

Agenda Item No:

Report to: Overview and Scrutiny (Services)

Date of Meeting: 16th March 2009

Report Title: UPDATE ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING & PLANNING POLICY

Report By: Tim Cookson
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Purpose of Report

This report provides a brief update on future revisions to affordable housing policy as delivered through the planning system.

Recommendation(s)

- 1. That progress on the LDF and in particular revisions to affordable housing policy are noted by Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

Reasons for Recommendations

To update Overview and Scrutiny on progress on affordable housing policy development

Background

1. In May 2007 the Service Scrutiny review agreed 10 key recommendations that should inform revised planning policy for affordable housing to be carried forward in the emerging Local Development Framework. In December 2007 Cabinet endorsed the results of the Services Scrutiny review and the management response to the review of affordable housing policy and its relationship with planning policy subject to the addition of the words "subject to clarification of the position relating to housing availability" to the end of the fifth paragraph of the management response to recommendation 1 after the words "Greenfield sites" and account is taken of the demand for social rented housing, and other forms of intermediary housing needs, including key worker housing; and that demand is regularly assessed throughout the period of the plan with targets being adjusted accordingly.
2. The Core Strategy, the lead document for the Local Development Framework (LDF), when in place, will determine both the numbers and type of affordable housing delivered through the planning process. The Core Strategy is an emerging document but is now a substantial way through the new LDF plan making process.
3. Consultation on the Core Strategy Preferred Approaches "Shaping Hastings" document was carried out over May to July 2008. We are currently completing our analysis of responses received through the consultation process.
4. When finalised we will be bringing forward the final submission version of the Core Strategy which will include the detailed wording of policies. This will need to be approved by Cabinet.
5. Once the Core Strategy is in place, a supplementary planning document (SPD) on affordable housing will be produced. The purpose of the follow on document is to provide a greater level of detail to developers and landowners on how their proposals will need to comply with strategic level policy.
6. Appendix 1 contains a table showing how each of the 10 recommendations are being taken forward within the LDF.

Wards Affected

Ashdown, Baird, Braybrooke, Castle, Central St. Leonards, Conquest, Gensing, Hollington, Maze Hill, Old Hastings, Ore, Silverhill, St. Helens, Tressell, West St. Leonards, Wishing Tree

Area(s) Affected

Central Hastings, East Hastings, North St. Leonards, South St. Leonards

Policy Implications

Please identify if this report contains any implications for the following:

Equalities and Community Cohesiveness	Yes
Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17)	No
Risk Management	No
Environmental Issues	No
Economic/Financial Implications	Yes
Human Rights Act	No
Organisational Consequences	No

Supporting Documents

Affordable Housing Recommendations (below)

Officer to Contact

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Affordable housing recommendations

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation	How this is being taken forward in the LDF
<p>1. The policy should be revised as part of the Local Development Framework (LDF). The assessment should consider whether the overall target for affordable housing being sought should be maintained at its current level or increased slightly to take account of the latest housing needs data. Consideration should also be given to lowering the current 15 unit threshold for triggering the provision of affordable housing. Such an assessment will need to pay careful attention to land supply, market conditions, viability and the likely level of public subsidy available.</p>	<p>The Core Strategy will include an affordable housing policy indicating that on brownfield sites of 15 units or more, 25% of the housing units will be secured for affordable housing purposes. This percentage will increase to 40% on Greenfield sites. The Housing Sites Viability Study indicates that lowering the site size threshold at which the policy requirements are triggered, is not appropriate at the present time. This position will be kept under review over the lifetime of the Core Strategy. Eligible sites will be identified through the subsequent Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) and the policy will apply equally to unidentified (or so called windfall) sites.</p>
<p>2. The new policy should reflect latest Government policy and guidance and aim to support the development of mixed and sustainable communities. Where possible the Council should seek to promote choice by ensuring that a range of house and tenure types are available across a given area and avoid high concentration of any one particular tenures or property type.</p>	<p>The Core Strategy affordable housing policy will reflect the latest national planning guidance on the provision of affordable homes and the promotion of mixed and sustainable communities, as outlined in Planning Policy Statements 1 and 3 (PPS 1 Delivering Sustainable Development & PPS3 Housing). The Core Strategy preferred approaches document proposes that where affordable housing is sought, the greater part of affordable provision will be for social rent. The policy will allow for some degree of flexibility in order to widen housing choice, and will allow for the provision of different forms of affordable housing where</p>
<p>3. The policy should pay particular attention to affordability and be evidence based in terms of the preferred mix and tenure sought. It should be flexible so as to respond to changing needs and aspirations of those seeking housing at any given time over the period of the Plan.</p>	

