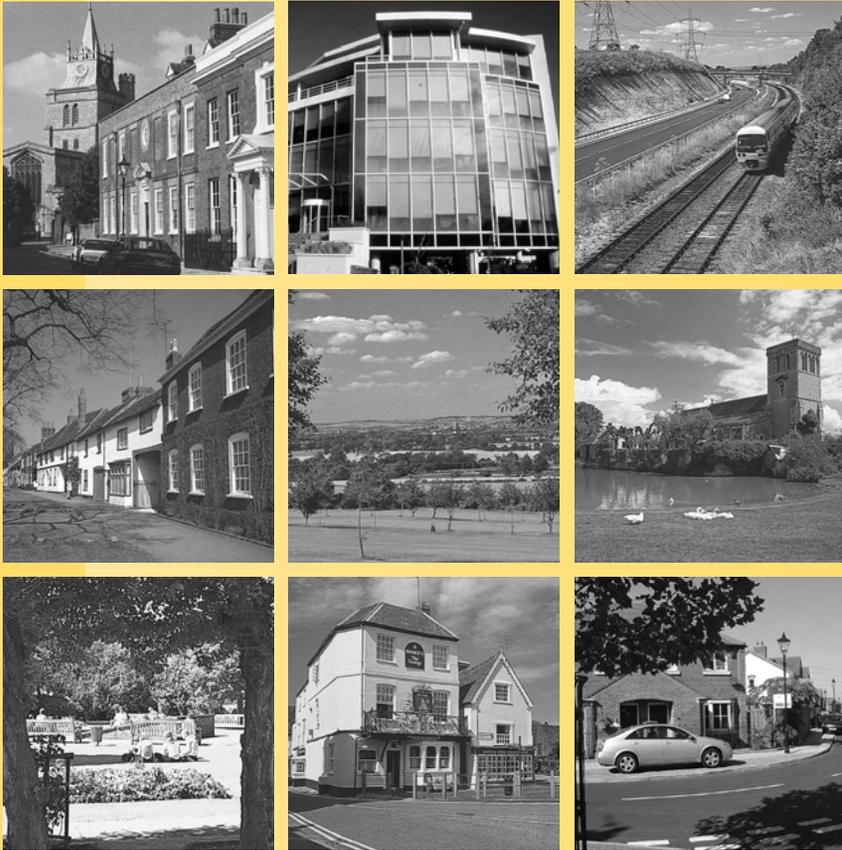


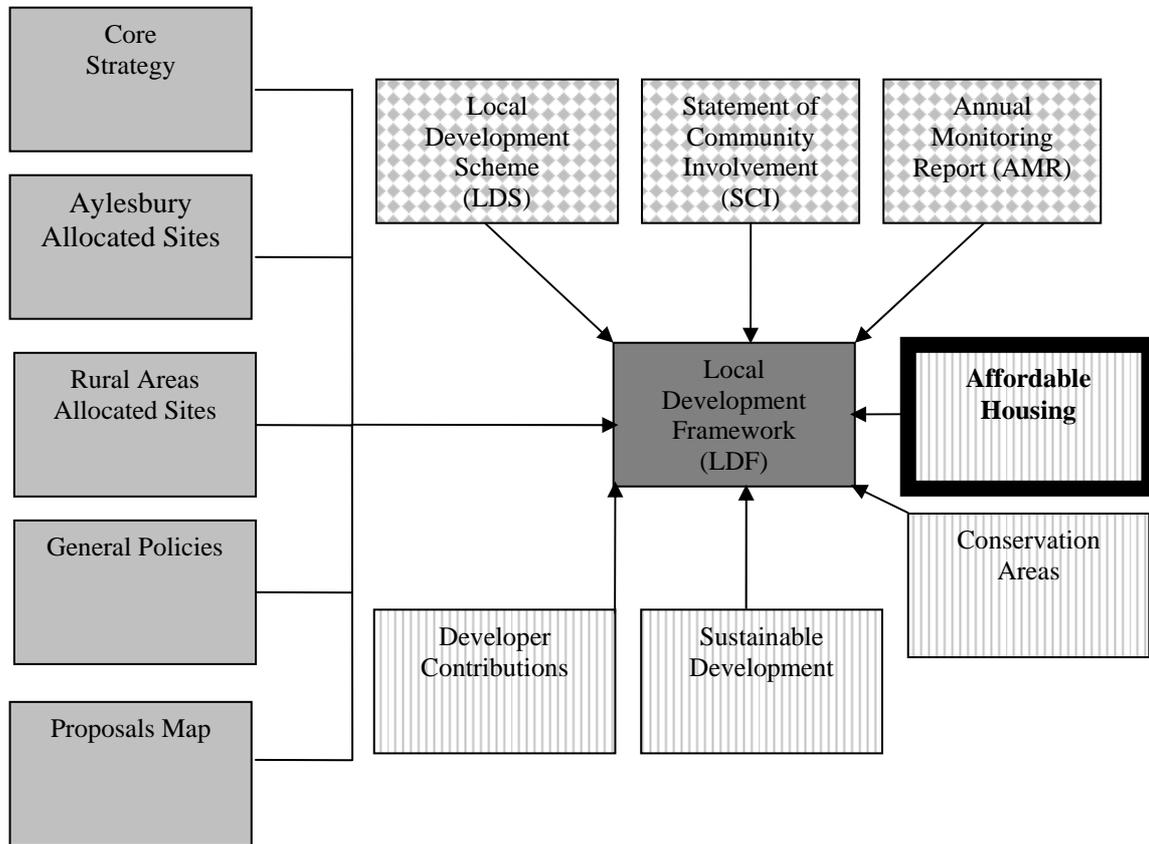
Local Development Framework



Affordable Housing
Supplementary
Planning Document

November 2007

**‘YOU ARE HERE’
- A MAP OF THE LDF, WITH THIS DOCUMENT HIGHLIGHTED -**



KEY



Local Development Framework (LDF)
The collective term for all the documents listed above.



