

Chapter 7

Housing

Context

7.1 The proximity of much of Wealden to Greater London, Crawley/Gatwick and other major employment centres, and the attraction of the District as a place to live, results in considerable pressure for new housing development particularly for larger executive style housing. At the same time, the disparity between local house prices and local incomes creates an 'affordability' problem and a significant local housing need exists.

7.2 Government guidance in PPG3 emphasises the importance of a greater choice of housing and that the housing needs of all in the community should be recognised, including those in need of affordable or special housing in both urban and rural areas. To promote more sustainable patterns of development and make better use of previously-developed land, the focus for additional housing should be existing towns. New housing and residential environments should be well designed and should make a significant contribution to promoting urban renaissance and improving the quality of life.

7.3 Structure Plan policies include an overall housing provision in line with Regional Planning Guidance for the period to 2011, and at a District level, focus major growth in Wealden, mainly at the Low Weald towns of Hailsham, Polegate and Uckfield for environmental and sustainability reasons. Emphasis is given to meeting a range of local housing needs and on maximising provision within urban areas.

7.4 There are an estimated 140,300 people living in the District, with around half living in the five main towns. The population shows a relatively uniform age structure with the largest proportion of people in the 45 – 59 age group. After taking account of existing housing commitments, further development on windfall sites and the proposed housing allocations in this Plan, the population of the District is expected to increase to around 151,400 by 2011.

7.5 There are some 61,000 dwellings in the District, an increase of around 5,800 since 1991, with around 83% owner occupied, 8% rented from the Council or a Housing Association and some 9% privately rented.

Strategy

7.6 It is an important function of the Local Plan to provide an adequate and continuous supply of land for housing within the context of the Structure Plan. The emphasis is on creating balanced and sustainable communities by meeting a range of local housing needs, minimising the impact of development on the environment and character of settlements, promoting a high quality of design and layout, providing access by a variety of transport means, and ensuring adequate services and infrastructure are in place. On this basis, this chapter contains policies for controlling the amount, type and location of new housing development in the District.

7.7 Local community views expressed during public consultations on the Community Strategy indicated strong support for the provision of affordable housing but resistance to further new housing development.

7.8 The Plan's objectives in relation to housing having regard to Government guidance in PPG3 (Housing), policies in the Structure Plan, the Council's Housing Strategy, the Community Strategy and the Local Plan strategy itself are:-

- (1) *to meet the housing requirements of the whole community, including those in need of affordable housing;*
- (2) *to make the best use of previously-developed land and buildings within towns and villages as far as possible, in preference to the development of greenfield sites;*
- (3) *to ensure that an adequate and continuous supply of housing land is available in relation to Structure Plan policies;*
- (4) *to protect and enhance the character and amenity of the towns, villages and countryside;*
- (5) *to promote a high standard of amenities, design and layout in new housing developments;*
- (6) *to help create mixed and balanced communities by providing a wide housing opportunity and choice through a mix of size, type and affordability in new housing development;*

(7) to encourage the retention and improvement of the existing housing stock;

(8) to create a sustainable pattern and form of development which reduces the need to travel by car through facilitating access by public transport, walking and cycling to jobs, local services and facilities and provides for mixed use development where appropriate;

(9) to make the most efficient use of land both within urban areas and in new allocations.

Housing Provision

7.9 The Structure Plan contains district-level housing provisions which for Wealden are:

6,600 dwellings for 1991 – 2006

4,400 dwellings for 2006 – 2011 including 3,300 dwellings on new housing allocations.

7.10 A study of housing land supply relative to the Structure Plan provisions was carried out at 1st April 2001, the base date of the first deposit draft Plan for statistical purposes, and the findings are contained in the Background Paper: Housing Land and Urban Capacity Study. An update of housing land supply at 1st April 2005 has been carried out for this Plan.

7.11 The Structure Plan housing provisions for the District can be met in part by housing completions 1991-2005, existing housing commitments and development on 'windfall sites'. After taking account of these factors, the requirement for new allocations in this Plan can be summarised as:

450 dwellings for 1991 – 2006
3180 dwellings for 2006 – 2011

7.12 Whilst the County Council envisaged that there would be no need for any major new housing allocations over the period 1991 – 2006, as the housing provision would be met by completions, commitments and windfall sites, new planning permissions have not come forward at the rate previously anticipated and therefore some allocations are needed. However, in view of the relatively small shortfall in housing land up to 2006, it is proposed to address this as part of the allocations for the post 2006 period. Over the 2006 – 2011 period the requirement for new allocations is slightly lower than the 3,300 dwellings anticipated by the County Council due

primarily to a quicker take up of existing commitments than previously expected in the period prior to 2006.

7.13 Policy HG1 sets out the means by which the Structure Plan housing provisions will be met for the periods 2005-2006 and 2006-2011 respectively after taking account of the 5,896 dwellings completed 1991-2005 and the findings of the urban capacity study as explained at paragraph 7.15. All of the existing large site (6 or more) housing commitments and the large sites identified in this Interim Guide are listed in Appendix 9.

