



BRACKNELL FOREST

HOUSING

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

MARCH 2025

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) provides guidance to supplement the following housing related policies in the Bracknell Forest Local Plan, 2024 (BFLP)¹.

- LP16 – affordable housing
- LP17 – provision of specialist housing for older people
- LP37 – protection of existing housing stock and land
- LP38 – accessible and adaptable dwellings
- LP39 – specialist housing
- LP40 – housing mix

Consultation

1.2 This SPD has been produced jointly by officers within the Planning and Housing departments of the Council. The SPD was subject to a five-week public consultation which took place between 1st October and 5th November 2024. A summary of the main issues raised and how they were addressed are set out in the associated 'Regulation 12 Consultation Statement'².

Sustainability Appraisal (SA)

1.3 The policies which are referred to within this document were subject to a Sustainability Assessment (SA) process through the BFLP. The Inspectors' report (para. 23)³ concluded that the BFLP SA was proportionate, objective, underpinned by relevant and up to date evidence, and accorded with the relevant legal requirements and national guidance. As such no further SA is required for this document.

Status of the Housing SPD

1.4 This SPD has been prepared in accordance with The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended), and the current SCI (2014 version). Following adoption, the SPD will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and supersedes Section 5.8 of the Council's adopted Planning Obligations SPD (2015)⁴.

¹ BFLP (2024): <https://consult.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/file/6304536>

² Regulation 12 Consultation Statement: www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/housing-supplementary-planning-document

³ BFLP Inspectors' Report (2024): <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-03/inspectors-report-bracknell-forest-local-plan.pdf>

⁴ Planning Obligations SPD (2015): [Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document | Bracknell Forest Council \(bracknell-forest.gov.uk\)](http://Planning%20Obligations%20Supplementary%20Planning%20Document%20Bracknell%20Forest%20Council%20%28bracknell-forest.gov.uk%29)

Structure of the SPD

1.5 This SPD includes the following sections:

- Section 2: Context
- Section 3: Market Housing
- Section 4: Affordable housing
- Section 5: Specialist housing
- Section 6: Self-Custom Build housing

2. **CONTEXT**

National policy and guidance

- 2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)⁵ was updated in December 2024. It includes the Government's planning policies for England and how they should be applied. It makes it clear that the planning system should be plan-led and provides a framework for meeting housing needs. The December 2024 version of NPPF made some changes to the definitions of affordable housing. These are reflected in **Section 4** of this document.
- 2.2 In December 2024 an updated 'Housing Delivery Test Rule Book'⁶ was also published. This changed the ratio for converting care bed spaces to a dwelling equivalent from 1.8 to 1.9. This change is reflected in **Section 5.10** of this document.
- 2.3 The NPPF is supplemented by Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)⁷. This helps explain how national policy should be implemented - the two documents should be read together.

Bracknell Forest Local Plan (BFLP)

- 2.4 The BFLP was adopted in March 2024, and sets out the vision and strategy for the Borough to 2037. It is divided into two parts:
- Part 1 contains the strategic policies and sets out where new jobs, homes and services will be located. It also contains policies that help to protect the natural and historic environment and help the borough to adapt to climate change as well as other issues.
 - Part 2 covers development management policies, such as helping to make sure we have high quality design, transport and environmental sustainability.
- 2.5 It contains several policies relating to housing. The policies relevant to this SPD are set out in **Section 1**.

Other development plan documents

- 2.6 In Bracknell Forest, there are several documents which form part of the development plan⁸. They are used to determine planning applications. National legislation requires that decisions are made in line with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 2.7 In addition to the BFLP, the following documents form part of the development plan, but are not considered in detail within this SPD:

⁵ NPPF: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

⁶ Housing Delivery Test Rulebook (para. 11): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/housing-delivery-test-measurement-rule-book/housing-delivery-test-measurement-rule-book>

⁷ PPG: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>

⁸ Bracknell Forest Development Plan: <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning/planning-policy/development-plan>

- Joint Minerals and Waste Local Plan (adopted January 2023): a Joint Plan covering Bracknell Forest, Reading Borough, Windsor and Maidenhead and Wokingham Borough. It sets out a long-term spatial vision and strategies for sustainable minerals and waste development and covers the period to 2036.
- Site Allocations Local Plan (SALP) (adopted July 2013): allocates certain sites for housing development, and a policy which recognises the needs of the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst. The BFLP has superseded some of the policies that were originally included in the Plan.
- Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs): there a number of 'made' NDPs for the Borough which are relevant to the consideration of planning applications.