Development Plan Documents (DPDs)
Documents containing planning policy; formally part of the development plan for Aylesbury Vale once adopted.



‘Administrative’ Documents
Documents involved in the administration of the LDF:

- LDS: the work programme for the LDF
- SCI: how we will involve the community in planning matters
- AMR: monitoring the effectiveness of the LDF



Supplementary Planning Documents
Provide additional detail on policies in a DPD.



This document is the Affordable Housing SPD
The Affordable Housing SPD provides guidance to housing developers and interested parties about the interpretation and application of the Council’s affordable housing policies.

NB The ‘saved’ policies in AVDLP remain part of the development plan for Aylesbury Vale until explicitly superseded by LDF policies; the policies in force will be made clear in all DPDs.

Aylesbury Vale District Council

AFFORDABLE HOUSING SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

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Summary

1. This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) has been prepared to provide guidance to housing developers and interested parties about the interpretation and application of the Council's Affordable Housing policies.
2. The SPD explains the policy framework for this guidance, summarises housing needs information and discusses how affordable housing providers can work with the Council to deliver its housing objectives.
3. PPS 3 and the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy provide the appropriate policy 'hook' for the SPD, which will serve as interim guidance until the Local Development Framework (LDF) policy and further SPD are produced. This document sets out information on site size thresholds, the proportion of affordable housing expected, housing tenure (including intermediate forms of housing aimed at key workers and shared ownership purchasers), levels of affordability, design, mix, type and standards, and discusses various issues surrounding occupancy controls, on- and off-site provision.
4. This SPD supersedes the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance *Delivering Affordable Housing*, adopted in August 2004.
5. The main points contained in the SPD are as follows:
 - Affordable housing is defined as social rented and intermediate housing, provided to specified eligible households whose needs are not met by the market;
 - Intermediate housing includes Intermediate rented, Discounted sale, Shared equity and Shared ownership;
 - Affordable housing is needed to meet both general needs as well as those for people with special needs and those that require supported housing;
 - Affordable housing is to be provided on sites with more than 15 properties, or in excess of 0.5ha in area;
 - A minimum of 40% affordable housing is to be negotiated on sites above this threshold;
 - The baseline mix is for 75% of the total affordable housing to be affordable rented accommodation and 25% to be intermediate housing;
 - The obligation to provide affordable housing exists regardless to the availability of public subsidy, but it is recognised that subsidy can deliver more affordable rented homes than if such subsidy is not available;
 - It is accepted that there may be exceptional circumstances where an element of affordable housing on site would not be the best solution;
 - The design and quality of affordable housing must be of the highest standard; and
 - The Council will require controls over occupancy and nominations to the affordable housing.

Introduction, purpose and status of this document

6. The Council shares the objectives of the planning system to develop sustainable and balanced communities, where all sections of society, regardless of their wealth, occupation or background, feel included. Planning for good quality and appropriate housing plays an important role in maintaining an inclusive and balanced society, as well as helping to achieve the Council's other objectives such as those relating to economic development. Good design and layout planning of affordable housing within residential and mixed-use developments creates vibrant, interesting and engaging communities in which to live and work.
7. Aylesbury Vale's Local Plan sets out the Council's policies for delivering affordable housing through the planning process. These policies have now been superseded by Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing, the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy and the emerging South East Plan. One of the main purposes of this SPD is to advise applicants how the Council will apply affordable housing policies in advance of the emerging Local Development Framework.
8. The SPD also has a number of wider objectives:
 - The document will assist with the delivery of good quality affordable housing of the right type, tenure and size in the district;
 - It clarifies the roles of landowners, house builders and developers, registered social landlords (RSLs) and such bodies as parish councils have in the provision of affordable housing;
 - It will give more certainty to negotiations surrounding affordable housing provision, ensuring that development proposals are handled consistently and effectively, reducing the time taken to determine planning applications;
 - It explains the Council's requirements for affordable housing so that they can be taken into account in land and property purchase negotiations, ensuring that their impact on valuations and development appraisals can be accurately assessed;
 - It clarifies the size thresholds where sites will be expected to provide affordable housing;
 - It ensures that affordable housing is effectively integrated within housing developments so that its location and design does not distinguish between tenures, helping to create mixed and balanced communities;
 - It describes when it may be appropriate to locate affordable housing on alternative sites or provide payments in lieu;
 - It helps to overcome obstacles that might be met when providing affordable housing in rural areas; and
 - It provides a means of measuring the outcomes of the Council's policies.
9. The policies contained within this SPD will inform the Council in its consideration of planning applications. Proposals that do not comply with its requirements may be challenged, subject to delays or potentially refused planning permission.

Consultation and adoption

10. In compliance with PPS 12, this draft of the SPD has undergone wide consultation. It has been circulated to a wide range of stakeholders including

Registered Social Landlords, developers, landowners and their agents, Parish Councils, the Housing Corporation and individuals.

11. The adoption process will comply with the requirements of the Statement of Community Involvement (adopted October 2006) and will follow the procedure set out in The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004.

