

: Draft Minutes from P& ED Scrutiny Panel – 9th Aug 2004**Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance**

Members of the Planning & Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Panel and the Community & Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel considered the report of the Planning Officer (previously circulated). During a discussion the following points were raised:

- Members praised the officers involved for all the hard work that had been put into the report.
- The effect of the emergence of the Regional Housing Board on affordable housing policies was discussed. The officer informed the panel that the emergence of this body was an opportunity but also a threat. It would mean that funds would be allocated on a regional rather than national level which would be an advantage. However, the Regional Housing Board had targeted funds at large urban areas historically and therefore potentially, Salisbury could lose out.
- Members felt that affordable housing should always be one of the top priorities of the Council. However, some members and the officer expressed a word of caution that every aspect of a development must be considered and that second rate schemes should not be adopted simply because the Council needed to meet social housing targets.
- Members commented that the proof of the document would be in the negotiations with the developers. They stated that officers must stand firm against the pressure to reduce the levels of social housing on schemes. Members commented that it was very important that they support the officers and could not be seen to waiver on the levels of social housing set even if this meant fighting appeal cases.
- Members felt that as the need for 850 houses per year had been identified and only 150 per year were being planned for this target was only scratching the surface of the problem. Officers commented that even if all homes were 'affordable' the 850 per year level would not be met. There was a general acceptance that this guidance was achieving as much as it could within the boundaries of existing policy, but that a new affordable housing policy could be drafted for the Local Development Framework (LDF) as soon as practically possible.
- There was a suggestion that measures such as compulsory purchase should be introduced to discourage landowners from speculatively sitting on land whilst waiting for its value to rise. The officer stated that compulsory purchase was not a measure that anyone would want to pursue (unless as a very extreme last resort). Another option would be that if a landowner had not developed land for many years the officers could threaten to deallocate it in the LDF in favour of land that would be likely to be developed. However, the officer stated that this was not a situation which occurred regularly in this district and therefore there was no need for such a policy at this stage.
- Several comments were made regarding the best use of sites and members commented that there should not be a standard requirement for one type of property nor should developers be the ones to dictate what type of social housing was provided on each site. The officer stated that the planners and housing officers look at each site individually to determine what is necessary and what is the best use for that site.
- The view was expressed that local members should be involved in the negotiations with developers for social housing on sites within their wards.
- Members felt that housing strategy also needed to be considered as there were many people in private rented accommodation that found the accommodation too large for their needs and wanted to downsize but could not afford to. If they could be moved this would free up larger housing sites for families that needed it.
- The Portfolio Holder commented that he would like the conversion of rural buildings to be included in the new LDF as this would help to provide more affordable housing.
- There was a debate over the benefits of private versus social landlords. Some members felt that there was no reason why private landlords could not run affordable housing rented schemes. However, all members agreed that these landlords would be expected to fulfil all the criteria that the social landlords had to fulfil.
- Members felt that whilst housing for (key) essential workers was vital to keep the district functioning, housing for local people should not be forgotten. Some members suggested that perhaps employers should be asked to provide accommodation for their workers.

RESOLVED –

That, subject to the proposed changes referred to in the report, (and those set out in Appendix I), that it be recommended to the Cabinet that the revised guidance be formally adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance.