

Affordable Housing

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Government intends that everyone should have the opportunity of a decent home. Local planning authorities are advised to plan to meet the needs of the whole community, including those in need of affordable housing, in a way which does not reinforce social distinctions. This ~~revised draft~~ supplementary guidance explains in more detail how the affordable housing policy in the Local Plan to 2011 will be implemented. The guidance is given at a general level and the Council accepts there will need to be a degree of flexibility when assessing individual schemes to take account of local and site specific circumstances and to ensure that the housing provided best contributes towards satisfying local housing needs.
- 1.2 The policies in the draft Local Plan ~~have been~~ ~~were~~ taken into account as a material consideration by the Council when deciding on planning applications from 1 January 2003. The first draft of the Supplementary Planning Guidance for affordable housing was published in June 2004. Both these documents sought 50% affordable housing on sites of ten or more dwellings in settlements of more than 3000 people and sites of four or more dwellings elsewhere. The Inspector in his report of the local plan inquiry concluded that a 40% target was more reasonable and realistic, and that a threshold of 15 dwellings in settlements of 3000 people or more was consistent with Government guidance. This has been accepted by the Council and the Local Plan and the Supplementary Planning Guidance have been amended accordingly. This ~~revised draft~~ supplementary guidance ~~will be~~ ~~was~~ subject to extensive consultation with the public, businesses and other interested parties, and their views were considered. The guidance ~~will be~~ ~~was~~ amended in the light of consultation ~~and will be approved once the Local Plan is adopted when before being adopted in July 2006.~~ It will be given substantial weight in determining planning applications. This guidance does not apply to the provision of affordable housing on sites below the size thresholds in policy H16 or rural exception schemes brought forward in accordance with policy H17 of the Local Plan.
- 1.3 The affordable housing policy is part of a wider suite of policies in the Local Plan to widen housing opportunity and choice. These include policies requiring a variety of dwelling types and sizes to meet the needs of existing and future people especially for smaller properties and accommodation suited to people with impaired mobility and other special needs. Additional measures for meeting local housing needs are contained in the Council's annual Housing Strategy Statement. The Council recognises that partnership working involving its housing and planning functions, registered social landlords, the Housing Corporation, the local strategic partnerships, developers and landowners is essential if its aspirations for providing affordable housing in the Vale are to be realised.

2.0 THE CONTEXT

- 2.1 The context for the Council's approach on affordable housing is provided at the national, regional and county levels, and its policies and this guidance are influenced by the level of housing need within the district. Of particular importance has been Planning Policy Guidance note 3: *Housing* and Circular 6/98: *Planning and Affordable Housing* both issued by the ~~Department for Communities and Local Government~~ ~~Office of the Deputy Prime Minister~~ and available on their web site. Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9) and the emerging work on

the draft South East Plan which is being prepared by the South East England Regional Planning Assembly (SEERA) have also been taken into account. The Oxfordshire Structure Plan 2016, produced by Oxfordshire County Council and which is available on their web site, has an aspirational target that 50% of the housing built in the county should be affordable but that the precise amount will be established by the district councils in the context of need in their areas. The Oxfordshire Community Partnership and the Vale Strategic Partnership, which are responsible for preparing community strategies, both acknowledge that the need for affordable housing is one of the top priorities facing the area, and the top priority for Oxfordshire.

2.2 The District Council commissioned Fordham Associates to undertake a district-wide housing needs survey, which was published in April 2001 and this was updated in April 2005. The housing need update demonstrates that the relationship between household incomes and house prices means that 26% of households in the Vale are unable to afford market housing and that some 3400 households are in unsuitable accommodation. To clear the backlog of people in need and provide for newly arising households, it states that 845 affordable homes should be built each year in the district for the next five years. This is in excess of the total number of dwellings to be built each year in the district according to the Oxfordshire Structure Plan and Fordham Associates considered it justified a significant provision of affordable homes through the planning system. They also concluded that the largest shortfalls of both affordable and market housing were for one and two bedroom units.