The planning context for affordable housing in Aylesbury

National planning context

12. The Government's national planning guidance is contained in **Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3)** – Housing, published in November 2006. This replaces PPG3 and Circular 6/98 and describes the key housing objective as ensuring that everyone has the opportunity of living in a decent home, which they can afford, in a community where they want to live.
13. PPS3 states that the planning system should be used in a positive way to deliver an identified level of growth, having taken into account need and demand. It aims to ensure that high quality homes are provided, that are well designed, make the best use of land, are energy efficient, employ sustainable methods of construction and contribute to the wider goal of a more sustainable pattern of development.
14. PPS3 stresses the importance of ensuring that public sector investment in housing results in a mixture of properties, both in terms of size and tenure that contribute to a balanced housing market. It seeks to improve choice and requires a sufficient quantity of housing to be provided, taking into account need and demand. A five-year supply of land should be available, managed so that it makes efficient and effective use of land, including re-use of previously-developed land where appropriate.

Regional planning context

15. Local authorities must have regard to Regional Plans when developing their Local Development Frameworks.
16. **The Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy**, adopted in March 2005, provides a 20 year strategic framework for the sub-region. It identifies Aylesbury Vale District as forming part of the sub-region. In the period 2001-21 the plan requires, under Policy MKAV2, Aylesbury Urban Area to accommodate a total of 15,000 new dwellings and 3,300 new dwellings in the rest of the District. In addition, Policy MKAV2 requires that for Aylesbury, 40% of the dwelling requirement should be affordable.
17. **The draft South East Plan** provides a 20-year strategic framework for the region. It sets out core objectives as balancing economic and housing growth with rising standards of environmental management and reduced levels of social exclusion and natural resource consumption.
18. The draft South East Plan carries forward the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy for a further five years. Between 2006 and 2026, the Plan proposes major expansion throughout the district, with 21,200 new homes being

provided - 16,800 of which will be in the planned urban area of Aylesbury and another 4,400 new homes in the rest of the district.

19. With particular regard to affordable housing, the draft Plan sets out a number of broad aims for housing in the south east. The evidence base underpinning the Plan suggests that 25% of new housing should be social rented, with a further 10% provided in the form of other forms of affordable housing.
20. Sub-regional variations to these figures are identified in the sub-regional strategies where there is suitable evidence and Policy MKAV2 states that 40% of all new housing in the planned urban area of Aylesbury should be affordable. Although not specifically mentioned in Policy MKAV2, 40% also applies to new housing schemes throughout the rest of the district outside Aylesbury. The draft Plan says the precise level and the split between social rented and other forms of tenure will need to be determined locally, having regard to local housing assessments.
21. The draft Plan also says that:
 - Local Development Documents should seek provision of affordable housing on all sites where 'it can be justified by local housing assessments and the economics of provision';
 - Where on-site provision of affordable housing is not feasible, commuted payments will be required;
 - Non-residential development which generates needs for additional housing will also make an appropriate contribution to affordable housing provision;
 - At least 60% of new housing to be provided on previously developed (brownfield) land;
 - Average housing densities should be increased to 40 dwellings per hectare, with a strong emphasis on high design standards;
 - Existing housing stock should be used more efficiently, through appropriate conversions and refurbishment; and
 - More small-scale affordable housing sites should be created in rural areas.
22. The Government will publish its proposed modifications to the South East Plan, following the consideration of a report from an independent panel who undertook the Examination in Public into its contents, probably at the end of 2007 or early in 2008. The Panel Report recommends reducing the 40% affordable housing requirement to 35%. If the proposed modifications reflect this recommendation, the 40% requirement in this SPD will accordingly be reduced to 35% with immediate effect.

Local planning policy

23. The Aylesbury Vale District Local Plan (AVDLP) was adopted in 2004 and covers the period to 2011. There are two key policies in the AVDLP that deal with affordable housing, namely:
 - Policy GP2, which sets the site size threshold and the percentage of affordable housing that will be negotiated; and
 - Policy GP3, which deals with Low Cost Market Housing.
24. Given the primacy of national and regional affordable planning guidance contained in PPS3, MKSM SRS and also the draft SEP, these local plan policies

are now superseded. The site size and percentage requirements which will be applied in Aylesbury Vale are set out in this SPD, and based on national policies in PPS3 together with the regional policies will be applied in Aylesbury Vale. In addition, low cost market housing is now not included within the definition of affordable housing in accordance with PPS3.

25. The Council will continue to assess the circumstances of each proposed development individually and will take into account the following points when considering proposals:
 - the need locally for affordable dwellings (including evidence from the Council's Housing Needs Survey);
 - the economics of the development (including the cost of any contributions towards the achievement of any other planning objectives also being sought from the development of the site); and
 - Government guidance and sustainability considerations.
26. The current Aylesbury Vale District Local Plan is being replaced by the Local Development Framework which will plan for the period up to 2026.

