



Planning Committee (Policy)
14 October 2015

Report from Head of Planning

For Action

Wards affected:
ALL

Brent Affordable Housing Position Statement

1 Summary

- 1.1 Planning Committee considered an Affordable Housing Update report on 23rd July 2015. The Brent Affordable Housing Position Statement is considered to reflect a suitable response to the Committee's resolution. It seeks to address the main priorities indicated by the Committee in the wide ranging discussion that occurred in relation to the agenda item.
- 1.2 The position statement will be put on the Council's website to assist developers and the wider community in understanding the Council's approach to seeking affordable housing in association with new developments.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That Planning Committee endorse the Brent Affordable Housing Position Statement as set out in Appendix 1 for publication on the Council's website.
- 2.2 That the Head of Planning periodically review and make minor updates as required to the Brent Affordable Housing Position statement in relation to new evidence and changes to interpretation of policy.

3 Detail

- 3.1 The Planning Committee considered an Affordable Housing Update report on 23rd July 2015. The paper covered a number of affordable housing related issues: national affordable housing policy; housing delivery in Brent; viability assessments; evidence of housing needs; joint working with other London Boroughs; tenure blind development; and Brent's own affordable housing development.

3.2 Committee resolved:

- (i) that it be agreed that the publication on the website of a position statement requiring affordable housing viability assessments be provided in a form that is open to member and public scrutiny as much as possible, including an easily understandable executive summary and a wider commitment to a more comprehensible housing related advice;
- (ii) that closer work with London Boroughs on an affordable housing protocol and joint procurement of a consultants' panel be agreed in principle

3.3 Committee made reference to the draft Islington Development Viability Supplementary Planning Document issued for consultation in early July 2015. The discussion on this and the other matters indicated a desire from the Committee for Brent to issue further guidance on affordable housing matters. This is reflected in the reference to 'wider commitment to a more comprehensible housing related advice' in the resolution.

3.4 Extensive locally relevant advice is provided on affordable housing delivery in the Mayor's Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance. Consultation responses on a replacement for this document are currently being considered in conjunction with matters that the Planning Inspector has raised in relation to the Minor Alterations to the London Plan Examination in Public. The delivery of affordable housing in association with planning applications is currently a rapidly changing environment, in part driven by outcomes related to planning appeals decision making. As such the production of a Supplementary Planning Document, essentially duplicating much of the existing relevant guidance against a background of resource constraint is recommended as inappropriate.

3.5 On this basis the Affordable Housing Position Statement attached in Appendix 1 is recommended as a proportionate response. Planning Committee is recommended to endorse the statement. It balances the Council's necessity to be clear about the priority it places on certain aspects in the delivery of affordable housing in association with new development, against the need to not essentially repeat extensive existing robust policy and detailed advice that currently exists at a national, London and Brent level.

3.6 As previously indicated, the position with regards to affordable policy and practice can change quickly. In addition more up to date information on housing matters, e.g. prices, incomes, delivery levels will continue to become available. For minor changes it is proposed that, should the position statement be endorsed by Committee, it can be reviewed and updated by the Head of Planning as and when necessary. For more significant changes, or at the request of the Chair, it can be brought back to Committee to review and endorse.

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 The position statement seeks to provide greater clarity on the Council's approach to dealing with applications where affordable housing would be required through Development Plan policies. It should provide greater clarity for the Council and developers, thus improving the application process, reducing costs and delay.

5 Legal Implications

- 5.1 The position statement can be regarded as a material planning consideration. However, the weight accorded to it will not be as strong as for instance Supplementary Planning Documents, which have statutory status if adopted in accordance with regulations.

6 Diversity Implications

- 6.1 No equality impact assessment has been undertaken, as the position statement is not creating new policy, just providing clarity on approach. Delivery of additional affordable housing will however result in benefits for a range of groups with protected characteristics, such as ethnic minorities and those with a disability. These groups have higher representation within those in need of affordable housing.

7 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)

- 7.1 None

8 Environmental Implications

- 8.1 The Guide deals with development proposals within the Borough and thus will have a positive effect on controlling impacts on the environment.

Background Papers

Affordable Housing Update 23rd July 2015 Brent Planning Committee

Contact Officers

Any person wishing to inspect the above papers should contact Paul Lewin, Planning Policy & Projects 0208 937 6710

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