

Wiltshire Council

Environment Select Committee

7th November 2023

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. To assist in achieving this, the Team works in partnership with Registered Providers of Affordable Housing (RPs).
2. The Housing Enabling Team is aware of the recent recommendation of the Housing Allocations Policy Task Group to:

'Work with social housing providers to identify the number of social houses available in Wiltshire and to link increasing the supply of social housing with demand and need'.

The work of the Housing Enabling Team reflects the aspiration of this recommendation and the mission of the Business Plan in ensuring that 'we have the right housing' by engaging with the planning system to implement Core Strategy policy (which has been informed by a Strategic Housing Market Assessment), and liaising with developers and RPs, to ensure that the housing delivered meets local demonstrable need in terms of tenure, unit size and provision of adapted units.

3. In 2022/23, 643 Affordable Homes were delivered in Wiltshire. This is slightly below the average annual target. Within this financial year we are starting to see a more marked decrease in delivery. At the end of Q2, 235 Affordable Homes had been delivered which represents 36% of our annual target.

Role of Registered Providers

4. 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. The two main tenures delivered are currently:
 - Affordable Rented Housing allocated to households on Wiltshire's Housing Register;
 - Shared Ownership Housing sold to eligible households with a household income of less than £80,000 in accordance with government policy;In future, Affordable Housing provision will also include an element of First Homes as required by a change in government policy.

5. 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.
6. An effective partnership between Wiltshire Council and RPs is therefore important in ensuring the delivery of Affordable Housing. The slowdown in delivery of S106 units highlights the importance of working with our partner RPs to support them in continuing to deliver their land-led schemes.

Wiltshire Housing Development Partnership (2021 to 2026)

7. Wiltshire Council has had an established partnership arrangement with RPs since 2009. In August 2021, following agreement of Cabinet, the Council renewed the Wiltshire Housing Development Partnership (RP Partnership). In adopting a more formal approach to selection, we have ensured that we have the right partners to assist in focusing on the Council's key priorities, such as climate change, in addition to meeting the strategic affordable housing delivery requirements of the Local Plan.
8. A selection process was undertaken which involved the Cabinet Member for Housing. Any RP able to demonstrate a willingness to assist in working towards the aims of the Partnership was invited to join, with no limit on the number of RPs in the Partnership. The aims of the Partnership are as follows:
9. 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

10. The selection process resulted in 11 provider partners joining 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).

11. RP partners pay an annual partnership fee of £4,500 (index linked) with a reduced fee for partners with stock of less than 1,000 units.

Effectiveness of the RP Partnership

12. The partnership continues to effectively facilitate the delivery of Affordable Housing:

- Partnership meetings are held quarterly and are well attended by senior RP management.
- A new format to partnership meetings focuses on the Council's key priorities such as climate change and rural housing delivery. It draws on the expertise of Council teams such as the Climate Team and Planning teams who have attended partnership meetings for focused sessions.
- The partnership continues to adopt a joint approach to problem solving, sharing expertise and experience.

13. The most recent partnership meeting (September 2023) was held in County Hall and was the first 'in-person' meeting since Covid. It was well-attended and extremely well received by attendees, who valued the opportunity to network and exchange ideas. Cllr Alford was in attendance and highlighted the RPs fundamental role in helping to meet the Council's housing target. He provided assurance of the Council's commitment to delivering Affordable Housing.

14. The focus for the meeting was the climate emergency with the Climate Team giving a presentation on the Wiltshire Climate Strategy, and one of our partner RPs giving a presentation on the practical issues involved in securing EPC(A) rating on a new development. This led to a useful exchange of ideas and identification of issues on which an element of joint problem solving would be useful.

15. 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.

Cllr Phil Alford, Cabinet Member for Housing, Strategic Assets, Asset Transfer

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