

## 5. HOUSING

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

5.1.1 There are a number of important reasons why we need more homes. These include:

- to provide affordable homes both for those in the greatest need and for those that need help getting on to the housing ladder,
- to keep and attract people of working age with a range of skills in order to sustain economic growth, particularly as there is likely to be a dramatic increase in the population of those aged over 60 in the plan area,
- to cater for the demand created by the way in which we live our lives which has contributed towards a reduction in household size. For example, the increase in life expectancy of older people, young people leaving their parent's home earlier and an increase in the incidence of marital breakdown.
- to allow for people moving into the area to live and work, which is likely to continue and would otherwise increase house prices further.

5.1.2 At the beginning of the plan period there were 3,000 people on the housing register in West Dorset and 4,600 in Weymouth and Portland. The house price to wage ratio in West Dorset and Weymouth and Portland is significantly higher than national and regional comparisons. The housing implementation strategy for the plan area is set out below:

#### STRATEGIC APPROACH

A continuing supply of housing land is needed to help meet the changing demographic and social needs of the area, and to help reduce the need to travel and promote economic growth and social inclusion. The type, size and mix of housing will be expected to reflect local needs as far as possible and result in balanced communities.

Although the total projected need for affordable housing is not expected to be met in the plan period, opportunities will be taken to secure affordable homes to meet local needs. This will include ensuring all new open market housing sites make a contribution (through providing new affordable homes or, where this is not possible, making a financial contribution), and through a range of flexible policies that encourage affordable housing to come forward where there are suitable opportunities.

### 5.2 AFFORDABLE HOUSING

#### Affordable Housing

Affordable housing must be provided at a cost low enough for local people to afford whose needs are not met by the open market. It should remain at an affordable price (if it is practicable to apply suitable restrictions).

There are three main types of affordable housing; social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing. Housing available for social or affordable rent is rented housing normally provided by registered providers and regulated by the Homes and Communities Agency. Intermediate housing can include shared equity products and leasehold shared-ownership schemes, discounted sale (with future sales restricted to the same discount).

Low cost market housing, aimed at first time buyers, is not considered to be affordable

housing as it does not remain affordable in the longer term.

#### AFFORDABLE HOUSING ON OPEN MARKET HOUSING SITES

- 5.2.1 One way of achieving affordable housing delivery through the planning system is by requiring that a proportion of the net increase in open market housing on a development site is developed as affordable housing instead. There is no evidence to suggest that affordable housing cannot be delivered to some degree on all sizes of development, from one unit upwards. And having a 'threshold' under which a contribution need not be made can distort the number of units that would otherwise come forward on a site.
- 5.2.2 On-site provision will always be sought, unless this would not deliver a whole unit, or there is compelling evidence why off-site provision or a financial contribution of equivalent value would be of greater all-round benefit.
- 5.2.3 Setting the level of affordable housing to be delivered on open market housing sites is very much dependent on site viability. Setting the level too high will mean that some sites, particularly brownfield sites (that are likely to have a higher existing use value and may also have clean-up costs), are unlikely to come forward. And setting the level too low will mean that we fail to deliver as much affordable housing as we could. The wider infrastructure needs that are expected to be met by the development, either through planning obligations or the community infrastructure levy, will also have an impact on viability, and need to be considered at the same time.
- 5.2.4 A minimum target for affordable housing provision on open market housing sites has been set at the start of the plan period, in what are very challenging economic times. This varies across the plan area, with Portland having a lower target due to the financial viability of development in that area. There will be future opportunities to amend this target if the economic situation changes sufficiently, which should be done alongside the review of the community infrastructure levy, as the two are intrinsically linked to viability. Where applying the target would result in a fraction of an affordable home, a financial contribution will normally be sought for that fraction. The level of financial contribution sought and how it can be calculated will be published at the same time as the community infrastructure levy charging schedule, so that its impact on viability can be fully tested through the community infrastructure levy examination.
- 5.2.5 No affordable housing provision will be required from rural workers dwellings or homes restricted to holiday use. However, if the restriction is lifted at a later date, a contribution will be required at that time. There may be other instances where certain developments are not able to make such provision, particularly if the existing land has a significant market value and will not generate many additional units. The Councils will have regard to issues such as this when assessing proposals, and in such cases a development appraisal should be submitted by the applicant (where possible, in advance of the planning application), together with full supporting information concerning site constraints, costs (including any abnormal costs) and projected income. The Councils will supply the latest version of the viability appraisal toolkit to be used for this purpose.