Policy HG1

In order to meet the housing provisions of the East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Structure Plan 1991-2011, provision will be made for:

(1) the completion of 250 dwellings between 2005 and 2006 in the following ways:

(i) existing housing commitments totalling 85 dwellings

(ii) large site windfall allowance totalling 75 dwellings

(iii) small site windfall allowance totalling 90 dwellings

(2) The completion of 4670 - 4683 dwellings between 2006 and 2011 in the following ways:

(i) existing housing commitments totalling 410 dwellings

(ii) large site windfall allowance totalling 375 dwellings

(iii) small site windfall allowance totalling 440 dwellings

(iv) other urban capacity sources totalling 260 dwellings

(v) allocations of previously developed land totalling 705 dwellings as contained in policies CR1; HA1-2; V1-2 and V6

(vi) urban extensions totalling 2400 dwellings as contained in Policies CR2-4; HA3-9, HA12; PW1-2; UC1-3 and V3-5, 7.

(vii) rural affordable housing allocations totalling 83 - 97 dwellings as contained in Policy HG6.

New Housing Sites

7.14 It is Government policy to give priority to providing new housing through re-using previously-developed land and buildings in preference to the development of greenfield sites. In identifying sites for new housing allocations the Council has followed a search sequence as recommended in PPG3. In the first instance the potential for maximising new housing within towns and villages through the re-use of previously developed land and buildings has been examined through an Urban Capacity Study. The balance of the housing requirement will have to be met largely in the form of 'greenfield' urban extensions as proposed in the Structure Plan.

Land Within Towns and Villages

7.15 The Urban Capacity Study identified the potential for housing from a variety of sources in line with Government guidance, including previously-developed or vacant land, redevelopment and infilling within residential areas, redevelopment of non-residential uses, and conversion and subdivision of residential and other properties. The study concluded that

- the large site 'windfall' allowances over the Plan period are justified
- allocations of previously developed land, mainly residential curtilages, and otherwise vacant land, totalling around 300 dwellings are appropriate. This figure is reduced to 230 dwellings following consideration of representations on the first deposit draft plan.
- an additional allowance of some 160 dwellings is appropriate to reflect new Council initiatives such as 'living over the shop' and some development over car parks
- an allowance of some 100 dwellings is appropriate to allow for development on existing employment and other allocations which may not come forward for their proposed use

7.16 The provision of around 490 dwellings on previously developed sites and through other opportunities identified in the Urban Capacity Study reduces the total from 3,630 dwellings to around 3,140 dwellings, the amount of new housing that needs to be allocated mainly in the form of greenfield urban extensions.

7.17 Details of the Urban Capacity Study methodology and findings are included in the Background Paper: Housing Land and Urban Capacity Study. The allocations of previously developed and vacant land are contained in the separate Crowborough and Hailsham chapters and the villages chapter at Forest Row and Maresfield. The Urban Capacity Study has identified the potential for development on windfall sites from a variety of opportunities, namely:

- the re-use of empty homes
- conversion of empty or under-used space above shops and offices
- conversion/sub-division of existing houses to flats and small dwellings
- conversion or redevelopment of non-residential buildings or land
- redevelopment of existing residential land and premises
- infilling development within existing residential areas
- mixed use schemes, mainly in or near town centres and neighbourhood centres

7.18 In line with Policy GD1, within the development boundaries new housing development through these opportunities will be permitted provided that it is acceptable in terms of character, amenity, access and parking considerations, and is in accordance with all the relevant policies and proposals in the Plan.

Policy HG2

New housing development through infilling, redevelopment, conversion, subdivision and other windfall sites within the development boundaries, as defined on the Proposals Map, will be permitted subject to compliance with other policies in the Plan.

Housing Allocations

7.19 Government advice in PPG3 is that planned extensions to existing urban areas are likely to prove the next most sustainable option after building on appropriate sites within urban areas. The Government also promotes the re-use of appropriately located previously developed land and buildings. Structure Plan policies propose the expansion of the Low Weald towns to provide for housing and associated development needs in the period 2006 – 2011.

7.20 As stated in Chapter 2, the capacity of the Low Weald towns of Hailsham, Polegate and Uckfield to accommodate the required housing growth through urban extensions has been examined through an analysis of the broad sectors around the towns. The capacity of Crowborough, Heathfield and the villages to accommodate some of the housing growth was similarly considered.

7.21 The findings of the sector analysis of the Low Weald towns and of the other towns and villages in the District together with consideration of representations on the housing allocations and the First Deposit Draft Plan has formed the basis for the Council's distribution of development strategy for housing and associated business growth as set out in Chapter 2. The main allocations proposed in this Plan are listed in the table on the next page. These comprise mainly of greenfield urban extensions with the exception of the major 'brownfield' site at the former Hellingly Hospital and smaller 'brownfield' sites at Isfield and East Hoathly. The allocations of previously developed and vacant land within towns and villages, totalling around 230 dwellings referred to at paragraph 7.15 are contained in the separate town and villages chapter under policies CR1, HA1 and V1 respectively.

7.22 These allocations in Table 7.1 overleaf and their associated policies are contained in the respective Town and Villages chapters. The site capacities have been generally calculated at 35 dwellings per hectare, unless there are particular considerations, warrant a lower density, which is at the lower end of the density range of 30 – 50 dwellings per hectare recommended in PPG3. Higher densities may be achieved on some sites which would be determined at the planning application stage.

7.23 The total figure of 2955-2968 dwellings is broadly equivalent to the requirement for housing on new allocations of 3,140 dwellings referred to at paragraph 7.16. The housing figures are indicative at this stage and the consideration of representations on this revised plan together with the possibility of higher densities on some sites may result in changes to some allocations or the reduction of the total land required in the final draft Plan.

