

Social Services Further Questions

The word 'social' is used in so many different ways by different people / organisations / researchers it can get a bit confusing at times. 'Social Services' is really social care; most of these questions are about social (affordable) housing which is a different function of the Council although we do obviously talk to each other.

- 1 **Acquisition of future housing stock:** If 30% of new development is 'affordable',
 - a) does this reflect expected future growth in demand for future housing?
 - b) what input does RCC have to make sure that the new 'affordable' dwellings reflect what is required, in the form of small bungalows, 1-bed flats etc.?

Please see response under (2) below.

- 2 **30% affordable housing:** Why this figure? Is this a government policy or something decided at local level or dictated by developers?

(1) and (2) The Council works with partners to produce a Strategic Housing Market Assessment which looks at housing demand and need and demographic trends. The 2015 SHMA Update shows a shortfall of 35 affordable homes per year in Rutland for the period 2014-36 (22 years), not including 131 affordable homes that were in the pipeline in Rutland across the whole of the 5 year period 2015-20. The Council's Core Strategy (adopted 2011) allows for 150 homes per year of all ownership types from 2006-2026 (20 years). The most recent consultation on the Local Plan Review (Issues and Options) allowed for 173 homes per year of all ownership types in the period 2015-36 (21 years).

There is a lot of detail here, but essentially Government & Council policy is that we have to try to set the affordable housing requirement at a level which both meets need and is normally viable, taking into account that developers also have to fund other services through the Community Infrastructure Levy. This level of 30% is included in the Council's Supplementary Planning Document on Planning Obligations (2016). Not all sites provide this amount of affordable housing – for instance if it is not viable following a proven financial assessment of the development, or if the site is exempt from affordable housing because it is smaller than 11 homes. (Cash contributions are receivable for off-site affordable housing from sites of 6-10 dwellings in Barleythorpe Parish, but this doesn't apply to Oakham because of different rules Government regarding affordable housing requirements in certain villages.)

The Council's monitoring target is 40 affordable homes per year in Rutland, which is what the "30%" policy is likely to deliver in practice and is broadly similar to the need found in the SHMA.

In terms of the mix to be provided, Policy SP9 of the Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document encourages the provision of a range of affordable housing to meet needs. Local knowledge, the affordable property type/size/ownership mix in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2014 (which takes account of future demographics), housing waiting lists, national

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changes to the benefits system, the need for communities to be socially sustainable and viability help to inform mix on individual sites.

I expect to be consulting Oakham Town Council regarding the Council's Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2017-22 over the next few weeks so you may wish to consider feeding into that process through them.

- 3 **Shortage of 4 & 5-bed social housing properties.** Does the 30% of affordable housing on new developments include 5-bed properties as social housing? Surely a 5-bed 'council house' would not be of the same design, construction and location as a 5-bed house (eg on Uppingham Road)?

Five bedroom affordable homes are rare – from memory I think there are three 5/6 bedroom affordable homes in Rutland and are typically conversions of existing affordable homes. They are not generally similar to executive housing types. 5 bed affordable homes count as 'double' under the Council's Planning Obligations SPD, but no five bedroom affordable homes have been provided recently by developers or are in the immediate pipeline. The overall need for this type of property is low, but they are needed generally by perhaps one or two families per year.

Four bedroom properties are provided, but there may perhaps be a couple on a large development.

Properties with large number of bedrooms can be particularly expensive to provide – apart from the obvious costs of construction and the larger amount of land needed, the extra income from the residents for various reasons do not increase in proportion to the additional cost.

- 4 **The waiting list for social housing:** we were told that there are 300 on the waiting list for Rutland.
- a) How many are on the list for Oakham and, separately, for Barleythorpe?
 - b) What is the predicted trend for the waiting list over the next 10 years?

(a) and (b). The nos. on the waiting list fluctuate, depending on need, aspiration and how long it has been since the Council has carried out a review of its housing register to remove applications that are likely to be out-of-date. It is hard to predict trends for similar reasons and due to the uncertainty of the economic cycle and national welfare reform (i.e. benefit changes). It is perhaps more likely to go up than down.

It also is dependent upon the criteria for joining the list. It does not include some people who are looking mainly for shared ownership housing. Oakham is by far the highest area of demand in Rutland. Many applicants are on more than one list, so an overall picture showing Oakham and Barleythorpe separately would be time-consuming to produce.