#### TENURE SPLIT, SIZE, TYPE AND MIX

- 5.2.6 The analysis in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment, based on housing need across the whole of plan area, indicates that 79% of affordable housing demand is likely to be for social or affordable rents. These findings point towards a high level of social or affordable

rented housing provision. However intermediate affordable housing enhances mixed communities and assists economic viability.

- 5.2.7 The greatest demand for affordable housing at the beginning of the plan period was for two bedroom homes, with a significant demand for one and three bedroom homes. However larger homes with three or more bedrooms can provide more flexible housing to cater for different needs and the scope for newly forming and growing small families. The size of housing needed will vary locally, and both current needs and flexibility to meet likely future needs will be taken into account in determining the right mix.
- 5.2.8 Disabled people often have particular design requirements over and above those currently required under building regulations. Where there is an identified need for housing with such adaptations, every effort should be made to accommodate this provision. This may be through the inclusion of some housing that can be easily adapted to meet a variety of particular needs.

#### **HOUS 1. AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

- i) **Where open market housing is proposed affordable housing will be sought, unless the proposal is for the replacement or subdivision of an existing home. The level reflects the viability of development land in the local area, and will be:**
  - a minimum of 25% in Portland
  - a minimum of 35% in Weymouth and West Dorset
- ii) **In most cases, where one or more affordable homes are being provided, these should be provided on the open market site. Financial contributions towards the provision of affordable housing will be required for any shortfall that cannot be delivered on the site.**
- iii) **Applicants seeking to justify a lower level of affordable housing provision will be expected to provide an assessment of viability. A lower level of provision will only be permitted if there are good reasons to bring the development forward and the assessment shows that it is not economically viable to make the minimum level of provision being sought.**
- iv) **Affordable housing provision tenure should meet identified local needs and on strategic allocations should be split to provide a minimum of 70% for social and/or affordable rent and a maximum of 30% for intermediate affordable housing.**
- v) **The type, size and mix of affordable housing will be expected to address the identified and prioritised housing needs of the area and should be proportionate to the scale and mix of market housing, resulting in a balanced community of housing and/or flats that are 'tenure blind'.**
- vi) **Where there is an identified local need for specially designed affordable housing to cater for disabled people with particular needs, or affordable housing that can be easily adapted to meet a variety of such needs, developments should prioritise provision of this accommodation.**

#### **Monitoring Indicators:**

The number of affordable housing units by size and tenure secured on-site through open market housing development, and the level of financial contribution secured towards delivery of affordable housing. **Target:** minimum of 25% affordable housing secured in Portland and a minimum of 35% secured in Weymouth and West Dorset

The number of affordable housing units delivered through financial contributions where affordable housing cannot be provided on site. **Target:** to provide the equivalent number of homes where

contributions have been made in lieu.

#### AFFORDABLE HOUSING EXCEPTION SITES

- 5.2.9 Another way of providing affordable homes is through 'Exception Sites' which are just for affordable housing on sites that would not be granted planning consent for open market housing. This allows small sites adjoining villages and towns, with relatively low land value, to provide for 100% affordable housing, without a fundamental policy objection. Large sites of 100% affordable housing are more likely to result in a unbalanced community mix, and are therefore not encouraged under this approach.
- 5.2.10 Because this is an exception, it is important that it is in response to a clearly identified need arising from a local community, which cannot otherwise be met. Future occupancy will also be prioritised for people with a local connection (for example those living or working in the local area, or with close family in that area).
- 5.2.11 Allowing market housing cross-subsidy on exception sites was considered when this plan was prepared. This can be brought forward where the community wants it, through neighbourhood planning, as it would not be contrary to the strategic policies in this plan. And there are communities actively working on such schemes. But it has not been included as a general policy because it would reduce the likelihood of 100% affordable housing sites being delivered (so reducing the potential for affordable housing where there are few developable sites), and it could also result in significant unplanned growth adjoining settlements.

#### HOUS 2. AFFORDABLE HOUSING EXCEPTION SITES

- i) **Small scale sites for affordable housing adjoining settlements may be permitted provided that:**
- **the council is satisfied that the proposal is capable of meeting an identified, current, local need within the town, local parish or group of parishes, which cannot otherwise be met;**
  - **the scheme is of a character scale and design appropriate to the location;**
  - **there are secure arrangements to ensure that the benefits of affordable housing will be enjoyed by subsequent as well as initial occupiers.**

**Monitoring Indicator:** the number of affordable housing units completed on exception sites.

#### 5.3 OPEN MARKET HOUSING MIX

- 5.3.1 A variety of housing sizes are necessary to meet the needs of local people and to create more mixed communities. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment indicates a greater need for two and three bedroom homes, however this will vary according to location and will change over the plan period to reflect likely future requirements and demographics

