

Affordable Housing A Quick Guide

The following questions and answers give some brief guidance on the way that Dartford Borough Council's affordable housing policies are interpreted. The Council is currently preparing its Local Development Framework Core Strategy document. The emerging policies can be found in the Preferred Options Document (Jan 2008).



What is affordable housing?

The Council's primary definition is:

Subsidised Housing that is made available to buy or rent and that is available to people who cannot afford to rent or buy homes generally available on the open market.



What is Dartford's threshold for affordable housing?

Generally all new development sites for housing will trigger a 30% on-site affordable housing requirement if at least one of the following criteria is met:

- The site provides or is capable of providing 15 or more units
- The site is ½ hectare or more in size

In the rural areas of Bean and Darent, Joydens Wood, Longfield, New Barn and Southfleet, Sutton-at-Hone and Hawley and Wilmington, an affordable housing requirement of **50%** will be triggered if the following criteria is met:

- The site provides or is capable of providing 2 or more units

Developers are required to enter into a Section 106 Planning Agreement with the Council for the affordable housing provision.

IF THE SCHEME DOES NOT MEET THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING REQUIREMENT DETAILED ABOVE, PLANNING PERMISSION WILL NORMALLY BE REFUSED.



How does the Council know what level of affordable housing is required?

The Council carried out a Housing Needs Survey in 2006/2007. The major conclusion drawn from the study was that there was likely to be a substantial shortfall of affordable housing provision in the next five years. Meeting newly arising need as well as clearing the backlog of need within 5 years could be achieved through the above affordable housing requirements. The Council also uses a range of local housing indicators such as waiting and transfer lists to assess likely demand.



Who provides the housing?

Although Dartford Borough Council owns and manages an existing stock of approximately 4,300 properties it does not build or purchase new housing itself. Provision of new affordable housing is carried out by Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) who are jointly commissioned by the Council and the Homes and Communities Agency (previously the Housing Corporation). The Homes and Communities Agency is responsible for monitoring the performance of RSLs and allocating funding for new housing.

The Council works in partnership with a number of RSLs under the remit of the North Kent Housing Partnership which includes Gravesham, Medway and Swale Borough Councils. Most of our partner RSLs can provide for a range of needs including general rented and shared equity schemes and more specialised supported housing accommodation for those with particular accommodation needs.



What type of housing does the Council expect to see on new development sites?

The Housing Needs Survey has suggested that affordable housing provision should be in the form of rented and shared ownership. Affordable housing to buy will only be acceptable on new developments if it meets the Council's current affordability criteria based on house prices and income levels, for example, shared ownership housing should be made available at between 25% and 50% shares for it to be affordable to local people.

The Council has a preference for a range of 1, 2, 3 and 4 bedroom accommodation suitable for families, couples and single people. However there is an identified need for rented family accommodation in the form of houses. The agreed housing mix on development sites is the subject of negotiation between the Council, RSLs and the developer.



What are the Council's expectations regarding the location and design of affordable homes within development schemes?

The Council is keen to ensure that affordable housing units are distributed evenly, i.e. arranged in small clusters where possible across the whole of the development. Affordable housing in one area of the development will not be acceptable. In design terms, there should be no discernable difference between various types of tenure. Affordable housing should, where possible, proportionately reflect the mix of market housing taking into account local housing needs.



How is the Council ensuring the building of homes that are flexible enough to achieve 'Lifetime Homes' standards?

The Council seeks 25% of all housing across the development, including affordable housing, to be built to Lifetime Homes Standards. The Standards are set out in an appendix to the Local Plan Review.



Which RSLs form the North Kent Housing Partnership?

A list of RSLs and contact names and numbers are listed below:

Affinity Sutton Group Limited

Level 6, 6 More London Place
Tooley Street
London SE1 2DA

Contact: Sheila Thomas
(0207) 3785542
sheila.thomas@affinitysutton.com

London & Quadrant Housing Trust

Osborn House, Osborn Terrace
London SE3 9DR

Contact: Bulbul Ali
(0208) 8572870
bali@lqgroup.org.uk

Amicus Horizon

60 Bell Road
Sittingbourne
Kent ME10 4HE

Contact: Neil Tickle
(01795) 434277
Neil.tickle@amicushorizon.org.uk

Moat Housing Group

Mariner House, Galleon Boulevard
Crossways
Dartford
Kent, DA2 6QE

Contact: Sally Rice
(0845) 3596300
sally.rice@moat.co.uk

Hyde Housing Association

Knightrider Street
Maidstone
Kent

Contact: Mike Finch
(01622) 356453
mke.finch@hyde-housing.co.uk

Town and Country Housing Group

High Weald House
Monson Way
Tunbridge Wells
Kent TN1 1QL

Contact: Colin Lissenden
(01892) 501771
colin.lissenden@tchg.org.uk