of tenants*

Housing Action Teesside members in both private and social rented accommodation are living through often extreme housing disrepair, and the frustration of being trapped on waiting lists.

A 2022 survey of Housing Action Teesside members in Thirteen social rented housing found that 73% of respondents experienced problems getting repairs done, with common problems including damp, mould, broken windows and doors, and broken boilers. Tenants experienced impacts on mental and physical health, being unable to use utilities such as showers or washing machines for months, and lost income from waiting in for workmen who never arrived. 57% had been unaware of Thirteen's complaints process.

Of these, prominent problems include damp and mould. One Housing Action Teesside member and Thirteen tenant in Billingham was left for years in housing with growing problems with black mould (*see picture below*), and when Thirteen recognised that her housing was unlivable, the only alternative accommodation that Thirteen offered was inappropriate for her due to her disability.



*Black mould in the house of a disabled Thirteen tenant in Billingham*

Another Housing Action Teesside member was on housing waiting lists for four years in substandard accommodation. Due to her and her adult daughter having developed disabilities they were unable to access the entire top floor of her house, so both were forced to sleep on a cramped sofa-bed in the living room. While they were supported to create a housing profile on Tees Valley Home Finder, their proof

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of identity documents were repeatedly deleted from the website due to technical issues so their priority banding was lost at least four times. For clients trapped on waiting lists who do not have the IT technical skills to constantly check and update their Tees Valley Home Finder or My Thirteen profiles, or are preventing from doing so due to a disability, there can often be no realistic prospect of successfully bidding for housing.

The lack of available social housing stock therefore prevents social landlords from being able to provide alternative accommodation while work is being done, as well as trapping people on housing waiting lists and in cycles of homelessness.

## **SOCIAL HOUSING - HISTORY AND CONTEXT**

### *Postwar housebuilding*

The UK as a whole is facing a significant shortage of social housing. Only 6,000 homes for social rent are built each year, while waiting lists according to Shelter are at roughly 1.3 million.

Historically the UK, facing substandard housing and high waiting lists in difficult economic circumstances, has used council house-building on a massive scale as a means to stimulate the economy and relieve housing need. Between 1946 and 1951 1.2 million new homes were built, of which 80% were council houses. Overall up until 1980, England built social homes at a rate of 126,000 a year, the vast majority of which were council housing.

### *Privatisation of social housing*

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The introduction of Right to Buy and the virtual elimination of grant funding of council housing under the Thatcher Government led to a major reduction in the supply of council housing. Demolition of ageing stock and sell-offs of council housing under Right to Buy continued to reduce the social housing supply. This continued under the 1997-2010 Labour Government with the further loss of 655,000 social homes.

Furthermore, the nature of social housing was transformed by the introduction of private housing associations. The lack of funding for local authorities led to a growing repair backlog. In order to be given funding for repairs to bring homes up to the Decent Homes Standard, tenants were given a one-off opportunity to vote for stock transfers from their local council into a private housing association.

Although this led to short-term funding and an improvement in housing conditions, this was the kind of trick that could only be played once; by leaving housing stock in the hands of corporate social landlords, who are not democratically accountable to their residents and who receive funds not from government grants but from the corporate bond market, there is now limited incentive for housing associations to improve their properties or build new social housing. Now, decades later, our members in social housing feel that their landlord's "social purpose" has been forgotten, and social housing waiting lists continue to grow.

Today, building of social housing is negligible compared to housing need.

Nationally, councils spent £2.3 billion on temporary accommodation between April 2023 and March 2024. This increased by 29% in last year, and represents a 97% increase in the last 5 years. Between 2021 and 2026 it is projected that £70 billion in public money will be paid to private landlords in housing benefit, whereas only £11.5 billion will be paid out by central government in capital grant for affordable homes in that period.

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### *Current social housing in Stockton*

The dominant housing association in Stockton is Thirteen Housing Group, which is a Teesside-based housing association, which owns and manages 34,000 properties. Thirteen was created through an amalgamation of other social housing providers. The history of Thirteen is a complicated one. Firstly, Stockton Borough Council set up Tristar Homes as an 'arm's length' company in 2002 to manage council housing stock having received a 2 ½ star rating. Unfortunately, it then went on to receive a 1 star with no chance of improvement from the regulators.

Meanwhile in Hartlepool, the housing stock was transferred from the council to Housing Hartlepool in March 2004. Tristar Homes went on to take ownership of the council's stock in 2010, joining Housing Hartlepool in a partnership to form Vela.

In Middlesbrough, Erimus Housing was created from the transfer of council housing stock in November 2004. Four years later, Fabrick Housing Group was created by the joining of Tees Valley Housing, a traditional housing association, and Erimus Housing.

Thirteen Group was formed when in 2014 Fabrick and Vela amalgamated to form one group with four landlords. In the first year alone, Thirteen Group saved £7.5m and consolidated in 2017 to become one landlord as Thirteen, to bring "even further strength and a simpler, easier business to work with". Gus Robinson Developments was purchased in 2018 to help play a part in building houses within the North of England for Thirteen. Thirteen now manage some 34,000 homes across the North East region, spanning North Tyneside to York, with the majority of properties (30,000) in the Tees Valley.

Thirteen offers homes for market sale, in addition to those rented at affordable (80% of market rents) or with social tenures.



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According to Thirteen's most recent annual report in 2023, Thirteen's total reserves are increasing year-on-year due to high current operating surpluses. Thirteen's total reserves increased from £630 million (2021) to £695 million (2022), and have as of March 2023 reached £786.6 million.

## **COUNCIL HOUSING IS THE ANSWER**

The long-term arguments for building social housing, and in particular council housing, are clearcut. By building council housing Stockton could relieve the housing waiting list, allow it to move vulnerable people on from temporary accommodation, and provide a realistic alternative to private rented housing which would provide a downward pressure on private rents.

Hyde's Value of a Social Tenancy open-source methodology estimates that an average new social tenancy provides £16,906 per year in benefits to public finances (including rent, as well as increased employment from construction and maintenance activity). Moreover according to National Audit Office modelling (*The Affordable Homes Programme since 2015*, 8 September 2022), building housing for social rent creates 3.4 times more economic benefit than it costs. This includes benefits in preventing rough sleeping and homelessness, reducing the cost of housing benefit, relieving financial stress and insecurity, and enabling workers and families to live in appropriate housing closer to support networks and resources.