Other Council documents

2.8 There are a number of other documents referred to within this SPD:

- Housing Commitments⁹: provide details of housing related sites (use class 'C3 dwellinghouses' and 'C2 residential institutions') in the Borough to the 31st March, and is updated annually. It provides an overview of sites that are under construction and completed during each monitoring year, together with any outstanding planning commitments, including:
 - Hard commitments: sites with a valid planning permission.
 - Soft commitments: sites which have no formal planning permission but have been identified in principle as being suitable for development. This is divided into two further categories:
 - sites with a resolution to grant permission subject to a s106 legal agreement and;
 - sites in an adopted plan (i.e. those accepted in principle, but that do not yet have a formal planning permission, which includes allocated site in the SALP, BFLP and Warfield NDP).

Data is produced on a parish basis in relation to:

- Large sites: one hectare or more.
- Medium sites: sites less than one hectare with 5 or more dwellings (net).
- Small sites: sites less than one hectare with under 5 dwellings (net).
- Housing Authority Monitoring Report (AMR)¹⁰: provides an annual overview of the performance of housing related policies within the BFLP and SALP.
- Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) (2021)¹¹: produced by Iceni, this document forms part of the evidence base for the BFLP, providing an up to date assessment of the housing needs of the Borough.
- Older Persons Accommodation and Support Strategy (2011-2026)¹²: sets out the Council's approach to promoting independence, and options for securing and maintaining peoples' homes of choice.

⁹ BFC Housing Commitments: [Housing monitoring | Bracknell Forest Council \(bracknell-forest.gov.uk\)](https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/housing-monitoring)

¹⁰ BFC Housing AMR: [Housing monitoring | Bracknell Forest Council \(bracknell-forest.gov.uk\)](https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/housing-monitoring)

¹¹ HNA (2021): <https://consult.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/file/5819854>

¹² Older Persons Accommodation Strategy (2011-2026): <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2021-11/older-persons-accommodation-and-support-strategy-2011-to-2026.pdf>

- Housing Strategy (2023-2028)¹³: contains the vision and strategic priorities for housing in the Borough over the next 5 years.
- Adult Social Care Market Position Statement (MPS) (2023-2025)¹⁴: sets out what the future demand for care and support in Bracknell Forest might look like, with the aim of facilitating partnership working in meeting strategic priorities.

¹³ Housing Strategy (2023-2028): <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-03/housing-strategy-2023-to-2028.pdf>

¹⁴ MPS: <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-02/market-position-statement-2023-to-2025.pdf>

3. MARKET HOUSING

3.1 What is market housing?

- 3.1.1 Market housing is housing which is either privately owned or privately rented and relates to use class 'C3 dwellinghouses' (a property occupied by a single person or people as a single household or occupied by not more than six residents living together as a single household).
- 3.1.2 Park or mobile homes are not classified as buildings as they are moveable structures. Where a proposal relates to the change of use of land for the stationing of a home that will be used as a primary permanent residence, it will be dealt with as a C3 use. Housing related development plan policies will be applied to these proposals except where referred to in this SPD.
- 3.1.3 A number of terms may be used in planning applications relating to market housing such as: residential, flats, apartments, dwellings, units, housing, park homes, mobile homes etc.

3.2 Housing needs

- 3.2.1 The BFLP does not set out a need over the plan period specifically for market housing. The overall housing need for the Borough is 10,438 homes (614 homes per year) across the plan period and is set out in Policy LP4 of the BFLP.

3.2.1 Meeting future needs

Role of existing commitments

- 3.2.2 Outstanding commitments will help to meet the housing requirements and are updated annually in the Council's housing monitoring report.

