Inspector's Question 112

I note that the response to Q83 asserts that this policy is not trying to impose the nationally described optional internal space standards and that there is no justification for doing so. Nevertheless the policy itself is clearly directed towards requiring the provision of sufficient internal space for normal residential activities. National Planning Practice Guidance relating to the nationally described optional internal space standards advises that the government set out its policy on the application of these standards in plan making in a Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) of 25 March 2015. This WMS advises that from the date the Deregulation Bill 2015 is given Royal Assent, local planning authorities should not set in their Local Plans or supplementary planning documents any additional local technical standards or requirements relating to the internal layout of new dwellings. This policy is clearly contrary to the advice given in that Written Ministerial Statement which is a statement of government policy. One of the criteria for soundness set out in paragraph 182 of the NPPF is whether a plan is consistent with government policy. I invite the Council to consider whether the inclusion of policy H7 in the plan would render the plan unsound as inconsistent with government policy. Policy H7 is included for discussion in Hearing Session 2 (matter 7).

AVDC Response

Although policy H7 'Dwelling sizes' in VALP does not require new housing developments to match the optional technical standard due to lack of supporting evidence, it does require new dwellings "to provide sufficient internal space for normal residential activities". This requirement conflicts with the wording of the Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) of 25 March 2015 where such requirements are prohibited. It is therefore accepted that the policy does not accord with government policy as set out in the tests of soundness and will need to be deleted from the VALP through a modification together with its supporting text.