Council housing, due to local authority democratic accountability and statutory duties, is uniquely able to tie in social housing with broader planning and social care duties.

Of course, Housing Action Teesside recognises that this problem could not be solved from a standing start, and acquiring council housing poses its own challenges. Nevertheless we argue that Stockton Borough Council should begin



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acquiring council housing today at a manageable scale, and plan for a future in which large-scale council house-building can end the housing crisis.

### *Council housing today*

Other local authorities are ahead of Stockton in seeking to begin replenishing their council housing stock. While some local authorities such as Stockton have transferred all of their council housing to housing associations, many continue to own and build council housing. 158 out of 294 councils in England today have Housing Revenue Accounts, indicating they have more than 200 council-owned properties.

In addition, since the abolition of the borrowing cap on councils' Housing Revenue Accounts in 2018, many councils have begun building council housing again. Last year, 9,054 homes were built by councils directly, and an additional 3,049 homes were built by council-owned housing companies. This is nowhere near the scale required, but it is a crucial start.

Locally, several local authorities are pursuing projects to build council housing. Durham County Council, which previously disposed of its housing stock to Believe Housing, has now announced it is seeking to build 500 new council homes again. Hartlepool Borough Council reopened its Housing Revenue Account in 2016 and now owns roughly 300 properties, and is exploring a new scheme of 75 new council homes. North Yorkshire Council's housing strategy through 2029 has the delivery of 500 council homes as a "minimum baseline". Darlington's social housing stock continues to be council-owned, and it has reported it has designed and built 400 homes in-house under its current housing plan.

It is important that Stockton not be left behind by this process, which could potentially lead to housing unaffordability and waiting lists in Stockton outstripping neighbouring local authorities.

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### *Starting from scratch*

Some additional challenges are presented by seeking to acquire council housing without any existing stock. However these are not insurmountable.

As it has no existing housing stock, Stockton Borough Council currently has no "Housing Revenue Account". Housing Revenue Accounts (HRAs) are landlord accounts by local housing authorities acting as landlords of council housing under Part II of the Housing Act 1985. HRAs ring-fence certain defined transactions within the General Fund, for example including management and maintenance, major repairs, loan charges and depreciation costs. They receive incomes in the form of rents and service charges.

However, even without an HRA, local authorities are still able to acquire up to 200 council homes using their General Fund. Once a council acquire 200 homes, it would need to set up an HRA. Any use of the General Fund for acquiring council would require approval in the form of a "Direction" from the Secretary of State (Angela Rayner) - though as we have seen, these are being approved in many local authorities across the country.

Any borrowing to fund house-building would need to be permitted by the Public Works Loan Board at the Treasury. Local authorities are able to borrow for council house-building against their expected rental income, in line with the Prudential Code.

The process for setting up a Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is for local authorities to write to the Secretary of State stating that the local authority is establishing an HRA.

See below for a summary of the process:



Source: Labour Campaign for Council Housing

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### *Addressing concerns about council housing*

There are additional costs associated with controlling housing stock, such as the requirement to **maintain and administrate**. Many skills were lost when Stockton Council transferred its housing stock to private housing associations. However many local authorities have arrangements with adjoining local authorities (such as for example Hartlepool, Durham or Darlington) which would allow for the existing housing authority to carry out maintenance for the new council housing. This cooperation with neighbouring authorities would allow Stockton to begin building council housing, and develop its own skills and infrastructure required to manage its own stock over time.

Building housing does have its own challenges, such as **acquiring land**. However Stockton Council currently has major developments ongoing (in Stockton Town Centre and in Billingham) which will likely include housing, and in which the Council could seek to include some council housing in the developments. Furthermore, many local authorities avoid the cost of building by first prioritising buying ex-council properties. Action on Empty Homes have found that more than 50,000 long-term empty homes are in the North East of England alone, and many of these could be bought by Stockton Borough Council to put into immediate use as council housing.

One significant concern which is regularly raised is **Right to Buy**. This does pose a challenge to any local authorities seeking to build council housing, as if tenants exercise Right to Buy it could represent a net loss for the council. However Right to Buy is only exercisable if a council has a Housing Revenue Account, so Stockton Borough Council could build up to 199 homes without this being a risk. In addition, it is expected in the long-term that Right to Buy will likely be reviewed, including potentially changes to the discount rate, which could make building large-scale

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council housing more financially sustainable. It may therefore be in Stockton Borough Council's interests to begin building council housing at a limited scale now, and seek to expand this in the future when national regulations change.

## **CONCLUSION**

Our members and other residents across Stockton are experiencing a housing crisis, and need ambition and urgent action from the Council. In the long-term, Stockton's housing sector will not be sustainable without large-scale council housing. We urge Stockton Borough Council not to be left behind, and to take the steps now to begin rebuilding Stockton's social housing under direct, democratically accountable council control.

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**From:** [Alesia Powley](#)  
**To:** [DL All Council Members](#); [Jack Miller \(Councillor\)](#); [Mohammed Mazi \(Councillor\)](#)  
**Cc:** [Jane Edmends](#)  
**Subject:** Common allocation Policy Customer Consultation 7th October 2024  
**Date:** 03 October 2024 11:17:20  
**Attachments:** [SBC & MBC Final Letter CAP Consultation.pdf](#)  
[SBC FAQ CAP Review Consultation.docx](#)  
[241001 MHCLG DPM letter to Councils - Social and Affordable Housing.pdf](#)  
[image001.png](#)  
[image002.png](#)  
[image003.png](#)  
[image004.png](#)  
[image005.png](#)  
[image006.png](#)

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This document was classified as: OFFICIAL

Hello

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council alongside Middlesbrough Council, Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council, Beyond Housing and North Star Housing operate a Common Allocations Policy for the allocation of social/affordable housing. The partnership have recently conducted a review of the current policy and are proposing several changes which will now be subject to consultation. The majority of customers will receive an email inviting them to complete the online consultation, however a small number of customers will receive a copy of the attached letter.

