

Housing Panel - Affordable Housing questions

Question	To	Response
<p>Q1. A consideration of different ways that the council can encourage a greater affordable housing supply by working with other organisations? For example by financing housing associations or others, through low rate loans or investing of treasury monies.</p>	<p>Alan Wylde, Housing Development & Enabling Manager</p>	<p>Oxford City Council are committed to increasing housing supply in the city and can demonstrate the benefits of taking a flexible approach as to how this is achieved whether it is with the private sector on sites such as Barton, the housing association sector on sites such as Northway and Barns Road as well as through direct provision by the Council itself as part of its commitment to deliver an additional 952 Council homes over the next 10 years. Alternative approaches are always being considered including the use of the Council's own land and financial resources in order to maximise additional affordable housing supply and will be brought forward for evaluation when feasible. This will be covered in more detail in a specific report to CEB on affordable housing delivery models in the near future and is part of the draft Oxford Housing Strategy.</p>
<p>Q2. Our Empty Property Strategy lists "Encourage and support affordable housing ..." as one of its aims. Have we been able to bring any empty homes back into use as affordable housing? I've heard that specifically, Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMOs) can be used in combination with conditions that housing will be let at affordable rents - is this something we could do (or do more of)?</p>	<p>Mel Mutch, Empty Homes Officer</p>	<p>Part of encouraging owners to bring their dwelling back into use is to supply them with information in particular the Council's Home Choice Scheme. We have had one owner take up this scheme following my encouragement. Generally, owners seem to be reluctant to get involved with the scheme for reasons such our rent payments being less than the private sector and the concern that our tenants may be problematic. Obviously we try and turn this around with the positives of our scheme and that we do not have people who have been evicted on our housing register which in itself is a sort of reassurance.</p> <p>With regard to EDMO's we have applied for three in the past. One we withdrew before a decision was made by the RPT because the owner put it up for sale and it was subsequently sold. With regard to the other 2 one was sold and the other refurbished and rented out.</p> <p>EDMO's can be used by us for social housing and there are examples where other local authorities have done this. The EDMO is for a 7 year period so ideally any property we consider with regard to EDMO's should not be excessive with</p>

		<p>regard to work required to bring it back into use.</p> <p>Of course there are also Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs).</p>
<p>Q3. Are there ways we can have greater control over definitions of affordability? Tower Hamlets have set affordable rent levels in their planning policies - it would be interesting to hear about this and how it might apply here?</p>	<p>Laura Higgins, Team Leader, Spacial and Economic Development</p>	<p>Yes we can do this and through s106 agreements we do set rent levels. There are definitions of Social Rent, shared ownership and intermediate housing in the Sites and Housing Plan which includes rent levels. These would be included within s106 agreements.</p>
<p>Q4. Other issues of planning control: Islington have specified consideration of 'use value' rather than 'market value' when making viability assessments about the levels of affordable housing contributions that developers need to make - could this be applied?</p>	<p>Laura Higgins, Team Leader, Spacial and Economic Development</p>	<p>Yes we already do this. Using Existing Use Value (EUV) rather than market value is a critical element of a robust viability assessment and we follow that approach. Appendix 3 of the Affordable Housing and Planning Obligations SPD includes detail on the viability appraisal requirements. Here is a small extract which relates to EUV:</p> <p><i>“6. Existing Use Value</i> <i>A3.36. The EUV is what the site is worth in its current use and condition. The City Council would expect three EUV valuations, each of which must be undertaken by a different qualified RICS surveyor.</i> <i>A3.37. The EUV is not necessarily the same as the actual land purchase price. Developers when purchasing a site should take account of adopted and emerging planning policies in agreeing a price. The Council will not accept overpayment for site purchase as a justification for non-viability.”</i></p>
<p>Q5. Other authorities have used Community Land Trusts in various models. Are there any that could apply in Oxford?</p>	<p>Alan Wylde, Housing Development & Enabling Manager</p>	<p>As with the other models of delivery mentioned above, the potential of Community Land Trusts will be examined and considered as and when opportunities arise. Typically in the UK they have been used on smaller schemes but the Council would be interested to see if they are capable of delivering larger numbers of homes whilst retaining benefit for the community and future occupiers.</p>