

Affordable Housing Briefing Paper for Warminster Area Board

March 2016

Background

There have been a number of national policy changes affecting the delivery of affordable housing as well as local policy changes. This paper and the presentation to be delivered at the Area Board meeting are to update the community area on those changes together with updates relating to the housing needs in the local area.

National Policy Context

There are two pieces of legislation currently going through Parliament – the Housing and Planning Bill and the Welfare Reform Bill. The main outcomes to be achieved through these bills are to;

- Increase owner-occupation including low cost options
- Make best use of existing social housing stock
- Reduce the burden on the public sector (housing benefit bill)

In addition, the government continues to promote independent living in the community.

Changes being introduced as part of these proposals include;

- Introduction of starter homes for under 40s/first time buyers. These will be low cost homes sold at 80% of open market value.
- Reduced rents for affordable homes by 1% per year for the next four years. As housing associations build new homes by borrowing against their future rents, this will result in reduced capacity to invest in new affordable homes
- Reduced benefit caps introduced from April will make it more difficult for households in receipt of benefits to afford to pay rents particularly for larger properties e.g. 3 and 4 bed homes
- Extension of the right to buy for Housing Association tenants to be funded through sales of local authority housing stock
- Possible introduction of 2 – 5 year fixed term tenancies for social housing with mandatory use of fixed term tenancies for local authorities
- Households with an income of more than £30,000 to pay market rents with the additional income generated for local authority tenancies being returned to the treasury

Wiltshire Priorities

- Ensuring there are a range of housing options available to meet needs
- Promoting home ownership housing
- Enabling provision of homes for the most vulnerable

- Helping people to achieve independence and choice enabling them to live at home for longer
- Improving the quality of and making best use of existing stock

Assessing Need

There are a range of sources of information used to assess housing need. These include;

- Wiltshire Core Strategy
- Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)
- Town and parish surveys
- Under-occupation and overcrowding data
- Demographic trends & census updates
- Existing stock information
- Re-let supply
- Housing register

The core strategy identifies the numbers of new homes required in each area to meet needs.

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment is the evidence base projecting need up to 2026 that was used to support the core strategy – this said an additional 1000 new affordable homes were needed each year in Wiltshire

Town and parish surveys provide additional information at a local level although this is usually a snapshot of need at a point in time rather than a projection of future need.

Under-occupation and overcrowding data help to show potential future need.

Existing stock information and re-let supply are used against new need to understand how stock needs to change.

The housing register is a snapshot of those in need today. The register is not a good indicator of future need and has to be looked at in the context of all of the information above.

Statistics relating to the profile of housing stock in the Warminster Community Area are detailed in the attached presentation for information.

Next Steps

Plans are in place to commission research at a community area level to ensure there is robust data projecting future needs at a local level.

A housing strategy will be developed and future priorities agreed for Wiltshire.

The housing team will work with local communities and partners to understand local need and help to deliver new homes where required including through neighbourhood plans

Options will be considered to increase choices for those not able to meet their housing needs in the open market

Responses to national policy changes will be prepared and implemented.