Role of BFLP allocations

- 3.2.3 Policy LP5 of the BFLP includes a number of housing related allocations (2,080 homes over the plan period) to meet the housing needs of the Borough over the BFLP plan period.

Role of windfall sites

- 3.2.4 Windfall sites are sites that come forward through the development management process, outside the local plan process (i.e. sites which are not allocated).
- 3.2.5 Historic housing monitoring information shows that small and medium windfall sites have played an important role in the Council's housing supply. There is no reason to assume that this trend will not continue. These sites will continue to contribute towards the overall housing needs. Small sites will also help meet any short-term housing requirements. Such applications will be considered on their merits in line with existing development plan policies and other national and local guidance.

3.2.2 Monitoring market housing over the plan period

3.2.6 The following information will be recorded in the annual Housing AMR:

- Number of dwellings (net) completed by site each year
- Number of accessible and adaptable dwellings completed each year (on qualifying sites - this will exclude park and mobile homes)
- Size and type of dwellings (this will exclude park and mobile homes) completed each year, this will be recorded as follows:
 - Size: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5+ bedrooms
 - Type: flats, terraced, semi-detached and detached

3.2.7 The data will be updated to the 31st of March each year and take account of the data in the annual update of the housing commitments.

3.3 Market housing requirements

- 3.3.1 Planning applications will be assessed on their merits in accordance with the guidance in this SPD, policies in the development plan (including the BFLP and relevant 'made' neighbourhood development plans), other relevant Council guidance, together with national planning policy and guidance.

Defined settlements and sustainable locations

- 3.3.2 Except for housing proposals relating to specific circumstances set out in Green Belt and countryside policies (such as rural workers), proposals will be permitted within the defined settlement in sustainable locations.
- 3.3.3 In assessing proposals, regard will be had to Policy LP2 'Settlement Hierarchy' of the BFLP. The settlement hierarchy directs new development to the defined areas of the most sustainable locations according to a hierarchy. Bracknell is a Tier 1 settlement i.e. the most sustainable.

Affordable

- 3.3.4 In accordance with Policy LP16 of the BFLP, 35% of new homes are expected to be affordable, where the following site size thresholds are met: 10 or more (gross) dwellings, or a site area of 0.5ha or more. **Section 4** of this SPD provides further information on the consideration of affordable housing matters.

Loss of existing stock

- 3.3.5 In order to safeguard the Borough's housing stock, in accordance with Policy LP37 of the BFLP, there should be no net loss of existing residential accommodation, except where any of the following applies:
- i. the continuation of a residential use is undesirable because of environmental conditions; or
 - ii. the development forms part of a wider comprehensive scheme which would result in an overall net increase in residential units; or
 - iii. the proposal delivers overriding public benefits which outweigh the loss of the residential use; or
 - iv. a change from residential use is the only viable way of ensuring the protection of a heritage asset; or
 - v. it has been demonstrated that residential use has been abandoned.
- 3.3.6 If any of the above criteria are considered to apply to a proposal, this information should be clearly set out within the application submission, which will be considered on its merits.

Adaptable and accessible dwellings

- 3.3.7 In accordance with criterion 1 of Policy LP38 of the BFLP, all new build dwellings will as a minimum be constructed in accordance with the requirements of Part M4 Category 2 of the Building Regulations 2010. This relates to dwellings being capable

of adaptation to meet changing needs of future occupiers. For the avoidance of doubt, a replacement dwelling will be classed as a 'new build'.

