



**ST HELENS**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

# **Affordable Housing**

## **Supplementary Planning Document**

# **Scoping Report**

## **May 2024**

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 What is this document?

This scoping report is the first step in preparing an Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The SPD will provide detailed guidance on the interpretation and implementation of policies within the St Helens Borough Local Plan up to 2037 (2022) (Local Plan).

The purpose of this document is to engage key stakeholders in considering the scope and content of the SPD.

The responses on this scoping report will inform the preparation of a draft SPD, which will then in turn be published for consultation before it is then adopted. Once adopted the SPD will carry full weight as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

## 1.2 What is Affordable Housing?

National planning policy requires the Council to plan for the delivery of a wide choice of high-quality homes within sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities, based on sound evidence, and to identify the size, type, tenure and range of housing that is required. The Council is seeking to achieve a mix of housing that reflects St Helens Borough's housing needs, and in accordance with national planning policy, this includes providing housing for different groups including those who require affordable housing.

Annex 2 ('Glossary') of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) defines affordable housing as '*Housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers)*'.

There are four broad types of affordable housing:

- Affordable housing for rent
- Starter homes
- Discounted market sales housing
- Other affordable routes to home ownership

## 1.3 SPD Links with National Policy and Legislation

The Affordable Housing SPD will be produced so it is consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and The Town and Country Planning (Local

Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. Regard will also be had to the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).

#### 1.4 SPD Links with St Helens Borough Local Plan up to 2037 (2022)

The Affordable Housing SPD will be prepared to provide further guidance in relation to the interpretation and implementation of the policies in the Local Plan, in particular, Policy LPC02: Affordable Housing, which states:

### **Policy LPC02: Affordable Housing**

1. The Council will support the delivery of affordable housing by encouraging new provision by Registered Providers of Social Housing.
2. Proposals for new open market housing developments of 10 units or more, or when the number of units is not known, sites of 0.5ha or more, will be required to contribute as follows:
  - i) at least 30% of new dwellings provided on greenfield sites in Affordable Housing Zones 2 and 3 must fall within the definition of 'affordable housing'; or
  - ii) at least 10% of new dwellings provided on brownfield sites in Affordable Housing Zone 3 must fall within the definition of 'affordable housing'.
3. The types of affordable housing to be provided on any site must be informed by the latest evidence concerning need. Where an affordable housing requirement is triggered in line with paragraph 2 of this Policy:
  - a) at least 10% of the overall number of homes to be provided should be available for affordable home ownership (unless this would significantly prejudice the ability to meet the identified needs of specific groups); and
  - b) any remaining proportion of the affordable housing to be provided should be for affordable rented accommodation.
4. The provision of affordable housing may vary on a site-by-site basis taking into account evidence of local need and where appropriate, the economic viability of the development. Any relaxation of the affordable housing requirements set out in paragraphs 2 or 3 of this Policy will only be supported if:
  - a) it is fully justified by an independent site-specific viability appraisal; and
  - b) the benefits of proceeding with the development outweigh the failure to provide the full affordable housing contribution.

5. Any affordable housing provision must be within the application site unless the applicant has demonstrated either that:
  - a) insufficient local need exists to justify on-site provision; or
  - b) there would be overriding benefits by making alternative provision 'off site' in which case a commuted sum in lieu of on-site provision will be required. The level of any such commuted sum should be in accordance with guidance set out in the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document.
6. Where affordable housing is to be provided on site, adequate provisions must be made, for example through conditions and / or a Section 106 agreement, to ensure that such housing is made available in perpetuity for occupation by persons who are in affordable housing need, or for any subsidy to be recycled to support affordable housing provision elsewhere.

Policy LPC02 of the Local Plan, as noted above, sets out the circumstances in which affordable housing provision to help meet this need will be required and indicates the quantities that will be sought from open market housing development.

