

Spelthorne Borough Council

Supplementary Planning Document

on

Housing Size and Type

Consultation Draft

April 2012



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Appendices

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this Supplementary Planning Document is to explain in more detail the Council's requirements for securing the right size and type of dwelling in new residential developments and conversions.
- 1.2 Those requirements are set out in Policy HO4 of the Council's Core Strategy and Policies Development Plan Document (DPD)¹ and the supporting explanatory text to that policy. An extract of the policy and explanatory text is set out in full in Appendix A.
- 1.3 The purpose of the policy is to ensure that the mix of new dwellings, together with the existing housing stock, best meets the housing needs of the Borough as a whole.

2. What the policy requires

- 2.1 The policy seeks to ensure, during the plan period from 2006 to 2026, that:
 - a. In any residential scheme of 4 or more dwellings at least 80% of the dwellings should be one and two bedroom units;
 - b. Encouragement is given for the provision of housing to meet the needs of older people, including the provision of 400 units of extra care housing on suitable sites.
- 2.2 The last sentence of the explanatory paragraph 6.22 of Policy HO4 in the Core Strategy and Policies DPD provides an important qualification that exceptions to the requirements of the policy may be made where there is a need for larger affordable dwellings to be included in the mix.
- 2.3 The policy also encourages the provision of some dwellings which are designed to meet the needs of people with disabilities. This aspect of the policy is not dealt with in this SPD

3. Background to the Policy and this SPD

- 3.1 Over the life of the Core Strategy and Policies DPD from 2006 to 2026 the Council's policy is to ensure that 3320 additional dwellings are built. This will add some 8% to the existing dwelling stock of over 40,000.
- 3.2 Policy HO4 within the Core Strategy and Policies DPD was based on a Housing Needs Assessment and further detailed research on the size of dwellings that should make up the additional 3320. That work showed a significant projected growth in the number of small households and a need for smaller dwellings. It also showed a steady loss of existing smaller dwellings by extensions to existing properties of at least one or more bedrooms. The policy requirement that 80% of new dwellings in schemes of 4 or more should be 1 and 2 bedroomed is aimed at ensuring the additional 3320 dwellings helps maintain an appropriate balance in the existing dwelling stock as a whole.

¹ Core Strategy and Policies Development Plan Document, February 2009.

- 3.3 A further study of dwelling size and affordable housing requirements was undertaken in January 2012 and has informed this supplementary guidance². This shows that there is a continuing need for smaller dwellings overall but there is a specific need for affordable dwellings which can accommodate families. In particular the study found that during the period of 2006 to 2026:
- a. The overall population of the Borough is likely to remain broadly static.
 - b. There will be a growth in the number of smaller households with the increase in one-person households rising from around 12,475 to 17,150 – a difference of some 4,675.
 - c. Part of the growth in single person households is accounted for by the growth in the number of older people.
 - d. There will be a particular need for 1, 2 and 3 bedroom private housing.
 - e. Information from the Housing Register shows that there is an on-going need for affordable housing.
 - f. A significant part of the need for affordable housing is met from re-lets from the existing housing stock, but additional affordable housing is required to meet demand.
 - g. The required additional affordable housing needs to be family accommodation for between 4 and 7 persons to ensure an appropriate balance within the social housing stock.
- 3.4 The study concluded that there was no need to change Policy HO4 but that the 80% requirements for 1 and 2 bedroom dwellings should not apply to affordable family accommodation.
- 3.5 In the private housing market there is still the need for 80% 1 and 2 bedroom accommodation. However, no more than one third should be 1 bedroom. The balance of 20% should be 3 bedroom accommodation. This reflects the existing guidance in the supporting text to Policy HO1 in the Core Strategy.
- 3.6 The study recognised that developments of fewer than 4 dwellings were exempt from the 80% requirement and would continue to provide a supply of larger private dwellings.

4. Affordable housing requirements

- 4.1 Affordable housing will be required in any developments of 15 or more dwellings and, in addition, social landlords will be encouraged to bring forward smaller sites. This is required by Policy HO3 of the Core Strategy and Policies DPD. Where new schemes come forward they will be required to contribute to the need for affordable family housing.

² 'Provision of Smaller Dwellings', January 2012.

- 4.2 The Council's research has confirmed that the size of affordable family dwellings required, and the proportions in which they need to be provided, are as follows:
- 2 bedroom 4 person dwellings 66%
 - 3 bedroom 5 person dwellings 31%
 - 4 bedroom 6 and 7 person dwellings 3%
- 4.3 The minimum floorspace requirements for dwellings of these bedroom/person sizes are set out in the Council's Supplementary Planning Document 'Design of Residential Extensions and New Residential Development'³, Appendix 4.