Delivering affordable housing in Aylesbury Vale

Defining affordable housing

27. AVDC has considered the definition of affordable housing contained in PPS3 (supplemented in CLG's *Delivering Affordable Housing* publication) and believes it to be the most appropriate definition for Aylesbury Vale. These definitions replace guidance given in the Council's SPG as well as Planning Policy Guidance Note 3: Housing and Circular 6/98 (Planning and Affordable Housing).
28. Affordable housing is therefore defined as including:

“social rented and intermediate housing, provided to specified eligible households whose needs are not met by the market”.
29. More specifically,
 - **SOCIAL RENTED HOUSING** is rented housing owned and managed by local authorities and registered social landlords, for which guideline target rents are determined through the national rent regime. It may also include rented housing owned or managed by other persons and provided under equivalent rental arrangements to the above, as agreed with the local authority or with the Housing Corporation as a condition of grant.
 - **INTERMEDIATE AFFORDABLE HOUSING** is housing at prices and rents above those of social rent, but below market price or rents, and which meet the criteria set out above. They can include the following:
 - **Intermediate rented** homes are provided at rent levels above those of social rented but below private rented;
 - **Discounted sale** homes have a simple discount for the purchaser on its market price, so the purchaser buys the whole home at a reduced rate;

- **Shared equity** is where more than one party has an interest in the value of the home e.g. an equity loan arrangement or a shared ownership lease. There may be a charge on the loan, and restrictions on price, access and resale; and
 - **Shared ownership** is a form of shared equity under which the purchaser buys an initial share in a home from a housing provider, who retains the remainder and may charge a rent. The purchaser may buy additional shares ('staircasing'), and this payment should be 'recycled' for more affordable housing. In most cases, a purchaser may buy the final share ('staircase out') and own the whole home, though this may be restricted in some rural areas.
30. For the avoidance of doubt, affordable housing in Aylesbury does not include **low cost market housing**, as this is excluded from the definition in PPS3. However, in recognition that PPS3 states that Local Planning Authorities should 'take account of the need to deliver low cost market housing as part of the overall housing mix', it has had to take a view on whether this form of housing has a role to play in providing a wider housing mix.
31. In paragraph 4.7 of Chapter 4 of the *Aylesbury Vale District Local Plan* the Council defines low cost market housing as comprising '1- or 2- bedroom dwellings of a type approved by the Council as being appropriate to help satisfy the home-ownership aspirations of people, including key workers, whose incomes are only just adequate to access the property market'.
32. The Council's view, therefore, is that low cost market housing does not have a role to play in widening the mix of housing throughout the district. It can, however, potentially support sustainable development by restricting (through a section 106 agreement) its sale as 'buy-to-let' housing. Should developers wish to submit proposals for alternative types of low cost housing it will be considered, on the understanding it does not qualify as affordable housing.
33. Affordable housing provided **without public grant** may also be provided. In order to comply with the Council's definition of affordable housing, non-grant funded housing must fall within the definition of social rented or intermediate affordable housing set out above, and will need to be secured through a section 106 agreement.

Affordable housing need in Aylesbury Vale

34. In 2003, the Council commissioned John Herington Associates to undertake a Housing Needs Study to define the demand for housing in Aylesbury Vale and the ability of those in need to access the housing market. This was updated in 2007. The main conclusion of these studies is that the unmet housing need in the District continues to grow.
35. The main findings of the 2007 update to the HNS study were:
- House prices rose between 2003 and 2006 by 9.1% annually;
 - Incomes increased by 3.4% annually;
 - There is a backlog of 6,846 households in housing need who cannot afford market housing;

- After considering the supply of new affordable homes, there are 5,422 households in housing need who cannot afford market housing;
- Over the next 10 years, Aylesbury Vale faces a shortfall in the supply of new affordable homes of between 1,077 and 1,316 homes per year, depending on whether favourable or unfavourable assumptions are used;
- Up to 79.3% of the backlog of households in need require social rented housing;
- 14.1% of the backlog of households in need could potentially afford shared ownership housing; and
- A further 6.6% of the backlog of households in need could potentially afford sub-market rented housing, where rents were no more than 75% of the market rent.

Housing for particular groups

People with special needs, requiring supported housing

36. The Housing Needs Study revealed a considerable level of need for people requiring some form of supported housing. An estimated 520 households from the backlog of those in housing needs contained someone who required some form of supported housing, of which 87 (about 17%) were seeking sheltered accommodation.
37. In addition, of the households that were seeking to move to another property, over 21% (1,071 households) contained someone with special housing needs, with the following types of impairment:

Visual impairment	8.2% of the total
Hearing impairment	7.0%
Wheelchair user	9.0%
Walking difficulty (not wheelchair user)	35.4%
Learning difficulty	2.6%
Mental ill health	11.6%
Other impairments	26.1%

38. Not all will require affordable housing, but a significant proportion – 41.2% of existing households – were currently living in Council or housing association rented property (Table 2.48 Tenure Preferences of Household Movers with Special Needs).
39. The Council has a duty to ensure that these needs are met. Where the circumstances of individual sites provide opportunities to address such needs (such as level access and proximity to appropriate facilities), it will seek to negotiate a proportion of new affordable homes that address these needs.
40. Buckinghamshire CC Housing and Support Partnership (HSP) have carried out an initial estimate of the need for housing adults requiring supported housing across the County. Its preliminary report *Identifying the Housing Needs of Social Care Groups in Buckinghamshire* said that as a result of recent changes to housing investment, individual districts will no longer see a proportionate slice of the development investment in their area. A consequence of this is that it is likely that housing needs will need to be met over an area beyond individual local authority boundaries.

