

**EXETER CITY COUNCIL**  
**PLANNING MEMBER WORKING GROUP**  
**21 AUGUST 2012**

**EXECUTIVE**  
**18 SEPTEMBER 2012**

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT**

**1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 This report has been prepared in order to brief and seek Members' views on:
- the contents of a draft Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), prepared to amplify affordable housing policy contained in the Exeter Core Strategy;
  - the intention to publish the SPD for public consultation; and
  - the contents of an Initial Screening Statement prepared to accompany the draft SPD.

**2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Policy CP7 of the Exeter Core Strategy (adopted in February 2012) requires the provision of 35% affordable housing on development sites capable of delivering 3 or more dwellings, subject to considerations of viability and feasibility. The Core Strategy states that the Council will prepare an Affordable Housing SPD to provide more detailed guidance to support Policy CP7.
- 2.2 Policy CP7 was drafted during a period of economic prosperity, when a 35% target and 3 dwelling threshold were considered to be viable and realistic policy parameters for Exeter. Amongst other guidance, the draft SPD sets out how Policy CP7 will be applied in light of the economic downturn and its impact upon development viability.
- 2.3 It is proposed that the draft SPD should be published for a 6 week period of public consultation in early Autumn.
- 2.4 To comply with European Union regulations, the Council is required to assess whether or not the draft 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 a number of statutory consultees.

**3 CONTENT OF THE SPD**

- 3.1 The draft SPD is attached to this report as Appendix 1.
- 3.2 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. In addition, smaller housing schemes have historically represented an important source of new housing in Exeter, but the strictures of Policy CP7 are rendering many of these schemes unviable. To address this, the draft SPD states that the Council will:

- not seek an affordable housing contribution from schemes of between 3 and 14 dwellings; and
- accept the provision of 25% (or more) affordable housing without having recourse to a development appraisal.

3.3 The draft 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 draft 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 3.1-3.2);
- sets out the affordable housing mix that will be sought on each scheme (paragraphs 3.10-3.11);
- clarifies the Council's policy on wheelchair accessible housing. Policy H7 of the Exeter Local Plan First Review states that on sites capable of yielding 15 or more dwellings or measuring 0.5 hectares, the Council will negotiate for 5% of the total number of dwellings to be provided as wheelchair accessible housing. There is a clear need in the City for affordable housing that is also wheelchair accessible. The draft SPD therefore amplifies Policy H7 by stating that up to 10% of the affordable housing element should be wheelchair accessible and designed to meet the needs of households on the Council's Housing Register (paragraph 3.13);
- provides guidance on the design and distribution of affordable housing, with reference to the Council's Residential Design Guide SPD (paragraphs 3.14-3.18);
- advises that in order to promote mixed and well balanced communities, affordable housing should be provided on the development site, unless there exceptional reasons to justify off-site provision or provision by means of a financial contribution. Appendix 2 of the draft SPD contains a formula for calculating financial contributions (paragraphs 3.20-3.25);
- gives details of the development appraisal process, which developers will be required to undertake in order to demonstrate that the provision of 25% affordable housing is not viable (paragraphs 3.26-3.29);
- 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 draft SPD has been produced in consultation with Housing Services.

## **4 PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

4.1 It is proposed that the draft SPD will be published on the Council's website and the consultation advertised in the local press. All individuals and organisations listed on the Local Development Framework consultation database will be contacted directly for their views, either by email or letter. Comments received will be compiled and responded to

in a Consultation Statement, which will be published alongside the SPD when it is finally adopted.

## **5 INITIAL SCREENING STATEMENT**

- 5.1 An Initial Screening Statement is available from City Development.
- 5.2 The Initial Screening Statement concludes that the draft SPD will not have any significant environmental effects and, therefore, that it does not need to be subject to a full Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environment Assessment. The Council is required to consult English Heritage, the Environment Agency and Natural England on the results of the Initial Screening Statement. The responses of these bodies are awaited.

## **6 PLANNING MEMBER WORKING GROUP**

- 6.1 Planning Member Working Group on 21 August supported the draft supplementary planning document. Members expressed the desire that officers consider whether S106 agreements could be designed to ensure implementation of provision of affordable housing within a limited period. Officers will report further at Executive.

## **7 RECOMMENDATION**

- 7.1 Executive is recommended to agree publication of the draft Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document at Appendix 1 for public consultation for about six weeks and that authority be delegated to the Assistant Director City Development to make any minor editorial changes prior to publication.

**RICHARD SHORT**  
**ASSISTANT DIRECTOR CITY DEVELOPMENT**

**Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)**  
**Background papers used in compiling this report:**  
None