In addition to Policy LPC02, the Local Plan contains other policies that are relevant to this SPD which, amongst others, include:

- Policy LPA02: Development Principles
- Policy LPA07: Infrastructure Delivery and Funding
- Policy LPA11: Bold Forest Garden Suburb
- Policy LPC01: Housing Mix

## 2. Scope of the Affordable Housing SPD

### 2.1 Proposed SPD Contents

The Affordable Housing SPD will aim to set out the Council's expectations in relation to affordable housing provision on development sites, to ensure that prospective developers are aware of the requirements that need to be met when submitting a planning application for residential development.

The Affordable Housing SPD will aim to:

- Provide clear guidance to assist in the determination of planning applications for developments
- Increase the provision of affordable housing in the Borough in order to meet local needs
- Ensure a range of affordable homes in relation to tenure, size and location
- Ensure that local residents have the opportunity to buy or rent a home that is affordable for their income

The broad context and coverage of the Affordable Housing SPD will be as follows:

- Introduction and Aims/Objectives
- Policy Context – National, Sub-Regional and Local Policies and Guidance (including evidence of need within the Borough)
- Definitions of Affordable Housing, including First Homes
- Qualifying Persons / Eligible Households
- Overall Expectations (including liaising with the local authority)
- Affordable Housing Statements
- Tenure Split, Housing Mix and Levels of Affordable Housing
- 100% Affordable Housing Schemes
- Assessment of Sites
- Ensuring Quality Design and Integration
- Economic Viability
- Securing Affordable Housing (including Off-Site Affordable Housing Provision) – including content of Section 106 Agreements
- Securing and Calculating Commuted Sums / Financial Contributions (and Spending Contributions)
- List of Registered Providers of Social Housing

### 3. Time Schedule of SPD Preparation and Next Steps

#### 3.1 Timescale for SPD preparation and adoption

Below is an indicative timescale for the preparation and adoption of the SPD.



#### 3.2 Next Steps

This consultation will run for a minimum of four weeks. Following the consultation, Council Officers will review comments received, which will inform the drafting of the SPD. A public consultation will then be carried out on the draft SPD.

Following the consultation on the draft SPD, comments received will be reviewed with appropriate amendments made to the SPD before it is adopted at a St Helens Cabinet meeting. A Consultation Statement will be produced containing details of all those consulted when preparing the SPD, a summary of the main issues raised and how those issues have been addressed within the SPD.

## 4. How to get involved

This document has been prepared to identify the scope of the emerging Affordable Housing SPD and raise awareness of, and interest in, the document. Comments are sought on the scope that has been set out through this document and the questions in Section 5 below.

A response form has been created which allows for comments and responses on the questions contained within this document, along with any additional comments if required. This can be found at <https://sthelens.gov.uk/SDP-Scoping-Consultation>

Answering the questions in Section 5 is optional and the Council will also accept other forms of written response.

You can complete the response form and return it by email or post to:

**Email:** [planningpolicy@sthelens.gov.uk](mailto:planningpolicy@sthelens.gov.uk)

**Post:** Planning Policy Team, Development Plans, St Helens Borough Council, PO Box 512, ST HELENS, WA10 9JX.

All comments on this scoping report should be submitted by Thursday 13 June 2024.



## 5. Consultation Questions

Q1: Do you support the proposal to prepare an Affordable Housing SPD for St Helens? If not, what are the reasons as to why the Council should not prepare an Affordable Housing SPD?

Q2: Do you agree with the broad context and coverage of the Affordable Housing SPD, as set out in this document?

Q3: What level of detail should the Affordable Housing SPD go into - for example, general guidance or specific details?

Q4: Although not currently included within the definition of affordable housing in the NPPF, Planning Practice Guidance states that 'First Homes' should be considered to meet the definition of 'affordable housing'. Therefore, do you consider a section on First Homes and the Council's approach to First Homes should be included within the SPD?

Q5: Do you think an approach to provide specific advice for different types of affordable housing would be useful?

Q6: Are there any specific reports, documents, or guidance that you think we should be considering as part of the evidence base to inform the Affordable Housing SPD?

Q7: If you believe a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) or a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) is required, please set out why (please see accompanying SEA and HRA Screening Report for further information).