41. As the fastest growing district in Buckinghamshire, Aylesbury Vale was projected to have the highest output of new affordable homes, amounting to about 60% of the total (page 16). The report noted that many people in need of supported housing will need access to affordable rented accommodation, but that there were many competing demands for this housing resource.
42. With regard to housing for **older people**, the key points in the report said:
- People aged over 65 made up 14.5% (69,675 people) of the Buckinghamshire population in 2001;
 - The numbers in this age group are expected to grow by 36% in the 20 year period from 2005 to 2025; and
 - The older elderly group, those over 80, is expected to double within this period.
43. Again, the growth in numbers of people over 65 was the highest in Aylesbury Vale (table, page 20), but the number of units of sheltered and extra care accommodation to rent per 1000 people was amongst the lowest (table, page 22). The consequence of this is that more social rented sheltered and extra care accommodation will have to be provided in the district.
44. With regards to **extra care housing**, Buckinghamshire CC's *Extra Care Strategic Plan* (November 2006) considered that it would be appropriate to plan for about 560 extra care dwellings over the next 20-25 years. Around 171 of these would need to be provided in Aylesbury Vale. A little over half of these would be for sale (including some low cost home ownership) and just under half for social rent.
45. The Identifying the Housing Needs of Social Care Groups in Buckinghamshire report also proposed that:
- 8 units per year from 2006-2011, and 10 units from 2011-2016 would be needed in Aylesbury Vale for **people with physical and sensory disabilities**; and
 - The SP-funded supply of accommodation for **people with mental health needs** amounted to 54 units.
46. The Council will need to ensure that the housing needs of other groups identified in the report are adequately provided for in new housing provision:
- people with drug and alcohol misuse needs;
 - people living with HIV/aids;
 - people at risk and leaving care;
 - lone teenage parents;
 - women at risk of domestic violence;
 - single homeless with support needs; and
 - gypsies and travellers.

BME communities

47. The Council commissioned research in 2005 into the housing needs of local Asian communities. This highlighted that in Aylesbury Vale, Asians tend not to rent their homes and have a strong preference for home ownership. Apart from improving methods of communication to enable them to purchase their own

homes, there were no particular recommendations for the provision of affordable housing.

48. The Housing Forum for the South East is considering conducting further research into the housing requirements of households from the wider BME community. Until this is available, the Council will take account of an overall requirement across the district to ensure that on appropriate sites (where larger family market housing is proposed) at least 3.2% of new affordable housing provides homes of at least 4 bedrooms in size (HNS 2003 Table 6.13).

Key workers

49. Housing for Key Workers is aimed at households who work in particular public sector occupations that have local recruitment or retention difficulties, but who cannot afford a home they need.
50. The Housing Needs Study found that 11% of households in need contained key workers. Table 6.1 of the Study provided the following numbers in need:

Fire-fighter	24
Teacher	132
NHS Care Assistant	24
Other NHS healthcare worker	66
Total	246

51. Other public sector workers in Aylesbury include nurses and other specific health care workers, social workers, prison officers, probation officers, police officers, planners employed by local authorities, occupational therapists, educational psychologists and speech therapists. However, the scope of people falling within the definition of 'key worker' is likely to change over time.
52. It is expected that the needs of public sector key workers will be met as part of a balanced mix of affordable housing. The Council will also explore how other forms of affordable housing could address recruitment problems in other occupations, for example, nurse's accommodation at Stoke Mandeville Hospital.

Affordable housing site thresholds

53. Planning applications will need to determine the numbers of dwellings proposed on a site. In line with national guidance, affordable housing will be sought on developments of 15 or more dwellings, or residential sites of 0.5ha or more, irrespective of the number of dwellings.
54. Subdividing a site or property so that the thresholds are not exceeded will be resisted and will not avoid the obligation to provide affordable housing; thresholds will be applied across the whole development area. If the Council believes there is a reasonable expectation of adjoining land coming forward for housing development, it will take account of the whole site area when calculating what is required. Affordable housing will also be sought where the Council feels that a development site has been specifically designed or its density reduced such that the number of dwellings falls below the threshold.

Proportion of affordable housing to be provided

55. The Council requires that a minimum of 40% affordable housing will be negotiated on sites above the threshold.

Size and type of housing required

56. The size and type of affordable housing required will take account of:
- The Council's Housing Register;
 - Housing Needs Studies, at regional, local and village levels;
 - The supply chain of affordable housing, as provided by housing providers for the Housing Corporation;
 - The capacity and location of sites emerging from the 5 year housing land supply, informed by the 15 year housing trajectory; and
 - Emerging needs identified through Joint Planning for Supported Housing.
57. The Council expects that a range of dwelling sizes and types will be provided, including housing for families. Affordable housing provision in rural areas will need to be tailored according to the results of individual village housing needs surveys
58. On very large allocated housing sites (say those in excess of 200 dwellings), the Council's development briefing documents will provide more detailed information about the size and type of all types of housing required.

Tenure split

59. The 2007 update to the Housing Needs Study provides guidance of the type and tenure of affordable housing required in Aylesbury Vale. It shows that a large proportion of people in housing need cannot afford shared ownership, although there are some people who aspire to home ownership and can afford shared ownership provided that it is affordable.
60. The Council's baseline mix is for:
- 75% of the total affordable housing to be affordable rented accommodation; and
 - 25% intermediate affordable housing (which will include shared ownership and new build Homebuy).
61. Put another way, of the 40% requirement across an entire site, 30% of the total should be affordable rented accommodation and 10% intermediate tenures, including shared ownership (or new build Homebuy). Exceptionally the Council may consider a variation of this mix, but this must be justified in terms of housing need and will be assessed on a site by site basis.

Affordability

62. When it looks at the affordability of shared ownership (or new build Homebuy), the Council will examine the total housing cost, including mortgage payments and rent on the unsold equity at Housing Corporation guideline levels. Any service charges should be kept at a reasonable level so as to be affordable by people on low incomes.

63. For *intermediate rented housing*, total rent and service charge levels should be set at no more than 75% of the equivalent open market rent in the locality of the development.
64. In keeping with the recommendation in the Housing Needs Study, the Council expects to see *discounted sale housing* being discounted by at least 30% on the open market value. The value of such a discount should be retained for subsequent purchasers, so that it does not purely benefit the first buyer.

