

## **INFORMATION NOTE 11**

### **Housing Mix, Type and Density**

**South West Regional Assembly  
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# **SOUTH WEST REGIONAL ASSEMBLY**

## **INFORMATION NOTE 11**

### **Housing Mix, Density and Type**

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Building on the Draft PPS3: Housing the recently published PPS3 requires the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) to :

*“set the region’s housing density policies, including any target” (paragraph 45).*

It also states that:

*“30 dwellings per hectare (dph) net should be used as an indicative minimum to guide policy development”.*

- 1.2 The Draft PPS3 also included a table of indicative density ranges for city centre, urban, suburban and rural locations and criteria for the choice of appropriate levels of density for an area. This is now omitted from PPS3 but is the only guidance on indicative density ranges that has been available and has been used in the formation of the Draft RSS policy on density.

- 1.3 PPS3 also requires the RSS to:

*“set out the region’s approach to achieving a good mix of housing”.*

- 1.4 This briefing paper sets out the key issues in the region relating to housing density, mix and tenure, highlights associated issues, and sets out how the Draft RSS for the South West meets these requirements.

#### **2 State of the Region**

##### **Density**

- 2.1 Population growth and limited brownfield land supply in the right places means densities of new development need to be relatively high. In line with sustainability principles and the sequential approach there is now widespread acknowledgement that the re-use of previously developed land where appropriate makes the most efficient use of land, enabling the preservation of greenfield land, preserving scarce land resources and creating conditions where a choice of sustainable transport modes (including walking) can be delivered effectively. High density development has a key role to play within this context as it

enables a greater proportion of development to occur on this previously developed land and thus has a key contribution to make to sustainable development.

- 2.2 In the right location high density development can enable people to live and work in the same location and reduce the need to travel particularly by private cars. It can also support a range of local services and create more energy efficient developments and thus generally has a role to play in creating more sustainable settlements. In line with the settlement strategy of the Draft RSS, high density development is a way of making best use of scarce land resources in the most sustainable locations and enabling the development of more self contained settlements. High density development although not universally popular can also produce visually and exciting sustainable settlements.
- 2.3 Monitoring data has shown that density has been increasing in the South West region. The DCLG Land Use Change Statistics show that in 2001 the average density in the South West was 26 dph and that this has increased to 34 dph in 2005. This is a higher rate than for England as a whole where in 2001 the average density was 22 dph and in 2005 an average density of 31 dph. It has also been shown that the percent of dwellings being built at higher level densities (of 50 dph or more) in 2006 is higher than in 2005 (SWRA 2006). This data shows that higher densities are being delivered within the region.
- 2.4 An exemplary urban extension incorporating higher density levels is Poundbury at Dorchester which although portrayed as a 'village' demonstrates how these densities can be used to give a high quality urban feel to an extension.

### **Mix and Type**

- 2.5 The South West is experiencing social trends which are leading to increased demand for housing. A important trend is that more single people are choosing to live alone reflecting increased life span and increased independence in old age, but other influences such as high levels of divorce also contribute to declining household size. By 2026 it is predicted that 30% of the population will be over 60 years of age and it is likely that this will also put pressure on the need for more single person dwellings to suit this ageing population. Also these demographics may lead to demand for more specialist accommodation catering for different groups of elderly people.
- 2.6 A further issue is that this increased demand for housing has contributed towards inflated house prices and the gap between house prices and income has led to affordability issues in the region with many people being priced out of the housing market. This increased demand for housing and the affordability issues suggest a need to increase and accelerate the provision of housing to provide adequate choice and mix of housing, as well as a need to address relatively low household incomes.

### 3 Density, Mix and Type Issues

#### Density Issues

- 3.1 There are a number of key issues and challenges related to the delivery of high density development. Many of the barriers to achieving higher densities concern consumer attitudes and related issues of market acceptance, rather than technical feasibility. Other issues include design challenges and differing views on where high density development is appropriate. A summary of the pros and cons of high density development and the key issues is contained in Appendix A.

