

Update to Sustainability Appraisal Report – October 2015

Revised Proposed Modifications to the Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan

Wealden District Council submitted the Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan on Wednesday 25th March 2015 for examination. Consultation took place, starting Monday 6th July 2015, on the Proposed Modifications to the Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan. These modifications encompassed Government policy regarding affordable housing planning obligations. Government policy regarding affordable housing planning obligations was subsequently revoked after a High Court Judgement handed down on 31st July 2015.

As a result of the revocation of Government policy, modifications are proposed to the Submission Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan. These modifications are called Revised Proposed Modifications to the Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan. These modifications mean that affordable housing within Wealden District will be required on sites of 5 or more dwellings (net) and that in exceptional circumstances, such as a Registered Provider finding it uneconomic or impractical to provide units on site, a commuted sum may be accepted in lieu of on-site permission.

The Sustainability Appraisal Report for the Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan (March 2015) considered reasonable alternatives for threshold including housing numbers and site size and proportion of affordable housing. Further alternatives were considered in the Supplement to Sustainability Appraisal of the Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan (July 2015). The Policy contained within the Revised Proposed Modifications to the Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan is similar to that of Option 21 of the Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal Report (March 2015).

The reasonable alternatives within both the Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal Report (March 2015) and the Supplement to Sustainability Appraisal of the Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan (July 2015) remain valid. All these alternatives have now been rejected and Option 21 contained within the Sustainability Appraisal Report for the Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan (March 2015) is now selected with a minor amendment removing the site size threshold. This amendment is not considered to be material as it relates to density and the effective and efficient use of land. As such, it is considered that the Sustainability Appraisal undertaken in respect of Option 21 is relevant and sufficient for the modified Policy AFH1 and so will not be repeated. The Sustainability Appraisal of Option 21 can be read in Appendix C of the Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal Report (March 2015).

The reasons for rejection of alternatives contained within the Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal Report (March 2015) remain valid and relevant for the purposes of this sustainability appraisal. The reason for rejecting the policies contained within the Submission Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan and the Proposed Modifications to the Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan relate directly to the sustainability assessment contained within the associated Sustainability Appraisal Reports¹ in that the thresholds proposed within these documents would result in less affordable housing being delivered. The selected Option (Option 21 as amended) contained within the Revised Proposed Modifications to the Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan allows for greater affordable housing provision overall and particularly in rural areas, where housing costs are high and there is less likely to be large scale housing sites.

The Habitat Regulations Assessment contained within the Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal Report (March 2015) is not affected by the proposed change in policy, and remains relevant.

For purposes of clarity this update must be read in conjunction with the Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal Report (March 2015) and the Supplement to Sustainability Appraisal of the Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan (July 2015). All three documents constitute the Sustainability Appraisal Report for the Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan.

¹ Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal Report (March 2015) and the Supplement to Sustainability Appraisal of the Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan (July 2015)