<p>4. The Project Board believes that the primary need will continue to be for social rented housing as evidenced by the 2005 Housing Needs Survey and 2006 Housing Market Assessment. Nevertheless the committee also recognises that the provision of other tenures of affordable housing, such as shared ownership housing, can be justified in some circumstances where it helps improve the economics of provision on marginal sites or aids the councils wider economic & regeneration aims. This might be particularly relevant where high levels of social rented homes already exist and a degree of tenure diversification is sought.</p>	<p>necessary. For example, to avoid the over concentration of social rented housing or to improve the economics of provision on marginal sites. This will be relevant where high levels of social rented homes already exist and a degree of tenure diversification is sought.</p>
<p>5. In considering individual planning applications the Council should refer to the most recent housing need and housing market data available. This should include a consideration of levels of homelessness and demand as expressed through the Council's housing registers and the waiting lists.</p>	<p>In determining individual planning applications, the Local Planning Authority will use monitoring information and be advised by the Council's housing department as to the size and mix of affording dwellings required on individual sites.</p>
<p>6. The Project Board believes that the council should, after taking account of relevant factors, specify size and type of affordable housing that in their judgment, is needed in particular locations and if appropriate on specific sites.</p>	
<p>7. In determining the type of affordable housing that is required on specific sites this should be achieved through policy, guidance and control measures. Developments should ensure that a good mix of housing is provided, both houses & flats, and in particular that families, the elderly and those with disabilities are suitably catered for.</p>	<p>The size and form of affordable housing that is likely to be needed in particular locations will be determined in the Site Allocation Development Plan Document</p>
<p>8. The Project Board believes that given the level of demand for affordable housing and the scarcity of available housing land, the emphasis should remain for on site provision of affordable housing. Off site contributions or commuted sums should only be considered in the most exceptional circumstances where the Council believes it is desirable in terms of helping support the development of a more mixed community and where it will provide an equivalent contribution in lieu of on site</p>	<p>The Core Strategy preferred approaches document proposes that affordable housing will be provided on the application site. However, where the Council determines that off-site provision would be beneficial, off-site provision or a financial contribution in lieu of on-site provision (of at least equivalent value) may be accepted so long as the agreed approach contributes to the creation of mixed communities elsewhere in Hastings.</p>

provision.	
<p>9. Affordable housing should be of a high quality and affect a high standard of environmental sustainability. Homes should be of an Eco Homes standard 'very good' as a minimum and should be built to 'Lifetimes Homes' standard. Affordable homes should be well integrated within market housing sites and indistinguishable from those homes for outright sale in terms of style, location and build quality. The Project Board feels that small clusters of affordable housing rather than monolithic blocks of a single tenure are desirable.</p>	<p>Guidance urges authorities to encourage applicants to bring forward sustainable and environmentally friendly new housing developments, including affordable housing, that reflect the approach set out in the DCLG's Code for Sustainable Homes. Achieving an Eco Homes standard of Very Good has now been replaced with the Housing Corporation (now known as the Homes & Communities Agency) Design and Quality Standards which include a requirement that new homes achieve the Code for Sustainable Homes level 3 (three star) as a minimum.</p> <p>The current Supplementary Planning Guidance note 6 states that all affordable homes should meet the Joseph Roundtree Lifetimes homes standard.</p> <p>The Core Strategy preferred approaches document proposes that affordable homes must be well integrated within the development scheme and indistinguishable from those homes for outright sale in terms of style, location and build quality. 'Pepperpotting' or small clusters of affordable housing rather than blocks of a single tenure will be required.</p>
<p>10. Any new affordable housing policy should be regularly reviewed through annual monitoring reports to assess whether it achieving the desired outcomes.</p>	<p>Policy performance will be reported annually through the LDF Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) which is submitted to Government in December each year.</p>