2.3 The issues surrounding the provision of affordable housing were debated extensively at the public inquiry on the Local Plan in 2005. In his report of the local plan inquiry the Inspector stated at paragraph 8.23.3

“It is acknowledged by all concerned that, in a district with some of the highest house prices in the region outside London, there is a considerable need for new affordable housing over the plan period.”

However, the Inspector did not accept all of the ambitions set out for affordable housing in the draft Local Plan and the Council ~~is proposing to modify~~ modified it in accordance with his recommendations. Policy H16 ~~in the Local Plan therefore~~ ~~as proposed to be modified~~ states

POLICY H16

40% OF THE DWELLINGS PROVIDED ON THE FOLLOWING SITES WILL BE EXPECTED TO BE AFFORDABLE TO LOCAL PEOPLE WHO ARE UNABLE TO RENT OR BUY A HOUSE APPROPRIATE TO THEIR NEEDS ON THE OPEN MARKET:

- i) IN SETTLEMENTS OF MORE THAN 3,000 PEOPLE¹, ON ALL SITES WHICH ARE CAPABLE OF ACCOMMODATING 15 OR MORE DWELLINGS OR WHICH ARE 0.5 HECTARES OR MORE;**
- ii) IN SETTLEMENTS OF 3,000 PEOPLE OR LESS, ON ALL SITES WHICH ARE CAPABLE OF ACCOMMODATING FIVE OR MORE DWELLINGS.**

THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROVIDED:

- a) WILL BE OF A SIZE AND TYPE TO MEET LOCAL HOUSING NEEDS;**
- b) WILL HAVE ARRANGEMENTS PUT IN PLACE TO ENSURE THE HOUSING REMAINS AFFORDABLE FOR LOCAL PEOPLE IN THE LONG TERM; AND**
- c) WILL BE DISTRIBUTED EVENLY ACROSS THE SITE AND WILL BE INDISTINGUISHABLE IN APPEARANCE FROM THE MARKET HOUSING.**

- 2.4 This Supplementary Planning Guidance has been written in accordance with the above policy from the adopted Local Plan 2011. ~~If significant changes are made to the policy before the Local Plan is adopted the guidance will be reviewed.~~

3.0 THE DEFINITION OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- 3.1 The ~~draft~~ Local Plan defines affordable housing as that which caters for people who are unable to rent or buy a house suitable for their needs on the open market. Affordable housing includes social housing for rent, shared ownership and intermediate housing for rent or sale. Irrespective of the tenure it will be provided with a subsidy to enable the asking price or rent to be substantially lower than prevailing market rates, and will remain affordable to local people in the long-term. In the context of this guidance the term “social housing” refers to social housing for rent described in paragraph 3.3 below. Shared ownership and intermediate housing for rent or sale are referred to as “intermediate housing”.

Types of Social Housing to be Provided

Tenure

- 3.2 To ensure that the dwellings provided are genuinely affordable to local people in housing need and do not only benefit the initial occupier, the following types of provision set out in paragraphs 3.3 – 3.6 below are accepted by the Council as falling within its definition of affordable housing.

¹ **Those settlements with more than 3,000 people are Abingdon, Botley, Faringdon, Grove, Wantage and Kennington.**

For the purposes of the Local Plan and this Supplementary Planning Guidance, Botley consists of those parts of North Hinksey and Cumnor Parishes south and east of the A420 not designated as Green Belt and including Cumnor Hill and Chawley, as shown on the Proposals Map in the Local Plan.

