

REPORT TO: COUNCIL

DATE: 11 OCTOBER 2007

REPORTING OFFICER: CABINET MEMBER (HOUSING)
Cllr Jean Butterfield

SUBJECT: NOTICE OF MOTION: AFFORDABLE HOUSING

WARD/S AFFECTED ALL

FORWARD PLAN REF: N/A

1.0

PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report informs Council of the actions taken since its last meeting in response to a Notice of Motion proposed by Councillor T Chapman and seconded by Councillor C Lewis on 19 July 2007.
- 1.2 The Director of Development Services has been consulted on this report.

2.0

RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That the Council notes the actions taken and proposed to address the issues raised by the Notice of Motion.

3.0 RECOMMENDED REASONS FOR DECISION

- 3.1 To confirm the response to the Notice of Motion.

4.0

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND RECOMMENDED FOR REJECTION

- 4.1 None.

5.0 RESPONSE TO THE NOTICE OF MOTION

- 5.1 A meeting was held on 6 September 2007 between the Cabinet Member (Housing), the Head of Housing (Alan Jenks), the Principal Development Officer (Jenny Wood) and Councillors T Chapman and C Lewis. Set out below are responses to the points raised in the Notice of Motion, which were the basis for discussion with Councillors Chapman and Lewis.
- 5.2 ***'This notice of motion calls upon the Council to investigate ways of encouraging developers who provide affordable housing, to supply a wider range of house types. At present the majority of affordable dwellings built are one and two bedroomed properties. It is apparent that there are only a small number of affordable three bedroomed houses being constructed throughout the district. A more even balance across the range of accommodation available would benefit most communities.'***
- 5.2.1 The existing supply of affordable housing and its turnover informs the affordable housing shortfall and housing needs figures, most recently updated in the Housing Needs Assessment 2006 (HNA). The existing supply of affordable 3 bedroomed homes is relatively high - between April 2004 and March 2007, 3 bedroomed homes made up 59% of all affordable homes allocated or nominated to by the Council (205 of the 349 affordable homes available over that period).
- 5.2.2 In turn, the HNA informs the proportion and mix of affordable housing size, type and tenure that the Council is able to negotiate on mixed tenure sites developed under affordable housing planning policy. This is in accordance with government guidance that requires a robust evidence base for affordable housing negotiations (PPS3). The methodology for such need assessments is also prescribed – housing need is about requirements, it is not aspirational. Hence a household with two children of different sexes up to the age of 10 is deemed to require 2 bedroomed accommodation. That said, PPS3 also states that local authorities should have regard to current and future demographic trends in determining the overall mix of housing required over the plan period.
- 5.2.3 Of the 830 households in need of affordable housing each year 2006 – 2011, the HNA identifies a **requirement** for 790 no. 1 and 2 bedroomed dwellings and only 40 no. 3 bedroomed dwellings. Moreover, the most immediate and pressing need, that of homeless households, is very clearly for smaller homes. 85 households are currently housed in temporary accommodation. Of these, 80% (68 households) require 1 or 2 bedroomed homes.
- 5.2.4 This is the evidence base upon which affordable housing negotiations must be founded. If the Council were to require a developer to provide something for which there was ostensibly no need, then that requirement could and would be challenged, potentially resulting in the loss of affordable housing altogether on a given site.
- 5.2.5 The Council's 50% target is by number, not site area. Again this is in accordance with government guidance. Affordable housing is developed at a

loss by the private sector – any insistence that it take up a larger footprint on the site than can be justified by the evidence base, could also be challenged.

5.3 *Notwithstanding the evidence base, the Council accepts that it is clearly short-sighted to make no 3 bedroomed affordable housing provision and will, where appropriate and possible, seek to negotiate an element of larger affordable homes ...*

Households will grow and common sense dictates that the next HNA, due in 3 – 5 years, will identify that a proportion of current 2 bedroomed need (often arising from newly forming households), will have become 3 bedroomed need. It is also considered that the potential problem of a mismatch between supply and need will be greater in rural areas where there are fewer opportunities to access an existing supply of larger affordable homes and where entry level prices are generally higher than in urban areas.

5.3.1 Wherever possible, the Council seeks to incorporate an element of 3 bedroomed affordable dwellings within market sites, whilst recognising that priority needs are for 2 bedroomed accommodation. In 2006/07, 24 of the 81 affordable dwellings granted planning permission were 3 bedroomed or above (including permissions on 100% affordable housing sites).

5.3.2 Often the nature of development will dictate the size (and indeed tenure) of the affordable housing. Over recent years, significant numbers of barn conversion schemes have been approved, whilst large new build sites have been in short supply. There have been a number of flatted developments too. Clearly the limitations of any development will influence the size and type of affordable housing provided.

5.3.3 Where there is the opportunity to create 3 bedroomed dwellings (either by increasing the footprint or potentially building at 2.5 storeys with a third bedroom in the roof space), where there is a willing developer, and provided that achievement of the Council's 50% target or meeting priority needs will not be compromised, the Council will continue to secure an element of 3 bedroomed affordable housing on mixed-tenure sites. This will form part of site-specific negotiations.

5.3.4 In addition, in situations where the size/tenure mix is largely within the Council's control (i.e. exception sites and 100% affordable housing sites), the Council will seek to secure an element of 3 bedroomed housing on all appropriate developments.

Background Papers – None

OFFICER CONTACT: Please contact Jenny Wood if you require any further information on the contents of this report. The officer can be contacted at the Department of Community Services, Springfield House, Kings Road, Harrogate, HG1 5NX, by telephone on 01423 556891, or by Email – jenny.wood@harrogate.gov.uk.

SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT / POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

		Implications are		
		Positive	Neutral	Negative
A	Economy		✓	
B	Environment		✓	
C	Social Equity			
i)	General	✓		
ii)	Customer Care / People with Disabilities	✓		
iii)	Health Implications	✓		
D	Crime and Disorder Implications		✓	

If all comments lie within the shaded areas, the proposal is sustainable.



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