

## Affordable Housing

### Policy CS 6

#### Provision of Affordable Housing

In order to address the need for affordable housing in West Berkshire a proportion of affordable homes will be sought from residential development. The Council's priority and starting expectation will be for affordable housing to be provided on-site in line with Government policy<sup>(48)</sup>.

Subject to the economics of provision, the following levels of affordable housing provision will be sought by negotiation:-

- On development sites of 15 dwellings or more (or 0.5 hectares or more) 30% provision will be sought on previously developed land, and 40% on greenfield land;
- On development sites of less than 15 dwellings a sliding scale approach will be used to calculate affordable housing provision, as follows:-
  - 30% provision on sites of 10 – 14 dwellings; and
  - 20% provision on sites of 5 – 9 dwellings.

Proposed provision below the levels set out above should be fully justified by the applicant through clear evidence set out in a viability assessment (using an agreed toolkit) which will be used to help inform the negotiated process.

In determining residential applications the Council will assess the site size, suitability, and type of units to be delivered. The Council will seek a tenure split of 70% social rented and 30% intermediate affordable units, but will take into consideration the identified local need and the site specifics, including funding and the economics of provision.

The affordable units will be appropriately integrated within the development. The Council will expect units to remain affordable so as to meet the needs of both current and future occupiers. Where this is not relevant or possible, the subsidy will be recycled for the provision of future affordable housing.

#### Explanation of the Policy

**5.26** West Berkshire is an area of high property prices compared to the level of income. As a result, many local people have difficulty gaining access to suitable housing on the open market. Housing triggers a wider range of factors than affordability alone, having widespread implications on health, education, and employment opportunities.

**5.27** Affordable housing is defined within the NPPF and the definition can be found in the 'Glossary' for this document.

## 5 Core Policies

**5.28** The West Berkshire Housing Need Assessment<sup>(49)</sup> identifies a shortfall of between 560 and 850 new affordable homes across the District per year to 2011. This must be placed in the context of the West Berkshire housing requirement set out in Policy CS1 of an average of 525 new dwellings (both market and affordable) each year to 2026. Whilst the level of affordable housing need will be kept under review throughout the Plan period and may alter, the level of need remains extremely high, and the policy must therefore seek to maximise opportunities for increased affordable housing delivery.

**5.29** Methods for securing affordable housing as an element of market housing proposals have been well established in both the West Berkshire District Local Plan<sup>(50)</sup>, and the Council's existing Supplementary Planning Guidance 4/04<sup>(51)</sup>. However, evidence from the Housing Need Assessment and the Council's Strategic Housing Market Assessment<sup>(52)</sup> indicates that the threshold for securing provision to date, as set out in the West Berkshire District Local Plan<sup>(53)</sup>, appears unlikely to meet the continuing need for affordable housing in the future.

**5.30** A study of economic viability<sup>(54)</sup> has been carried out on behalf of the Council which sets out the evidence for reducing affordable housing thresholds below that of 15 units as set out within the adopted West Berkshire District Local Plan<sup>(55)</sup>. The study and its update report support a policy approach which reduces the threshold to 5 units without unduly compromising the site viability. The Council recognises that in some circumstances there may be exceptional costs of development which need to be acknowledged, and that the policy may represent the starting point for negotiation. The Council will carefully scrutinise proposals which appear to fall artificially below the required thresholds which may indicate a possible attempt to avoid making the appropriate contribution towards the delivery of affordable housing. Such proposals are likely to be refused planning permission where they fail to make efficient use of land.

**5.31** Taking account of housing need and past delivery trends the Council will seek an overall target of 35% of all new housing to be affordable. With an average housing allocation of 525 dwellings per annum, this overall target for affordable housing delivery would equate to an average of 184 units per annum, depending on overall housing completions in any given year. The requirement for affordable housing will be applied to the total number of gross dwellings on the proposed development site.

**5.32** The Council seek a tenure split on each development site of 70% social rented, and 30% intermediate affordable units. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment and the Housing Need Assessment conclude that the core requirement to meet the need within the District is for social rented housing. There is, however, still a significant proportion of existing and newly arising households that require access to intermediate accommodation. The Council recognise the new Affordable Rent tenure introduced by the Government in April 2011, and this tenure will be taken into account when determining applications. To ensure flexibility in the policy, the tenure split is a target, with the tenure on each site taking into consideration the identified local need and site specifics. On smaller schemes, for example those of 5 units, a 70/30 split would be impractical given the provision of affordable housing on such a site would only be one unit and therefore in this case the tenure will be determined based on local need. Given the nature of the policy there will be instances when the proportion of affordable housing sought will result in the provision of a part unit. In these cases, the part unit will be rounded up or down to provide the nearest whole unit. On small schemes, any rounding will be considered along with the appropriate size and tenure type of units required.

49 West Berkshire Housing Need Assessment (DTZ, 2007), [Berkshire Housing Market Assessment](#), available at [www.westberks.gov.uk](http://www.westberks.gov.uk)

50 [West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991 - 2006 \(Saved Policies 2007\)](#) available at [www.westberks.gov.uk](http://www.westberks.gov.uk)

51 [Delivering Investment from Sustainable Development SPG 4/04](#) (Topic Paper 1 – Affordable Housing) available at [www.westberks.gov.uk](http://www.westberks.gov.uk)

52 [Berkshire Housing Market Assessment](#) (DTZ, 2007) available at [www.westberks.gov.uk](http://www.westberks.gov.uk)

53 [West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991 - 2006 \(Saved Policies 2007\)](#) available at [www.westberks.gov.uk](http://www.westberks.gov.uk)

54 [West Berkshire Economic Viability Assessment](#) (Adams Integra, 2007&2009) available at [www.westberks.gov.uk](http://www.westberks.gov.uk)

55 [West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991 - 2006 \(Saved Policies 2007\)](#) available at [www.westberks.gov.uk](http://www.westberks.gov.uk)

**5.33** Affordable housing should be provided as built units on the application site as part of well designed mixed tenure schemes, helping to create mixed inclusive communities. In exceptional circumstances where site specific issues inhibit the provision of on-site affordable housing, or where provision can be better met on an alternative site in the District, off-site contributions may be accepted as an alternative.

### **Delivery and Monitoring**

The policy will be delivered by working in partnership with the Council's Housing Department, Housing Associations/Registered Providers and planning applicants.

The Council will regularly monitor and review the need for, and delivery of, affordable housing by assessing the level of affordable housing completions across the District and affordable housing completions in rural areas.