Land Recycling Target

7.24 The Government's land recycling target is that nationally by 2008, 60% of additional housing should be provided on previously developed land and through conversions of existing buildings. A similar target is also contained in Regional Planning Guidance for the South East. Based on existing housing commitments, anticipated development on windfall sites, the findings of the urban capacity study and allocations in this Plan, the figure for Wealden over the period 2004 - 2011 would be around 45%.

7.25 Although below the national and regional target this is a relatively high figure for a rural area like Wealden with little legacy of derelict, disused or otherwise previously developed land because it includes existing housing commitments within the towns and villages for infilling and redevelopment, particularly in the early part of the Plan period. The projections just for the period 2006-2011 show a figure of around 40%.

Table 7.1 Housing Allocations

Town/Village	Site	Total Dwellings at 35 per hectare net	Affordable housing at 30% of total	Small dwellings at 20% of total
Crowborough	Land at Steel Cross (Policy CR2)	40	12	8
	Heatherview Farm (Policy CR3)	80	24	16
	Land at Alderbrook (Policy CR4)	80 ⁽¹⁾	24	16
Hailsham	Hellingly Hospital (Policy HA2)	400 ⁽¹⁾	120	80
	Woodholm Farm (Policy HA3)	50	15	10
	Welbury Farm (Policy HA4)	350	105	70
	Land south of Hempstead Lane (Policy HA5)	70	21	14
	Land at Arlington Road East (Policy HA6)	70 ⁽²⁾	21	14
	Land east of Battle Road, south of A271, Amberstone (Policy HA7)	120	36	24
	Land south of Howard Close (Policy HA8)	40 ⁽¹⁾	12	8
	Land at Station Road (Policy HA9)	35	11	7
	Land East of Battle Road (Policy HA12)	50 ⁽³⁾	15	50 ⁽³⁾
Polegate/ Willingdon	Land west of A22 (Policy PW1)	600	180	120
	East of Shepham Lane (Policy PW2)	250	75	50
Uckfield	Land north of Mallard Drive (Policy UC1)	120	36	24
	Land north of Eastbourne Road (Policy UC2)	220	66	44
	Land at Sandpits, Lewes Road (Policy UC3)	60	18	12
Buxted	Land west of Church Road (Policy V3)	40 ⁽⁵⁾	12	8

East Hoathly	Mixed use area, south of the Mews (Policy V2)	45 ⁽⁷⁾	14	9
	Land off Church Marks Lane (Policy V4)	30 ⁽¹⁾	9	6
Five Ash Down	Land to the west of Oakleigh (Policy V5)	15 ⁽⁴⁾	5	3
Isfield	Former Army Camp (Policy V6)	30 ⁽⁵⁾	9	6
Maresfield	Land at Park Farm (Policy V7)	80 ⁽⁵⁾	24	16
Villages (various)	Rural affordable housing allocations (Policy HG6)	83 - 97 ⁽⁶⁾	83- 97 ⁽⁶⁾	

The total number of dwellings is 2,955 – 2,968

The housing figures are indicative at this stage.

- (1) The number of dwellings on these sites is limited by the constraints of the local road network and also in the case of Hellingly Hospital by the need to protect the parkland.
- (2) The number of dwellings on this site is limited by constraints relating to tree retention and impact on Listed Buildings.
- (3) As this is a site on the edge of Hailsham Town Centre, it is anticipated that it will be developed as a flatted scheme of 1 and 2 bedroom units and at a higher density than 35 dwellings per hectare.
- (4) This site is considered suitable for a low density scheme to reflect the existing character of the surrounding area.
- (5) The scale of development on these sites has regard to the character of the villages and in the case of Isfield Camp to the lack of services and facilities.
- (6) These sites comprise rural affordable housing allocations which are separately detailed in Chapter 7 of the Revised Draft Plan.
- (7) The housing figure is indicative only and a development brief will be prepared to guide development

Phasing of Housing Land

7.26 Structure Plan policy seeks to maintain a reasonable continuity in the supply of land for housing over the whole Plan period, to ensure efficient and effective use of existing housing commitments and the re-use of existing properties. It states that it will be a condition of the new housing land releases that none of the dwellings will be completed and occupied before 2006. An appropriate policy is therefore included in this Plan.

7.27 In order to help facilitate completions in the 2006 – 2011 period on the housing allocations, planning permissions will be granted in advance of 2006, to help maintain a continuity in the supply of new housing in the relatively short period of 2006 – 2011 and enable development to meet any infrastructure requirements in time for occupation.

Policy HG3

Planning permission for housing development on the allocated sites will only be granted subject to a planning agreement to ensure that none of the dwellings will be completed and occupied before 2006.

7.28 PPG3 advises that previously-developed sites should be developed before greenfield sites. Where allocations comprise previously-developed land within towns and villages, the Council will use its best endeavours to bring these forward early through working with landowners and service agencies. It is not considered generally appropriate to seek to phase development of the small scale previously-developed sites in advance of the development of the major greenfield allocations in view of the uncertainty over their timing and the requirement to ensure a continuous supply of the major housing releases over the 2006 – 2011 period.

7.29 As explained in the Transport Chapter, in view of the existing capacity constraints on the A27 Trunk Road, occupation of the housing allocations at Hailsham will be phased in relation to completion of trunk road junction improvements (Policy TR 3). Occupation of the allocation west of the A22 at Polegate will also be phased to coincide with completion of the A27 West Polegate Improvement.