We have received correspondence dated 01.10.24 from the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (attached) which references that changes will be brought forward to social housing allocations regulations to exempt all veterans from local connection and residency tests to facilitate their access to social housing, alongside exemptions for domestic abuse victims and care leavers. The letter advises that the MHCLG will convene roundtables with stakeholders to explore the detail of these exemptions further and consider what more needs to be done to support vulnerable cohorts. We would like to acknowledge that although this is not directly referenced within our consultation, we will respond accordingly.

We appreciate that not all members will receive queries in relation to the consultation nevertheless we would like to provide you with some information in advance. Attached is a copy of a Frequently Asked Questions document, if you receive any queries which are not detailed within the document or would like any further information on the consultation, please contact [strategichousing@stockton.gov.uk](mailto:strategichousing@stockton.gov.uk)

Thank you

Kind regards

**Alesia Powley**

Strategic Housing Officer  
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

Telephone: 01642 528788 | Email: [alesia.powley@stockton.gov.uk](mailto:alesia.powley@stockton.gov.uk) | Web: [www.stockton.gov.uk](http://www.stockton.gov.uk)





My Ref: TVHF

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council,  
Dunedin House,  
Columbia Drive,  
Thornaby,  
Stockton-on-Tees  
TS17 6BJ  
Tel: 01642 524345  
Email: TVLP@stockton.gov.uk  
Date: 07/10/2024

Dear **Mail merge name**

We are writing to you as a Tees Valley Home Finder account holder to inform you that due to an increased demand for housing the Tees Valley Lettings Partnership are considering making changes to their Common Allocations Policy. The Lettings Partnership consists of:

- Beyond Housing
- Middlesbrough Council
- North Star Housing
- Redcar & Cleveland Council
- Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

A Common Allocations Policy sets out the rules that decide who can apply for social housing and the priority they will be given. The main changes we are consulting on are, our priority bands, local connection criteria and the exemption periods in relation to anti-social behaviour.

We are consulting with all applicants, social landlords and relevant stakeholders to seek their views and opinions and we would like to hear from you!

If you would like to participate in the consultation, please complete the enclosed questionnaire and return in the pre-paid envelope provided. Alternatively, you can complete the consultation online via <https://www.stockton.gov.uk/current-consultations>

The closing date of the consultation is Monday 18<sup>th</sup> November at 12pm.

If you require a copy of the consultation in an alternative format, please email [strategichousing@stockton.gov.uk](mailto:strategichousing@stockton.gov.uk) or call 01642 524345.

Yours Sincerley

The Lettings and Nominations Team on Behalf of Middlesbrough Council and Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council.

Customer name  
Address line one  
Address line two  
Address line three  
Address line four  
Postcode





## Common Allocations Policy Review Consultation

As you are aware Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council alongside Middlesbrough Council, Redcar & Cleveland Council, Beyond Housing and North Star Housing operate a Common Allocations Policy for the allocation of social/affordable housing. The partnership have recently conducted a review of the current policy and are proposing several changes which will now be subject to consultation. The following frequently asked questions have been developed to support with any customer queries you may receive during the consultation period.

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### Why has the policy been reviewed?

Due to the increased demand for social/affordable housing within the partnership areas and the financial pressures currently faced by Local Authorities and Registered Providers a review of the current policy was undertaken to establish if the policy was creating any obstacles to customers in housing need securing suitable housing. The current number of applications listed by priority banding is detailed within the table below.

Stockton Customers with a Live Tees Valley Home-Finder Account – Q1 2024	
Band One	256
Band Two	552
Band Three	471
Band Four	1824

*\*Source HFSOT BUP 24/25 Reporting & Monitoring*

In 2024 there has been an average of 16 properties advertised per week and each advert attracts on average 113 bids.

#### When was the current policy reviewed, and proposals identified?

The review exercise took place between April 2024 and August 2024.

Representatives from all the partnership areas were invited to join a review task and finish group. The group met in person on several occasions and a detailed review of each section of the current policy was undertaken.

#### What are the proposed changes?

The proposed changes are detailed within the consultation. A copy of the consultation is attached in **Appendix A**.



**Will any customers be placed at a disadvantage?**

Applications registered prior to the implementation of any new policy changes will not be disadvantaged by the introduction of a new policy.

A current applications priority banding would only be reviewed if there is a change in the applicant's circumstances or they would qualify for a high banding following the introduction of the new policy.

**Who will be consulted?**

We are consulting with all customers who have a fully registered live Tees Valley Home-Finder account, Registered Providers and a range of wider partners including Temporary and Supported Accommodation providers and the VCSE Sector.

**When will the consultation begin?**

The consultation will begin on **Monday the 7<sup>th</sup> October and run for six weeks, ending at 12 noon on Monday the 18<sup>th</sup> November.**

The partners will consider all comments received throughout the consultation process and this information will inform any final changes to the policy.

**How can customers make their views known?**

Most customers will be contacted via email and asked to complete an online questionnaire available on the Councils website. For those customers without email they will be contacted via post and provided with a paper copy of the questionnaire and a pre-paid returns envelope.

**What do I do if a customer/partner/stakeholder contact me with a question regarding the consultation?**

If a customer/partner/stakeholder contacts you with a question relating to the consultation, please forward this to [strategichousing@stockton.gov.uk](mailto:strategichousing@stockton.gov.uk)

**If a customer queries their current housing application, who do I direct them to?**

If a customer contacts you with an issue relating to their Tees Valley Home-Finder account, please forward this to the Lettings and Nominations team.

Email: [tvlp@stockton.gov.uk](mailto:tvlp@stockton.gov.uk)

Telephone: 01642 524345



## Appendix A

### Common Allocation Policy Review 2024 Consultation Questions

#### Question One

Please select which option best represents you:

- I am a resident living within the Tees Valley Home-Finder partnership area.
- I am a staff member of a Tees Valley Home-Finder Partnership organisation.
- I am a representative of the Registered Provider sector.
- I am a representative of the VCSE Sector
- Other (e.g. an advocate acting behalf of an applicant)

(To appear when options 2,3 or 4 are selected above)

Please state the name of the organisation you are completing the consultation on behalf of:

Open text box restricted to 30 characters

Do you currently have a Live Tees Valley Home-Finder account application?

