

**EXETER CITY COUNCIL**  
**PLANNING MEMBER WORKING GROUP**  
**5 FEBRUARY 2013**

**EXECUTIVE**  
**5 FEBRUARY 2013**

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT**

**1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To report the outcome of public consultation on a draft Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), prepared to amplify affordable housing policy contained in the Exeter Core Strategy. Also to agree the Council's proposed responses to representations and to adopt an amended document.
- 1.2 The SPD includes a proposed approach to the viability of housing developments in the current economic climate.

**2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The SPD, if adopted, will have an important role in amplifying Policy CP7 of the Exeter Core Strategy (adopted in February 2012), which is the Council strategic planning policy on affordable housing.
- 2.2 To comply with European Union regulations, the Council is required to assess whether or not the SPD is likely to have significant environmental effects and, consequently, whether it needs to be subject to a full Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environment Assessment. The results of the assessment must be published in an Initial Screening Statement and sent to three statutory consultees (English Heritage, the Environment Agency and Natural England). The Initial Screening Statement concludes that the SPD will have no significant environmental effects.
- 2.3 To comply with the Council's own policies, the SPD must also be subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA). The EQIA concludes that the SPD will have numerous positive and no negative equalities impacts.
- 2.4 Public consultation on the draft SPD and EQIA took place between 4 October and 16 November 2012. Consultation with the statutory consultees on the EQIA took place during the same period. Eighteen responses to the public consultation were received, all in respect of the draft SPD. Responses to each of the representations are set out in Appendix B of the Consultation Statement. None of the representations have resulted in significant changes being made to the SPD.

**3 CONTENT OF THE SPD**

- 3.1 The proposed final version of the SPD and the Consultation Statement accompany this report as Appendices 1 and 2 respectively. The EQIA and Initial Screening Statement (Appendices 3 and 4) are available in the Members' Room.

3.2 Core Strategy Policy CP7 allows for the consideration of economic viability when negotiating for the provision of affordable housing. In the current economic climate, housing schemes coming forward in Exeter are generally proving unable to deliver 35% affordable housing. This is supported by the evidence base prepared for the Council's draft Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). In addition, smaller housing schemes that have historically represented an important source of new housing in Exeter are, in many cases, currently being rendered unviable by the strictures of Policy CP7. To address these issues, the proposed SPD states that the Council will:

- accept that there is presently no need to prove lack of viability on schemes of between 3 and 14 dwellings, where not part of a wider development; and
- accept the provision of 25% (or more) affordable housing without having recourse to a development appraisal, where an offer is otherwise acceptable.

3.3 The proposed SPD advises that this approach will be taken for a period of 3 years from adoption of the Council's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), which is imminent. To encourage applicants to implement their planning permissions swiftly, and thereby deliver much needed housing in Exeter, the proposed SPD also states that consents will be time limited to a period of 2 years.

3.4 In addition, the draft SPD:

- sets out the types of housing development which will be subject to affordable housing policy. This includes schemes for people receiving care or support and non-self contained dwellings (e.g. HMOs), but excludes purpose-built student accommodation (paragraphs 3.2-3.3);
- sets out a standard affordable housing mix that will be sought on each scheme (paragraphs 3.11);
- clarifies the Council's policy on wheelchair accessible housing -10% of the affordable housing element of a development scheme should be wheelchair accessible and designed to meet the needs of households on the Council's Housing Register (paragraph 3.15-3.16);
- provides guidance on the design and distribution of affordable housing, with reference to the Council's Residential Design Guide SPD (paragraphs 3.17-3.18);
- advises that in order to promote mixed and well balanced communities, affordable housing should be provided on the development site, unless there are exceptional reasons to justify commuted provision. If so, the Council's priority is for off-site provision, followed by off-site purchase and then a financial contribution (paragraphs 3.20-3.25). Appendix 3 of the draft SPD contains a formula for calculating financial contributions; and
- describes how the affordable housing provided will be managed, how occupancy will be controlled and how the Council will ensure that the affordable homes remain affordable in perpetuity (Section 4).

3.5 The proposed SPD has been produced in consultation with Housing Services.

#### **4 ADVICE SOUGHT/RECOMMENDATION**

4.1 That Planning Member Working Group:

- (i) Support adoption of the amended Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document at Appendix 1; and
- (ii) Supports the proposed Consultation Statement at Appendix 2, including the proposed responses to representations made on the draft SPD.

4.2 That Executive:

- (i) Adopts the amended Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document at Appendix 1; and
- (ii) Agrees the proposed Consultation Statement at Appendix 2, including the proposed responses to representations made on the draft SPD.

**RICHARD SHORT**  
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