- 3.3.8 For clarity, as Policy LP38 relates to new buildings, this policy will not be applied to park/mobile homes as they are not classified as buildings and are therefore not subject to Building Regulations.
- 3.3.9 In addition, on developments of 10 or more (gross), criteria 2.i of the policy requires that at least 5% of all new dwellings meet Part M4(3)(2)(a) of the Building Regulations 2010. This requires dwellings to be constructed with the potential to be adapted for occupation by a wheelchair user. Part 2 ii of the policy relates to wheelchair accessible M4(3)(2b). As this may only be required where the local authority is responsible for allocating or nominating a person to live in a wheelchair accessible dwelling, this is dealt with in the Affordable housing section of this document.
- 3.3.10 Further information is set out in the 'Buildings Regulations 2010, Access to and use of buildings' document, 2015¹⁵.
- 3.3.11 Where the calculation of the 5% requirement of dwellings to be wheelchair adaptable would result in less than one home, provision of an on-site wheelchair adaptable property will be supported.
- 3.3.12 Similarly where the 5% requirement results in a fraction provision greater than a whole unit, on-site wheelchair adaptable properties (rounded up to the next whole property) will be encouraged and supported. For example (figures relate to gross dwellings):
- 10-19: 5% requirement is less than one dwelling. A single on-site unit will be supported.
 - 20: 5% requirement equates to one on-site dwelling.
 - 21-39: 5% requirement relates to 1-2 dwellings. Two on-site units will be supported.
 - 40: 5% requirement equates to two on-site dwellings.
 - 41-59: 5% requirement relates to 2-3 dwellings. Three on-site units will be supported.
 - 60: 5% requirement equates to three on-site dwellings.
 - 61-79: 5% requirement relates to 3-4 dwellings. Four on-site units will be supported.
 - 80: 5% requirement equates to four on-site dwellings.
 - 81-99: 5% requirement relates to 4-5 dwellings. Five on-site units will be supported.
 - 100: 5% requirement equates to five on-site dwellings, and so on.
- 3.3.13 The 5% on-site provision will be expected to be reflective of the tenure, type and mix of dwellings being provided within the overall scheme and will be split between market and affordable on a pro-rata basis.

¹⁵ Building Regulations:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7f8a82ed915d74e622b17b/BR_PDF_AD_M1_2015_with_2016_amendments_V3.pdf

- 3.3.14 As set out in the BFLP (para. 12.15), it is expected that compliance with Policy LP38 should be demonstrated in a Design and Access Statement submitted with the planning application. Applications will be assessed against the current building regulation requirements referred to above, or any subsequent update to the regulations.
- 3.3.15 If the policy requirement is adequately demonstrated through the application proposals, a condition to require the permission to be implemented in accordance with the approved plans and maintained as such thereafter will be included in the grant of a planning permission.
- 3.3.16 If the policy requirement is not adequately demonstrated as part of the application submission, appropriate planning conditions to require written verification that the completed dwellings are built to the specified standards to be submitted for approval, and maintenance thereafter will be included on any grant of planning permission.

Mix

- 3.3.17 In order to deliver balanced and sustainable communities, the Council will seek a range of dwelling types and sizes to meet the existing and future needs of different groups.
- 3.3.18 In accordance with Policy LP40, criteria 1:
- i. All residential developments, including conversions of 10 or more dwellings (gross) will be expected to provide a range of types and sizes with an emphasis on family homes outside Bracknell Town Centre.
 - ii. Developments of fewer than 10 units will be encouraged to provide types and sizes of dwellings that reflect local needs
- 3.3.19 For clarity, as park/mobile homes relate to the change of use of land rather than new buildings, Policy LP40 will not be applied to this type of development.
- 3.3.20 The BFLP includes a significant proportion of planned new housing development in and around Bracknell Town Centre. Taking account of the need to make efficient use of land and achieve higher densities, it is likely that smaller sized units/flatted development will be delivered on these sites. Therefore, it will be particularly important to seek larger family homes on sites outside the town centre to help to meet the needs of families across the Borough.
- 3.3.21 For the avoidance of doubt, reference to 'Bracknell Town Centre' is taken to mean the defined centre boundary as referred to in Policy LP21 ('hierarchy and extent of centres') which is defined on the Policies Map and Inset Map (see Inset 1 of Appendix 3 of the BFLP).
- 3.3.22 In reflecting local need, in the first instance, regard should be had to the HNA (2021). The results of monitoring and data from other local sources of information should also be used to help respond to housing needs. However, it is acknowledged that

demand can change over time, therefore information should be provided as part of any planning application to justify the mix proposed, particularly if only one single dwelling type/mix is proposed.