- Yes
- No



## Question Two

### Local Connection

Currently applicants do not need a local connection to register an account on Tees Valley Home-Finder and bid for housing within the partnership area. However, priority for housing is given to those with a local connection.

### The Proposal

Considering the current significant demand for housing and an increase in applications from outside the partnership area, it is proposed that a local connection is required in order for an applicant to register and apply for housing via Tees Valley Home Finder across the three Local Authority partnership areas.

Applicants will be counted as having a local connection to a Local Authority area if they fit one or more of the following categories:

1. They live in the Local Authority area and have lived there for 6 out of the past 12 months or 3 out of the past 5 years\*
2. They have close family connections with someone who has been resident in the Local Authority area for a minimum of five years. A close family connection is defined as a parent, child, grandparent, grandchild, sibling, legal guardian; or
3. Their regular place of work is located within any of the Local Authority areas.

*\*Exclusions would apply to accommodation that an individual may have been directed to reside such as Approved Premises, Prison and Bail Hostels. It also would not include Care Homes and Hospitals.*

Applicants leaving the armed forces and victims of domestic abuse will not need to have a local connection. Divorced or separated spouses or civil partners of Service personnel who need to move out of accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence will also be exempted from local connection requirements. A local connection will be applied across all 3 Local Authorities areas for these applicants.

Applicants eligible under the Homes for Ukraine scheme will have local connection to the Local Authority of the host family that they were placed with.

**Please select the option which best represents your opinion on this proposal.**

- I Strongly Agree
- I Agree
- I Neither Agree/Disagree
- I Disagree
- I Strongly Disagree



### Question Three

#### Anti-Social Behaviour

The current policy states the following in relation to anti-social behaviour:

If the applicant (or a member of their household) is found to be guilty of 'unacceptable' behaviour (which includes a history of anti-social behaviour), they may be excluded from the partnership housing register for **12 months**.

#### The Proposal

Due to the increase of anti-social behaviour and the impact this has on communities it is proposed that this timeframe is extended to **36 months**. This will impact individuals who have been served notice, evicted or had a property closure due to anti-social behaviour only.

**Please select the option which best represents your opinion on this proposal.**

- I Strongly Agree
- I Agree
- I Neither Agree/Disagree
- I Disagree
- I Strongly Disagree



## Question Four

### Priority Bidding

The current policy states the following in relation to keeping the partnership register up to date:

Applicants with a priority for housing will be reviewed regularly to ensure they are not having difficulties with the scheme and to check that they are applying for suitable properties as they come up.

### The Proposal

Customers who are in Bands 1, 2 and 3 will be expected to bid for suitable properties using the priority awarded to them. Applicants who do not bid **may** have their priority removed if there have been suitable properties advertised and they have failed to place bids on them.

**Please select the option which best represents your opinion on this proposal.**

- I Strongly Agree
- I Agree
- I Neither Agree/Disagree
- I Disagree
- I Strongly Disagree



### **Question Five**

#### **Band One Plus Demolition or Regeneration**

Currently people living in the partnership area who are losing their home due to demolition or regeneration are allocated Band One housing priority in the area which they live.

#### **The Proposal**

It is proposed that a new Band One Plus banding is created and those customers who are losing their home due to demolition or regeneration would be provided with the higher priority banding.

**Please select the option which best represents your opinion on this proposal.**

- I Strongly Agree
- I Agree
- I Neither Agree/Disagree
- I Disagree
- I Strongly Disagree



## Question Six

### HM Armed Forces Community

The current policy states:

People leaving the HM Armed Forces community. This will include a member of the Armed Forces (serving or has formerly served in the regular forces; serving or has formerly served in the reserved forces; a bereaved spouse/civil partner; divorced spouse/civil partner\*) are allocated Band One Priority.

Applicants will need to be assessed by the Local Authority Homelessness Teams before this priority will be awarded.

### The Proposal

It is proposed that a new Band One Plus banding is created and those customers leaving the armed forces community (serving or has formerly served in the regular forces; serving or has formerly served in the reserved forces; a bereaved spouse/civil partner; divorced spouse/civil partner\*) with an **urgent need** for housing would be provided with the higher priority banding. Applicants will need to be assessed by the Local Authority Homelessness Teams before this priority will be awarded.

And:

Those leaving the Armed Forces community (serving or has formerly served in the regular forces; serving or has formerly served in the reserved forces; a bereaved spouse/civil partner; divorced spouse/civil partner\*) within the last five years with **no** urgent housing need will be allocated Band Three Priority on their **first tenancy only**.

*\* For this purpose, “the regular forces” and “the reserve forces” have the meanings given by section 374 of the Armed Forces Act 2006(2).”.*

**Please select the option which best represents your opinion on this proposal.**

- I Strongly Agree
- I Agree
- I Neither Agree/Disagree
- I Disagree
- I Strongly Disagree





## Question Seven

### Homelessness

The current Policy States that homelessness applicants are awarded Band One housing regardless of their assessed priority need:

#### ***People assessed as statutorily homeless and in priority need***

People who have been accepted as statutorily homeless and in priority need and where the main homeless duty is owed (Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996). People in this category may receive a direct offer of housing.

Applicants will need to be assessed by the Local Authority Homelessness Teams before this priority will be awarded.

#### ***Applicants who, following assessment, are owed the homelessness prevention or relief duty. \****

\* If duty has been discharged through the refusal of a reasonable offer of accommodation, the applicant will be placed into Band 4. If the duty is discharged for any other reason, the applicant will be placed into the Band appropriate to their assessed housing needs.

Applicants will need to be assessed by the Local Authority Homelessness Teams before this priority will be awarded.

### The Proposal

It is proposed that homelessness applicants following assessment by the Local Authority Homelessness Teams would be split across **three** priority bands.

**Band One Priority** would be allocated only to those applicants who are homeless living in temporary accommodation arranged by one of the partner Local Authorities, or are owed a main or relief duty and are in priority need as in accordance with Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (the homelessness legislation) and there is an urgent need to free up the temporary accommodation, or move in order to fulfil the above duties.