5. Providing an appropriate dwelling mix in new developments

- 5.1 The Council recognises that town centre residential schemes will usually be at a higher density in the form of flats and often as part of a mixed use scheme. In these cases most of the dwellings will be one or two bedroom accommodation. Larger units providing family accommodation will usually be more appropriate in non-town centre locations.
- 5.2 On non-town centre sites there will be a number of factors to be taken into account in deciding on the appropriate dwelling mix. These are as follows:

1. **Affordable housing:** This should be provided in proportions to meet the mix set out in paragraph 4.2. This mix will be applied in line with the explanatory text to the policy in the Core Strategy and Policies DPD.

The need for four bedroom accommodation, whilst small, is important. However, providing such a small proportion (3%) in schemes involving less than 10 affordable dwellings is not always practical. Therefore, whilst the Council will encourage four bedroom affordable accommodation in schemes of less than 10 affordable dwellings, in order to ensure sufficient units of this size are provided it will require the proportion to be a minimum of 10% in developments where 10 or more affordable dwellings are provided.

2. **Private housing:** There is a need for smaller private sector dwellings (in terms of bedroom numbers) of 3 bedrooms or less. 80% of dwellings in schemes of 4 or more dwellings should be 1 or 2 bedroom with the 1 bedroom proportion not exceeding a third. The remaining 20% should be 3 bedroom. These requirements will not apply to small schemes of 3 or less dwellings which will provide the opportunity for larger dwellings to be provided.
3. **Sheltered housing schemes:** such schemes generally have only one and two bedroom accommodation and there will be no requirement for larger units in such developments.
4. **Character of housing development:** Any development will need to reflect the character of the area in which it is situated. In suburban areas of the Borough flats are less likely to be in character. Where

³ Design of Residential Extensions and New Residential Development, April 2011.

there is a predominance of larger dwellings a mix with less than 80% one and two bedroom dwellings may be appropriate with a greater proportion of 3 bedroom dwellings. However, the majority should still have one and two bedrooms.

6. Other matters

a. Design

- 6.1 All schemes for new residential development should have regard to Policy EN1 which sets out a number of requirements including regard for local character, quality of design and avoiding an adverse impact on amenity. These are amplified in the SPD on the 'Design of Residential extensions and new Residential development'

b. Pre-application advice

- 6.2 The Council welcomes the opportunity to provide pre-application advice and its arrangements for providing this are explained on its website.⁴ This advice can provide the opportunity for particular mixes of dwellings, as well as other matters, to be discussed and resolved at an early stage in the design process.

⁴ www.spelthorne.gov.uk

Providing for Different Types of Housing

- 6.22 Policy HO4 sets out the mechanisms for ensuring a range of housing size and types to meet community needs. It takes account of the existing stock of some 39,500 dwellings of which 65% have three or more bedrooms.
- 6.23 The Council considers that the need for smaller dwellings in the Borough would best be met by requiring a high proportion of all new housing and conversions to be 1 and 2 bedroom dwellings. The figure needs to take account of the large number of existing dwellings that are extended every year by one or more bedrooms. Very small infill developments generally provide a disproportionate number of 3 and 4 bedroom dwellings. Therefore, on all developments of four or more dwellings a minimum of 80% 1 and 2 bedroom dwellings will be required. The Council's research suggests that about two thirds of these should be 2 bedroom dwellings. Of the remaining 20% of dwellings the greatest need is for 3 bedroom dwellings because much of the demand in the Borough for 4 bedroom dwellings and larger is met by the extensions to existing properties. It is important that the mix of dwellings in any individual development contributes to the needs identified above. The only exceptions will be where the requirements for affordable housing dictate a greater mix of larger dwellings.
- 6.24 There is a need for up to 400 units of extra care housing in Spelthorne by 2026. Because of the care requirements such housing can best be provided in larger schemes of around 40 units. Provision will be achieved by negotiation on individual sites.
- 6.25 The Council will encourage the provision of dwellings that exceed the minimum disability requirements so that they are, or can easily be made, fully accessible for disabled occupiers. In practice this will mean space for easy installation of a stair lift and facilities such as bathrooms that can easily be adapted for disabled occupiers at first floor level.

Policy HO4: Housing Size and Type

The Council will ensure that the size and type of housing reflects the needs of the community by:

- a) requiring developments, including conversions, that propose four or more dwellings to include at least 80% of their total as one or two bedroom units,
- b) encouraging the provision of housing designed to meet the needs of older people, including the provision of 400 units of extra care housing on suitable sites over the period 2006 to 2026,
- c) encouraging the inclusion within housing schemes of a proportion of dwellings that are capable of meeting the needs, as occupiers, of people with disabilities.