3.3.23 Notwithstanding the above, it is recognised that different mixes will be appropriate in different locations within the Borough. Therefore the Council will have regard to:

- size of the site
- individual site circumstances such as character of the area and any physical building constraints such as conversions
- on-site design requirements such as a gateway feature or landmark building
- site specific viability

3.3.24 In taking account of the mix of dwelling types proposed, the Council will consider whether rooms are likely to be used as bedrooms, even if they are not identified as such on the plans (such as those which are capable of accommodating a single bed and storage). This is because the number of bedrooms has implications in assessing proposals against several development plan policies and associated planning conditions and planning obligation requirements (such as parking standards, Thames Basins Heath mitigation, open space provision etc).

3.3.25 Whilst recognising that there is now a greater demand for home working, there is a need to balance this demand with the provision of smaller bedrooms. There are other ways of accommodating homeworking other than through the use of small bedrooms, such as smaller separate rooms (particularly at ground floor for 2+ storey dwellings), use of circulatory spaces (particularly for 3+ storey properties), or use of other ancillary areas such as rear gardens, where a home-working facility may be provided.

3.2.26 In assessing whether a room can be classed as a single bedroom space, the Council will have regard to the size and configuration of the room and whether it can accommodate a single bed, bed-side table and access to the bed (typically with dimensions of 2.2m x 1.8m or greater).

Design considerations

3.3.27 As set out in Policy LP28 'Design Principles', masterplans and design codes will be required for larger or more complex sites, which are defined as follows (para. 9.21 of the BFLP):

- Larger scale development:
 - those named in Part 2 of Policy LP28 (i.e. strategic site allocations at Beaufort Park, Derby Field, The Peel Centre, Eastern Gateway Development Area and Southern Gateway Development Area)
 - windfall sites involving development with the potential to have a significant impact on an area, requiring new or amended street networks, new green spaces, schools, community facilities and other elements of infrastructure
 - those involving phased development or that are of a significant height or scale.

- Complex developments:
 - those in multiple ownership, involving high densities or having more than one key issue where a masterplan approach is needed to ensure satisfactory resolution.
 - sites that are sensitive including sites of historic interest or character, those that affect the setting of an historic building and those that are in or adjacent to a conservation area.
 - sites including sensitive habitats, and those located within sensitive landscapes
 - sites where development has the potential to affect views to or from the Green Belt.

3.3.28 The required masterplan should include a holistic approach to drainage and green infrastructure matters, to be considered at the outset of the design of the scheme.

3.3.29 In addition schemes should have regard to the Council's current design guidance or any subsequent replacement:

- Design SPD: [Design Supplementary Planning Document | Bracknell Forest Council \(bracknell-forest.gov.uk\)](https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-06/bracknell-forest-design-supplementary-planning-document-2022-to-2026-0.pdf)
- Streetscene SPD: [Streetscene Supplementary Planning Document | Bracknell Forest Council \(bracknell-forest.gov.uk\)](https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-06/bracknell-forest-streetscene-supplementary-planning-document-2022-to-2026-0.pdf)
- Bracknell Town Centre Masterplans SPD): <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning/planning-policy/supplementary-planning-documents/bracknell-town-centre-masterplans-supplementary-planning-document>

3.3.30 During the plan period of the BFLP, the Council may also introduce 'design codes'. Any proposal will be assessed in line with current planning policy and advice.

Health and well-being

3.3.31 The Council's Plan (2023-2027) includes a priority for 'engaged and healthy communities, with one of the ambitions being a 'diverse and growing population which is healthy and active', and green spaces to foster wellbeing. This is underpinned by a 'health and wellbeing strategy'¹⁶.

3.2.32 As above, proposals will be assessed on their merits in accordance with the development plan. Proposals for housing will be expected to have regard to Policy LP3 'sustainable development principles' which refers to promoting healthy lifestyles and maximising health and well-being. This could include improving connectivity to and provision of accessible green spaces to encourage healthy and active lifestyles such as securing off-site improvements to or on-site provision of open space, green infrastructure, recreational facilities and inclusive spaces. There are a number of linked policies within the BFLP which will also need to be considered such as infrastructure (Policy LP24), design principles (Policy LP28), green infrastructure

¹⁶ Health and wellbeing strategy 2022-2026: <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-06/bracknell-forest-health-and-wellbeing-strategy-2022-to-2026-0.pdf>

(Policy LP30), open space (Policy LP45) and transport considerations (Policies LP25 and LP60).