**Band Two Priority** would be allocated to those applicants who, following a homeless assessment are owed a prevention or relief duty with no priority need.

**Band Three Priority** would be allocated to those applicants where a relief duty has ended after 56 days, and it has been determined the applicant has been deemed to be intentionally homeless.

**Please select the option which best represents your opinion on this proposal.**

- I Strongly Agree
- I Agree
- I Neither Agree/Disagree
- I Disagree
- I Strongly Disagree



## Question Eight

### Young People Leaving the Care of the Local Authority

#### The current policy states

As defined in the Children Act 1989, where a formal referral has been made by Social Services with the aim of safeguarding the welfare of the child or children or a child/children leaving the care of the Local Authority under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 are awarded Band Two housing priority.

#### The Proposal

An individual leaving the care of the Local Authority under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 who have been assessed as ready for independent living will be awarded Band One Priority.

And:

Those individuals who do not qualify for Band One Priority would be awarded Band Two Priority for their first tenancy only.

**Please select the option which best represents your opinion on this proposal.**

- I Strongly Agree
- I Agree
- I Neither Agree/Disagree
- I Disagree
- I Strongly Disagree



## Question Nine

### Medical Grounds

#### The current policy states

Applicants who have been assessed by one of the Partners as requiring alternative accommodation because their medical condition (physical or mental health) and/or disability is having a significantly detrimental effect on their ability to live in their current home.

Applicants will be referred to the relevant Local Authority Team for assessment by an Occupational Therapist before any Band award is made under this category.

Currently applicants assessed under the category of Urgent Medical are awarded Band Two Priority.

#### The Proposal

It is proposed that a new category of Emergency Medical Grounds is created and applicants who are assessed as requiring emergency accommodation are allocated Band One Priority.

This banding will only be allocated to those individuals with an emergency housing need due to medical problems which are exacerbated by their current housing situation, and applicants being discharged from hospital where their housing is unsuitable and cannot be made suitable through adaptations. Other urgent medical cases will remain in Band Two.

Each case will be assessed individually, and applicants will be referred to the relevant Local Authority Team for assessment by an Occupational Therapist or Secondary Mental Health Service before any Band award is made under this category. The assessment is not of the applicant's health but how their accommodation affects their health or welfare therefore **the impact of the property will be assessed and not the prognosis of the illness.**

**Please select the option which best represents your opinion on this proposal.**

- I Strongly Agree
- I Agree
- I Neither Agree/Disagree
- I Disagree
- I Strongly Disagree



## Question Ten

### Child Protection

Currently only applications with a “child in need” are allocated priority housing at Band Two.

The current policy states:

As defined in the Children Act 1989, where a formal referral has been made by Social Services with the aim of safeguarding the welfare of the child or children.

### The Proposal.

A new category of Child Protection will be introduced as a Band One Priority. This will be allocated where there is evidence of a **serious threat** to the well-being of a child and their accommodation is a **significant** contributory factor to the risk. Referrals will be made by allocated Social Worker’s only.

The child in need Band Two Priority will remain and allocated to those assessed where the accommodation is being a key factor to the risk of the child.

**Please select the option which best represents your opinion on this proposal.**

- I Strongly Agree
- I Agree
- I Neither Agree/Disagree
- I Disagree
- I Strongly Disagree



## Question Eleven

### Special Guardianship Order

#### The current Policy States

##### ***Adoptive parents or prospective adoptive parents/foster carers***

Those who need to move due to their current accommodation being unsuitable or who need to move to a different location to safeguard or promote the well-being of the child or children they have adopted or are planning to adopt or foster children in foster care.

Applicants will be required to provide documentation from the Local Authority to confirm their adoptive/foster carer status before any Band award is made under this category.

Applicants assessed under this category are awarded Band Two Priority.

#### **The Proposal**

It is proposed that Special Guardianship a family court order that places a child or young person in long-term care with someone other than their parent(s) (Adoption and Children Act 2002) is also included within this category.

#### **Please select the option which best represents your opinion on this proposal.**

- I Strongly Agree
- I Agree
- I Neither Agree/Disagree
- I Disagree
- I Strongly Disagree



## Question Twelve

### Acute Overcrowding

The current policy states people living in overcrowded conditions are awarded Band Three Priority Banding.

Overcrowding is assessed on the number of people within the household and according to the best use of bedrooms and sleeping spaces available. The calculation shown below is used to determine overcrowding.

Under-occupation and overcrowding will be assessed based upon the number of people within the household and according to best use of the bedrooms to reflect the criteria set out by the Department of Work and Pensions.

One bedroom will be considered suitable for:

- An Adult /Adult Couple.
- Two children of the same sex under the age of 16.
- Two children under the age of 10 regardless of their sex.
- Any other person aged 16 or over; or
- Any other child that cannot be matched with the above.

Please note: This assessment does not include living room space unless there is a second living room which can be used as a bedroom, and it does not breach health and safety standards. Where a bedroom is being used for another purpose e.g., study or toy room, its original function as a bedroom will be used in assessing the level of under occupation or overcrowding. The main householder(s) will be expected to share a bedroom with a child under the age of 12 months.

#### **Additional Bedrooms**

There may be some circumstances where a household is allowed an extra bedroom as detailed below:

- Health reasons.
- Bedroom for an overnight carer.
- Joint custody or overnight access to a child/children; or
- Prospective adopters and foster carers.

Where one of the above applies, evidence will be requested, and an affordability check may need to be completed to make sure the applicant can afford the additional bedroom.

### The Proposal

It is proposed that a new category of Acute Overcrowding is introduced and awarded Band Two priority. This category will be awarded where an applicant household is severely overcrowded requiring two or more additional bedrooms according to the criteria set out by the Department of Works and Pensions stated above. Other cases of overcrowding will remain in Band Three.

**Please select the option which best represents your opinion on this proposal.**

- I Strongly Agree
- I Agree
- I Neither Agree/Disagree
- I Disagree
- I Strongly Disagree



### Question Thirteen

#### Senior Management Discretion

**This category applies to Stockton Borough Council and Middlesbrough Council only.**

There is no current policy which allows for senior management discretion.

