

Leicester  
City Council

**WARDS AFFECTED**  
All Wards

**FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:**  
Cabinet

4<sup>th</sup> April 2005

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**REFERRAL FROM HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:  
PLANNING AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

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**Report of the Corporate Director of Housing**

**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 This report advises Cabinet of the Housing Scrutiny Committee's views on the ODPM Consultation paper "*Planning for Mixed Communities*".

**2. Summary**

- 2.1 The ODPM are proposing to advise Councils that the **minimum** size of site on which affordable housing should be sought through the planning process should normally be 15 dwellings or 0.5 hectares or below. The Housing Scrutiny Committee supports this view.

**3. Recommendations**

- 3.1 The Cabinet is recommended to
- a) consider the views of Scrutiny Committee
  - b) decide how it wishes officers to respond to the ODPM consultation paper "*Planning for Mixed Communities*", on the issue of lowering the threshold at which affordable housing will be sought on residential sites.
  - c) receive a further report, when the final ODPM guidance is issued, to consider the implications for Leicester's local planning policies. This report will incorporate the views of Strategic Planning and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee.

**4. Financial Implications (Rod Pearson)**

- 4.1 Any commuted sums received from developers in lieu of affordable housing can be fully used by the Council for the provision of affordable housing.

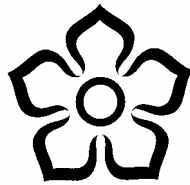
**5. Legal Implications (Joanna Bunting)**

**6. Report Author**

Ann Branson - Service Director Housing Renewal and Options – Ext 6802

## DECISION STATUS

<b>Key Decision</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Reason</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Appeared in Forward Plan</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Executive or Council Decision</b>	<b>Executive</b>



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## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **1. Report**

#### **1.1 Scrutiny Decisions**

1.1.1 On 10<sup>th</sup> March 2005, Housing Scrutiny Committee considered a joint report from the Corporate Director of Housing and the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Culture on Planning and Affordable Housing. Housing Scrutiny Committee resolved *“that the Cabinet be recommended to support the lowering of the minimum site size threshold at which affordable housing should be sought to 15 dwellings / 0.5 hectares.*

1.1.2 The report will be considered by Strategic Planning and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee on 20<sup>th</sup> April. This date is slightly beyond the deadline (15<sup>th</sup> April) for comments to be submitted to the ODPM consultation paper, *“Planning for Mixed Communities”*. However SPAR resolved on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2004, *“that the Cabinet be asked to change the Council’s affordable housing policy to 30% affordable housing units as part of any development of 10 units or more and, on any development of 100 units or above, to be 40% affordable housing;*

#### **1.2 ODPM Consultation Paper “Planning for Mixed Communities”**

1.2.1 The consultation paper states that Government policy is to create sustainable communities that offer a wide range of housing and are socially inclusive. It argues that part of what makes a community sustainable is a well-integrated mix of decent housing of different types and tenures to support a wide range of households of different sizes, ages and incomes.

1.2.2 The paper sets out how local planning authorities provider can achieve this. They include:

- Doing local housing need assessments to cover all tenures
- Ensuring regional and local planning policies seek to achieve a mix of housing

- Influencing the size, type and affordability of housing

The ODPM proposes that if the local planning authority considers that a proposal for a site does not contribute sufficiently to the objective of creating mixed communities, then the local planning authority is entitled to refuse the application.

1.2.3 The paper also proposes that the **minimum** site size threshold, above which affordable housing is to be sought, should normally be 15 dwellings or below, or sites of 0.5 hectares or below. Differential rates can be set (e.g. 15% on sites 15-24 dwellings, 30% on sites between 25-50 dwellings). It is proposed that the policy should also apply where a site could yield more units than the planning application proposes.

### 1.3 Leicester's Affordable Housing Policy in Replacement City of Leicester Local Plan

1.3.1 Leicester's current policy is to seek:

- at least 30% affordable housing on development of 25 or more dwellings or 1 hectare or more outside the Strategic Regeneration Area
- an overall target of 30% in the Strategic Regeneration Area (within grant aid supported for dwellings above the first 15% i.e. the target is 15% when no grant is available).

1.3.2 The authority receives many residential planning applications just below the current 25 dwelling threshold.

### 1.4 Future Options

1.4.1 The Corporate Director of Housing and the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Culture will submit a joint response to the Consultation Paper. The ODPM proposals will generally support the Council's existing policies in the Replacement City of Leicester Local Plan.

1.4.2 Cabinet may wish to express a view on the government's proposals to lower the threshold at which affordable housing should be sought on residential planning applications, which officers can submit in response to the Consultation paper.

1.4.3 In any case, when the final government planning guidance is published, Cabinet will need to consider the implications for the Council's policies.

## **FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

### **1. Financial Implications (Rod Pearson)**

Any commuted sums received from developers in lieu of affordable housing can be fully used by the Council for the provision of affordable housing.

### **2. Legal Implications (Joanna Pearson)**

### 3. Other Implications

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/NO	Paragraph Within Supporting information	References
Equal Opportunities	Yes	1.2.1	
Policy	Yes	1.4.3	
Sustainable and Environmental	Yes	1.2.1	
Crime and Disorder	Yes	1.2.1	
Human Rights Act	No		
Elderly/People on Low Income	Yes	1.2.1, 1.2.3, 1.3.1	

### 4. Background Papers – Local Government Act 1972

4.1 Planning and Affordable Housing – Housing Scrutiny 10<sup>th</sup> March 2005.

### 5. Consultations

### 6. Aims and Objectives

6.1 The aim of the Housing Department is “*A decent home within the reach of every citizen in Leicester*”. The provision of affordable housing helps meet key objective 2 “*To encourage provision of new housing to meet the needs of Leicester’s citizen*”.

### 7. Report Author

Ann Branson  
Service Director Housing Renewal and Options – Ext 6802