- 3.3 **Social housing for rent** where the rents and service charges are significantly below open market rates. The properties will usually be managed by a registered social landlord. The Council will expect the rents on properties secured through the planning system to be no higher than the target rents for the area as established by the Housing Corporation.
- 3.4 **Shared ownership housing** is housing partly owned by the occupier and partly owned by another body. Where registered social landlords are involved the share of ownership can be as low as 25% and the occupier can gradually obtain a greater share in the ownership of the property. Rent is often, but not always, payable on that part of the equity not owned by the occupier. The rental element should not be greater than the appropriate proportion of the Housing Corporation's target rent levels. Most shared ownership schemes in the Vale are currently run by registered social landlords, but other organisations such as housing trusts set up by local organisations or employers could also be involved.
- 3.5 **Intermediate housing for rent** where the rental levels are significantly below open market rates, but not as low as Housing Corporation target rents. The owner does not have to be a registered social landlord. Such housing will be subject to a legal agreement that will apply to initial and subsequent owners of the property in the long term.
- 3.6 **Intermediate market housing** is housing for sale at a substantial discount below open market value. To be acceptable to the authority under the affordable housing policies, such housing should not be cheap simply because it has low space, amenity or quality standards, but be of good quality provided at a price significantly below its open market value. Fordham Associates in the supplementary report to the Housing Needs Survey (2001) established that because of the premium on new houses, a very substantial discount is necessary to reduce the price to that of the average in the second-hand market. To be acceptable to the Council intermediate market housing should be at a price that is about 60% of open market value. This sum is equivalent to the provision of free serviced land. The Council will expect a legal agreement to be signed that will be binding on the first and all subsequent occupiers of such properties to ensure that the dwellings are always sold at a fixed percentage of their full market value to people nominated by the Council, or failing that approved by the Council as being in need of affordable housing in the area. If a suitable purchaser cannot be found the difference in value between the fixed percentage and the full market value should be paid to the Council for reinvestment in affordable housing if there is a need for such housing at the time of sale.

Key Worker Housing

- 3.7 The Housing Corporation defines key workers as those 'who work within the public sector providing essential services for the community where there is evidenced recruitment and retention problems or where there have been Regional Board recommendations or employer contributions'. The District Council's definition of a key worker is 'someone whose household income does not exceed 40% of the average house price in the District commensurate with their size of household where at least one member of the household is an employee working substantially in the public sector or under contract to the public sector ~~for a non-profit distributing organisation such as a leisure trust, charity or housing association~~'. Further work on key workers will be carried out through the Council's Housing Strategy Statement and the Oxfordshire Community Partnership. All the tenures of affordable housing will be suitable for key workers depending on their incomes and family circumstances. However, the Local Plan recognises that shared equity housing and intermediate housing for rent or sale are particularly appropriate for key workers who have a reasonable income but are unable to buy a home of their own on the open market.

Special Housing Needs

- 3.8 When assessing the overall provision of affordable housing on a site the need for specialised housing will also be taken into account. This includes accommodation for people who need support to live in the community and has supported people funding. It also includes special accommodation, such as sheltered housing, for the elderly. The provision of such housing will be

taken into account when assessing the amount of affordable housing to be provided on individual sites. Schemes which provide specialised owner occupied accommodation on a commercial basis at market prices will not be taken to offset the provision of affordable homes. Where such schemes provide smaller than normal units (for example provision for the elderly) the Council will assess the affordable provision against what the scheme could provide if the scheme were not providing specialised units.

4.0 SITES SUITABLE FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

4.1 The Council expects 40% of the dwellings to be affordable on sites of 15 dwellings or more (or 0.5 hectare or more) in settlements of more than 3,000 people¹. In settlements of 3,000 people or less the threshold above which affordable housing will be expected is 5 dwellings. This is in accordance with policy H16 of the Local Plan. The policy will apply to all planning applications above the site-size thresholds and not only to sites allocated in the Local Plan.