#### The Proposal

Both Stockton and Middlesbrough Local Authorities expect that the vast majority of allocations will be made following the allocations scheme rules according to priority banding. However, there may be exceptional circumstances where the only way an **exceptionally urgent** housing need can be resolved is using senior management discretion. It is important, in fairness to all applicants that these discretionary powers are used in genuinely exceptional cases for example witness protection cases.

Within the Boroughs of Middlesbrough and Stockton these cases will be reviewed on an individual basis by the Local Authority, Housing Service/Team (TBC) and a priority banding may be awarded.

Within the Borough of Redcar and Cleveland there is a quota system in operation, which ensures that a proportion of lettings is made available to applicants within each band. Therefore, the category of Manager's Discretion is not applicable in Redcar and Cleveland.

**Please select the option which best represents your opinion on this proposal.**

- I Strongly Agree
- I Agree
- I Neither Agree/Disagree
- I Disagree
- I Strongly Disagree



**Question Fourteen**

**Any further comments**

If you have any further comments regarding the consultation and the proposals, please detail them in the box below.

Please do not provide any comments on individual circumstances or provide any personal information.

Free text box, restricted to 100 characters.

If you have any concerns regarding a current live application on Tees Valley Home Finder, please direct these to the Partner Agency who manages your application.

Contact details for the Tees Valley Letting Partnership are:

<b>Partner Agency</b>	<b>Email</b>	<b>Telephone</b>
Stockton Borough Council	<a href="mailto:tvlp@stockton.gov.uk">tvlp@stockton.gov.uk</a>	01642 524345
Middlesbrough Council	<a href="mailto:tvlp@stockton.gov.uk">tvlp@stockton.gov.uk</a>	01642 524345
Redcar & Cleveland Council	<a href="mailto:housingclientservices@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk">housingclientservices@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk</a>	01642 774774
North Star Housing	<a href="mailto:customerservices@northstarhg.co.uk">customerservices@northstarhg.co.uk</a>	0300 0110011
Beyond Housing	<a href="mailto:enquiries@beyondhousing.co.uk">enquiries@beyondhousing.co.uk</a>	0345 0655656





# Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

**Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP**

*Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for  
Housing, Communities & Local Government*  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

To: Local Authority Leaders in England  
Cc: Local Authority Chief Executives in England  
National Housing Federation  
G15  
Northern Housing Consortium

1 October 2024

Dear Leader,

The Government is committed to the biggest increase in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation. Our aspiration is to ensure that, in the first full financial year of this Parliament (2025-26), the number of Social Rent homes is rising rather than falling. We are working closely with you to deliver this.

I announced a set of measures in my statement to Parliament on 30<sup>th</sup> July, including a consultation on the National Planning Policy Framework, greater flexibilities in the Affordable Homes Programme, and flexibilities on the use of Right to Buy receipts. We have welcomed engagement following this and are committed to setting out details of future Government investment in social and affordable housing at the Spending Review.

## **Support for our Armed Forces communities**

The Government is committed to strengthening support for our Armed Forces communities and to ensuring that veterans have access to the housing support that they need.

We recognise the value of the social housing allocation framework in providing vital flexibilities for councils to design and operate local allocation policies that best reflect local needs. This includes the use of local connection and residency tests to ensure the allocation of social housing can better meet the needs of local communities. However, we believe, and the guidance makes clear, exceptions to this framework should apply in special circumstances. We know that councils use the flexibilities available to them but we must ensure that no veteran is unfairly penalised.

## **The Prime Minister has announced an ambition to house all veterans in housing need.**

We will be bringing forward changes to social housing allocations regulations to exempt all veterans from local connection and residency tests to facilitate their access to social housing.

Existing guidance, [Improving access to social housing for members of the Armed Forces](#) includes examples of ways in which councils can ensure that Service personnel and their families are given appropriate priority for social housing, such as setting aside a proportion of properties for former

members of the Armed Forces under a local lettings policy. This might be particularly relevant where the council or housing association partners are bringing new developments on stream.

In addition to the examples set out in the guidance, councils are also able to offer Temporary Accommodation support for veterans under the existing parameters of the third round of the Local Authority Housing Fund. Councils are able to deliver smaller Temporary Accommodation units by agreement where there is a local need and can already take into account an individual's military service when assessing housing needs and priority.

### **Exemptions from local connection requirements for domestic abuse victims and young care leavers**

This Government understands the important role social housing can play in supporting some of the most vulnerable in society and we want to ensure that the system works for these individuals. We know that every year tens of thousands of vulnerable households are given the shelter and security that social housing provides, with local councils and housing providers playing a key role.

In our response to the consultation on [social housing allocations](#) reforms, published earlier this month, we committed "*to ensuring that, where appropriate, barriers preventing vulnerable groups in need from accessing social housing are removed. We will continue to work with councils, partners and other stakeholders to support vulnerable groups, including victims of domestic abuse and care leavers*".

We know that care leavers and domestic abuse victims can have difficulty demonstrating a local connection. Such individuals often have to leave their local area for their own safety or to receive suitable support and do not have a local connection to the place where they would best be able build a safe and stable life.

### **The Prime Minister announced that the Government will better support young care leavers and victims of domestic abuse to access housing.**

We will exempt care leavers under 25 and victims of domestic abuse from local connection and residency tests. We will convene roundtables with stakeholders to explore the detail of these exemptions further and consider what more needs to be done to support vulnerable cohorts.

Existing guidance, [Improving access to social housing for victims of domestic abuse](#), is intended to assist local councils to ensure that victims of domestic abuse are able to move into social housing from a refuge or other form of temporary accommodation by ensuring that they have appropriate priority and are not disadvantaged.

