

County Councillors are to discuss proposals for a new garden village in Northumberland.

A report to the council's cabinet on July 12 recommends members agree to the submission of an 'Expression Of Interest' to central government for support in developing proposals for a new garden village on land owned by The Dissington Estate, north of Darras Hall, Ponteland.

The Government's National Planning Policy Framework requires councils to encourage sustainable development through growing the economy and supporting healthy and vibrant communities – meaning the council must make provision for more homes to be built.

Earlier this year the Government published a report entitled "Locally Led Garden Villages, Town and Cities", seeking expressions of interest from local authorities to create new sustainable and locally-led garden villages based on a number of key eligibility criteria including:

- ·Proposals comprising of between 1,500 and 10,000 homes;
- ·Garden villages must be new discrete settlements and not an urban extension of an existing town or village;
- ·Expressions of Interest must demonstrate how a proposed garden village will be well-designed, built to a high quality, and attractive;
- ·Schemes should be part of a wider strategy to secure the delivery of new housing to meet assessed need. Announcing the initiative earlier this year, Housing Minister Brandon Lewis said: "We have set out the most ambitious housing programme for more than a generation, doubling the housing budget so we can meet our ambition of delivering a million new homes over this Parliament.

"As part of this, and to ensure that strong communities are at the heart of new development, we made a commitment in our manifesto to support locally-led garden cities, towns and villages in places where communities want them."

Since publication of the report, the Council has been approached by The Dissington Estate who have an interest in developing a garden village in Northumberland and are working with the Council to prepare submission of an Expression of Interest.

The company has speculatively developed proposals for a garden village in this location of approximately 1,800 dwellings with associated local services, facilities and infrastructure provision.

While physically separate from Ponteland, the report to cabinet states the development would be capable of delivering “significant benefits” to the town.

These would include the provision of more than 500 affordable houses, delivery of a Ponteland Relief Road, enhanced community transport and infrastructure, and delivery of a flood alleviation scheme for Ponteland.

Councillor Allan Hepple, Cabinet Member for Economic Growth, said: “While these proposals are in their earliest stages, garden villages form an important part of our drive to ensure the future prosperity of Northumberland and continued economic growth.

“For our county to grow and prosper we must enable more jobs, more residents of working age and a greater choice in the housing market.

“The Government also requires us to deliver significant numbers of new houses towards its national target of a million new homes by 2020, and this would form part of our contribution to this.”

If the Dissington Estate proposal is selected as one of the 12 garden village projects the government wishes to support, the Council would work with them to progress the scheme.

The cabinet is also being asked to approve further modifications to the Northumberland Local Plan Core Strategy, requiring further public consultation, to allow the garden village proposal to be brought forward through the Plan.