Climate change and ecology

- 3.3.33 The Council's Plan (2023-2027) refers to a priority for a 'green and sustainable environment', with ambitions including green spaces to foster sustainability and biodiversity, and local transport networks to provide choice in travel. This is underpinned by a 'climate change strategy'¹⁷.
- 3.3.34 As above, proposals will be assessed on their merits in accordance with the development plan. Proposals for housing will be expected to have regard to Policy LP3 'sustainable development principles' and Policy LP27 'climate change' such as taking opportunities to reduce the need to travel and reliance on private car use, enhancing green infrastructure networks and incorporating multi-functional green infrastructure and biodiversity net gain, incorporating sustainable drainage systems, and maximising use of energy from renewable and low carbon sources. There are a number of linked policies within the BFLP which will also need to be considered such as design principles (Policy LP28), drainage and flood risk (Policies LP33 and LP57), ecology matters (including green infrastructure, Policy LP30, and biodiversity, Policy LP53), sustainable construction (Policy LP56) renewable and low carbon energy (Policy LP55) and transport (Policies LP25 and LP60).

¹⁷ Climate change strategy 2020-2024: <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2021-11/bracknell-forest-climate-change-strategy.pdf>

3.4 Securing delivery

- 3.4.1 Planning permissions will include conditions requiring development to be built in accordance with approved plans, and if required, phasing information. Planning conditions and legal agreements may be used to secure particular aspects of a proposal.
- 3.4.2 In order to comply with sections 111 and 113 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act, 2023, the Council will include conditions on the grant of planning permission relating to:
- Development commencement notices:
 - to require information when the development is expected to be begun.
 - Development progress reports:
 - progress that has been made/expected to be made on development (relating to each reporting period).
- 3.4.3 The information required by condition will take account of any subsequent enabling legislation and guidance issued by the Government.
- 3.4.4 The Council's reporting period relates to 1 April-31 March each year. For large and medium sites, the Council may also require information to be submitted on a quarterly basis (end of June, September, December and March of each monitoring period).
- 3.4.5 A 'completion' will be taken as a unit capable of being lived in, even if it is not yet occupied/sold (unless specified differently in enabling legislation).

3.5 Requirements for planning applications

3.5.1 Prior to the submission of a planning application, applicants are encouraged to submit a pre-application enquiry¹⁸.

3.5.2 In addition to standard planning application submission requirements, it would assist the assessment of residential proposals if the following information could be clearly set out as part of a pre-application/planning application submission (notwithstanding that some of the matters referred to are policy requirements). This is not intended to be an exhaustive list:

- i. existing and proposed use, including net increase in dwellings (particularly if the loss of any existing residential use is proposed).
- ii. how the proposal accords with Policy LP16 in relation to provision of affordable housing, through the provision of an Affordable Housing Statement.
- iii. masterplan/design code information where required by Policy LP28.
- iv. information justifying any loss of accommodation proposed in relation to Policy LP37.
- v. information on how the proposal meets the requirements of Policy LP38 in relation to accessible and adaptable dwellings.
- vi. a clear summary of the mix of units proposed/justification on compliance with the requirements of Policy LP40.
- vii. details of the anticipated start date of a development, build out rate and completion dates of individual dwellings (i.e. any dwellings capable of occupation), set out by year (1 April-31 March each year). This will be used to assist with monitoring housing completions for medium and large sites.