### **Improving decency standards**

On 22 September I set out the government's commitment to take action to ensure all homes are decent and safe, and residents are treated with the respect they deserve. I will work in partnership with the sector to deliver the change needed. We will:

- consult on a new Decent Homes Standard for the rented sectors as soon as possible. The consultation will look to ensure safe, secure housing is the standard people can expect in both social housing and private rented properties.
- bring forward legislation for Awaab's Law in the social rented sector this autumn, so hazards such as damp and mould must be investigated and remedied to set timescales. Implementing this legislation for social housing and extending protections to the private rented sector will support tenants to secure faster repairs, reducing health and safety risks.
- introduce new access to information requirements for housing associations, to enable tenants from the 2.5 million households managed by housing associations to hold their landlords to account and drive up the quality of the housing and services they provide.
- introduce a Competence and Conduct standard for the social rented sector that will ensure staff have the right skills, behaviours and experience to carry out their roles, which often involve supporting some of the most vulnerable in our society. The new standard, which will include qualification requirements for senior managers and executives, will help to raise standards across the sector, ensuring tenants receive a professional service and are treated with respect and dignity.
- consult on a Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard of EPC C for the Social Rented Sector by the end of the year. This will mean that social housing residents will benefit from cheaper bills and have homes that are less susceptible to damp and mould.

The Housing Minister and I will also continue to work with you to deliver affordable homes to meet the needs of veterans and vulnerable groups as part of our broader commitment to deliver a generational boost in social and affordable housing and the development of our 10-year housing strategy.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Angela Rayner', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

**RT HON ANGELA RAYNER MP**

Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government

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<b>Place Select Committee</b>
<b>Review of Affordable Housing</b>
<b>Draft Outline Scope</b>

<b>Scrutiny Chair (Project Director):</b> Cllr Richard Eglington	<b>Contact details:</b> <a href="mailto:Richard.Eglington@stockton.gov.uk">Richard.Eglington@stockton.gov.uk</a>
<b>Scrutiny Officer (Project Manager):</b> Michelle Gunn	<b>Contact details:</b> <a href="mailto:michelle.gunn@stockton.gov.uk">michelle.gunn@stockton.gov.uk</a>
<b>Departmental Link Officer:</b> Jane Edmonds (Assistant Director - Housing & A Fairer Stockton-on-Tees)  Alan Glew (Team Manager Strategic Housing)	<b>Contact details:</b> <a href="mailto:Jane.Edmonds@stockton.gov.uk">Jane.Edmonds@stockton.gov.uk</a>  <a href="mailto:Alan.Glew@stockton.gov.uk">Alan.Glew@stockton.gov.uk</a>
<b>Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?</b>	
<p>The topic directly supports the following key objectives of the Council plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Place where people are healthy, safe and protected from harm &amp;</li> <li>• Making the borough a place with a thriving economy where everyone has opportunities to succeed</li> </ul> <p>How:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- By providing good quality, affordable housing.</li> <li>- By supporting independent living.</li> </ul> <p>It also supports the key priority to development of a business case to actively accelerate the provision of affordable and specialist housing provision within the borough.</p>	
<b>What are the main issues and overall aim of this review?</b>	
<p>Like many local authorities demand for affordable and social rented housing is increasing. As a 'non stock holding' local authority we rely on Nomination Agreements with Registered Housing providers to address housing need and on relationships both Registered Housing providers and private developers to increase the supply of affordable housing in the borough. Currently we are experiencing increasing demand for affordable housing from all needs groups (i.e. families / singles &amp; couples / those with health needs / those seeking supported housing to enable independent living) at a time when the number of affordable housing units available (via Nomination Agreements) is reducing, as outlined below:</p> <p>Number of applicants registered on Tees Valley HomeFinder (Housing Register): Qu 2 2023/24 = 1331 / Qu 4 2023/24 = 2566</p>	

Number of applicants registered on Tees Valley HomeFinder (Housing Register) by band at the end of Qu 4:

Band 1 = 259

Band 2 = 512

Band 3 = 415

Band 4 = 1380

Average number of properties advertised on Tees Valley HomeFinder (per week within the borough):

2022/23 = 16 / Qu 1 and Qu 2 2023/24 = 12 / Qu 3 = 10, Qu 4 = 15

New build affordable homes (all tenures) – 20/21 = 48, 21/22 = 141, 22/23 = 72, 23/24 = 146

The aim of the review is to identify potential options for how the council can increase the supply of affordable housing in the borough and therefore address housing need.

**The Committee will undertake the following key lines of enquiry:**

- What is the journey when applying for affordable rented accommodation:
  - How long are people staying on the list for affordable housing?
  - Where are people living while waiting for affordable housing?
  - Are the people registered with the scheme already in housing, if not how many are homeless?
  
- What are the current housing requirements?
- What has been the delivery over the previous 3 years?
- What is the projected delivery?
- What are the challenges and barriers to delivery for the housing providers? E.g. land/financial
- How are other local authorities dealing with local need?
- What options are available for the Council to do more/what can we do to assist the market to increase supply?

**Who will the Committee be trying to influence as part of its work?**

Council, Cabinet, Housing Providers, private developers

**Expected duration of review and key milestones:**

10 months, reporting to Cabinet in April 2025

**What information do we need?**

Existing information (background information, existing reports, legislation, central government documents, etc.):

Housing Strategy <https://www.stockton.gov.uk/housing-strategy-introduction>

Common Allocation Policy for Tees Valley Lettings Partnership

<https://www.stockton.gov.uk/common-allocation-policy-introduction>

Local Plan (page 65 – 68) [https://www.stockton.gov.uk/media/2518/Local-Plan-2019/pdf/Local\\_Plan\\_2019.pdf?m=1645450086087](https://www.stockton.gov.uk/media/2518/Local-Plan-2019/pdf/Local_Plan_2019.pdf?m=1645450086087)

