

AFFORDABLE HOUSING DELIVERY

4.0 Overview and Scrutiny Comments

- 4.2 The Panel discussed the Affordable Housing Delivery report at its meeting on 4th December 2024.
- 4.3 In response to questions from Councillor Chapman, the Panel heard that there had been a mid term review of the Housing Strategy last year. It was further clarified that Homes England fund outside of the Section 106 allocation on a site by site basis. It has been identified that there is a high need for affordable rented accommodation within the district therefore a 70:30 split with shared ownership properties is employed in the majority of cases, this need is monitored and adjusted as required. It was noted that the GL Hearn report, which was the current needs assessment for Cambridgeshire was in need of updating, however the Panel were advised that a Local Housing Needs Assessment would be undertaken as part of the Local Plan work, thus updating the available data. It was observed that two schemes to provide housing for key workers had also been developed recently.
- 4.4 It was clarified, following a question from Councillor Pickering, that the term Growth Sites referred to the two sites at Alconbury Weald and Wintringham. These sites were long term developments which would see improvements to infrastructure and the local area as they progressed and it was recognised that there was a high demand for the properties being developed on these sites.
- 4.5 Councillor Martin expressed concerns over Housing Providers wishing to provide less affordable housing within their development than recommended. The Panel were assured that in such instance, the developer would have to provide an independent viability assessment to reinforce this proposal, this survey would then be reviewed by independent consultants to verify the developers suggestions. It was noted that there were minimal viability challenges on 40% sites.
- 4.6 It was observed by Councillor Catmur that the LP25 standards within the current plan were, in his experience, inadequate for wheelchair users, this would be further looked at and discussed with the Executive Councillor outside of the meeting.
- 4.7 Following an observation from Councillor Terry, the Panel heard the report was not looking at individual sites, however it was noted that concerns over parking were taken into account. Furthermore, it was advised that ways to manage current issues would be investigated with Civil Parking Enforcement and local constabulary teams.

- 4.8 The Panel heard, following a question from Councillor Corney, that the recent delivery of affordable housing ahead of schedule ensured that appropriate properties were delivered for residents ahead of time. Work would continue to be undertaken alongside developers and planning colleagues to ensure that the needs of the district are met.
- 4.9 It was confirmed, in response to a question from Councillor Blackwell, that rules to manage local connection criteria were set on a case by case basis on rural exception sites. Following a further question from Councillor Catmur, the Panel heard that housing needs surveys were taken into account in the case of rural exception sites, however the weight given to those surveys was down to the case officer and could be coupled with local knowledge from parishes to ensure it's accuracy if the survey was undertaken some time ago. The Panel also heard, following a question from Councillor Martin, that the value of community buy in was acknowledged however there was no formal trigger for concerns, but ideas from the Panel on this would be welcome.
- 4.10 Following the discussion, the Panel were informed that their comments would be added to the Cabinet report in order for an informed decision to be made on the report recommendations.