¹⁸ Pre-planning application advice: <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning/planning-applications/pre-application-planning-advice-developers/preparing-pre-application>

4. AFFORDABLE HOUSING

4.1 What is affordable housing?

4.1.1 Definition of affordable housing

- 4.1.1 The NPPF provides the definitions of affordable housing used in the Bracknell Forest Local Plan. The following explanation of the main affordable housing types and tenures is taken from Annex 2 of the NPPF, December 2024:

Affordable housing: housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers); and which complies with one or more of the following definitions:

a) Social Rent: meets all of the following conditions: (a) the rent is set in accordance with the Government's rent policy for Social Rent; (b) the landlord is a registered provider; and (c) it includes provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.

b) Other affordable housing for rent: meets all of the following conditions: (a) the rent is set in accordance with the Government's rent policy for affordable Rent, or is at least 20% below local market rents (including service charges where applicable); (b) the landlord is a registered provider, except where it is included as part of a Build to Rent scheme (in which case the landlord need not be a registered provider); and (c) it includes provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision. For Build to Rent schemes affordable housing for rent is expected to be the normal form of affordable housing provision (and, in this context, is known as Affordable Private Rent).

c) Discounted market sales housing: is that sold at a discount of at least 20% below local market value. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Provisions should be in place to ensure housing remains at a discount for future eligible households.

d) Other affordable routes to home ownership: is housing provided for sale that provides a route to ownership for those who could not achieve home ownership through the market. It includes shared ownership, relevant equity loans, other low cost homes for sale (at a price equivalent to at least 20% below local market value) and rent to buy (which includes a period of intermediate rent). Where public grant funding is provided, there should be provisions for the homes to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for any receipts to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision, or refunded to Government or the relevant authority specified in the funding agreement.

4.2 The requirement for affordable housing

- 4.2.1 The Council is committed to maximising the provision of affordable housing in line with Policy LP16 of the Local Plan. The policy seeks to ensure that the Council achieves mixed, balanced and sustainable communities and delivers high quality affordable housing for local people in housing need.

4.2.1 When the affordable housing requirement applies?

- 4.2.2 Policy LP16. 1 states that affordable housing will apply to all sites where 10 or more dwellings are provided. The figure of 10 homes is gross rather than net - where proposals involve the demolition of existing homes on a site, these will not be deducted from the total number proposed. Sites providing less than 10 homes, but with an area of 0.5 hectares are also required to provide affordable housing. The affordable housing thresholds used in Bracknell Forest are in line with guidance in paragraph 65 of the NPPF.
- 4.2.3 The provision of affordable housing will also apply to specialist accommodation for older people in self-contained housing where care and support are provided on site, where the site is delivering a gain of 10 or more (gross) self-contained units. This applies regardless of whether the development is defined as use class C3 or C2 (i.e. housing with care and support). More detail on this is provided in **Section 4.5.4** below.
- 4.2.4 The affordable housing requirement also applies to mobile/park home sites where 10 or more homes are to be provided. On such sites, it is accepted that Registered Providers will not accept onsite affordable housing units and so it is likely that a commuted sum payment in lieu of onsite provision will be sought, as detailed in **section 4.4.2**.
- 4.2.5 Affordable housing requirements do not apply to some forms of residential development that fall within permitted development rights, such as office to residential conversions. The extension of permitted development rights in 2013 to allow various buildings to be converted to residential use without the need for full planning permission, means that no mechanisms can be put in place to secure contributions from developers (in kind and financial) towards affordable housing and other infrastructure.

4.2.2 Level of affordable housing required

- 4.2.6 Policy LP16.1(i) of the Local Plan requires that on sites where the affordable housing requirement applies, 35% of the dwellings should be provided as affordable housing. The affordable housing should generally be provided on site and should include a mix of tenures, types and sizes that respond to identified local housing needs and priorities, as set out in **Section 4.3**.
- 4.2.7 Proposals which provide a higher amount of affordable housing than the 35% requirement will also be permitted. More details on this are provided in **Section 4.7** below.

