

## **BRECKLAND COUNCIL**

### **REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR PLANNING, HEALTH & HOUSING to the CABINET: 8 DECEMBER 2009**

**(Author: Darryl Smith, Principal Housing Officer)**

#### **AFFORDABLE HOUSING POLICY**

##### **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To invite Cabinet to consider the affordable housing policy as the delivery mechanism for the affordable housing criteria within the Local Development Framework and recommend it to Council for approval.

##### **2. Recommendations**

- It is recommended :
- 2.1 To support the Affordable Housing Policy for adoption.

**Note:** In preparing this report, due regard has been had to equality of opportunity, human rights, prevention of crime and disorder, environmental and risk management considerations as appropriate. Relevant officers have been consulted in relation to any legal, financial or human resources implications and comments received are reflected in the report.

##### **3. Information, Issues and Options**

###### **3.1 Background**

- 3.1.1 The affordable housing policy has been drafted to provide the tools to implement the planning policies within the Core Strategy of the Local Development Framework. The previous affordable housing policy was adopted by members in 2003 and has subsequently been superseded by changes to planning guidance such as Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3) or our own policies such as the Local Development Framework.

Affordable housing delivery is a key priority for the Council in delivering against a range of National, Regional targets in addition to local targets set within the Local Area Agreement. The policy also works to tackle the need identified in the Housing Needs Survey 2007 for 964 units of affordable housing each year over five years.

- 3.1.2 The review and development of the new policy has been undertaken with a task and finish group consisting of members and officers. During the process particular experts were scrutinised on their respective knowledge and experience to assist with the shaping of the policy.

###### **3.2 Issues**

- 3.2.1 The policy sets out how we will apply the relevant policies DC4 and DC5 of the Local Development Framework in securing a supply of affordable housing whether that is on a site just for affordable housing or as part of a larger development with a developer. The policies within the Local Development Framework have been widely consulted and examined in public and accepted by the Planning Inspector as appropriate for the District.

- 3.2.2 During the inclusive process with members, there were some key areas members wished to be considered as guiding principles in the policy. These principles are :-

- Green issues relating to development and ensuring that the policy will have a synergy with the Green agenda being developed within Breckland Council
- Design of affordable housing achieving a higher quality than some of the

current proposals members have been presented with

- Consideration given to alternative providers of affordable housing rather than just through Housing Associations
- Continue with our current approach to not support subsidy on dwellings secured through planning gain

The policy has been drafted to take account of these issues as well as ensuring that those who require guidance on the delivery of affordable housing have a clear steer of the Councils expectations.

3.2.3 There are some areas of the document that are driven by national guidance such as the definition of affordable housing which we could not change and becomes embedded in the Local Development Framework as the overarching document to this policy. This means that forms of housing such as low cost market housing can still be built in the district but just can not form part of the affordable housing contribution.

3.2.4 It has been important to draft the document as a tool to apply policy which enables the flexibility that developers and the current market conditions require. Thus setting out when and how commuted sums can be considered, allowing each site to reflect local need in mix and tenure as well as an emphasis on design. Under the current market conditions it is important that we are able to offer options and solutions to developers and landowners to ensure a supply of housing, both private sector and affordable.

### 3.3 Options

3.3.1 To recommend the policy for adoption

3.3.2 To propose changes to the policy and subsequently recommend the policy for adoption.

3.3.3 Not agree to recommend the policy for adoption.

### 3.4 Reasons for Recommendation(s)

3.4.1 The policy has been drafted to take account of member's priorities whilst balancing the legislative framework which is in place to deliver affordable housing. The Task and Finish group were able challenge officers and ensure that their thoughts delivered the expectations they have for their communities.

3.4.2 The policy has been drafted to reflect the Local Development Framework which has been widely consulted, scrutinised and found to be sound by the Planning Inspector.

## 4. **Risk and Financial Implications**

### 4.1 Risk

4.1.1 Failure to adopt the policy will constitute a medium level risk to the Council, The LDF has a framework which we can operate within but the policy is required to provide more detail for developers. Without the policy there could be a level of inconsistency in advice and approach to securing the affordable housing.

### 4.2 Financial

4.2.1 There are no direct financial implications in the adoption of the policy.

## 5. **Legal Implications**

5.1 There are no direct legal implications in the adoption of this policy.

## 6. **Other Implications**

a) Equalities: The policy has not had an equalities impact assessment carried out

but does not discriminate in its application, other policies which then enable units to be occupied have been assessed for compliance.

- b) Section 17, Crime & Disorder Act 1998: There are no direct section 17 implications as a result of adopting the policy.
- c) Section 40, Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006: There are no direct implications through the adoption of the policy.
- d) Human Resources: There are no human resources implications as a result of adopting the policy.
- e) Human Rights: This policy will be used to deliver a supply of affordable housing which is a service we provide to support article 8 of the Human rights act and will provide services to all who require them , regardless of race, ethnicity or disability which will be considered in the application of this policy.
- f) Other:

## **7. Alignment to Council Priorities**

- 7.1 Prosperous communities – by seeking to reduce deprivation and improving access to housing for residents, develop flourishing rural communities.

Building safer and stronger communities – contributing to improving health within the district, promoting a sense of community belonging and pride.

Environment – contribute to reducing the causes of climate change, protect and improve the local environment

## **8. Ward/Community Affected**

- 8.1 All wards /parishes affected.

### Background Papers

*Minutes of the task and finish group on affordable housing 24<sup>th</sup> June 2009, 8<sup>th</sup> July 2009 and 29<sup>th</sup> July 2009.*

*Minutes of Overview and scrutiny Committee of 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2009  
Local Development Framework.*

### Lead Contact Officer:

*Name/Post: Darryl Smith – Principal Housing Officer (Strategy and Enabling)*

*Telephone: 01362 656890*

*Email: darryl.smith@breckland.gov.uk*

### Key Decision Status (Executive Decisions only):

*Key decision on the forward plan*

### Appendices attached to this report:

*The Affordable Housing policy.*