

**MARKET HOUSING MIX:  
RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON DRAFT SPG  
(Report by Head of Planning Services)**

**1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Cabinet of the response to draft supplementary planning guidance (SPG) on this subject, and to consider the Council's response. A revised document is recommended for formal adoption as SPG.

**2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 At its meeting on 17 April last year Cabinet approved draft SPG on market housing mix for the purpose of public consultation. The guidance is intended to assist the interpretation of policies HL5 and HL10 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan Alteration, which require an appropriate mix of dwellings in accordance with the local community's needs.
- 2.2 Specifically, it requires developers to incorporate a proportion of smaller dwellings in new schemes, in response to evidence that the requirement for such properties is not being met at present. The guidance applies only to market dwellings; the mix of affordable units will continue to be negotiated on a site by site basis, according to the requirements of the specific location.
- 2.3 For SPG to carry full weight in the development control process it must be subject to an appropriate form of consultation. The draft was circulated to parish and town councils in Huntingdonshire, planning agents, developers, housebuilders, civic and environmental interest groups. The consultation period lasted from 9 May to 27 June 2003, and was supplemented by a 'round table' debate with the key respondents (see below).

**3 THE CONSULTATION RESPONSE**

- 3.1 Over 40 responses were received, predominantly from parish and town councils and development interests. Comments split into two broad categories: it was generally supported by parish and town councils and the CPRE, whereas developers, housebuilders and planning agents objected in varying degrees to both the principle and the content of the draft. A full summary of the comments received is attached to the agenda separately (annex 1).
- 3.2 The draft SPG was one of the first in the country on this subject since national guidance (in the form of PPG3, issued in 2000) first encouraged local authorities to address housing mix. The issues involved are complex as well as controversial, and several consultation responses made a number of points that merited careful consideration.

- 3.3 In view of this an independently facilitated 'round table' discussion was arranged, with the agreement of the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy. This brought together key respondents with the aim of promoting a better understanding of the objectives and potential impacts of the SPG, and to explore possible changes which might reconcile the aims of both the Council and objectors. This took place in December, and the facilitator's report is attached at Annex 2.

#### **4 CHANGES PROPOSED TO THE DRAFT SPG**

- 4.1 In the light of the representations and the detailed consideration of issues afforded by the facilitation process, a number of changes are recommended to the draft guidance. A revised document, incorporating these changes, is attached at Annex 3. The key changes and the reasons for them are outlined in Annex 4. In summary they entail:

- Greater emphasis on providing 'guidance' rather than rigid requirements
- A slight reduction in the recommended targets for smaller units
- Increased flexibility to take site specific material considerations into account
- Not pursuing the blanket removal of permitted development rights on new one and two-bed dwellings
- Case studies to illustrate good practice

- 4.2 The changes are being recommended to overcome the main concerns about the implications of the SPG, in particular the perceived inflexibility of the advice and its potential impact on the viability and marketability of development sites. The amendments that have been made are considered to strike an appropriate balance between the need for a step-change in the provision of small units, and the need for the guidance to be capable of successful implementation.

- 4.3 The preparation of a new Local Development Document towards the end of this year (replacing the Local Plan) will provide an opportunity to revisit the issue in the light of further experience with the SPG's implementation, and will enable robust policies to be written into the Development Plan.

#### **5 RECOMMENDATION**

- 5.1 That the revised supplementary planning guidance on Market Housing Mix, as contained in Annex 3 to this report, be adopted.

**Background Papers:**

DETR (2000) *Planning Policy Guidance Note 3: Housing*

HDC (2002) *Huntingdonshire Local Plan Alteration*

HDC (2003) *Huntingdonshire Housing Needs Survey 2002*

Report to Cabinet, 17 April 2003, and Minutes: *Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance: Market Housing Mix*

**CONTACT OFFICER** - enquiries about this report should be made to Clare Bond, Planning Officer, on 01480 388435.