4.2 The number of dwellings a site is capable of accommodating will be assessed having regard to the character of the site as a whole and its surroundings, the need to achieve higher densities of development and the minimum density requirements set out in policy H14 of the Local Plan. Where land above the affordable housing threshold is subdivided to create separate schemes below the threshold, the land will be considered as a whole and affordable housing sought on each scheme. If planning permission is granted for development below the threshold and a further application is made on adjacent land that was owned or controlled by the developer at the time planning permission was originally sought, the Council will normally treat the site as a whole and expect the full affordable provision to be made through the second permission. Similarly, if planning permission is granted for a number of dwellings below the threshold and a subsequent application is made which takes the number of dwellings above the threshold, the Council will expect the full amount of affordable housing to be provided on the site. Outline applications which are capable of accommodating more dwellings than specified in

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the threshold will be permitted subject to a legal agreement requiring an affordable housing scheme to be submitted in accordance with this guidance at the reserved matters stage. The provision of affordable housing on sites below the threshold will be welcomed.

4.3 Circular 6/98 indicates that in deciding whether a site is suitable for affordable housing account should be taken of the proximity to local services and facilities and access to public transport. The general strategy of the Local Plan to 2011 is to locate most development at the main settlements and allow development of up to 15 dwellings in the villages with a reasonable range of services and facilities. The Council considers that all these locations will be suitable for the provision of affordable housing of all tenures. In rare cases housing may be permitted on sites above the threshold in locations remote from local services, such as through the conversion of existing buildings in the countryside, or the redevelopment of existing buildings in small settlements. In these cases the Council will assess their suitability for social housing and may consider the provision of shared ownership and intermediate housing for rent or sale more appropriate.

4.4 The Council will normally require that the affordable housing is provided as an integral part of the development. This is in accordance with PPG3 and Local Plan policy H16. As the Vale of White Horse is an area of planning restraint where the amount of land released for housing development is constrained the Council will only allow off-site provision of affordable housing in exceptional circumstances (see paragraphs 6.10 – 6.11 below).

5.0 DETERMINING THE TYPE, MIX AND DESIGN OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

5.1 It is important that the type and mix of affordable housing secured through the planning system meets local needs. Developers are strongly encouraged to discuss the type and mix of affordable housing, including the need for specialised accommodation, with the District Council before a planning application is made.

Tenure Mix

5.2 Given the incomes of people on the housing register and the fact that the lowest income households are usually the least economically and socially mobile, the Council considers that the majority of affordable housing to be provided across the Vale should be social housing for rent. Within the context set by policy H16 of the Local Plan the Council will normally expect that at least 30% of the housing provided on a site is in the form of social housing for rent with the remaining 10% comprising either shared ownership housing, intermediate housing for rent or sale or a mix of these tenures. The Council will encourage a higher proportion of social housing for rent if this can be supported through grant payment or if the whole site is being developed by a registered social landlord.

5.3 The precise mix will be considered at the time of a planning application taking into account the characteristics of the site, the need for particular types of affordable housing in that location at the time the application is made and the availability of public subsidy. Another influencing factor will be the existing tenure and social mix in a neighbourhood. Where there is a significantly above average proportion of social rented housing in the locality it may be appropriate to provide a higher than normal rate of intermediate housing. In some villages, where travel costs are relatively high, it may also be appropriate to have a higher proportion of intermediate housing. The affordable dwellings provided in accordance with the local plan policy must be at prices that are genuinely affordable to those in housing need.

Size and Type of Affordable Dwellings

5.4 On the basis of the Housing Register, the Housing Needs Survey, the desire to build mixed and balanced communities and provide an affordable housing stock that is likely to meet the long term needs of the Vale, as a general guide the following sizes and types of affordable dwellings will normally be sought.

One bedroom (two person) flats	20% social rent 9% intermediate
Two bedroom (four person) flats	8% social rent 3% intermediate
Two bedroom (four person) houses	20% social rent 7% intermediate
Three bedroom (five person) houses	20% social renting 5% intermediate
Four or more bedroom (six or more person) houses	7% social rent 1% intermediate

- 5.5 To accommodate family homes the Council will normally seek a maximum of 40% affordable flats on any development. However, on high density sites in the main settlements which are developed predominantly for flats, the Council is likely to accept that a higher proportion of flats is appropriate. Generally flats provided to meet the affordable housing policy should have a maximum of two bedrooms.