Meeting Local Housing Need

7.30 The Council commissioned a Housing Needs Study in 1999 to assess the range of housing needs to be met over the Plan period and the size, type and tenure of housing required to meet those needs. The findings of the study, which have been projected to 2011, form the basis for the policies in this section which are designed to address local housing needs. A summary of the findings for each of the Parishes is included in Appendix 1. Housing needs are also assessed regularly through the Council's Housing Register, homelessness claims and through information held by Registered Social Landlords. An up to date survey of rural housing needs has been carried out in association with the rural housing initiative under Policy HG6.

7.31 In summary, the 1999 study identified as the two most important issues to be the problem of 'affordability' and the level of 'concealed' households living within an existing household. These concealed households are not able to afford even the cheapest available housing in the District, particularly in parts of the rural areas, where terraced house prices are high and flats are in limited supply. Most new household demand is for the smaller and affordable type of housing, particularly one and two bedroom flats and terraced houses, with some demand for family accommodation.

7.32 Specifically, the study and subsequent projections concluded:

- over 1600 new forming households currently require affordable housing, principally for rent, but including around 135 shared ownership houses for households on the margins of the market
- a total of around 2900 households will need affordable housing at 2011, and this level does not take into account households planning to leave the District because of a lack of affordable housing
- a new programme of at least 170 houses a year of housing to rent is required over the period to 2011 to maintain housing need at its current level
- around 800 unsubsidised small market houses are required in the period to 2011 by new households with annual incomes adequate to access the market

- there is a demand for 440 homes in the form of sheltered or other accommodation suitable for the elderly in both public and private sectors to help meet the projected increase in the elderly population

7.33 In the light of the housing needs study findings the Local Plan includes policies relating to the provision of affordable housing in new development and on rural 'exception' sites. These take account of current Government guidance. However, recent Government statements place significant weight on the need to improve the arrangements for delivering affordable housing. In July 2003, the Government published its proposed changes to PPG3 which included the ability to allocate land for affordable housing in rural areas. This is addressed in paragraphs 7.53 to 7.61 and the allocations included in Policy HG6.

Affordable Housing in New Development

7.34 Government guidance in PPG3 is that a community's need for a mix of housing types, including affordable housing, is a material planning consideration which should be taken into account in formulating development plan policies and in deciding planning applications involving housing. In view of the demonstrable lack of affordable housing to meet local needs over the Plan period, a policy for seeking affordable housing on allocated sites and windfall sites is essential.

7.35 For the purposes of Policy HG4, affordable housing is defined as housing that is provided with private or public subsidy, for local people who are unable to meet their housing needs in the local housing market because of the relationship between housing costs and incomes. In Wealden, affordable housing will typically be for rent and will be managed by a Registered Social Landlord. The Housing Needs Survey confirms that subsidised housing to rent is the only affordable option for a large proportion of those in need, particularly new forming households. Shared ownership or discounted market housing also referred to in Government guidance is only an option for a relatively small number of households on the fringes of the market.

7.36 To meet the projected level of affordable housing need would require the

Council to seek around 50% of the total housing provision over the Plan period in the form of affordable housing and even higher in some towns. However such a requirement would be difficult to justify in financial and social terms, and a figure of around 30% will be expected. In view of the need for subsidised housing to rent, some 25% of the housing should be of this type with a relatively small proportion, 5%, in the form of shared ownership or discounted market housing. Site specific targets are included under the appropriate site based policy for the allocations in the Town Chapters and the Villages Chapter.

7.37 Government guidance advises that affordable housing can be sought on sites of 15 or more dwellings (or 0.5 ha) in urban areas, where justified by local need. Evidence regarding the size of windfall sites coming forward in Wealden demonstrates that whilst a threshold of 15 dwellings would increase the supply of affordable housing, a threshold of 10 or more dwellings (or 0.4 ha) would achieve a notably greater amount of affordable housing and is justified by the exceptionally high level of local housing need in the District.

7.38 Government guidance is more flexible in rural areas of 3000 population or less and a site threshold of 5 dwellings is justified in Wealden's rural areas in the light of local housing need. As small windfall sites are also an important component of the housing provision in the rural areas, on sites of 3 and 4 dwellings a single affordable housing unit will be required. It is not considered appropriate to seek provision on smaller sites, principally on ground of economic viability.

7.39 The transfer of serviced land at nil cost to a Registered Social Landlord approved by the District Council will be required to enable construction to Housing Corporation and the RSL's design standards. Alternatively, built out units could be provided on site by a developer on behalf of a Registered Social Landlord where an equivalent number of affordable homes would result and construction is to Housing Corporation and RSL's design standards. In any housing scheme, the early involvement of the RSL is essential to ensure the necessary funding is in place and development is included in the RSL's programme. Only exceptionally, should built-out units be provided and wholly funded by a developer and only then when an RSL is willing and able to acquire and manage the housing as a fewer number of dwellings would inevitably result.

7.40 In order to maximise the opportunities available to provide affordable housing, on-site provision will be the priority and off-site commuted payments or other contributions will be the exception. However, a proportion of the affordable housing requirement on the housing allocations in the Low Weald towns will be sought in the form of a financial contribution in order that some affordable housing can be provided elsewhere in the District, particularly in the rural areas, where there is a demonstrable housing need but where new allocations are limited. It is not considered appropriate to seek such a payment on allocations of less than 100 dwellings.

