

Wiltshire Council

Environment Select Committee

12 November 2024

Update on Wiltshire Housing Development Partnership

1. The role of the Housing Enabling Team is to facilitate the delivery of a range of Affordable Homes (as defined in National Planning Policy Guidance) to meet the needs of Wiltshire's residents, with a target of delivering an average of 650 homes per year. This target is derived from the Wiltshire Core Strategy which was informed by a Strategic Housing Market Assessment. To assist in achieving this, the Team works in partnership with Registered Providers of Affordable Housing (RPs).
2. The work of the Housing Enabling Team reflects the mission of the Business Plan in ensuring that 'we have the right housing' by engaging with the planning system and liaising with developers and RPs, to ensure that the housing delivered meets local demonstrable need in terms of tenure and unit size.
3. In 2023/24, 532 Affordable Homes were delivered in Wiltshire. Whilst this is below the annual average target, it reflects a fall in the overall number of housing units delivered in Wiltshire from 2,425 homes in 2022/23 to 1,825 homes in 2023/24.
4. Of the 532 Affordable Homes delivered, 61% were rented accommodation (either Affordable Rent or Social Rent) and 39% were for Affordable home ownership.
5. Although the Core Strategy sets a target for the total number of Affordable Housing completions (gross provision), it is useful to be aware of the number of disposals. The Regulator of Social Housing and the Council's System, Performance and Engagement Team have confirmed that a total of 127 properties (including both Council and Registered Provider properties) were disposed of during 2023/24. Properties are disposed of for a variety of reasons which include Right to Buy sales and Shared Ownership properties staircasing to 100% ownership.

Role of Registered Providers

6. The Housing Enabling Team provides support to partner RPs on an on-going basis to facilitate the delivery of Affordable Housing and to ensure that delivery meets demonstrable need.

7. Registered Providers of Affordable Housing (RPs) play a vital role in helping the Council to provide Affordable Housing to meet need by:
 - Purchasing Affordable Housing units delivered by developers which have been secured through S106 planning obligations (S106 units).
 - Developing Affordable Housing units on land-led 100% Affordable Housing sites.
8. An effective partnership between Wiltshire Council and RPs is therefore important in ensuring the delivery of Affordable Housing.

Wiltshire Housing Development Partnership (2021 to 2026)

9. Wiltshire Council has had an established partnership arrangement with RPs since 2009. The current partnership runs from 2021 to 2026. The remit of the partnership is to facilitate the delivery of new-build Affordable Housing. It is not concerned with allocations, management & maintenance or disposals.
10. Registered Providers have been selected to assist in focusing on the Council's key priorities in addition to meeting the strategic affordable housing delivery requirements of the Local Plan. Whilst provider partners are expected to assist the Council in achieving its wider objectives e.g. working towards carbon neutral, we are mindful that Registered Providers choose where they work. Working through the partnership, the Housing Enabling Team is able to establish and maintain a close relationship with RPs' development teams with the aim that they continue to want to work in Wiltshire.
11. The aims of the Partnership are as follows:

Wiltshire Council and the Provider Members will work in partnership to:

 - meet strategic Affordable Housing delivery in accordance with the Local Plan
 - accelerate the provision of affordable homes
 - improve the environmental standards of Affordable Housing stock (including its resilience to climate impacts) and to assist Wiltshire Council in responding to the climate emergency and mitigating climate change
 - support the wider aims and objectives of Wiltshire Council
 - ensure delivery and maintain provision of affordable homes across the whole of Wiltshire and in both urban and rural areas
 - address issues of affordability
 - meet the demonstrable needs of a range of client groups
 - ensure high standards of service for occupants of Affordable Housing
 - ensure equality of opportunity in all aspects of its housing service

12. There are currently 11 provider partners in the Partnership, comprising a broad range including larger national and regional RPs and smaller local RPs. Provider partners include:
- 10 Registered Providers
 - The Council's Residential Development Team (which, in development terms, performs a similar function to RPs).
13. Partners pay an annual fee and there is a partnership agreement that partners are asked to adhere to [Housing - our partners - Wiltshire Council](#).

Effectiveness of the RP Partnership

14. The partnership continues to effectively facilitate the delivery of Affordable Housing:
- Partnership meetings are held quarterly and are well attended by senior RP management.
 - Partnership meetings focus on the Council's key priorities such as climate change and rural housing delivery. They draw on the expertise of Council teams such as the Climate Team and Planning teams who attend partnership meetings for focused sessions and to provide regular updates.
 - The partnership continues to adopt a joint approach to problem solving, sharing expertise and experience.
15. The most recent partnership meeting (October 2024) was held in County Hall and was well-attended and well received by attendees, who valued the opportunity to network and exchange ideas. Cllr Clewer was in attendance, providing assurance of the Council's commitment to delivering Affordable Housing. At the request of partner RPs, the meeting was attended by the Ecology Team Manager who gave presentations on Biodiversity Net Gain and Nutrient Mitigation in order to assist RPs in navigating their way through new environmental requirements.
16. The Housing Enabling Team is confident that, subject to the continued commitment of the Council and RPs, the Partnership offers the potential to continue to assist the Council in working towards its key priorities.
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Cllr Phil Alford, Cabinet Member for Housing, Strategic Assets, Asset Transfer

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