

Cheltenham Borough Council

Officer Decision – Director of Planning & Building Control

Date of Decision: 02/12/2025

Accountable officer:

Tracey Birkinshaw, Director of Planning & Building Control

Ward(s) affected:

All

Key Decision: No

Exempt Decision: No

Decision:

To publish the JCS Affordable Housing Guidance Note (AHGN)

Reasons for the decision:

The JCS Affordable Housing Guidance Note (AHGN), covering the three Joint Core Strategy ([JCS](#)) authorities (Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury) has been prepared to provide clarity and guidance around existing affordable housing related policies found within the JCS and three authorities' respective Local Plans. The AHGN will:

- Support the JCS authorities to making timely decisions on planning applications,
- Support the creation of cohesive communities and delivering much-needed affordable homes for residents in housing need.
- Inform future affordable housing-related policies within the SLP by supporting proactive engagement with industry stakeholders as part of day-to-day work and the wider SLP examination programme.

Alternative options:

The three JCS authorities considered preparing an Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). However, owing to the resource implications of completing this document against the background of an ambitious [Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury Strategic and Local Plan](#) (SLP) timeline, and the need to meet housing need and deliver more affordable homes was challenging and would in due course be overtaken by updating of policies via the

SLP.

Another alternative option that officers considered was not publishing an Affordable Housing Guidance Note (AHGN). However, reflecting on experience of using the existing policies to date it was considered that to secure better outcomes around affordable housing delivery and community cohesion, the creation of guidance to support the implementation of JCS policy was appropriate as a proactive tool to work with developers and Registered Providers.

Consultation and feedback:

The JCS authorities and Housing Enabling Teams have consulted with a range of stakeholders to produce the JCS AHGN.

- Planning Policy and Development Management Officers from the three JCS authorities advised that, in view of the SLP timelines and resource constraints, it would be advisable for an Affordable Housing guidance note to be published instead of a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).
- Planning Policy and Development Management colleagues suggested using a different presentation format, focusing on providing a clear and concise policy position, before following with guidance to support policy implementation.
- The Planning Member Liaison Working Group (PMWLG) were consulted on the high-level principles of the AHGN, with no significant changes being proposed to the document.
- Relevant Cabinet/Executive Members from the three authorities were consulted, with no changes being proposed.
- Housing, Health and Care Partnership (HHCIP) - This group suggested minor amendments to the draft, especially in relation to adding references to best practice in the design of older persons accommodation and seeking clarification around the delivery of level access and wheelchair accessible homes, which was duly provided whilst recognising that this document cannot create new policy.
- JCS Affordable Housing Partnership - suggested that the JCS authorities should add further details around tenure blind requirements, as well as ensuring consistency in references to wheelchair accessible homes.

Finally, after concluding engagement with relevant stakeholders, officers reviewed the final draft AHGN with the Cabinet Member for Planning & Building Control and Cabinet Member for Housing, who supported the document as now presented, but asked that officers present the documents to all members to support member understanding of how this document will be applied in Cheltenham Borough. Both members endorsed the next step of publication. This officer decision will be published alongside similar decisions published by Gloucester and Tewkesbury.

Background information:

N/A

Finance Approval:

N/A- No financial implications as the AHGN is simply an articulation of existing policy.

Signed:

Date:

Interests declared:

None

Signed: Tracey Birkinshaw, Director Planning & Building Control Date: 02/12/25