Design

- 5.6 The Council will expect high standards of design, layout and landscaping for all developments, which respect the character of the area and reflect local distinctiveness in accordance with policy DC1 of the Local Plan. The Council will expect compliance with this and other local plan policies on all housing sites irrespective of whether they are for affordable or open market housing. To ensure the creation of mixed and integrated communities the affordable housing should not be visually distinguishable from the market housing on the site in terms of build quality, materials, details, levels of amenity space and privacy. The affordable housing should be fully integrated with the market housing and should be distributed evenly across the site (pepper-potted) or in the case of flats, in small clusters distributed evenly through the development. This should be considered at an early stage of the detailed design and layout of the site. All social housing and intermediate housing ~~provided with Housing Corporation Social Housing Grant~~ must be built to meet ~~the most up to date requirements of the Housing Corporation.~~ For schemes to be funded from the Corporation's 2006-2008 bid round the minimum standards include the ~~the most up to date Housing Corporation's~~ 'essential items' in the Scheme Development Standards, including the EcoHomes level 'very good' standard, and Housing Quality Indicator minimum for five of the ten indicators (size, services, layout, accessibility and energy). In addition ~~and those of the Registered Social Landlord to which the housing is to be transferred.~~ 10% of the affordable dwellings must be developed to Lifetime Homes Standards in accordance with policy H15 in the local plan; sometimes these may require higher standards than are provided in the dwellings sold on the open market. ~~The affordable homes which could attract funding from the Housing Corporation from 2006-08 onwards need to meet the new Housing Corporation standards related to that funding round. Detail of the requirements will be available from the Housing Corporation from early 2007 onwards. A key change anticipated is the switch from EcoHomes "Very Good" to the Code of Sustainable Homes level 3 or 4.~~
- 5.7 Developers should contact the Council at an early stage to discuss the mix, size and type of affordable dwellings to be provided and the involvement of a registered social landlord ~~or approved housing provider~~. It is very important that the ~~registered social landlord~~ housing provider is involved at an early stage in preparing the details of the scheme to ensure the affordable houses transferred to them meet their requirements and the Housing Corporation's standards and guidelines. Ideally the developers should discuss these issues with the Council and the ~~registered social landlord~~ housing provider to be involved in the scheme before they enter into contract arrangements with the landowner.

6.0 FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Affordable rents

- 6.1 The Council considers that to be affordable, social rented housing should be let at prevailing Housing Corporation target rent level or less. It will also be necessary to keep service charges to an affordable minimum as it is the total cost of occupying a property that determines whether it is affordable. As a general guide for those on the lowest incomes, no more than 30% of a household's net income should be spent on housing costs. ~~Information on income levels will be given in the Council's annual Housing Strategy.~~

6.2 For shared ownership housing, the rent charged on the equity not owned by the occupier should be calculated as a proportion of the target rent level set by the Housing Corporation. For other forms of intermediate housing the rents should generally be no more than 150 % of the target rent levels.

Subsidies

6.3 Given the high cost of housing in the Vale relative to local incomes it is clear that some form of subsidy will be required to enable the properties to be let or sold at an affordable price. Currently there are two main sources of subsidy:

- developer subsidy where the price paid for land or property by the social housing provider is substantially below its unencumbered market value. In practice the cost of this subsidy should be reflected in the lower price that is paid initially for the land by the developer: and
- public subsidy which is available as social housing grant or key worker funding paid directly by the Housing Corporation to a registered social landlord or approved housing provider, and capital funding from the registered social landlord or local authority.

6.4 In December 2003 the Housing Corporation confirmed in a letter to local authorities that ‘The position in the South East is that there is a presumption against funding, through social housing grant, housing schemes where it should be possible to negotiate a S106 agreement unless it is clear that the development economics of that scheme require it’. This increases the emphasis on securing affordable housing through land values and establishes, in effect, that the Housing Corporation through the social housing grant will purchase secure additional affordable units or a greater proportion of social rented units.