General design of affordable housing

65. Affordable housing provided with public subsidy must be designed to meet the Housing Corporation's Design and Quality Standards, which were published as part of its overarching Design and Quality Strategy in 2007. Designs that meet the Corporation's enhanced standards are encouraged, as this will improve the prospects for grant.
66. Whilst not wishing to prejudice the consideration of design as part of the normal planning process, the Council expects that affordable housing should not be distinguishable from market housing in terms of overall design details, build quality and materials. On larger residential developments, affordable housing should be provided in clusters of no more than 15 dwellings, but this may be marginally increased where blocks of flats are to be provided. For smaller schemes of up to say 20 homes, the maximum size of such clusters would normally be groups of 4 dwellings.
67. Affordable Housing should also achieve Secured By Design accreditation and be properly integrated into the overall layout of the site and its surrounding area. The Council considers that it is essential to create balanced, mixed communities, and therefore it will not normally accept affordable housing which, by its design or layout, separates it from the general market housing.

Phasing

68. Affordable housing should be built at the same time as the market housing and this will be controlled through the section 106 agreement. The Council will agree the proportion of market housing that can be occupied before the affordable housing is completed. Agreements for developments that are built in phases will incorporate provisions for phased completion of affordable housing.
69. Development on a site will not commence until a section 106 agreement has been entered into, securing the affordable housing.

Housing grant and scheme viability

70. Although the obligation to provide affordable housing does not take account of the availability of public subsidy, the Council recognises that subsidy can deliver more affordable rented homes than if such subsidy is not available.
71. The Council holds regular discussions with the Housing Corporation and its preferred RSL development partners, and expects housing providers to work within this framework, so that any grant that may be available can be identified and used to maximum advantage.

72. In order to assess the viability of any particular proposal, the Council will publish with this SPD a schedule setting out default assumptions for use with the Housing Corporation's Appraisal Tool (as developed by GVA Grimley and the Bespoke Property Group). Developers are encouraged to explain the viability of their proposals, and negotiations may be assisted by the use of this Tool.
73. Negotiations on individual sites will be guided by an informed assessment of the availability of both public and private subsidy, including that which RSLs and other providers are able to produce. As well as the Council's schedule of default assumptions referred to above, guidance on typical rent levels, building costs per square metre, rents on the unsold equity of shared ownership housing and land disposal arrangements will also be produced to assist with such negotiations.
74. Developers will need to clearly demonstrate what factors need to be taken into account on a particular proposal. Negotiations may take into account any abnormal costs associated with the development, include site clearance, decontamination, particular design measures, landscaping, noise and other environmental attenuation, as well as appropriate infrastructure provision which may include highway and public transport contributions.
75. Developers must show that any abnormal costs are identified at an early stage, so that their impact on the viability of the scheme may be assessed. The Council expects that such costs would be reflected in the price paid for the land, and paying too much for a site does not remove the obligation to provide affordable housing.

On-site and off-site provision

76. Planning Policy Statement 3 says that the presumption is that affordable housing will be provided on the application site so that it contributes towards creating a mix of housing (para 30). The Council considers that integrating different housing types and tenures will help to develop balanced and sustainable communities, where people want to live.
77. Where housing need can be effectively met on-site (even if this involves following a different approach to the design), there is little justification for an off-site solution to be pursued. However, the Council accepts that there may be exceptional circumstances where even though an element of affordable housing is appropriate in principle, provision on the site itself would not be the best solution.
78. When considering if circumstances are exceptional, the Council will take account of the following factors:
 - the presence of physical or other constraints or circumstances which would mean that on-site provision would not be practicable or desirable;
 - where it compromises other planning objectives;
 - instances where an off-site solution may be of a higher quality to that which could be provided on-site (for example, through the provision of an improved dwelling mix);
 - the number, type and tenure of other affordable housing in the area;
 - the type and design of the development proposed;
 - the implications of the proposed design on management arrangements for different types of housing;

- where affordable housing may not be required on site in the form proposed; and
 - sites where the proximity of local services and facilities and access to public transport is poor (except in rural areas, where a balanced judgement between the need for affordable housing and access to local facilities will be made).
79. In considering such circumstances, the Council will not have regard to the marketability of private housing as a factor that should result in affordable housing being provided off-site.
80. Where the Council agrees that affordable housing is able to be provided off-site, it will expect the overall level of affordable housing to be of broadly equivalent value, such that it does not provide an incentive to the developer of the main site to provide the affordable housing on a second site. The overall numbers to be provided will be calculated on a case by case basis.
81. Developers will be expected to provide the following information when making a case for off-site provision:
- Details of the proposed development in question, including the anticipated development timetable;
 - A detailed explanation of why the alternative of off-site provision is considered more appropriate (having regard to the advice elsewhere in this SPD) in this particular case; and
 - Details of the alternative proposed. Ideally, this should be in the same town or parish, and within the ownership or control of the developer. It should benefit from either an extant planning permission or be acceptable for development proposed. Proposals for such arrangements should also enable development to be secured within a similar timescale as the host site, such that the required affordable housing is provided at broadly the same time as if it were built within the host development.