#### Mix and Type Issues

- 3.2 There are a number key issues and challenges related to type and mix of housing. These include the need to make tenure physically indistinguishable and reaching agreement on what type and mix is needed in a development. A summary of the pros and cons of mixed tenure and type and the key issues is contained in Appendix B.

### 4 Policy Context

#### Planning Policy Guidance 3 (PPG3) and Circular 01/05 Residential Densities

- 4.1 PPG3 states that Local Planning Authorities should avoid developments that make inefficient use of land of less than 30 dwelling per hectare. It encourages housing development which makes more efficient use of land at 30 and 50 dwellings per hectare.
- 4.2 Circular 01/05 and the Density Direction ensure that developments of less than 30 dph are called in to the Secretary of State.

#### Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing Consultation Version

- 4.3 The Draft PPS3 indicated that the RSS would be required to:

*“set out the regions density target and/or the regions density range/s”  
(paragraph 5f).*

- 4.4 It also included a table of indicative density ranges in Annex C:

	Location			
	City Centre	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Density Range (dwellings per hectare)	Above 70	40-75	35-55	30-40

4.5 Annex C also sets out criteria that can be used to inform the choice of an appropriate level of density for a development. This is attached at Appendix C.

4.6 In terms of mix and type the Draft PPS3 requires the RSS to:

*“set out the region’s approach to achieving an appropriate mix of household types to meet need and demand” (paragraph 5h).*

### **Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing**

4.7 The recently published PPS3, which supercedes the PPG3 and the Draft PPS3 requires the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) to :

*“set the region’s housing density policies, including any target” (paragraph 45).*

It also states that:

*“30 dwellings per hectare net should be used as an indicative minimum to guide policy development” (paragraph 47).*

### **Regional Housing Strategy (RHS)**

4.8 The RHS is central to the development of housing policy and delivery of housing in the region and has a two way relationship with the RSS. The RHS mission is to work in partnership to ensure everyone has access to a good quality home within a sustainable and inclusive community. It sets out 3 main aims:

- Balancing housing markets with a range of tenures and to improve the balance between supply and demand;
- Achieve good quality homes;
- Support sustainable communities.

### **Regional Planning Guidance 10 (RPG10)**

4.9 RPG10 states in policy HO6: Mix of Housing Types and Densities that “development plans should make more efficient use of land by encouraging housing development at higher net densities than have been achieved in the past, ie, averaging around 30-50 dph across the region, with significantly higher densities on urban sites, especially those close to town centres and transport nodes” (p81).

## **5 Housing Density, Mix and Type in the Draft RSS**

5.1 The draft RSS Policy on density has three levels specified which local authorities will need to address individually and in collaboration with others in Housing Market Areas. The base level for all development is 30dph and the balancing level across HMAs is set at 40 dph. This will give local authorities some flexibility. The expectation is that urban

development densities will be much higher, with densities on small urban infill and infill in market forms reaching in excess of 100dph in certain cases.

- 5.2 65% of the region's new housing will be located at the SSCTs it is likely that a high proportion of this growth will be achieved at greenfield 'urban extensions'. Whilst these new development areas will need to incorporate a mix of dwelling types, the ethos of the RSS is that they should be more 'urban' than sub-urban in character and consequently should be developed at relatively high densities as indicated in Policy F. This suggests that the master planning of such developments should aim to achieve 50dph across the extension. This should be possible with much higher density development at model points.
- 5.3 In the Draft RSS the policy and text relating to housing density, mix and type is found in Chapter 6 which takes forward the Integrated Regional Strategy aim of harnessing the benefits of population growth and managing the implications of population change.
- 5.4 Balanced Housing Markets Section 6.1 provides guidance in providing a plentiful and affordable housing supply which includes guidance on the scale of provision, balanced housing markets and development densities. This addresses the issue of ensuring there is adequate mix and type of housing. The Draft RSS identifies the key challenges in ensuring a plentiful and affordable supply of housing are:
- Delivering an adequate choice and mix of housing types of all tenures at the most sustainable locations meeting the preferences of the markets and the ability of people to pay;
  - Ensuring development values can be used effectively to ensure sufficient numbers of affordable homes can be delivered.
- 5.5 Policy H2 and the accompanying text set targets for housing densities. The main objective of this policy is to set out a minimum target for all development and higher targets where appropriate and particularly in relation to the SSCTs where its more plausible to develop sustainable and walkable developments, to ensure developments are built at optimum densities. The policy reads as follows:

*"H2 Housing Densities*

*Housing developments should exceed 30 dwellings per hectare (dph) in all parts of the region and averages across housing market areas will be in excess of 40 dph over the plan period. Density of development of housing at the SSCTs should be at least 50 dph and considerably higher in well-planned mixed-use developments within the existing urban area. Planned urban extensions of SSCTs and adjacent new communities should achieve 50 dph or more overall. Individual LDDs will reflect this target with appropriate variations reflecting local conditions and will outline measures to ensure regular monitoring of delivery" (p132).*

## 6 Evidence Base

- CABE (2005) *Better Neighborhoods: Making Higher Densities Work*;
- DCLG (2006) PPS3: Housing;
- DCLG (2006) Draft PPS3: Housing;
- GOSW (2001) RPG10 for the South West;
- Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2003) Findings: *'Rebalancing communities by mixing tenures on social housing estates'*;
- Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2005) Findings: *'Messages from three mixed-tenure communities'*;
- Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2006) Findings: *'Developer and purchaser attitudes to new build mixed tenure housing'*;
- ODPM (2005) Circular 01/05: The Town and Country Planning (Residential Density) (London, South East England, South West England, East of England and Northamptonshire) Direction 2005;
- ODPM (2000) PPG3: Housing;
- ODPM (2003) Sustainable Communities in the South West;
- South East England Regional Assembly (2006) *Attitudes Towards Higher Density Development*;
- South East England Regional Assembly (2006) *Councillors Toolbox: Making the Best use of Land*;
- TCPA (2003) Policy Statement: Residential Densities;

## Appendix A: Housing Density Issues:

- **Summary of the Pros and Cons of High Density Development**

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective use of land</li> <li>• Facilitates sustainable transport methods and walkability</li> <li>• Facilitates community facilities</li> <li>• Enhanced security</li> <li>• Aesthetics (if well designed)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor perception and market attitude</li> <li>• The reality of car ownership and difficulty in providing parking in high density developments</li> <li>• Resistance to urbanism</li> <li>• Aesthetics (if poor design)</li> </ul>

- **Public Perception**

CABE (2005) suggest that there is public distrust of high density development and thus resistance towards it. RICS (2004) suggest that the public have a negative perception of high density development, for example, associations with the high rise buildings of the 1960s, increased traffic, poor parking facilities and poor quality design. It's necessary to overcome this negative perception in order to successfully deliver high density development.

The emphasis on community involvement and frontloading in the new planning system can be used to help improve the public understanding and perception. The South East have carried out a study: Attitudes to Higher Density Development in the South East which addresses some of these issues.

- **Reaching Consensus**

Inability to reach agreement between different actors involved in development can hinder high density development (CABE 2005).

Building consensus can help take forward high density development. CABE (2005) suggest that local authorities should show leadership via a number of techniques, for example, advocating exemplar schemes, frontloading and holding pre application meetings.

Charters and potentially tariffs can also be used to ensure delivery (CABE 2005)

- **Capacity Building**

Capacity building skills such as team training are important for raising awareness of density issues. Tools such as design statements and councillor guidance can also help increase capacity.

- **Measurements of Density**

There are various measures of density that can be used and a consistent approach needs to be adopted to assess developments.

The recently published PPS3 has now set a definition of new dwelling density as:

*“calculated by including only those site areas which will be developed for housing and directly associated uses, including access roads within the site, private garden space, car parking areas, incidental open space and landscaping and children’s play areas” (p26).*

- **Design Challenges**

Good design of high density developments is vital in order to gain the benefits of high density development and create attractive and convenient places to live. CABE (2005) state that it is important to ensure privacy, mixed tenure and mixed use. High density development can facilitate a better mix than sparser development. The provision of gardens and parking are also design challenges that need to be tackled.