6.5 In the context of this statement from the Housing Corporation, where social housing for rent or shared ownership is to be provided, the Council will expect either

- built dwellings to be transferred to the Council or a registered social landlord or approved housing provider at a price that would enable the Housing Corporation’s target rents to be charged without public subsidy. This is the preferred option as it will allow the affordable dwellings to be distributed in small clusters evenly across a site and to be built so they are visually indistinguishable from the market housing; or
- fully serviced land for all the affordable dwellings to be provided on the site to be transferred to a registered social landlord or approved housing provider at nil cost, and where appropriate with a cash subsidy, such as would enable the Housing Corporation’s target rents to be charged without public subsidy. Fully serviced means the supply of all utilities and access roads to the boundary of the site and the payment of all contributions to on and off-site services, facilities and infrastructure.

Viability

6.6 When a developer submits a planning application, the Council will expect developers to be in a position to satisfy the criteria in policy H16 of the Local Plan and this supplementary guidance. If a developer considers this will not be possible then they should contact the District Council at an early stage, well before the planning application is submitted, with evidence to demonstrate why the level of provision sought by the Council would make the development not viable. Such information should include:

- the cost of purchasing the site and whether it has been fully acquired
- the value of the site in its existing use or any realistic alternative
- estimated construction costs, including allowances for inflation

- other costs including specific on and off-site works and contributions towards improving off-site infrastructure, services and facilities such as education, transport and community facilities
- fees and other on-costs including for design, planning, surveying, legal, marketing, sales and interest charges
- projected sales prices for the dwellings by dwelling type
- the contribution to the developers overheads and profit.

This will enable the evidence to be assessed and if necessary subject to independent verification. Where the Council pays for independent advice from a qualified professional and the advice is that the affordable housing sought by the Council is viable, the Council will expect to recover the costs of the advice from the developer. All evidence on viability submitted to the Council will be treated in confidence by the Council and their professional advisors should it be necessary to seek external advice.

6.7 It is expected that standard development costs such as demolition and site clearance, archaeological and ecological surveys and mitigation measures, drainage and flood prevention measures, noise attenuation, landscaping and contributions to infrastructure and services to be reflected in the price paid for the site. Similarly any reasonable costs of remediating contamination will not be taken into account. However, it is accepted that costs can arise that could not reasonably have been foreseen when the site was purchased. In some cases it may be accepted that the provision of other planning or housing objectives through a development may reduce the amount of affordable housing that can reasonably be provided.

6.8 Where the Council accepts that the provision of affordable housing in accordance with this guidance would not be viable, the Council will work with the developers and a registered social landlord [or housing provider] to access public subsidy. The Council has a limited capital fund which it may use to help provide affordable housing only if it cannot be funded through the development process. Where public funding, either from the Council or the Housing Corporation, is not available, only then will the Council commence discussions about reducing the requirements of this guidance. This may either take the form of an overall reduction of the numbers of affordable housing to be provided or a lower proportion of social housing for rent which is more expensive to provide than other tenures of affordable units.

6.9 Where the Council accepts the development cannot fund all the affordable housing requirements set out in this SPG, and where the Housing Corporation is not in a position to allocate social housing grant at the time the planning permission is granted, the legal agreement will set out:

- i) the maximum amount of affordable dwellings with the tenure mix the Council would expect to see taking into account the Local Plan and this SPG
- ii) a requirement that the developer seeks additional funding from the Housing Corporation in partnership with the Council and an approved affordable housing provider to achieve
 - i) above on every bidding round where there are dwellings remaining to be built or sold
- iii) should funding be secured, but not at the level to achieve the expectation set out in i) above, the additional provision of affordable housing enabled by the funding must be agreed with the Council
- iv) if no funding is available from the Housing Corporation the level of affordable homes to be provided, by number, size, type and tenure. This will normally be the maximum that the site can provide within the viability assessment.

