Affordable Housing SPD (February 2015)

The South Worcestershire Councils (SWC) of Malvern Hills District, Wychavon District and Worcester City intend to prepare an Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), to provide guidance on the provision of affordable housing. This will be consistent with the planning policies in the South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP).

We are seeking your comments at this early stage to decide what level of guidance and background information should be contained in the Affordable Housing SPD.

Comments are invited between Monday 16th February and Monday 30th March 2015

In particular we are seeking comments from individuals and organisations who are involved in the building and allocation of affordable housing in South Worcestershire. This leaflet identifies some key issues. Please let us know if you agree with these, and if there are additional issues you would wish the SPD to cover.

What is a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

A Supplementary Planning Document gives guidance on the interpretation and implementation of the policies and strategies contained within the Development Plan. It does not provide any policies or land use allocations in itself. SPD’s are subject to public consultation under The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

Planning policies on affordable housing

Government policy requires each council to have policies relating to how affordable housing can be provided in their area. The three Councils are working on a joint Local Plan (the South Worcestershire Development Plan) that will contain future policies on affordable housing. Each of the South Worcestershire Councils (SWC) have current Local Plan policies, which will be superseded by the SWDP, and therefore the affordable housing policies, and related guidance will need to be updated.

Definition of affordable housing

The government defines affordable housing (for planning purposes) within the National Planning Policy Framework as:

Social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market.
Related planning policies

The proposed Affordable Housing SPD will be related to these policies in the South Worcestershire Development Plan:

- SWDP 14 Housing Mix
- SWDP 15 Meeting Affordable Housing Needs
- SWDP 16 Rural Exception sites
- SWDP 20 Housing to Meet the Needs of Older People
- SWDP 62 Implementation

These policies set out what levels of affordable housing will be required in new housing development, and whether the Councils will require on-site provision of affordable housing or a financial contribution to off-site provision.

Note, although the policies are not yet adopted, work needs to be commenced on this guidance so that when affordable housing policies are adopted, the guidance can be quickly produced, to help deliver the affordable housing.

Role of the Affordable Housing SPD

The Affordable Housing SPD will provide additional guidance on how SWDP affordable housing policies should be interpreted. It is particularly aimed at affordable housing providers, such as Registered Landlords (also known as Housing Associations), developers and landowners who are or will be involved in planning applications for housing.

What is the level of affordable housing need?

The Government and the three South Worcestershire Councils (SWC) recognise that there are many households in the country who cannot afford to rent or buy homes on the open market. In South Worcestershire there are many in housing need. The projected need for affordable in South Worcestershire over the plan period 2006 - 2030 is for 8,140 affordable dwellings. (para 11.9 South Worcestershire Development Plan Housing Background Paper (Provision and Supply) Addendum October 2014). Some of this need is intended to be met through agreements related to planning permissions.

Examples of Affordable Housing

Cleevton Row, Blakes Hill, North Littleton

Malvern Vale, Malvern
Key issues to be considered in the SPD:

- Planning policy can deliver affordable housing by requiring developers to deliver part of their development as specific types of affordable homes, or as land or financial contributions, through legal agreements related to planning permissions (s106). How these legal agreements will be produced / standardised is therefore an important issue.
- Where affordable homes should be located.
- At what level of rent/ sales a home will be defined as affordable.
- To assess the viability of the development and whether affordable homes can be provided at a subsidy?
- The types and sizes of affordable units provided is important - e.g. is there a need for flats, houses, bungalows, and how many bedrooms?
- Who does the affordable housing cater for- e.g. the young/ elderly/ families and who gets priority?
- Are there specific standards that the affordable housing should be built to, such as in terms of space standards, energy efficiency?
- The type of rent/ mortgage should be related to needs - so that a range of affordable homes can be provided for those with no income; those who can afford higher rents, but below market rents; and those who can take on a part mortgage/ part rent.
- Whether service charges should be taken into account in the assessment of affordability.
- Whether/ when the “right to acquire” a property will be applied.
- Other design issues such as car parking/ density/ tenure “blindness”.
- The relationship of affordable housing on a development site to other “contributions”, especially in relation to any the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) requirements, the Developer Contributions SPD
- Local connection criteria

How to comment:

Copies of this leaflet and a response form are available electronically on the SWDP website - www.swdevelopmentplan.org and on the three Councils websites at: www.malvernhills.gov.uk | www.worcester.gov.uk | www.wychavon.gov.uk

Your comments can be submitted via e-mail (attaching the response form) to contact@swdevelopmentplan.org

Hard copies of this leaflet and response forms will be available at Customer Service Centres (CSC) and/ or Libraries.

You can also write directly to South Worcestershire Development Plan, c/o Wychavon Civic Centre, Queen Elizabeth Drive, Pershore WR10 1PT

What next?

We will collate the comments received, and present these to the planning committees in the three South Worcestershire Councils. We will then produce a fuller Draft Affordable Housing SPD, that will be subject to formal consultation in late 2015. Any comments received will be reported to committees again. These will be taken into consideration in a final version of the SPD that will be adopted in May - July 2016, so that it will follow the timetable for the adoption of the South Worcestershire Development Plan and the CIL Charging Schedule.