7.41 The affordable housing should generally be distributed in groups of up to 10 dwellings throughout the development in order to avoid an over-concentration in one location and provide for a mixed and socially integrated development.

Policy HG4

Planning permission for new residential development will only be granted when an element of affordable housing is provided in accordance with the following criteria;

- (1) The amount, type and size of affordable housing to be provided will be negotiated on a site by site basis and will depend on the overall size of the development proposed, the mix of dwelling types proposed, the site characteristics, the scale and nature of need for affordable housing in the area and the economics of provision. However, it is expected that around 30% of dwellings will be in the affordable category which should comprise around 25% subsidised housing to rent and around 5% shared ownership or discounted market housing, the exact proportions of which will be determined on a site by site basis.**
- (2) The requirement for affordable housing in new residential development applies to the following sites:**
 - (i) Within the development boundaries of Crowborough, Hailsham, Heathfield, Polegate and Uckfield in housing developments of 10 dwellings or more, or on sites of 0.4 hectare or more;**

- (ii) Outside the development boundaries of Crowborough, Hailsham, Heathfield, Polegate and Uckfield in housing developments of 5 dwellings or more or on sites of 0.2 hectare or more.**

- (iii) Outside the development boundaries of Crowborough, Hailsham, Heathfield, Polegate and Uckfield in housing developments of 3 and 4 dwellings, the requirement is for 1 affordable housing unit.**

These thresholds also apply to those sites which are sub-divided into smaller areas but would clearly have a cumulative capacity or site area that would meet or exceed the thresholds.

- (3) The on-site provision of the subsidised housing to rent and shared ownership housing will be achieved by the transfer of serviced land at nil cost to a Registered Social Landlord approved by the Council or alternatively by an equivalent number of built-out units provided by a developer on behalf of a Registered Social Landlord approved by the Council. Only exceptionally will a financial or other contribution towards affordable housing on a suitable alternative site be acceptable and only when it can be demonstrated that the affordable housing will be provided.**
- (4) In the case of housing allocations in the Low Weald towns of 100 dwellings or more, a proportion of the affordable housing requirement will be sought in the form of a financial contribution in order that some affordable housing can be provided elsewhere in Wealden, particularly in the rural areas. The balance between on-site and off-site provision on each allocation will be agreed when planning applications are determined but would generally equate to some 10% of the affordable housing provision.**
- (5) The affordable housing should be well integrated with the rest of the development and distributed in small groups of up to 10 dwellings throughout the development. This and the timing of affordable housing provision relative to the market housing will be secured through a planning agreement.**

(6) Planning agreements will be required in order to secure the affordable housing provision, either on-site or through a financial or other contribution.

7.42 The Council has published separate supplementary planning guidance on affordable housing.

Affordable Housing Target

7.43 The Housing Needs Survey and further work by the Council reveals an affordable housing need amongst some 2,900 households over the Plan period to 2011. In the light of the housing provision in the Plan, comprising both allocations and windfall sites, and taking account of the proposed site thresholds and the affordable housing quota contained in Policy HG4, together with the rural affordable housing allocations contained in Policy HG6 it is anticipated that around 1,250 affordable housing units would be provided. This is an appropriate target for the Local Plan.

7.44 In addition, further affordable housing is likely to come forward through a number of sources including the purchase and repair of empty properties, small-scale Registered Social Landlord schemes within towns and villages and development on sites under the affordable housing 'exceptions' policy, HG5.

Affordable Housing 'Exceptions' Policy

7.45 In the rural areas of Wealden there are particular difficulties in securing an adequate supply of affordable housing for local needs. The Council's local housing needs 'exceptions' policy is an integral part of the corporate approach to meeting housing needs in the rural areas, and is recognised as such in the *Wealden Housing Strategy*. In line with Government guidance, the policy permits small-scale housing development outside the defined development boundaries in order to meet an identified housing need among those local people who are unable to compete in the normal housing market.

7.46 Development under this policy has made an important contribution to meeting rural housing needs but it is very unlikely that sufficient

'exceptions' land will be found to meet all local housing need in the rural areas as experience shows that most sites will not be acceptable in relation to the environmental, character, services and traffic considerations. In all cases the Council will seek to ensure that the scheme can be assimilated into the local area, both physically and socially, and will look for support from the local community.

7.47 As the policy relates to land outside the development boundaries where development will not normally be permitted, the principal issue is whether a site is suitable in planning terms. Particular importance is given to sustainability considerations including the location of a site in relation to an existing settlement and local services, the scale of development proposed, the impact on the character of surrounding development, the landscape and countryside, as well as other normal planning criteria. Where only one or two dwellings are proposed, and other suitable sites are not available in the Parish, the requirement to have reasonable accessibility to local services could be relaxed, notwithstanding the sustainability issues which could be outweighed by the pressing need for affordable housing.

7.48 With regard to need, the Housing Need Survey provides an indication of the general extent and nature of local housing need, although further detailed investigation by the Council or a Registered Social Landlord may be required when a suitable development site has been identified. The evidence from the survey and schemes that have been implemented suggests that, in the light of income levels among those in need, the appropriate tenure is rental through assured tenancies, i.e. with no right to buy. Outright purchase of a property would be inappropriate because the cost of provision is likely to exceed the purchasing power of local people in need, even when initial discounts are offered, but also due to the difficulty of retaining the property for meeting local needs on resale.

