

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD**

**6 January 2009**

**Joint Report of the Director of Health and Housing and  
Director of Planning Transport and Leisure**

**Part 1- Public**

**Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Council Decision**

**1 STRATEGIC HOUSING MARKET ASSESSMENT REPORT**

**Summary**

**The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), conducted by David Couttie Associates (DCA). The report also seeks Members' endorsement of this document, carried out in partnership with Sevenoaks District Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and recommends that it be adopted as a material consideration for Development Control. A presentation by David Couttie will be made to the Strategic Housing Advisory Board on January 5 to which PTAB Members are also invited, when there will be the opportunity to raise any questions regarding the SHMA directly. A report will be considered by both Advisory Boards as it is material to both the housing and planning functions of the Council.**

**1.1 Background**

- 1.1.1 Members will recall from previous meetings of the board that the Council commissioned David Couttie Associates (DCA) to undertake a SHMA. The report was commissioned in accordance with the requirements of PPS3 and the Communities and Local Government (CLG) "Strategic Housing Market Assessments Practical Guidance" (August 2007), to gain a robust and comprehensive assessment of housing demand and need within the Borough. The last similar surveys produced were the Housing Needs and Affordability Study (2002), and the Housing Needs and Market Assessment (2005) which informed the preparation of the Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy and subsequent Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) .
- 1.1.2 Tunbridge Wells Borough Council has led on the exercise, as both they and Sevenoaks District Council require the report as an evidence base to support the submission of their Core Strategies. The requirement to prepare such a study post-dates the submission of our Core Strategy. We agreed to participate principally because the other two parties could not prepare a sub-regional study without our active involvement. In any event it was considered useful to serve as

an updating of our market evidence and to refine our approach to implementation of our planning policies and housing strategy objectives. Its publication is currently amongst the criteria for Housing Planning Delivery Grant award.

1.1.3 The report will be published in early 2009, with the purpose to inform the further development of housing and planning policies in the West Kent market area. The document makes recommendations on:

- the general mix of market housing by size to be delivered from future new developments, which is something new that is not addressed in our Core Strategy;
- the target levels for affordable housing and future unit delivery by size; and
- the type and size of affordable housing to be provided in the future.

## 1.2 Key Findings

1.2.1 The recommendations on the target levels for affordable housing, as well as the type and size of affordable housing to be provided in the future provides a clear endorsement of the Council's adopted policies. The affordable housing trigger thresholds for planning applications, affordable housing unit size percentage ratios and affordable housing tenure splits contained in the adopted Core Strategy and Affordable Housing SPD are identical to those recommended in the SHMA. There is, therefore, no need to consider amending these documents as a result of this study. The housing needs data upon which the Study is based is valid until 2010, at which stage it may require fully updating.

1.2.2 The key findings of the report are:

- the proposed scale of future provision of housing in the Draft South East Plan to 2026 is lower than would be required to fully meet demand levels in the market sector (notwithstanding current market circumstances) and affordable housing need. That conclusion is hardly surprising in a predominantly restraint, Green Belt area and clearly from a planning viewpoint is over-simplistic as such factors must be balanced against other important considerations;
- future market housing provision should seek to address current stock imbalances and meet predicted demographic change, which effectively means the provision of more housing suitable for smaller households;
- that it is necessary to consider a range of site thresholds below 15 units in sub-areas within each authority, recognising that viability issues may require even lower target levels. This is the approach that we have adopted. A lower threshold (five units) applies in the rural areas and viability is considered on a site-by-site basis;

- a detailed feasibility study needs to be undertaken of the various delivery issues for intermediate market rent which is a matter for the Strategic Housing Advisory Board to consider in reviewing the Council's Housing Strategy
- the need to develop Housing Strategies to make the best use of the existing stock by providing positive incentives to improve the turn-over of family houses in the social sector. This is likewise a matter for Strategic Housing Advisory Board;
- the requirement to address the current and future growth in older people and frail older households across all tenures and their related care and support needs. This is material to both the housing and planning functions of the Council.

1.2.3 The final report will inform the contents of the Council's new Housing Strategy document, as well as provide robust evidence for our continuing enabling efforts for affordable housing provision in association with future planning applications.

### **1.3 Planning Implications**

1.3.1 As mentioned above, it is gratifying that the conclusions of this up-to-date Study endorse the approach in our currently adopted planning documents. There is only one area that is new and that is the advice on the mix of market housing required. The recommended mix is:

- 5% - 1 Bedroom units;
- 50% - 2 bedroom units;
- 40% - 3 bedroom units;
- 10% - 4 bedroom + units

1.3.2 It is a requirement of PPS3 that Core Strategies should include advice on the mix of market household types but, as mentioned above, this advice post-dated the submission of our Core Strategy. Whilst we were able to take on board some of the changes in the latest version of PPS3, it was impossible to meet this particular requirement because the 2005 Housing Needs Assessment that informed our Core Strategy had not addressed this issue.

1.3.3 In the case of the SHMA David Couttie has expressed market household demand in terms of dwellings size and type. These conclusions are a material consideration for development control. That is not to say that development that does not meet these requirements should be refused, but it will help inform decisions on the appropriateness of planning submissions. For example, the relative lack of need for 1 bedroom flats. What PPS3 says is that developers should bring forward proposals for market housing that reflect the demand and

profile of households requiring market housing as evidenced in the SHMA. It s therefore as much advice to the housebuilders as it is to the planning authority.

## **1.4 Legal Implications**

- 1.4.1 In accordance with the requirements of PPS3 and Communities and Local Government (CLG) "Strategic Housing Market Assessments Practical Guidance" (August 2007) local authorities are required to carry out such surveys to gain a robust and comprehensive assessment of housing demand and need within the housing market area. The last similar surveys produced were the Housing Needs and Affordability Study (2002), and the Housing Needs and Market Assessment (2005) but these only applied to the Borough.

## **1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

- 1.5.1 The cost of preparing the report has been covered by the LDF Reserve fund and shared equally between the three authorities. The Housing and Planning Delivery Grant rewards the preparation of such a study and more or less covers its cost.

## **1.6 Risk Assessment**

- 1.6.1 There was a risk that the conclusions of the Study might have in some way conflicted with the content of the Core Strategy or the Affordable Housing SPD which might have necessitated their early review. Fortunately, this is not the case.

## **1.7 Recommendation**

- 1.7.1 That the West Kent Strategic Housing Market Assessment **BE ADOPTED** as a material consideration for development control.

Background papers:

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None

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