

Appendix 2

Summary of feedback comments

We would like to thank everyone who read the draft housing strategy and provided feedback

Comments relating to specific parts of the housing strategy were as follows:

	Comment Made	Response
1	The draft housing strategy is very clear in terms of setting out the priorities for the Housing Service	Noted
2	The draft housing strategy is considered to be very well presented and in terms that the layman could understand Some typographical errors were also identified, which have been addressed	Noted
Priority One: Delivering Affordable Housing		
3	Affordable housing should be “pepper potted” on sites, even those which are very small	It is our policy to support “pepper potted” in accordance with our Meeting Housing Needs SPD
4	Affordable housing for key workers is important for sustainability of communities	We allocate in accordance with the provisions of the Devon Home Choice Scheme (DHC). Some authorities in Devon give preference to those who make a contribution to the local community but at this stage there are no plans to do this in Mid Devon following a review of our allocations scheme by Members of our Decent & Affordable Homes Policy Development Group. However, we do give priority in some cases to those with a local connection and

		employment in the local area can be counted as a local connection.
5	Key workers may benefit from shared equity schemes	Noted but we are dependent upon registered providers (RPs) making a decision to develop this type of accommodation and there is only a limited range of mortgage products available to those people who wish to buy into this housing tenure which can be problematic.
6	The targets for new homes must be achieved especially as there are many housing applicants aged 50+	The Council will do all that it can to build new homes and to enable other RPs to provide new homes in the District. The Local Plan Review is the mechanism by which the Council sets out its strategy to deliver this requirement in full (the Inspector at the plan's examination will want to test that the need for affordable housing is met by the plan)
Priority Two: Making Better Use of Existing Housing Stock		
7	<p>Providing Decent Homes for the Vulnerable</p> <p>Concern about space within new homes leads to a recommendation that new government guidelines relating to space standards are incorporated in the Housing Strategy to ensure new homes are fit for purpose</p>	The issue of dwelling size is one that the Council takes seriously and MDDC has implemented mechanisms through planning policy to ensure minimum standards are delivered. This included the adoption of a "dwelling size" policy in 2013 which set minimum size standards for all newly constructed properties. This would be assessed at the planning application stage. Following the subsequent introduction of the National Dwelling Size Standard, the Council has now moved to implement this new standard instead of that set locally in 2013 and it is against this standard that

		current planning applications are being determined.
8	<p>Provision of affordable housing</p> <p>There is support for the commitment to develop new homes but the target stated in the Housing Strategy must be a minimum requirement due to high levels of housing need in the District</p>	Noted
9	<p>Additional development of small units including a quota of affordable housing near to rural villages would help meet housing need</p>	<p>The Local Plan Review proposes to allocate 24 sites within or on the edge of 22 designated villages within Mid Devon. These will provide a mix of market and affordable dwellings. Planning policy also allows “exception sites” to come forward on the edge of rural settlements without the need for allocation. These would provide primarily affordable housing to meet a local need.</p>
10	<p>Using DFGs to help those who need adaptations to remain in their own homes, if appropriate</p> <p>More publicity is required to increase awareness of this scheme</p>	<p>The Council has a budget for adaptations required by Council tenants.</p> <p>We have a good relationship with Occupational Therapists who will refer clients in both the private and public sectors if they are in need of adaptations.</p>
11	<p>Housing those in housing need</p> <p>Housing providers should give preference to some key workers when allocating homes</p>	<p>The Council has a housing strategy which sets out how we expect RPs to use fixed term tenancies. We allocate homes in accordance with the provisions of the DHC scheme and also have an allocations policy which we use in certain cases which are specified. With regard to key workers, we do</p>

		give priority in some cases to those with a local connection and if someone works locally, this will be taken into account.
12	<p>Continuing to promote downsizing initiatives</p> <p>Downsizing can help to sustain communities as it enables local people to retain their existing local network and the resulting allocations can be made to other local people in housing need</p>	Agreed. We will promote downsizing as a positive option in our publicity to Council tenants and will include this in the action plan.
Priority Three: Preventing Homelessness		
13	<p>Part of this document may already be out of date</p> <p>Concern that information relating to BCHA and SHOT may have been misrepresented</p> <p>Funding reductions may jeopardise the service Nightstop is able to offer</p>	Agreed. We are working at a time when housing policy is evolving very quickly and where the financial climate is not favourable to local authorities. We will add the following paragraph to the section relating to this priority: "The Council is operating within a challenging financial climate given that we have been advised that our government grant will be reducing with an expected reduction of £1.7 million by 2019/20. This is likely to have an impact upon the ability of the Housing Service to prevent homelessness and to sustain tenancies. We are also aware that in this age of austerity, other partner agencies will also be operating with reduced finances and, as a result, that they may have to review their mission statements, aims and business plans, to reduce service levels or to cease offering a service. This may have a significant impact upon levels of homelessness and the

		<p>choices available to those in housing need. It is therefore important that the Housing Service is flexible in its approach to prevention work and that it works in partnership, where possible, in order to keep overhead costs to a minimum. It is important to ensure that our Officers are well trained and aware of all the options available so that they can give appropriate advice and support, where necessary.”</p> <p>We continue to use both SHOT and Nightstop, services provided by partner agencies, and have a commitment to provide some funding to the latter for the coming year. We continue to work with the SHOT team and they verify rough sleepers in the District.</p>
14	<p>There is now no local accommodation for those with high level support needs which will impact upon the strategy</p>	<p>Agreed. We will add the following to the section relating to this priority: “We recognise that there is a lack of local provision of supported accommodation for those assessed as having high needs and as part of our housing options approach we endeavour to support such individuals to secure suitable accommodation suitable for them”. Locally, our partners are aware of the issue and there is some joint working proposed which may offer a solution but this is very much in its infancy. We do try to find pragmatic solutions to problems such as this and this will involve consideration of all the options.</p>

15	Concern about the DARS scheme relating to whether or not it is affordable for people who may be experiencing financial difficulties	The Council views this scheme as just one part of our housing options approach. Our Officers do endeavour to assess the needs of those who are applying for assistance. We have a commitment to collecting monies which have been awarded as loans under the scheme as in the current financial environment we need to maximise recovery. However, we do take a flexible approach to arrangements for repayment and endeavour to ensure that they are affordable.
16	Concern that services may be affected by resourcing issues in the current economic climate. As a result, the document should not be overly optimistic about how other partner agencies will be able to assist the Council as we move forward.	This is a concern shared by the Council. Hopefully, the addition of the paragraph set out in relation to the comment numbered 13 above will set the scene and explain the economic realities.
Priority four: Managing the impact of an ageing population		
17	This is an alarming issue. Extra care units can play an important role in meeting this need.	Devon County Council has informed MDDC of the need for extra care provision within Tiverton and Cullompton, and this has been reflected in the Local Plan Review (and the Infrastructure Plan which supports it). A care home or retirement complex has been included within both the North West and East Cullompton allocations within the document. A planning application for a 45 unit extra care scheme in Tiverton is currently awaiting determination.
18	To develop the handyman service	We would be happy to consult with DSV and will include this in the

	Devon Senior Voice (DSV) would welcome an opportunity to be involved in discussions about this.	action plan.
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