#### HOUS 3. OPEN MARKET HOUSING MIX

- i) **Wherever possible, residential developments should include a mix in the size, type and affordability of dwellings proposed, taking into account the current range of house types and sizes and likely demand in view of the changing demographics in that locality.**

**Monitoring Indicator:** the number of homes permitted by size (bedrooms) and type.

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## 5.4 DEVELOPMENT OF FLATS, HOSTELS AND HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION

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- 5.4.1 The demographic trend towards smaller households means that there is likely to be a continuing market for flats, apartments and similar properties. Well managed hostels and houses in multiple occupation can provide an important role in housing vulnerable groups – for example, providing supported accommodation for homeless young people. These types of accommodation may be provided through new development or the conversion of large residential properties.
- 5.4.2 High density development provides very efficient use of land, but requires careful consideration of the mass, bulk and height of the proposed development and loss of large gardens, character of the local area, potential impact on the amenity of future residents, the management of communal areas and also likely traffic generation, as these factors can make such developments unacceptable.

### **HOUS 4. DEVELOPMENT OF FLATS, HOSTELS AND HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION**

**i) Proposals for flats, hostels and houses in multiple occupation should:**

- **be compatible with the character of the area**
- **not result in a cramped form of development;**
- **provide sufficient private amenity space within the site for the likely future occupants, normally comprising at least 10% of the site area for conversions providing 4 or more flats, and 20% of the site area for all new build schemes, unless such provision is undesirable in design terms.**

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## 5.5 RESIDENTIAL CARE ACCOMMODATION

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- 5.5.1 The increasing number of older people within the plan area is a key issue and accordingly, care accommodation will be vitally important during the plan period. Care accommodation can take a number of different forms. The County Council is moving away from the development of traditional and sometimes institutional models of accommodation and care (e.g. traditional residential care homes), towards the development of more flexible models of accommodation and support that offer vulnerable adults increased opportunities for maintaining independence, choice and control over their lives. Increasingly, support and care is being delivered at home or through ‘Extra Care’ supported accommodation services. ‘Extra Care’ facilities can provide self-contained accommodation grouped on a site providing an extensive range of facilities, over and above those found in ordinary sheltered housing, including provision of meals if required and individual packages of care and support available 24 hours a day. ‘Extra Care’ facilities have dedicated care and support teams, which in most schemes are likely to be based on-site.
- 5.5.2 The strategic vision of the County Council and NHS Dorset is to support the building of Extra Care housing developments together with more intense community based services that can be delivered to people in their own homes. Where new care accommodation is necessary it is important to locate this type of accommodation in areas that are easily accessible for visitors and staff and also so that residents, where possible, can access community facilities and public transport.

### **HOUS 5. RESIDENTIAL CARE ACCOMMODATION**

**i) Applications for new care accommodation and major extensions to existing care homes should:**

- **Be located within a defined development boundary and at an appropriate scale in relation to the settlement; and**

- **Meet with the strategic aims and objectives of Dorset County Council and NHS Dorset including demonstration of need for the service in the locality.**
- **Provide sufficient private amenity space within the site for the likely future occupants, normally comprising at least 20% of the site area unless such provision is undesirable in design terms.**

## 5.6 SITES FOR GYPSIES, TRAVELLERS AND TRAVELLING SHOWPEOPLE

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- 5.6.1 The Housing Act 2004 requires Councils to assess the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers and to provide accommodation based on the findings of that assessment. Local authorities in Dorset are working together to produce a joint Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan Document, which will identify sites throughout Dorset to meet the needs of these groups.
- 5.6.2 The Councils are committed to working in partnership with Gypsies and Travellers and with their representative groups, and with local residents, to seek solutions to issues concerning Gypsy and Traveller accommodation. In determining applications, issues of adequate levels of privacy and residential amenity for the occupiers, impact on the amenities of adjacent occupiers, and any detrimental impact upon the natural environment will be taken into account under the relevant policies. Proposals for sites for Travelling Showpeople will also need to provide adequate space for residential, maintenance and storage uses and be well related to the public highway network to accommodate the safe passage of large vehicles and pedestrians and located so as to minimise the impact of on-site business activities on neighbouring properties.
- 5.6.3 Prior to the adoption of the Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan Document, planning applications for Gypsy and Traveller sites will be determined in accordance with national planning policy for Traveller sites

