

LOCAL PLAN SUB COMMITTEE - 22 AUGUST 2019

PART I – NOT DELEGATED

6A. HOUSING DENSITY (DCES)

1 Summary

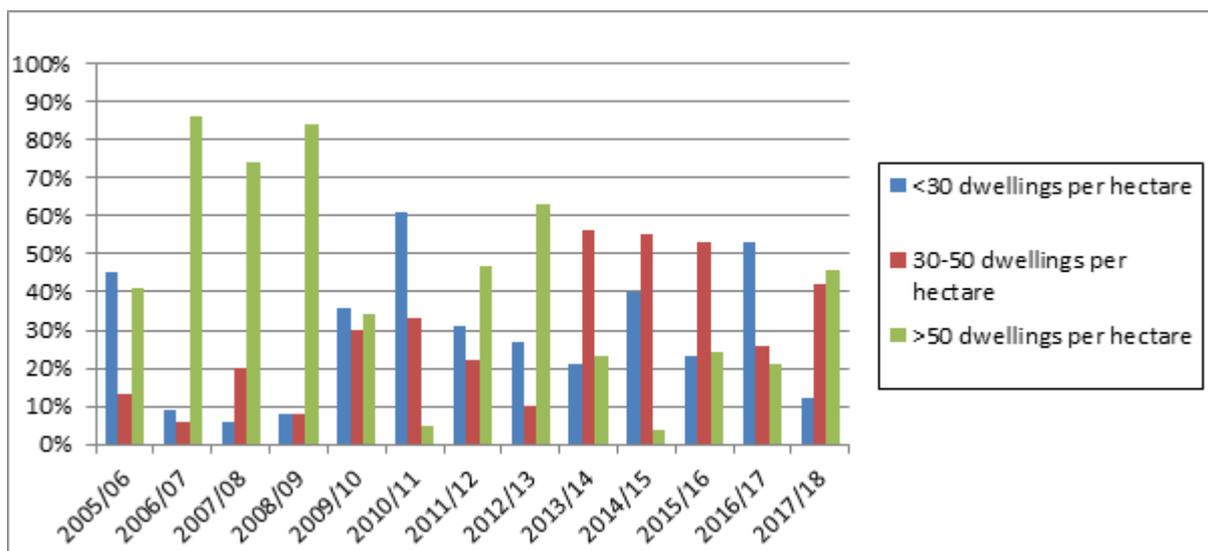
1.1 This topic paper sets out the issues which the new Local Plan will need to address in relation to housing densities and proposes policy wording to be contained within the new Local Plan.

2 Details

2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) advises that plans should contain policies to optimise the use of land in their area and meet as much of the identified need for housing as possible, and should include the use of minimum density standards for city and town centres and other locations that are well served by public transport. These should seek a significant uplift in density in these areas unless there are strong reasons why this would be inappropriate. Minimum density standards should also be considered for other parts of the plan area.

2.2 Given the constrained supply of available land to meet needs for growth in Three Rivers, it is particularly important that all new housing comes forward at a density which makes efficient use of land, and that the Local Plan secures an uplift in the average density of residential density where appropriate and in accordance with other policies in the Local Plan.

2.3 Monitoring data shows that past housing completions in Three Rivers have been delivered at a range of densities. Average densities have varied year to year depending on the nature of the schemes which have come forward within that year, with some years showing a high proportion of completions at less than 30 dwellings per hectare and other years showing a higher proportion of completions per hectare. The table below, which is included in the 2017-2018 Annual Monitoring Report, shows the variation in densities in housing completions.



2.4 The average housing densities¹ across the District are set out below:

1996-1999 = 25

2000 - 2003 = 24

2004 - 2007 = 26

2008 - 2011 = 21

2013 - 2015 = 37

2015 - 2016 = 25

2017 - 2018 = 35

2.5 The existing built up areas of the District have a varied character, including as a consequence of the density of development. For example, within Rickmansworth Town Centre, residential densities are approximately 52, while in Chorleywood densities are approximately 18.

2.6 It is considered that a minimum housing density of 50 dwellings per hectare should be set for the District with higher densities expected from areas well served by public transport, services and facilities. It is considered that this will strike an appropriate balance for the District between optimising the use of land and securing an uplift in appropriate locations while ensuring due regard for the character and amenities of the District and the quality of life of residents.

2.7 Whilst it is important to make more efficient use of land, particularly to reduce pressure on greenfield and/or Green Belt sites, this should not compromise the quality of the environment and existing residential areas in Three Rivers, some of which may fall within areas of special historic or landscape value. The draft policy therefore states that where lower densities are proposed on the basis of the character or amenities of an area, the reasons for this should be explained as part of any application.

2.8 The proposed Draft Housing Density Policy (Appendix 1) sets out the minimum density standards.

3 Policy/Budget Reference and Implications

3.1 The recommendations in this report are within the Council's agreed policy and budgets.

4 Financial, Legal, Equal Opportunities, Staffing, Environmental, Community Safety, Public Health, Customer Services Centre, Communications & Website, Risk Management and Health & Safety Implications

1.1 ¹ Average housing densities across the District = source Live Tables on Land Use Change <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-land-use-change-statistics>

4.1 None specific.

5 Recommendation

5.1 That the Local Plan Sub Committee note the contents of this report and recommend to the Policy and Resources Committee the Draft Housing Density Policy as set out in Appendix 1

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Background Papers

National Planning Policy Framework (2019)

Annual Monitoring Report (2017 – 2018)

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Draft Housing Density Policy

APPENDIX 1

DRAFT HOUSING DENSITY POLICY

Policy xx Housing Density

- 1) The Council will promote high quality residential development that respects the character of the District and caters for a range of housing needs. Development should make the most efficient use of land, without compromising the quality of the environment or existing residential areas.
- 2) New housing should be provided at a target density responding to the site, its context and the housing need with densities generally of at least 50 dwellings per hectare. In areas well served by public transport, services and facilities higher densities will be expected.
- 3) There may be occasions where a lower density of development would be appropriate with regard to a site and its context; for example within an area of special historic or landscape value, or specialist forms of accommodation. Any proposals for development at a density below the target levels above should include supporting information to justify the proposed approach.