In this case all the dwellings that could be owned by a Registered Social Landlord, or provide social housing for rent, must be developed to Housing Corporation Scheme Development Standards as this is a requirement of social housing grant and ownership by an RSL.

Commuted Payments for off-site provision

- 6.10 The Council is only likely to approve off-site provision where it is satisfied that the management of the affordable housing cannot be secured effectively, or where off-site provision would contribute more to the achievement of mixed and balanced communities or to satisfying the demand in areas of most acute need. The preference will be for alternative land to be provided and a financial contribution may be necessary in accordance with paragraph 6.11 below. The land given in exchange should be in a location which is consistent with the policies and general strategy in the Local Plan and which would be suitable for meeting those in most need on the housing register. The provision of alternative land in a location which would be contrary to the local plan strategy and would necessitate high travel costs for those in housing need will not be acceptable. The payment of a commuted sum for off-site provision is the least favoured option and will only be acceptable to the Council if it is satisfied that there is a likelihood of the money being able to be used within a reasonable period to provide a similar number of affordable dwellings as would be achieved with on-site provision. The payment may be used by the Council in a range of ways, for example to acquire land for affordable housing for resale to a registered social landlord an approved housing provider, to enable a higher proportion of affordable houses to be provided on sites where there are abnormally high development costs, to assist schemes being developed solely by registered social landlords where the public subsidy is limited or non-existent, to increase the number of social houses for rent, or to enable existing properties to be brought into affordable housing use.
- 6.11 The level of financial contribution will take into account the cost of providing the equivalent benefit on another site. The contribution in lieu of social housing for rent will generally be calculated on the basis of the market value of the dwellings to be commuted, less the mortgage that could be raised from the rental stream at Housing Corporation target rent levels. Commuted sums for shared ownership dwellings will be half this figure provided that full provision has been made for social rented dwellings.

7.0 ENSURING THE HOUSING REMAINS AFFORDABLE IN THE FUTURE

Social Housing for Rent or Shared Ownership

- 7.1 To ensure that the social housing remains available to people in need of affordable housing in the future the Council will normally require the involvement of a registered social landlord. This is an effective way of controlling the occupancy of the affordable dwellings without the need for complex planning legal agreements and is reasonably effective in ensuring the dwellings remain available in the long-term. However, in general terms, under current Government regulations any property which has the benefit of public subsidy can be acquired by the tenant. Since 1995 the right to buy has resulted in the sale of 600 social rented dwellings in the Vale.
- 7.2 The Council will seek to influence the Housing Corporation in its choice of approved development partner when allocating its social housing grant. The Council will promote those partners that have a good track record of high quality development and management of stock within the locality. The Council will normally seek nomination rights on all the affordable properties for a minimum of 10 years and on 75% of vacancies that arise thereafter. This will ensure that the affordable housing secured through the planning system best contributes towards satisfying local housing needs.

Intermediate Housing for Rent or Sale

7.3 Intermediate housing for rent or sale will be secured by a legal agreement that will run with the property. The rent or sale price will be agreed with the Council and in the first instance the properties should be offered to people on the Housing Register. If the properties cannot be filled from the register the Council will retain the right to approve the prospective tenants or purchasers to ensure they are unable to rent or buy a home suitable for their needs on the open market. If a need no longer exists for the type of property being offered either the value of the property secured through the planning system will be returned to the District Council for investment in a more appropriate form of affordable housing or an alternative affordable unit should be provided in the district.