7.49 Although the policy would not preclude any developer carrying out a suitable scheme with appropriate covenants on the land or legal agreements, the Council will require the properties to be managed by a Registered Social Landlord.

7.50 While the policy does not allow general demand housing outside the development boundary to cross-subsidise the funding of affordable housing, it could apply where the private housing is in the development

boundary and the affordable housing is outside as exception to policy.

7.51 The Statutory Instrument identifying exemptions from the purchase grant scheme for housing association tenants (the Right to Acquire) defines the areas where the principle of development may be acceptable under the policy, i.e. only exception sites which fall under an exempt area will be considered under the policy.

7.52 For the purposes of the policy the categories of need include existing or previous residents, persons whose work provides an important service to the community or persons who have a genuine offer of local employment, and in all cases need affordable housing. Preference will be given to village residents, followed by residents of the wider Parish, then the District as a whole and finally to a suitable applicant off the Council's Housing Waiting List as expanded on in supplementary planning guidance on affordable housing published separately by the Council.

Policy HG5

In exceptional circumstances, planning permission may be granted for small scale residential development in rural areas outside development boundaries in order to meet an identified local housing need among those people unable to compete in the normal housing market.

- (1) Proposals for such development will only be permitted where the Council is satisfied that the following criteria are met: -**
 - (i) the proposed development is located within or adjacent to an existing village or other settlement;**
 - (ii) the proposed development provides reasonable accessibility to local services;**
 - (iii) the proposed development is not intrusive in the countryside and is not harmful to the character of the landscape;**
 - (iv) the scale of the proposed development is appropriate in relation to the size of the settlement. Development should be in keeping with the character of adjoining**

development and the locality, and with local building styles;

- (v) the proposed development conforms with the Plan's policies, for access, parking, retention of trees, landscaping and impact on neighbouring properties;**
 - (vi) there is clear evidence of an unsatisfied local housing need in the parish that cannot be met through normal market mechanisms.**
 - (vii) the proposed development is of a size, type and cost, directly appropriate and affordable for those people in proven local housing need identified in (vi) above;**
 - (viii) the future affordability, management and ownerships of any dwellings can be ensured forever through the imposition of covenants and/or appropriate legal agreements;**
 - (ix) the proposal can be shown to be viable and achieve affordable housing.**
- (2) Applicants for planning permission, will be asked to demonstrate how their proposals meet criteria (vi) – (ix) above, which will then be the subject of assessment by the Local Planning Authority, advised as appropriate by the Local Housing Authority.**
 - (3) Proposals which include the provision of general demand housing outside the development boundaries to cross-subsidise the funding of affordable housing will not be permitted.**

Sites for affordable housing in rural areas.

7.53 Experience in implementing the 'exceptions' policy has shown the difficulties involved in a reactive policy on land where planning permission would not normally be granted. The consequence of this is a relatively small but very welcome number of dwellings completed under this policy.

7.54 Unfortunately this falls well short of meeting the very considerable affordable housing need in the villages and smaller settlements in the rural areas, as demonstrated in the housing

needs survey. Public reaction to this issue in rural areas is generally positive towards the need for affordable housing but not generally for speculative, more expensive housing. The Council has promoted the need for local planning authorities to be proactive and to have the ability to allocate land specifically for affordable housing, particularly in the rural areas. In July 2003, the Government published its proposed changes to PPG3 which included this ability to help create mixed and balanced communities.

7.55 Any such allocations should be solely for affordable housing, on land within or adjoining existing villages, which would not otherwise be released for housing and where it would contribute to the attainment of mixed communities.

7.56 It is considered that sites in the rural areas should be small in scale, generally between one and ten dwellings depending on the characteristics of the site and the settlement in question. Where only one or two dwellings are proposed, and no other suitable sites are available in the Parish, the requirement to have reasonable accessibility to local services may need to be relaxed, notwithstanding the sustainability issues which could be outweighed by the pressing need for affordable housing.

7.57 Many villages and smaller settlements in Wealden, particularly in the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, are dominated by housing of a similar characteristic, namely private housing, mostly, if not all out of the reach of those in housing need. It is therefore considered that this imbalance has to be addressed to help establish mixed and more inclusive communities through the allocation of small sites for affordable housing.

7.58 There must be a demonstrable need shown through appropriate local housing needs survey and the housing should be appropriate to the needs of local people, normally through subsidised housing to rent, and maintained as such for ever.

7.59 Working in close consultation with Parish Councils and Action in Rural Sussex, local housing needs surveys are being undertaken in 2004 and appropriate sites, generally for between one and ten dwellings, have been sought within or on the edge of the villages and smaller settlements. The criteria used for site assessment are those contained within Policy HG5, the exception sites policy.

7.60 It should be noted that any new housing as a result of this policy will be restricted to local residents, therefore ensuring that the needs of the local community are met. In terms of its allocation through the Council's Housing Register the definition of "local" is people in need of separate affordable accommodation who currently live by choice in the village and normally have done so for a continuous period of at least 2 years prior to their application.

