

South Oxfordshire Affordable Housing Guidance



MARCH 2023

South Oxfordshire District Council

Affordable Housing Guidance

Introduction

South Oxfordshire District Council seeks the delivery of affordable housing to meet the housing needs of those whose needs are not met by the market. As a council we have identified the need for affordable homes as a key priority within our [Corporate Plan](#).

Affordable housing is defined nationally through the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF), and is key to addressing housing need in the district, where house prices and market rents are significantly higher than the national average.

Well-designed, high-quality affordable homes also play a very important role in the health and welfare of our communities, as well as contributing to carbon reduction.

Our Local Plan seeks the delivery of affordable housing on new developments through specific policies. These are detailed in our adopted [South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035](#).

In addition to the policies and accompanying text within the Local Plan, we have also published additional guidance that is directly relevant to the delivery of affordable housing. This addresses matters such as design quality and layout.

Planning applications for residential developments are considered against the relevant policies in the Development Plan, including the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plans. This is taken into account alongside national planning policy, national planning guidance, and any relevant supplementary planning documents and guidance.

Delivering high quality affordable homes

We have published a number of documents that relate to the delivery of housing, including affordable housing, which aims to provide additional information and guidance on the delivery of new homes across the district. The links to these documents can be found within this guidance note. Together these documents set out the standards needed to enable a development proposal to be policy compliant.

Please note that the information provided in this document is not exhaustive in relation to the delivery of affordable housing. This document pulls out relevant planning policies for affordable housing, but the Local Plan should be read as a whole and other policies, together with those of Neighbourhood Plans, may be

relevant. As an on-line resource, this document will be updated on a regular basis in order to ensure that it remains up to date.

Existing policies and guidance

Local Plan 2035

The [South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035](#) (adopted December 2020) is the key delivery document. It should therefore form the starting reference point in the preparation of a planning application. It contains policies that secure a specified level of affordable housing on most new residential developments. The policies directly related to affordable housing are:

H9 Affordable Housing

This policy specifies the type of development where we will seek the provision of affordable housing, together with amount, tenure type and other general requirements contained in the accompanying text. It is a key policy aimed at ensuring a supply of new affordable homes across the district.

H10 Exception Sites and Entry Level Housing Schemes*

This policy addresses the need for small-scale affordable developments where they would not otherwise be permitted. Most often referred to as Rural Exception Sites, there should be a demonstrable and robustly evidenced local need, through a local housing needs survey. Development proposals should reflect the need for affordable dwelling types identified in the survey.

H11 Housing Mix

It is important that new developments provide a mix of accommodation that contributes to meeting the needs of all households. The mix of housing should have regard to the council's latest evidence and Neighbourhood Development Plan evidence for the relevant area. Policy H11 aims to meet the requirement for a suitable mix of dwelling types and sizes to meet varying needs. This includes minimum accessibility and adaptability standards, including minimum space standards published by the Government, known as the [Nationally Described Space Standards](#).

H12 Self-Build and Custom-Build Housing

Building or designing your own home could be a more affordable way for many people to become home-owners. The council strongly supports initiatives that provide opportunities for people to design and/or build their own home. Self-Build and Custom-Build housing does not necessarily fall within the definition of

*Following a [Written Ministerial Statement](#) (24 May 2021) Entry Level housing is now largely replaced by First Homes. National guidance has not yet been updated to reflect this change.

Affordable Housing, and prospective applicants should establish this through early discussion with the council's Affordable Housing team.

H13 Specialist Accommodation for Older People

Housing and health are inextricably linked, and the value of living in a suitable home in a sustainable location becomes even more important as people get older. Being able to continue living independently for as long as possible may require some level of support which could be provided through adaptations to the home or receiving social care visits at home. Whilst this policy is not directly linked to affordable housing, it should be taken into account where older persons accommodation is intended to meet the Affordable Housing definition.

Neighbourhood Plans

Neighbourhood planning gives communities the power to develop a shared vision for their area. Neighbourhood Plans can shape, direct and help to deliver sustainable development, by influencing local planning decisions as part of the statutory Development Plan.

Any proposal within a Neighbourhood Plan area should be in accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan unless there are material considerations that indicate otherwise. A full list of current and emerging Neighbourhood Plans, together with links to the individual plans themselves can be found on our [website](#).

Additional Guidance and documents

Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

We can require developers (under what are called 'Section 106 Agreements') to contribute towards the infrastructure needed to mitigate the direct impact of their development and to meet planning policy requirements. This can be in the form of financial contributions, the provision of affordable housing, the provision of land or restriction of use of land or the direct delivery of facilities. The updated [Developer Contribution SPD](#) came into effect in January 2023.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is money we get from housing developers as part of their permission to build new homes in our district. The money is used to fund community facilities, such as new schools, roads and healthcare facilities to support people moving into the area. Further information, together with the council's CIL Charging Schedule can be found on our [website](#).

Joint council guidance and documents

Some guidance is common to both South Oxfordshire District Council and our neighbouring district of Vale of White Horse District Council. Where it may be applicable to the delivery of affordable homes, it is listed below.

Joint Design Guide

The [Joint Design Guide](#) is intended to assist landowners, developers, applicants, agents, designers and planners through all stages of the design and planning process to achieve high quality and sustainable development. The guide is not specific to the delivery of affordable housing, it is applicable across all tenures.

First Homes

First Homes is a low-cost home ownership tenure which was introduced by the government in 2021. It now forms part of the affordable housing tenure requirement on most new developments. As this requirement was introduced after the adoption of the Local Plan, we have published a [First Homes interim policy statement](#).

Housing Delivery Strategy

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse councils will soon be publishing a new Joint Housing Delivery Strategy. We will include a link to the document here once it is available on our websites.

Net Zero Carbon Tool Kit

The [Net-Zero Toolkit](#) (jointly produced by West Oxfordshire District Council, Cotswold District Council and Forest of Dean District Council) has been designed to assist in the planning, design and construction of both new build and retrofit housing projects and we consider this to be a useful guide when considering energy efficiency measures in development proposals. Though not specific to the delivery of affordable homes, it is a highly relevant document which should be taken into consideration.

Our Delivery Partners

We work with a range of partners to deliver new affordable homes in our district. Our Registered Provider partners (housing associations) play a key role in the delivery of new homes. Early engagement between prospective developers and Registered Providers can help significantly in bringing forward high-quality developments which contribute to the creation of mixed and balanced communities. We can provide you with a list of our Registered Provider partners currently active in the district by emailing the [Affordable Housing Team](#).

Summary

This guidance note brings together relevant policies and guidance associated with the delivery of affordable housing in South Oxfordshire. We will keep this note under review and update it periodically, but please bear in mind it provides a snapshot in time of the relevant policies and guidance. It is intended to assist with the delivery of high-quality, policy compliant, affordable housing development. The policies and guidance listed are not exhaustive, and any planning application should ensure conformity with all appropriate national and locally published policy and guidance. Please [contact us](#) with any specific queries about the delivery of new affordable homes.

Alternative formats of this publication, a summary of its contents or specific sections, are available on request.

These include large print, Braille, audio, email, easy read and alternative languages.

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