

Relevant extracts from minutes of the Local Development Framework Working Group (LDFWG) meetings on 11 January 2023 and 1 February 2023

LDFWG 11 January 2023

Minutes (extract)

Affordable Housing Delivery SPD- Consultation Outcomes and Proposed Revised Draft

Dan Ashe provided a presentation to members on a summary of key representations received following the Affordable Housing SPD consultation. It was noted that the consultation process started in November for a four-week period.

The following points were highlighted:

Abri

It was highlighted that Abri raised concerns “on the disproportionate number of smaller homes on sites needed to be First Homes”. Dan reported that one way of addressing this, would be stating that a dwelling mix requirement applied to non-first Homes affordable dwellings on site.

A query was also raised to consider “not requiring First Homes”. It was explained a study was carried out in a local Council in Bath concerning First Homes which found that people who took up shared ownership mortgages could not afford First Homes. This led the Council to propose not to apply the National requirement for First Homes. Members were cautioned against this approach which was thought to contradict the National Policy and Woking did not have the evidence to apply this.

Another point raised by Abri was to “remove the requirement for affordable housing to be replaced like-for-like within the Borough”. It was highlighted that the Council should not be providing additional affordable housing outside the borough. This was considered unreasonable as it was believed that Woking had enough people in housing need who have local connections to Woking that replacement should be provided within the borough.

Discussion ensued on the viability, if whether the removal of affordable housing be replaced with like-for-like within the Borough.

Watkins Jones Group

The Watkins Jones Group had requested to remove the requirement of 20% minimum Affordable Housing on Build to Rent schemes and replace with the word “benchmark”. Dan raised concerns on this explaining the problem could attract many developers to go below the 20% mark. Cllr Dorsett suggested by placing the 20% as a minimum would set an expectation for developers. Members agreed for the wording to remain unchanged.

NHS Surrey Heartlands ICB

NHS Surrey Heartlands sought for NHS workers to be Priority One keyworkers regarding access to First Homes. Key workers prioritisation on other forms of Affordable Housing was also requested. NHS Surrey Heartlands offered to work with the Council to ensure that health infrastructure is prioritised in developer contributions, alongside Affordable Housing.

It was noted that it would be biased for the group to only consider NHS workers as Priority One keyworkers who would be allowed to access First Homes. It was acknowledged that there were other service areas with keyworkers to consider within the Borough who could also benefit from the scheme. It was suggested for members to obtain the list for Priority One, Two and Three keyworkers, as well as consulting with the housing allocations department before making a concrete decision on how to address this matter.

Action: D. Ashe

DM Officers

Following comments received from the Development Management Officers, the group discussed whether points raised were effective.

It was recognised that Council did not require affordable housing contributions from housing sites over 0.5 hectares, but had less than 10 dwellings. Though this could be applied as it was National Policy. Dan highlighted concerns about this consideration, suggesting that in some instances the contributions received might be small and exceed the time and effort on these types of applications.

It was thought that Waverley sought contributions from these housing sites by applying a standard formula used to calculate the financial contributions.

Following a request to review expected profit levels in calculations on overage clause which is currently 20%, members were reminded that the 20% was already written in the viability appraisal which formed the reinforcement of the CIL.

Following discussions members agreed that council should not seek affordable housing contributions from Gypsy and Traveller sites.

Development Management Officers sought to clarify whether housing mix proportions, etc, would change when the new SHMA is implemented. It was agreed that Officers would discuss with housing colleagues and update members before making a final decision.

Action: D. Ashe

Regarding the housing nomination's agreement, it was agreed for housing colleagues to be contacted to determine whether they use the local connection test or the Homes England grant funding requirements when allocating housing.

Dan informed members that Officers may consider a current planning consultation presented by the Government, that may lead to the Council having a new threshold which may not allow for the requirement of Affordable Housing.

LDFWG 1 February 2023

Minutes (extract)

Affordable Housing SPD

Following an update on the Affordable Housing SPD at the last meeting, Dan Ashe updated the Group on the changes that had been made following that discussion. These were detailed in the report.

The Chairman asked about the priority one and two key workers (section 3.5) and whether both should be of the same priority, adding people such as care workers to the higher priority. Dan Ashe said that he could follow this up with the housing department as he was not sure how these were graded. Beverly Kuchar commented that the more the priority one group was expanded, the harder it would be for those key workers to get priority. Following discussion, it was agreed that it should remain as it was detailed in the report.

The Chairman hoped that the updated SPD would help get more affordable housing in the Borough.