7.61 If nobody meets the above requirement then the following strong local connections will be considered:

- 1) People who have lived previously in the village, normally for a continuous period of at least 3 years, and had to move away through a lack of affordable accommodation; or
- 2) People whose close relatives, normally defined as parents and adult children or siblings (including step relationships), who currently live in the village and normally have done so continuously for a period of at least 5 years; or
- 3) People whose work provides an important services to the local community and who need to live locally but need affordable housing; or
- 4) People who cannot take up a genuine offer of work, which provides an important services to the local community, due to the lack of affordable housing.

Policy HG6

(1) The following sites, as shown on the Proposals Map, are allocated solely for affordable housing:

	No. of dwellings
(a) Land adj. to Rose Cottage PH, Alciston	1-2
(b) Land at the allotment gardens, off Cuckmere Court, Alfriston	10
(c) Land adj. to Village Hall, Beaconsfield Road, Chelwood Gate	6
(d) Land at School Lane, Danehill	10-12
(e) Land at Warren Farm Lane, Eridge Green	2

(f)	Land adjacent to Downs View, Five Ashes	4-6
(g)	Land at St Mark's Field, Hadlow Down	6-7
(h)	Land adjacent to the Village Hall, Herstmonceux	6
(i)	Land at Pound Lane, Laughton	6
(j)	Land west of North Street, Lower Horsebridge	6
(k)	Land adj. to South Street car park, Mayfield	8-10
(l)	Land at Courthope Avenue, Wadhurst	15-20
(m)	Former nursery adjacent to Osborn House, Rushlake Green	3-4

(2) Planning permission will only be granted for affordable housing development on these sites when:

(i) the application is accompanied by an up to date and robust assessment of local housing needs;

(ii) the proposed development is of a size, type and cost, directly appropriate and affordable for those people in proven local housing need identified in (i) above;

(iii) the future affordability, management and ownership of any dwellings can be ensured forever through the imposition of covenants and/or appropriate legal agreements;

(iv) the proposal can be shown to be viable and achieve affordable housing.

(3) Applicants for planning permission will be asked to demonstrate how their proposals meet criteria (i) to (iv) above which will then be the subject of assessment by the Local Planning Authority, advised as appropriate by the Local Housing Authority.

(4) Proposals which include the provision of general demand housing outside the development boundaries to cross subsidise the funding of affordable housing will not be permitted.

(5) The proposed development should conform with the Plan's policies including those on design, access, parking, tree retention and landscaping.

Mix of Dwelling Types and Sizes

7.62 Only 18% of the housing stock in Wealden comprises of flats and terraced houses compared to a figure of 25% for East Sussex and 47% nationally. Within Wealden, over the last twenty years or so, there has been significant pressure from developers wishing to build large 'executive' type homes. In new housing developments this has inevitably caused an imbalance in the mix of dwelling types and sizes and has made it particularly difficult to create mixed and balanced communities. Government guidance advises local authorities to secure an appropriate mix of dwelling size, type and affordability in new housing development to meet the changing composition of households in the light of the likely assessed need.

7.63 In addition to households in need of affordable housing, the Housing Needs Survey identified a requirement for some 800 general market houses such as 1/2 bedroom flats and terraced houses in the period to 2011 for new households able to access the market, as well as a demand for around 440 homes to help meet the existing and projected increase in the elderly population. There are few commitments in the housing land supply for flats and small houses or elderly persons accommodation and in order to meet the identified need and create visual interest and character, it is essential that a greater choice of accommodation is provided on the housing allocations and on windfall sites, in addition to affordable housing. For the purposes of Policy HG7, small dwellings are defined as one bedroom properties normally not exceeding 60 square metres internal floorspace and two bedroom properties not normally exceeding 80 square metres internal floorspace. In the light of the need and the level of housing provision over the Plan period, it is expected that 20% of housing on new allocations and windfall sites will be in the form of small market dwellings, comprising 1/2 bedroom flats and terraced houses, and special needs housing accommodation for the elderly and others. The resulting density of development would not normally be appropriate within the defined low density policy areas.

Policy HG7

Planning permission for new residential development will only be granted on sites at or above the thresholds in Policy HG4 when a proportion of small dwellings are provided comprising of 1 and 2 bedroom flats and terraced houses and special needs housing accommodation for the elderly and others, in addition to any requirement for affordable housing under Policy HG4.

The mix of dwelling types and sizes to be provided will be negotiated on a site by site basis and will depend on the overall size of the development proposed and the scale and nature of local housing need. It is expected, however, that around 20% of dwellings will be in the small dwelling categories.

Sustainable Residential Development

7.64 PPG3 puts particular emphasis on creating sustainable residential environments with particular reference to promoting links with public transport, encouraging mixed use development, promoting good design and layout including landscaping, and making the most efficient use of land. As explained earlier in this chapter sustainable development considerations have been central to the Plan's strategy for locating new housing development. Policies for transport are contained in the Transport chapter and mixed use development, including housing, will be encouraged in town centre schemes where appropriate. This section addresses specific matters relating to the design and layout of housing estates, making the most efficient use of land and the retention and improvement of the existing housing stock.

Design and Layout of New Housing Estates

7.65 Good design and layout of new housing development is essential to improve the quality and attractiveness of residential areas both for future residents and the existing community. Regard should be had to a variety of factors including the townscape and landscape of

the wider locality, creating a strong sense of identity which reflects the local character, and providing a safe and attractive environment which relates to the needs of people rather than traffic.