## 5.7 OTHER RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT OUTSIDE DEFINED DEVELOPMENT BOUNDARIES

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- 5.7.1 Residential development in the countryside outside defined development boundaries is not generally considered sustainable. Exceptions in relation to affordable housing and sites for gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople have been outlined above. There will be other circumstances when it makes economic and environmental sense, for example in the case of the replacement or subdivision of existing buildings. And sometimes the viability of an agricultural, forestry or other enterprise for which a rural location is essential, depends upon a worker being resident on site to oversee the essential operation of the enterprise 24 hours a day.
- 5.7.2 Care has to be taken that the extension or replacement of existing buildings does not simply lead to a significant increase in less affordable, larger dwellings at the expense of cheaper, smaller properties. It is important to ensure that a range of dwelling types and sizes is available in rural areas, and a healthy social mix in the community. The scale and design of extensions and replacements individually, and cumulatively over a period of years, can also have an adverse impact both on the character of individual properties and the surrounding countryside. For these reasons, extensions should be subordinate in scale and proportions to the original dwelling, taking into account the extent to which the dwelling has been previously extended, or could be extended under permitted development rights. For the purposes of this policy 'original' is defined as the building as it was built or as it existed as of the 1<sup>st</sup> July 1948. The extension, replacement or subdivision of an existing dwelling house is subject to the existing use being lawful.

- 5.7.3 Outside defined development boundaries the subdivision of an existing home may be appropriate, particularly where houses have been joined together in the past to form one dwelling. However, the subdivision of a home would only apply to the house and not ancillary buildings such as garaging and outhouses.
- 5.7.4 There is some demand for new low impact dwellings and self build projects. Although it is accepted that some elements of this type of dwelling are more sustainable, access to essential services such as school and health services need to be considered. These schemes would be, in principle, acceptable within defined development boundaries. If schemes meet the definition of 'affordable' then there is the possibility of the exception site policy catering for these types of homes in more rural locations and, in addition, if schemes meet the criteria for rural workers' dwellings then there is the potential for this to be allowed.
- 5.7.5 The creation of a new residential curtilage and extensions to existing residential gardens, either in the open countryside or on the outskirts of a settlement, will often involve the change of use from agricultural land. Unfortunately, such changes of use can have a serious negative impact upon the rural character of an area and the visual quality of the landscape, with the establishment of mown lawns, flowerbeds and the introduction of non-indigenous tree and shrub species. This can lead to an urbanisation of the rural area and is often reinforced by the introduction of domestic paraphernalia and structures such as sheds, greenhouses, fences, washing lines, play equipment and summerhouses. Careful consideration needs to be given to the size and shape of the existing plot and how it relates to others in the locality. The relationship of the site to the surrounding field pattern, topography and landscape features will also influence the impact on the wider landscape. In some instances the removal of permitted development rights may be necessary.

#### **HOUS 6. OTHER RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT OUTSIDE DEFINED DEVELOPMENT BOUNDARIES**

- i) The extension of an existing lawful dwelling-house located outside the defined development boundaries will be permitted provided that the extension is subordinate in scale and proportions to the original dwelling, and does not harm the character of the locality or its landscape setting.**
- ii) The replacement of an existing lawful dwelling-house located outside the defined development boundaries will be permitted on a one-for-one basis, provided that**
  - the new building can be accommodated within the existing curtilage,
  - the new building is not significantly larger than the original and does not detract from the character and appearance of the locality or its landscape setting.
- iii) The subdivision of an existing home, located outside the defined development boundaries, will be permitted provided that**
  - the development can be accommodated within the existing building,
  - the resulting changes are compatible with the character of the area.
- iv) New housing for rural workers (full time workers in agriculture, horticulture, and other rural businesses which require essential 24 hour supervision), located outside the defined development boundaries, will be permitted provided that it can be demonstrated that:**
  - the dwelling is essential to the requirements of the business
  - the business is financially sound
  - there is no alternative accommodation on the holding or nearby that exists or could be made available

- a dwelling on the holding has not recently been sold on the open market without an agricultural or other occupancy condition
  - the scale of the proposed dwelling is modest, and appropriate to the established need of the business, and is, wherever possible, close to the existing buildings to meet the functional needs of the business
  - the dwelling is of an appearance that is in keeping with its rural surroundings and is, where necessary, supported by an appropriate landscaping scheme
  - In the case of new businesses that cannot yet show they are financially sound a temporary dwelling may be acceptable provided that the other criteria are met.
- v) The location of low impact dwellings or self build dwellings will be allowed in line with other residential policy in the Local Plan.
- vi) New residential curtilages and extensions to existing residential gardens will only be permitted where they:
- reflect and/or reinforce existing plot and boundary patterns in the locality;
  - avoid an uncharacteristic urban extension into the open countryside;
  - will not harm visual amenities or the rural character of the area; and
  - include appropriate landscaping proposals.