Payments in-lieu of providing affordable housing

82. Where exceptionally the Council agrees that a financial contribution may be made in lieu of on-site provision, it will require the developer to provide justification that the payment would enable affordable housing to broadly the equivalent value elsewhere. This would involve a valuation of the affordable housing element of the proposed development land to be undertaken by a suitably qualified independent valuer, approved by the Council but paid for by the developer.
83. The Council's will utilise such monies through its Affordable Housing Development Partners, who will:
- Identify suitable alternative land or property, ideally within the locality, with planning permission or with the capacity to receive planning permission;
 - Prepare and submit schemes for approval, using the budget provided by any cash contributions singly or collectively; and
 - Agree a timetable for the purchase of alternative sites or properties
 - Utilise cash contributions on sites with planning consent in order to increase the amount of affordable rented homes or numbers of affordable housing overall.

84. The justification and practical benefits of such an approach will need to be clearly made, and such instances are to be at the discretion of the Council and are expected to be very exceptional.

Innovation and Sustainability

Design and Quality standards for Affordable Housing

85. The Council will expect high standards of design, layout and landscaping for all developments, which respect the character of the area and reflect local distinctiveness.
86. To ensure the creation of mixed and integrated communities the affordable housing should not be visually distinguishable from the market housing on the site in terms of build quality, materials, details, levels of amenity space and privacy.
87. The affordable housing should be designed such that it is indistinguishable from and fully integrated with the market housing. It should be distributed evenly across the site or in the case of flats, in small clusters distributed evenly throughout the development. Developers should consider this at an early stage of the detailed design and layout of the site.
88. All social housing and intermediate housing requiring Housing Corporation Social Housing Grant must be built to meet the relevant Housing Corporation standards. For schemes funded from the 2006-08 National Affordable Housing Programme (NAHP) these comprise the "essential items" set out in the Housing Corporation's Scheme Development Standards (April 2003), supplemented by the achievement of:
- EcoHomes "Very Good" or better; and
 - Housing Quality Indicator unit minima scores for Size of 41, Layout of 32, Noise, services, light of 22, Accessibility of 31 and Energy of 71.
89. For schemes funded in the forthcoming 2008-11 NAHP, these must be built to meet or exceed the Housing Corporation's new Design and Quality Standards (April 2007). The performance measures which indicate compliance are:
- For each home, Housing Quality Indicator unit minima scores for Size of 41, Layout of 32, Noise, services, light of 22. In meeting the HQI unit layout minimum score, it is expected that internal and external storage provision at least meets the requirements for storage specified in the HQI guidance for the occupancy and does not fall short in any aspect;
 - The achievement of the Code for Sustainable Homes level 3 (three star) as a minimum; and
 - An assessment against the 20 "Building for Life" criteria which demonstrates a minimum achievement of:
 - 10 out of 20 positive responses (rural and street fronted infill)
 - 12 out of 20 positive responses (all other developments)
90. Developers and RSLs should be aware of the relevant Housing Corporation standards that apply to the development. The latest standards can be downloaded from the Corporation's website and the Housing Corporation's regional offices can provide further clarification.

Lifetime Homes

91. Building new homes to Lifetime Homes Standards will provide accommodation that helps to reduce the need for larger homes to be used for people who need more space (most likely due to physical disabilities), but who do not specifically need a larger home.
92. The provision of Lifetime Homes is now incorporated into the Code for Sustainable Homes. The Council supports the construction of homes that are accessible to everybody, where the internal layout can be easily adapted to fit the needs of future occupants. It will aim to ensure that at least 10% of all new affordable homes achieve as many of the 4 credits available under the Code, which deal with internal and external design and specification of the dwelling.

Affordable housing in rural areas

93. The Council aims to ensure that rural areas continue to develop as sustainable, mixed and inclusive communities. It will support ways of addressing the needs of such communities by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection. In addition, Policy GP4 of the adopted Local Plan allows for rural exception schemes to provide affordable houses in rural areas with a population below 3,000 people. This SPD does not affect this policy.
94. The rural exceptions policy allows for sites to be released exceptionally to meet a clearly identified local need. It applies only to developments entirely of affordable dwellings, for occupation by households with a strong demonstrable local connection.
95. The development of such sites must be supported by evidence of local housing needs. Rural needs surveys will be used to supplement other housing need information.
96. Where it can be shown to be viable and practical, the Council will discuss with its partner RSLs about identifying sites for affordable housing in settlements with a population below 3,000 people, in consultation with the Rural Housing Enabler and Parish Councils. These sites should only be used for affordable housing in perpetuity. This will be achieved by ensuring that staircasing on shared ownership properties is restricted, such that the property cannot be sold on the open market except where the provisions of mortgagees in possession apply.

Housing management considerations

Controlling occupancy and nomination rights

97. The Council will ensure that adequate mechanisms are in place to secure the affordable housing and control its future occupation, so that it is occupied initially by eligible households and is retained for future eligible households. The exceptions to this are the statutory provisions covering the Right to Acquire and standard clauses allowing staircasing to full ownership where a shared ownership property has been provided with public grant.

98. Aylesbury's preferred approach for controlling occupancy is to involve an RSL from its list of preferred development partners. This is because RSLs are regulated by the Housing Corporation and inspected by the Audit Commission. Nomination agreements will also be put in place to ensure that people whose circumstances require subsidised housing get access to it. Further details can be provided by the Council's Housing Needs Department.
99. Where an RSL is not used to manage the affordable housing, alternative management arrangements will require prior approval. In particular, details of how the affordable housing is occupied by groups of households that meet the Council's criteria for eligible households will need to be agreed.
100. The Council will be operating a Choice Based Lettings Scheme with the three other authorities in Buckinghamshire. Properties will be advertised and offered to qualifying households in accordance with the housing priorities of the scheme.