Local letting policies

<p>Who can provide us with further relevant evidence? (Cabinet Member, officer, service user, general public, expert witness, etc.)</p>	<p>What specific areas do we want them to cover when they give evidence?</p>
<p>SBC Planning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current local plan and the challenges</li> </ul>
<p>Housing providers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are their consideration re commitment to supplying affordable housing in the borough</li> </ul>
<p>Private Developers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See above</li> </ul>
<p>Private landlord/letting agent</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the private rental market</li> </ul>
<p>Other local authorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How are they meeting the need of their residents?</li> </ul>
<p>Lettings and Nominations Team</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer Insight</li> </ul>
<p><b>How will this information be gathered? (eg. financial baselining and analysis, benchmarking, site visits, face-to-face questioning, telephone survey, survey)</b></p>	
<p>Evidence at meetings, site visits, baseline data analysis</p>	
<p><b>Communities powering our futures: How will key partners and the public be involved in the review?</b></p>	
<p>Viewpoint – previous survey results Older people who have been through the extra care project – how has this improved their ability to live independently</p>	
<p><b>How will the review help the Council meet the Public Sector Equality Duty?</b></p>	
<p>The Equality Act 2010 protects everyone from discrimination on grounds of nine Protected Characteristics (including – but not limited to – age, gender, disability, ethnicity), and advance equality of opportunity for those with Protected Characteristics. This review will be mindful of these factors.</p>	
<p><b>How will the review contribute towards the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, or the implementation of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy?</b></p>	
<p><u>Stockton Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA):</u> Housing - the review outcomes will support the JSNA strategic issue that there is a shortage of appropriate, good quality and affordable housing and a lack of available housing stock that meets the needs of the boroughs most vulnerable residents.</p>	
<p><u>Stockton-on-Tees Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2023:</u> All children and families get the best start in life All people in Stockton-on-Tees live well and live longer. All people in Stockton-on-Tees live in healthy places and sustainable communities.</p>	

**Provide an initial view as to how this review could lead to efficiencies, improvements and/or transformation:**

The provision of good quality, affordable housing makes a direct (positive) impact on the health and well-being of the boroughs residents and also helps address inequality. The outcome of the review will assist in alleviating budget pressure in adult social care and homelessness services.

**Project Plan**

<b>Key Task</b>	<b>Details/Activities</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
<b>Scoping of Review</b>	Information gathering	April 2024	Scrutiny Officer Link Officer
<b>Tri-Partite Meeting</b>	Meeting to discuss aims and objectives of review	15.05.24	Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer
<b>Agree Project Plan</b>	Scope and Project Plan agreed by Committee	20.05.24	Select Committee
<b>Publicity of Review</b>	Determine whether Communications Plan needed		Link Officer, Scrutiny Officer
<b>Obtaining Evidence</b>	Local Plan RP's Private Landlord Private Developer NHC Options appraisal	10.06.24 15.07.24 09.09.24  14.10.24 13.01.25	Select Committee
<b>Members decide recommendations and findings</b>	Review summary of findings and formulate draft recommendations	February 2025 TBC	Select Committee
<b>Circulate Draft Report to Stakeholders</b>	Circulation of Report	TBC	Scrutiny Officer
<b>Tri-Partite Meeting</b>	Meeting to discuss findings of review and draft recommendations	TB	Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer
<b>Final Agreement of Report</b>	Approval of final report by Committee	10.03.25	Select Committee, Cabinet Member, Director



<b>Consideration of Report by Executive Scrutiny Committee</b>	Consideration of report	20.05.25	Executive Scrutiny Committee
<b>Report to Cabinet/Approving Body</b>	Presentation of final report with recommendations for approval to Cabinet	17.04.25	Cabinet / Approving Body

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## Place Select Committee Work Programme 2024-2025

Date <u>(4pm unless stated)</u>	Topic	Attendance
<b>Monday 15 April 2024</b>	Monitoring: Action Plan - Scrutiny Review of Domestic Waste Collections, Kerbside Recycling and Green Waste Collections  Monitoring: Progress Update - Planning (Development Management) and Adoption of Open Space – April 2024	Dale Rowbotham  Simon Grundy
<b>Monday 15 April 2024</b> (informal – after formal meeting)	Scrutiny Review of (Unauthorised) Roadside Advertising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summary of evidence/draft recommendations</li> </ul>	Marc Stephenson
<b>Monday 20 May 2024</b>	Scrutiny Review of (Unauthorised) Roadside Advertising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Draft) Final Report</li> </ul> Scrutiny Review of Affordable Housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scope and Project Plan</li> </ul>	Marc Stephenson/Carolyn Nice  Jane Edmends/Alan Glew
<b>Monday 10 June 2024</b>	Scrutiny Review of Affordable Housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence gathering</li> </ul>	Jane Edmends/Alan Glew  David Bage and John Dixon
<b>Monday 15 July 2024</b>	Scrutiny Review of Affordable Housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence gathering</li> </ul>	Jane Edmends/Alan Glew/ Thirteen / North Star / Beyond Housing
<b>Wednesday 24 &amp; Monday 29 July 2024</b>	Scrutiny Review of Affordable Housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site Visit to Nominations and Lettings Team</li> </ul>	Members of the committee
<b>Monday 9 September 2024</b>	Scrutiny Review of Affordable Housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence gathering</li> </ul>	Jane Edmends/Alan Glew / Michael Poole Estate Agents/Keepmoat Housing

## Place Select Committee Work Programme 2024-2025

<b>Date (4pm unless stated)</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
	Monitoring: Progress Update - Planning (Development Management) and Adoption of Open Space – September 2024	Simon Grundy
<b>Monday 14 October 2024</b>	Scrutiny Review of Affordable Housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence gathering</li> </ul>	Jane Edmonds/Alan Glew / Northern Housing Consortium / Housing Action Teesside
<b>Monday 11 November 2024</b>	Monitoring: Progress Update - Scrutiny Review of Domestic Waste Collections, Kerbside Recycling and Green Waste Collections – October 2024	Dale Rowbotham
<b>Monday 11 November 2024</b> (Informal)	Scrutiny Review of Affordable Housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of evidence</li> </ul>	Jane Edmonds/Alan Glew
<b>Monday 13 January 2025</b>	Scrutiny Review of Affordable Housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence gathering</li> </ul>	Jane Edmonds/Alan Glew
<b>February date TBC</b> (Informal)	Scrutiny Review of Affordable Housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summary of evidence / draft recommendations</li> </ul>	Jane Edmonds/Alan Glew
<b>Monday 10 March 2025</b>	Scrutiny Review of Affordable Housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final Report</li> </ul>	Jane Edmonds/Alan Glew