

South Wiltshire Core Strategy Examination

**Matter 7 Core Policy 3 – Affordable Housing**

**How can the affordable housing target be met if it is proposed to deliver 40% affordable homes only on sites containing 15 or more houses, and even this is subject to negotiation?**

The Core Strategy is unsound because the plan for achieving the affordable housing levels is not sufficiently robust.

Based on evidence provided by the Local Housing Needs & Market Survey of 2006, the strategy has identified a requirement of 702 affordable houses per year. The target of 250 affordable houses per year is just over one third of the stated need and 40% of the proposed total of new houses. The introduction states that: “This Strategy has been developed to be deliverable.” (1)

However, the current wording of the strategy does not ensure achievement of this objective. It relies on an undefined majority of affordable houses being provided by developers; the requirements of the plan make it unlikely that 40% affordable houses will be delivered overall; there is no reference to the number of affordable houses that could, realistically, be provided through other possible alternatives.

“The main way to meet the majority of affordable housing need is by requiring house builders to provide a proportion of such homes in their developments.” (2)

1. Without a definition of “the majority of affordable housing need” it is unclear how many houses will have to be provided in other ways, and consequently whether such provision is viable.

“The plan requires 40% of such homes to be delivered in all new schemes of 15 houses or more and 25% on developments of 5 to 14 houses. Smaller developments will be required to make a commuted sum payment.” (3)

2. The overall delivery target is likely to be achieved only if **all** developments consist of 15 or more houses and delivering houses in small batches on larger sites does not provide scope for reducing the 40% requirement

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(1) Core Strategy 1.10 p 4

(2) Core Strategy 3.3(b) p 19

(3) Core Strategy 3.3(b) p 19

“The provision of affordable housing will be negotiated on a site-by-site basis”. (4)

3. The overall 40% target can be met only if there is a mechanism to ensure that a reduction in the percentage of affordable housing delivered on one site is balanced by a corresponding increase elsewhere.

“Preference is for the provision to be made without public subsidy but if this can be demonstrated not to be possible for reasons of viability then the Council will consider other delivery mechanisms including the use of public subsidy, or the transfer of land”. (5)

4. It is necessary to know what percentage of the affordable housing need **can** be met by these alternatives, so that any shortfalls arising from smaller developments or negotiation are not permitted to reach a level which cannot be made up by other means.

It may not be possible to ensure the delivery of the target of 40% or 250 new affordable homes annually (5) unless the methods for achieving that outcome are defined more precisely.

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(4) Core Strategy – Core Policy 3 p 62

(5) Core Strategy – Core Policy 3 p 62