Involvement of Registered Social Landlords

101. AVDC has an Aylesbury Vale Affordable Housing Partnering Agreement which has been agreed and signed by all the preferred partner RSLs approved by the Council. This agreement defines the management and development standards the Council expects. It also deals with the roles of the parties, the allocation of sites, the criteria for supporting bids for grant, equality and diversity measures and reviewing performance. All RSLs developing in Aylesbury should comply with these standards.
102. As part of its work with RSLs, the Council is also aware that the Housing Corporation (through its *Rationalisation of housing association stock - A guide and toolkit*) aims to promote effective community engagement and neighbourhood management by RSLs and that this could lead to some rationalisation of existing housing association stock in Aylesbury Vale. Developers are therefore strongly advised to liaise with the Council's Housing Enabling Team about which RSLs may be the best partner for a particular development.
103. For unregistered bodies that receive grant from the Housing Corporation, such matters are managed under a Partnership contract agreement, which is administered by the Corporation. The Council will liaise with the Corporation about how such arrangements will operate for any schemes that are developed under this route, to ensure that high quality housing management is put in place.

Glossary of Terms

Affordable Housing - social rented and intermediate housing, provided to specified eligible households whose needs are not met by the market.

Affordable Housing Provider - means a Registered Social Landlord (see below) or an unregistered body eligible to receive housing grant, which is capable of owning or managing affordable housing, or which is otherwise approved by the Council.

Cash in lieu (or commuted sum payment) - a financial contribution made by the developer to the Council and secured by a legal agreement, and used for providing affordable housing on another site.

Discount Sale Housing - housing that is sold at a discount from the market price, where the discount is retained for subsequent purchasers.

EcoHomes Standard - a rating used to measure the environmental impact of building and occupying new and renovated homes, devised by the Building Research Establishment.

HomeBuy Agents - administer the HomeBuy scheme. They work closely with the Council's housing department and housing associations developing new homes in the area, register interest from applicants, assess their eligibility and provide details of schemes in the area.

Housing Corporation - the national Government agency that funds new affordable housing and regulates Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) in England. Oversees the National Affordable Housing Programme (NAHP) that provides grant funding for affordable housing.

Housing Register - the register held by Aylesbury Vale District Council listing households accepted as being in need of affordable housing.

Intermediate Rented Accommodation - rented accommodation that is provided at below market rents. Rents are more expensive than social rented accommodation, but are at least 25% below open market rents.

Local Development Framework – a group of documents that provide a framework for development across a local authority; the statutory development plan that will replace the Aylesbury Vale District Local Plan.

Lifetime Homes - A standard of housing design developed by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation that provides a series of design features to permit a dwelling to be adapted to a household's changing circumstances over their lifetime.

Mortgagee in Possession Clause - a means of allowing lenders of private finance of affordable housing to dispose of a property on the open market as a last resort, if the RSL/affordable housing provider experiences financial difficulties and is in danger of defaulting on a loan.

National Affordable Housing Programme (NAHP) - The Housing Corporation's two-year funding system that enables RSLs and unregistered bodies to bid for grant to finance affordable housing.

New Build HomeBuy - homes sold as leasehold properties on shared ownership terms where a purchaser buys between 25% and 75% of the full value. A rent is payable on the share that is not owned. Additional shares can be purchased (known as 'staircasing') until outright ownership. When the property is re-sold, the share owned has to be sold to another household nominated by the social landlord, but if 100% is owned, it can be sold on the open market, unless the landlord wants to buy the property back to offer to other households who want to purchase. Eligibility for new build HomeBuy, like other forms of publicly subsidised housing, is subject to selection criteria (usually key workers, existing social housing tenants and those in priority housing need).

Open Market HomeBuy - an equity loan product that enables the purchaser to obtain a 'top up' equity loan usually for 25% of the full market value. The equity loan is provided by the Government (12.5%) through their preferred HomeBuy Agent and from one of a number of nominated residential lenders (12.5%).

Registered Social Landlord (RSL) / Housing Association - not-for-profit organisations that are registered under the Housing Act 1996 and regulated by the Housing Corporation. Set up to provide affordable housing for people in housing need.

Right to Acquire - the equivalent of 'Right to Buy' for RSLs and their tenants, under the provisions of the Housing Act 1996. Right to Acquire enables a tenant to purchase the home they occupy from the RSL under certain circumstances and conditions, usually those that have received Social Housing Grant funding from the Housing Corporation or Local Authority from 1 April 1997.

Section 106 Agreement - a contractually binding agreement under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, between a local authority and a named third party or parties, setting out the obligations of each in relation to a planning application. Planning permission is not granted until the Section 106 Agreement has been signed.

Social Rented Accommodation - rented housing owned and managed by local authorities, registered social landlords or affordable housing providers, for which guideline target rents are charged according to the national rent regime. These rents are usually significantly below market levels so that they are affordable to people on low incomes or those unable to afford market housing.

Shared Ownership - see New Build HomeBuy.

Social Housing Grant (SHG) - subsidy from the Housing Corporation to RSLs and unregistered bodies, to enable the provision of affordable housing.

Supported Housing - housing for those with special needs, such as young single people, students, elderly people (especially the frail elderly), disabled people (including people with learning difficulties or mental health problems), homeless people, rough sleepers, those recovering from addictive illnesses and women at risk, including those with children.

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) - a document that supplements and elaborates on policies and proposals in development plan documents.

Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document

This document provides guidance to housing developers about the interpretation and application of the Council's affordable housing policies. For a free translation please call (01296) 425334

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