

**Affordable Housing Update**

**Appendix 2**

**Affordable Housing Position Statement – Update on Commitments**

	<b>Commitment</b>	<b>Update</b>
a	<p>The Council will work closely with house builders, through planning obligations, to maximise delivery of general needs affordable housing. On average, this system has delivered 643 new affordable homes in Buckinghamshire each year. The Local Plans across Buckinghamshire set targets for new developments to deliver affordable housing. These targets range from 25% to 48% (as a proportion of the new dwellings built). Given the high land values in the county and the increasing cost of development it is likely that fully meeting these targets will remain a challenge.</p>	<p>The planning service continues to require house builders to deliver planning policy compliant schemes that meet Local Plan affordable housing requirements.</p> <p>Between 01/04/2022 and 30/06/2022, 186 units of affordable completions were recorded.</p>

b	<p>The Council will work closely with Registered Social Landlords to support them to deliver their development plans, and also to encourage them to work in partnership with the Council to use s106 funds and other enabling grants to make nomination rights for affordable rented accommodation available to those on the Bucks Home Choice system.</p>	<p>An internal stakeholder group (including officers from Housing, Planning, Legal and Property and Assets services) has been established to review working practices and identify opportunities to improve partnerships with RPs (Registered Providers). Initial outcomes from this group have included setting up Single Points of Contact within the Council for RP partners and working with RPs to get a clear picture of proposed affordable housing schemes that they have in the pipeline (to provide an over-view of proposed schemes across Buckinghamshire and promote strategic conversations at an early stage).</p> <p>On 6/7/22 the Council held an in-person Development Workshop with RPs to look at the future of partnership working and the current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The workshop focused on the areas of Planning, Property and Housing Enabling within the Council. The workshops highlighted that RPs were positive about their relationship with the Council, but highlighted the need to continue harmonising key policies, processes and points of contact following the transition to becoming a unitary authority. Timely engagement and turnaround of enquiries between both sides was also seen as an important factor. Overall, the RPs felt that there were many opportunities going forward to maximise affordable housing delivery in Bucks, but also highlighted the threats arising from increased construction costs and potentially unrealistic expectations from land and property owners.</p>
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		<p>The outcomes of this workshop are being reviewed and used to develop an Action Plan to deliver effective partnership working and encourage RP affordable housing development.</p>
c	<p>The Council will agree a local definition for 'key workers'.</p>	<p>The First Homes Interim Position Statement agreed by Cabinet on 10/5/22 (see Commitment (f) below) included the following definition of Key Workers for Bucks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clinical staff employed by the NHS to include ambulance drivers, paramedics, healthcare workers</li> <li>• Providing care services (including those working in care homes)</li> <li>• Police officers, community support officers, and frontline police staff</li> <li>• Uniformed staff in the Fire &amp; Rescue Service</li> <li>• Prison officers, and frontline prison staff</li> <li>• Probation officers</li> <li>• Public sector employed teachers, social workers, planning and building control officers, environmental health officers, occupational therapists, speech therapists and educational psychologists</li> <li>• Or such other critical workers that the council acting reasonably shall approve.</li> </ul> <p>This definition is being kept under review as the Council continues to explore and develop Key Worker housing options.</p> <p>1/8/22 – a draft definition has been agreed with the Cabinet member and is now being taken through governance processes for adoption.</p>

d	<p>The Council, through its housing company 'Consilio Property Ltd', may engage with private house builders to explore the viability of acquiring homes to accommodate key workers. Provided this is a viable option, and subject to business case and governance requirements, will seek to deliver at least one scheme in 2022.</p>	<p>Initial work to look at this option has raised questions that I may not be cost effective for Consilio to directly acquire homes for key workers in view of high local housing market costs. Officers are continuing to explore the viability of this option.</p> <p>31/08/22: Recent developments in respect of increasing homelessness pressures in Buckinghamshire will be kept under review and the viability of Consilio's involvement will be re-assessed.</p>

e	<p>The Council will identify at least one Council owned asset in Buckinghamshire on which to potentially deliver (subject to planning) affordable and key worker housing, possibly of a specialist nature. The sites identified to be assessed are: 1. Stoke Mandeville former Sports and Social Club 2. Horns Lane, High Wycombe 3. Tatling End, Denham</p>	<p>On 7/6/22, Cabinet authorised the submission of an Outline Planning Application for the former Bucks County Council Community Sports and Social Club site in Stoke Mandeville (identified as site 1 in this commitment). The Cabinet decision was called in and the call-in and pre-planning consultation document was considered at a meeting of the Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee on 5/7/22. The Select Committee referred the decision back to Cabinet for further consideration.</p> <p>On 12/7/22, Cabinet authorised the submission of an outline planning application for up to 100 residential units including 30% affordable Housing, a new road link between Booker Park School and Lower Road, an increase in size of the existing access road to Lower Road and the provision of a sports and leisure area for community and school use. Cabinet highlighted that this was Council owned land and provided an opportunity to provide services to the benefit of Buckinghamshire residents (such as affordable and keyworker housing in excess of statutory requirements and homes for clients of adults and children’s services) that cannot be imposed on privately owned development sites.</p> <p>If the outline planning permission is granted for the site, then a proposed detailed development scheme will be brought forward for further consideration by Cabinet.</p>
f	<p>The Council will agree a position statement on the new national ‘First Homes’ product for first time buyers and ensure that First Homes delivered in new Buckinghamshire housing developments</p>	<p>The First Homes Interim Position Statement was agreed by the Cabinet on 10/5/22. This includes a requirement for developers</p>

	<p>are prioritised for Buckinghamshire residents and key workers. An interim position statement on First Homes has already been developed.</p>	<p>of First Homes to prioritise sales to households with a local connection to Buckinghamshire and to key workers.</p>
g	<p>Empty homes in Buckinghamshire will be reviewed and catalogued and the Council will explore if these can be brought back into use. Council Tax charges for persistently empty homes will be reviewed</p>	<p>The council tax base figures as of October 2022 for Buckinghamshire were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total number of empty dwellings is 4,432.</li> <li>• Total empty for more than 6 months is 2,140.</li> </ul> <p>The number of households that are empty and being charged an empty homes premium on Council Tax was 512 (the empty homes premium is 2-5 years = 200% / 5-10 years = 300% / 10+ years = 400%)</p> <p>We have not yet moved forward with a review of the empty homes. Homes can be empty long term for a variety of reasons including major improvement works and probate issues. Previous experience has shown that there can be significant challenges in the Council intervening to return properties into use, with long timescales and associated costs.</p> <p>The review will be progressed when resources are available across the Housing and Revenues and Benefits teams.</p>