

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

23 February 2008

Joint Report of the Director of Health and Housing and the Director of Planning Transportation and Leisure

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken by the Cabinet Member)

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. A presentation will be given by David Couttie to which Planning and Transportation Advisory Board (PTAB) Members will also be invited, and 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 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 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 in supporting the submission of their LDF 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 shortly with the purpose of informing 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 policy. 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 conclusions on market housing mix can be regarded as a material consideration for development control and will help to influence the type of development proposed.

1.2.2 The housing needs data upon which the Study is based is valid until 2010, at which stage it may require fully updating.

1.2.3 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 restrained, Green Belt area and clearly from a planning viewpoint it is simplistic as such factors must be balanced against other important factors;
- future market housing provision must 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 lower target levels further still. 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;
- 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; and
- 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.

1.2.4 The final report will inform the contents of the Council's new Housing Strategy document, as well as providing robust evidence for our continuing enabling efforts for affordable housing provision in connection with future planning applications. It will also be adopted as a material consideration for development control.

1.3 Legal Implications

1.3.1 In accordance with the Communities and Local Government (CLG) "Strategic Housing Market Assessments Practical Guidance" (August 2007) local authorities need to carry out such surveys to gain a robust and comprehensive assessment of local housing demand and need. The last similar surveys produced were the Housing Needs and Affordability Study (2002), and the Housing Needs and Market Assessment (2005).

1.4 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.4.1 The study was funded by Planning Delivery Grant and its publication is amongst the criteria for Housing Planning Delivery grant award.

1.5 Risk Assessment

1.5.1 Failure to conduct the survey may have compromised the validity of the adopted LDF Core Strategy and the adopted Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document. It also means that the results of any future study may not have been capable of sub regional analysis, in conflict with government guidance.

1.6 Recommendations

1.6.1 That **CABINET** is requested to **NOTE** and **ENDORSE** the contents of the West Kent Strategic Housing Market Assessment for the purpose of updating the Council's next Housing Strategy.

The Director of Health and Housing confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

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Nil

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