

# Cabinet

Meeting date: 20 December 2022

## Member Questions (2 total)

### 1. Question from Councillor Wendy Flynn to Cabinet Member for Housing, and Cabinet Member for Cyber, Regeneration and Commercial Income

Many new developments include quotas for affordable housing but "affordable" housing isn't affordable for many. Homes available at social rent are in great demand, as demonstrated by the Council's housing waiting list. CBC, owning many hectares of land at Golden Valley, are in a strong position to provide homes available for rent at social rent levels. What is the minimum number of homes, available for **social rent**, that CBC plans to build on its land as a part of the Golden Valley Development?

#### Response from Cabinet Members

Thank you Councillor Flynn for your question. I agree that Social Rented homes are the most genuinely affordable homes the Council can provide.

To answer your question, it may be helpful to differentiate between the separate roles of the Council.

Firstly, the Council has a Landowner function. As landowner and development partner (with HBD x Factory), the Council intends to bring forward development that reflects the housing policy requirements. The 35% Affordable Housing ambition is currently included in the financial modelling for the project and we hope to maintain this as the project develops. However, the eventual housing and tenure mix will need to be considered in the light of the prevailing economic climate when each of the development plots that make up the whole of the site comes forward. This is a 10 year plus project.

The Council also has a Housing Enabling function. On a large site such as the Golden Valley Development, the Council's Housing Strategy and Enabling Team will be seeking 35% of all homes to be Affordable Housing, as required by planning policy.

As a starting point our team would expect the Affordable Housing element to be split as follows: 70% Social Rented; 30% Affordable Home Ownership, given that it is important we take account of the broader housing needs of the Borough, as set out in our latest local housing needs assessment. This therefore means that of the rented homes that we expect to see delivered as Affordable Housing on this development, 100% of them would be let as a Social Rent.

In the event that there are financial viability issues (and we are satisfied this has been independently tested) then Officers would have to review our tenure mix. In the first instance, Officers would still prioritise delivering Social Rent across those homes where affordability is likely to be most acute – i.e. on 1 bedroom homes and 4 bedroom homes or larger, with the remaining rented homes being provided as Affordable Rent.

Councillor Flynn may be aware that Affordable Rents can be set at up to 80% of market rents, which does call into question whether these homes are truly affordable for low income households, particularly as market rents have increased significantly in recent times. As such, should it be necessary that Affordable Rents are included in the tenure mix, then Officers would seek to ensure that these rents are set at no higher than Local Housing Allowance levels. Please see the link below for details on our current Local Housing Allowance levels against different size properties.

[Current local housing allowance rates | Local Housing Allowance rates | Cheltenham Borough Council](#)

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## **2. Question from Councillor Wendy Flynn to Cabinet Member for Customer and Regulatory Services**

During the Council meeting on 20th July, 2020, the then Leader, Steve Jordan, reassured me, along with members of the Hesters Way Neighbourhood Forum who were present at that meeting, of the Council's commitment to engaging with and supporting the Forum. There have been some issues with the Forum receiving support from the Council, which, along with Covid challenges, have held up the plan process. Under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), the Council has a statutory duty to assist communities in the preparation of neighbourhood development plans. I am happy to report that communications between the Forum and this Council have been re-established and hope that the Plan will now progress smoothly. Will the Leader ensure that, going forward, the Council meets its obligations with regards to the Hesters Way Neighbourhood Forum and will she also reassure the Forum that it has her support, as the previous Leader did?

### **Response from Cabinet Member**

The Council is mindful of its statutory duties and recognises the need to support communities in the preparation of Neighbourhood Development Plans. Support has and will continue to be provided which will include, amongst other aspects, whether applications relating to the designation of a neighbourhood forum satisfy the statutory requirements; consideration of Neighbourhood Plan areas; and assistance with the production of producing Neighbourhood Development Plans such as publicising plan proposals. With regard to the Hesters Way Neighbourhood Forum designation, the Neighbourhood Forum was designated on 5 December 2017. The designation of the Neighbourhood Forum expires by law after 5 years so has now expired. Therefore, the designation of the Neighbourhood Forum will need to be

considered again by Cabinet, in a similar way that it was previously considered in December 2017. Officers are in the process of considering a potential date for Cabinet in early 2023. Should Councillor Flynn wish to discuss the detail of the Hesters Way neighbourhood plan or any part of the process, the planning policy team will be very happy to assist.