Legal agreements

7.4 The affordable housing will normally be secured through legal agreements. The terms of the legal agreement should be seen as an integral part of the pre-application discussions and negotiations on the site as a whole. The legal agreements will normally specify

- the number, size, type and tenure of affordable housing to be provided (if necessary in accordance with the 'cascade' mechanism described in paragraph 6.9)
- the units for social renting to be transferred at a price that enables the housing to be let at the Housing Corporation's target rent levels
- the units for shared ownership properties to be transferred to an approved partner at 40% of the open market value of the dwellings
- all affordable housing to be built to at least the relevant Housing Corporation's standards (see paragraph 5.6 above) ~~essential items' scheme development standards, including eco homes rating 'very good' but may be increased to 'excellent' in the future~~, and comply with the RSL's specific development requirements, unless agreed otherwise by the Council
- 10% of the affordable homes to be built to lifetime homes standards and all to achieve "secured by design" wherever practicable
- not to start constructing the affordable housing units until a contract has been agreed with the RSL affordable housing provider (where appropriate)
- all affordable housing to be advertised in accordance with the Council's choice based lettings scheme for a minimum of 10 years and 75% of vacancies there after.

The Council will publish a standard legal agreement to give clearer guidance as to what is expected.

Phasing the Delivery of Affordable Dwellings

7.5 Where land is being transferred to a registered social landlord or other housing provider the Council will normally require that this occurs before the first open market dwelling is occupied. This will ensure that the provision of affordable homes is not delayed. On large sites which will take a number of years to build the transfer of land will relate to particular phases of development. Similarly where dwellings rather than land are to be transferred this will be phased to reflect the even distribution of affordable dwellings throughout the scheme.

7.6 Outline applications will only be permitted if a legal agreement is signed establishing the broad principles for the amount and type of affordable housing to be provided and the arrangements to be put in place to secure it in accordance with this supplementary planning guidance. The detailed matters will be secured when the reserved matters applications are submitted.

7.7 The arrangements for securing affordable housing will usually be finalised when full planning applications or reserved matter applications are submitted. Planning permission will normally only be granted if the developer enters into a legal agreement which sets out the precise arrangements.

8.0 MONITORING

8.1 The Council will monitor the level, location and type of affordable housing provided through the planning process on an annual basis. The results will be published in the Council's Annual Monitoring Reports. The effectiveness of the planning policies and this Supplementary Planning Guidance will also be monitored and this may lead to the policies in the Local plan and this guidance being reviewed in the future and then being adopted in a Local Development Document or as a Supplementary Planning Document under the new system. The guidance may have to be reviewed if there are changes to the affordable housing policies in the Local South East Plan, government policy, housing finance or local need.

9.0 FURTHER INFORMATION

9.1 Copies of the Local Plan, the Housing Needs Survey and the Housing Strategy Statement are available from the District Council and are available at www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk.

9.2 Developers are strongly encouraged to discuss their proposals with the Council's Planning Service (www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk) and Housing Service (www.housing@whitehorsedc.gov.uk) at the earliest possible opportunity (tel no 01235 520202).

9.3 The Housing Corporation's requirements Scheme Development Standards and target rent levels are available from the Housing Corporation, 149 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 0BN (www.housingcorp.gov.uk)

9.4 Details on lifetime homes are available from the Joseph Rowntree Federation, www.jrf.org.uk (Tel No 01904 629241).

9.5	Details of government policy relating to affordable housing are available from the Department for Communities and Local Government www.communities.gov.uk
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9.6 The County Council's development funding team can be contacted via email at developer.funding@oxfordshire.gov.uk (or tel no 01865 815798).

10.0 YOUR VIEWS

~~10.1 This Supplementary Planning Guidance is being published in draft form for consultation. Together with the draft Local Plan to 2011 it seeks to maximise the supply of affordable housing in the District and provide clarity on how the affordable housing will be delivered. The Council would like to receive your views on the draft guidance. Any comments should be submitted in writing by Friday 5 May 2006. Comments should be sent to:~~

~~The Deputy Director (Planning and Community Strategy)
Vale of White Horse District Council
Abbey House
Abingdon
OX14 3JE~~

~~By e-mail to: local.plan@whitehorsede.gov.uk.~~

~~By fax to: 01235 540397~~

~~10.2 All responses will be considered carefully by the District Council before it is adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance.~~