It is important to see density as part of the bigger picture and just one element of good design (CABE 2005).

It is also important to understand the context into which the development will fit and not to apply high density development as a blueprint. Where high density is appropriate is a key consideration and there needs to be a range of options offering real choice.

Design champions and standards such as the Building for Life scheme can help encourage high density development.

It is necessary to look at the diversity of design solutions emerging.

## Appendix B: Housing Mix and Type Issues

- **Summary of pros and cons of mix and type**

<b>Pros</b>	<b>Cons</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better area reputations and avoidance of prejudice associated with areas dominated by social housing</li> <li>• Increases in property prices</li> <li>• Reduced turnover</li> <li>• Increased demand</li> <li>• Tenant satisfaction</li> <li>• Better integration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concern mixed tenure is difficult to deliver</li> <li>• Developers are concerned about the salability of mixed tenure developments</li> </ul>

- Design of dwellings should be physically indistinguishable between tenure: **tenure blind**. This ensures any prejudice towards social housing as avoided (JRF 2003). It has also been suggested that '**pepper potting**' development whereby social housing is spread throughout the development rather than together in one location is beneficial.
- Tenure mix alone does not create interaction. A **mix of housing types** and sizes is also important. Consideration needs to be given to attaining the correct mix for an area, for example, ensuring family housing is not omitted due to concentration on single person dwellings (JRF 2006).
- **Good design** needs to be used to eliminate the concern that mixed tenure is difficult to sell (JRF 2003).
- Tenancy management is needed to ensure the site is properly managed (JRF 2003).

- **Appendix C: Draft PPS 3 Annex C Density**

## Annex C: Density

1. In determining appropriate approaches to density at the regional and local level, regional planning bodies and local planning authorities should have regard to the indicative density ranges for specific types of location set out in Table 1.

**Table 1: Indicative density ranges**

	Location			
	City Centre <sup>1</sup>	Urban <sup>2</sup>	Suburban <sup>3</sup>	Rural <sup>4</sup>
Density range (dwellings per hectare)	Above 70	40-75	35-55	30-40

Footnotes to Table 1:

<sup>1</sup> Where the predominant area lies within the central area of a city, as defined by the 2001 Census, or is part of the central area of a regional centre which serves a wide catchment. In London, parts of the whole of the Boroughs of Camden, Hackney, Hammersmith & Fulham, Greenwich, Haringey, Islington, Kensington & Chelsea, Lambeth, Lewisham, Newham, Southwark, Tower Hamlets, Wandsworth and Westminster form part of areas which are considered to have the characteristics of a city centre.

<sup>2</sup> Areas which are generally denser than more suburban areas and comprise a mix of residential and employment areas.

<sup>3</sup> Areas of medium housing density which are predominantly residential in character.

<sup>4</sup> Areas where there are no 'towns' and which are generally more than 10 km from an 'urban centre'. For purposes of this Annex, 'urban centre' means a settlement which exceeds 2 km<sup>2</sup> in geographical extent and 'town' means a settlement which exceeds 1 km<sup>2</sup> in geographical extent.

2. Local planning authorities should work with local stakeholders and local communities to set appropriate density ranges for specific types of location having regard to the indicative density matrix and to the approach to density set out in the regional spatial strategy.
3. The choice of appropriate levels of density for an area should be informed by:
  - an assessment of the characteristics of an area, including the mix of uses;
  - location and level of public transport accessibility;
  - the need to use land efficiently;
  - the importance of promoting high quality design;
  - the broader spatial strategy and vision for the future development of their area, in particular the need for housing and the housing plans and policies;
  - the level of service provision and public spaces; and
  - resource efficiency and the minimisation of environmental impacts.
4. Densities should be expressed as net residential density in dwellings per hectare (dph) and should be expressed as a range. The bottom of the range should act as a minima. Local planning authorities may set ranges below those set out in Table 1, and where they wish to do so this should be clearly justified. The presumption is that the minimum density should be no less than 30 dwellings per hectare. It will not generally be appropriate for local planning authorities to have one broad density range covering the whole of their plan area.