5. **Rents:**
- a) How many Oakham /Barleythorpe social housing residents have their rent paid?

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Eligibility for payments towards housing costs is set by national rules (with the minor exception of Discretionary Housing Payments). Typically, from experience at various councils etc. I would expect the figure to be between 60% and 80% of households in rented housing. It is possible for shared ownership residents to claim benefit for their rent in some cases, but it is not particularly common. Some tenants only receive partial help with their rent, so the figures will vary depending on the precise definitions used. Spire Homes would also be able to provide you with a rough idea. Affordable housing is aimed at people who cannot access suitable market housing without help; there will be some people in rented housing who are not on benefits for rent but who would have difficulty in paying private sector rents.

b) What factors are used to assess this? If there are no jobs for school leavers, then the population balance will become percentage-wise older. Therefore, a good base of affordable housing is essential, backed up by job opportunities.

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2014 and its 2015 Update helps to illustrate the relationship between affordable housing and jobs. There are also details in the Council's Corporate Plan 2016-20.

c) How many of the Oakham/ Barleythorpe elderly have rents paid for them?

Please see answer to (a) above.

d) What is the current total expenditure on rents paid for by RCC?

I am unsure how this is relevant to planning policy (as opposed to wider issues of social policy), but Andrea Grinney (agrinney@rutland.gov.uk) may be able to help you with this information if you still need it. Please bear in mind that much of this is offset against Government grant to the Council.

e) What is the predicted expenditure over the next ten years?

This is very hard to predict. Whilst the Council does look at likely expenditure in the medium term, predicting this far ahead is very difficult due to uncertainties in the housing supply/market and scope for changes in Government policy. Again, I am unsure how relevant this is to planning policy as the SHMA provides long term predictions of housing need up to 2036.

f) Are there any plans to increase housing stock if there is a shortfall?

The Council has policies (above) regarding the provision of affordable housing and we will be consulting in more detail shortly regarding the draft Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2017-22. We will be consulting further on the Local Plan Review in 2017.

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6. **Rutland Employers and Social Services:** At our meeting James referred to the document, 'Employment Land Assessment Update', which suggested there is some joined up thinking on employment and housing needs - fundamental if we are to maintain a town where people live and work. A market town of 'executive' houses whose inhabitants commute to work outside the area is not going to thrive. Housing development should be balanced, catering for all types of worker.
- a) How detailed is the information RCC has on companies' expansion (or the contraction or closure), relocation, start-ups etc?
- b) How is RCC attracting and promoting new business to the town?

(a) and (b) Our Economic Development team will be able to provide more information on this. economicdevelopment@rutland.gov.uk

Information on our Local Plan Review Evidence base is at http://www.rutland.gov.uk/local_plan/evidence_base_-_plan_review.aspx

7. **Healthcare provision:** a concern which has been raised consistently at our public events is healthcare provision in Oakham, or rather lack of it.
- a) What do Social Services see as major healthcare needs in the town?
- b) What are the healthcare provisions for disabled people and how well are they served?
- c) With the proposed McCarthy and Stone developments in Oakham (possible 94 flats for elderly residents, 56 of which will be for extra care), how is RCC planning to provide an increased need for healthcare in an already over-stretched doctors' surgery?

I've emailed a colleague in the People Directorate to see if she can help to respond to these questions, or pass them onto the right person.

8. **Right to acquire:** What is the likely impact of the government's 'Right to Acquire' policy on housing in Oakham?

Strictly speaking, this is an extension of the Right to Buy, as the Right to Acquire is something slightly different. It would clearly have some impact, but it is unlikely to be sudden as often people buying their houses probably wouldn't have moved anyway for some years (so their properties would not have become available for reletting in the short-to-medium term).

9. **Leicestershire and surrounding counties:** Do links exist with Leicestershire and other adjacent counties regarding social housing on our borders?

There is some joint working on policy issues and sharing good practice. Whilst our operational housing staff often know their counterparts in neighbouring councils because many customers do move between adjacent council areas, this does not normally get into

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shared provision of housing. Councils focus on meeting needs in their own areas. Rutland is not part of a multi-authority choice-based lettings scheme, unlike our neighbours in Leicestershire and Northamptonshire. Some of the administration work on shared ownership housing is carried out at a regional level.