7.66 Good design and layout is promoted through a variety of policies in the Plan, most notably Policy BE1 which sets out criteria that apply to any development whatever its scale. Policy HG8 expands these in relation to the design and layout of new housing estates and the applicability of the criteria will largely depend on the scale of development proposed. Further guidance is contained in a separate document 'Housing Estate Design Guidance'.

Policy HG8

Proposals for new housing estate development will only be permitted where a high quality of design and layout is proposed in keeping with the townscape and landscape of the wider locality. Proposals should be accompanied by a design statement which demonstrates how the following principles have been incorporated:

Layout

- (1) the creation of an imaginative layout which provides a strong sense of identity and integrates well with other parts of the town or village in terms of the pattern of local streets and spaces, building styles and materials, landscape features and the patterns of movement set up;**
- (2) the creation of smaller identifiable housing areas through the use of existing landscape and other natural features and through layout and design including new features such as 'town squares', open spaces, roads, footpaths and cycle links;**
- (3) new community facilities, where required, should be well related to the adjoining housing areas in order to create a community focus and encourage trips on foot and by bicycle;**

Landscape

- (4) the creation of a strong landscape framework which retains and maximises the potential of existing valuable site features including landforms, trees, hedgerows, open spaces, watercourses**

and ponds, and takes account of the site's interrelationships with the adjoining countryside and of the views into and out of the site;

- (5) significant new landscape provision will be required, where appropriate, including structural planting of trees and shrubs using planting forms and native species which reinforce the existing landscape context;

Movement patterns

- (6) the layout shall provide for safe and convenient movement by all means of transport based on a clear transport framework which integrates well with movement patterns in the locality and where priority is given to the needs of pedestrians and cyclists, provision is made for public transport, and appropriate measures are proposed to reduce traffic speeds;

Vehicle parking

- (7) car parking provision should be an integral part of the design process and located in positions to maximise natural surveillance, and avoid visual dominance of parked vehicles or uniform repetition of parking spaces;

Energy efficiency

- (8) energy efficient and sustainable housing should be secured through layout, design, housing type, orientation and landscaping;

Safety/crime prevention

- (9) crime prevention and community safety should be ensured through layout and design, in particular security of property and natural surveillance of access roads, footpaths, amenity space, parking areas and landscaping;

Design and materials

- (10) the design of individual buildings in terms of their form, scale and height, their position in relation to the spaces around them, and the texture, colour and pattern of materials should be compatible with the character of the locality and its local distinctiveness.

Making The Best Use Of Land

7.67 In order to promote sustainable forms of development, Government advice in PPG3 is that local authorities should avoid developments which make inefficient use of land (those of less than 30 dwellings per hectare net), encourage housing development which makes more efficient use of land (between 30 and 50 dwellings per hectare net) and seek greater intensity of development at places with good public transport accessibility.

7.68 Whilst it is considered important to reflect these density standards in the Plan, this must be seen in the context of high quality development rather than allowing 'town cramming' which can erode character and amenity in existing residential areas. The Government is clear that higher densities should go hand in hand with a better quality of housing design and mixture of housing size and type, pointing to good examples both now and in the past.

7.69 There are a number of residential areas with an established and distinctive low density character created by large detached houses set in spacious gardens with mature tree cover, hedgerows and other landscaping. Specific policies are contained in the relevant town and villages chapter to protect these areas.

Policy HG9

Outside the low density housing policy areas, as defined on the Proposals Map, proposals for residential development will only be permitted provided that the density of development is

- (i) not less than 30 dwellings per hectare net
- (ii) between 30 and 50 dwellings per hectare net
- (iii) in excess of 50 dwellings per hectare net in locations near to town centres, neighbourhood centres, railway stations, and other good public transport facilities

Notwithstanding these density standards, the proposed development should be consistent with the other policies in the Plan regarding the high quality of design and layout, the existing character of the area, site character and surroundings, local amenity and traffic

considerations. Exceptionally, this may necessitate some developments at less than 30 dwellings per hectare net.

Retention and Improvement of Housing Stock

7.70 The Council considers it important to maintain and where possible improve the existing housing stock. Policy HG2 provides for a variety of new housing opportunities within development boundaries which includes improvement to the existing housing stock. In addition, the Council wishes to resist the loss of residential accommodation and allow extensions and alterations to existing dwellings. The retention of institutional development is necessary in the light of the projected growth in elderly persons.

Policy HG10

The Council will resist the loss of residential accommodation, including residential institutional accommodation, (by change from residential to another use or by redevelopment), unless the following circumstances apply:-

- (1) the residential use is not appropriately located;**
- (2) the building is unsuitable for residential use in its present form and is not capable of being readily improved or altered in order to make it suitable; or**
- (3) the retention of the building or use for residential purposes would prevent an important development, redevelopment or other change of wider benefit to the community.**

7.71 The extension of existing dwellings is often an effective means of improving the housing stock. Small-scale extensions can often be built without the need to seek planning permission from the Council. Where extensions do need permission, the Council would wish to ensure that the scale and design of the extension is generally appropriate in relation to the existing dwelling and surrounding area, and that the amenities of neighbours are not adversely affected.

Policy HG11

Within the development boundaries, as defined on the Proposals Map, the extension and alteration of existing dwellings will be permitted where the scale, style, design and materials are appropriate and sympathetic in relation to the existing buildings, and there is no significant adverse effect on the amenities of the occupiers of neighbouring properties.