4.3 Meeting local housing need

- 4.3.1 Affordable housing plays an important role in meeting the housing needs of households that lack the means to afford private sector housing of an appropriate size and standard. Historically, affordable housing has been delivered principally as subsidised rented housing which provides long-term security of tenure for households that cannot afford to rent or purchase a property on the open market. Over time, various forms of 'intermediate housing' and affordable home ownership housing have been included within the term affordable housing, to meet the needs of households aspiring to own their own home.
- 4.3.2 In recent years, increasing demand for affordable housing has outstripped the supply of new and existing affordable homes available. This is the case for both affordable homes for rent and for affordable home ownership properties. However, the imbalance between supply and demand is not even. For some property types, sizes and locations, the available supply falls significantly below demand, whilst the supply of other types of property may be relatively abundant.
- 4.3.3 A wide range of housing needs and groups make up the demand for affordable housing – overcrowded families, older people looking to downsize, young people wanting to buy a first home, single people with additional support needs – all with different needs.
- 4.3.4 Affordable housing policies therefore are not just about maximising the number of new affordable homes provided. Equally as important is the type, size, tenure, location and quality of the homes delivered. Policy LP16 seeks to address a significant need for affordable housing in the Borough, but also to ensure that the provision of affordable housing on individual sites responds to the range of identified housing needs and priorities in the Borough.

4.3.1 Role of local evidence

- 4.3.5 Policy LP16.1(ii) states that the tenure, mix and type of affordable homes to be delivered should be informed by the Council's most up to date evidence of identified needs. The evidence that is considered in assessing the needs and priorities for affordable housing is drawn from the following sources.

Housing Needs Assessment 2021

- 4.3.6 The Bracknell Forest Housing Needs Assessment (HNA)¹⁹ was prepared in March 2021 by Icen Projects to support the development of the emerging Local Plan. The HNA estimates the future need for affordable housing for the plan period. The total assessed net need for affordable housing is 5,070 homes up to 2037, which is 338 affordable homes each year.
- 4.3.7 The HNA provides a breakdown of the types of affordable housing needed. It estimates that some 69% of the affordable housing need, equating to 232 homes per year, is for affordable homes for rent, whilst around 31% of need, 108 homes per year, is for affordable home ownership housing. It further estimates that 50% of affordable homes for rent should be provided as social rented housing and the remainder as affordable rented housing.

¹⁹ <https://consult.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/file/5819854>

- 4.3.8 The HNA also provides other evidence which can contribute towards an understanding of local housing need: an indicative mix of property sizes needed for each tenure, an analysis of entry-level house prices, rents and incomes for households looking to access market housing, and an assessment of what the affordability range should be for affordable home ownership options.

Housing Strategy 2023-2028

- 4.3.9 Bracknell Forest Council published its latest housing strategy in March 2023. The Housing Strategy sets out the strategic housing priorities over the five years up to 2028. Its timeframe is therefore shorter than the Local Plan. The strategy sets out four main strategic priorities, the second of which is to deliver new homes in sustainable communities that meet the needs of local residents.
- 4.3.10 The Housing Strategy considers in detail the available evidence of local affordable housing need. It focuses initially on the HNA, but also draws on other data including analysis of housing register applications, affordable housing completions over the last five years, recent lettings data, and information and feedback from affordable housing providers.
- 4.3.11 The result is a more refined assessment of the priority needs for affordable housing. This balances the modelled estimates of need over the 15 years of the Local Plan period, set out in the HNA, with an assessment of the most urgent and pressing priorities for affordable housing, recognising the shortfalls in the delivery of certain types of homes in recent years, and current areas of high and unmet demand.

Annual housing needs update

- 4.3.12 The Housing Service compiles an annual update on affordable housing need, which is published on the Council's website [Affordable housing needs in Bracknell Forest | Bracknell Forest Council \(bracknell-forest.gov.uk\)](https://bracknell-forest.gov.uk/affordable-housing-needs-in-bracknell-forest/).
- 4.3.13 The annual housing need update presents the most up to date details on housing register applications, new affordable housing completions, the number and type of affordable properties becoming available to let, average rehousing times for different size properties, rent levels and affordability, and the available evidence concerning the demand for affordable home ownership products.
- 4.3.14 The purpose of the annual housing need update is to ensure that affordable housing proposals are informed by the latest evidence of local housing need. It recognises that the housing priority needs and targets set out in the HNA and Housing Strategy may change over the life-time of the Local Plan. The annual housing need update provides a means of confirming, adjusting and updating the needs, priorities and targets through the plan period.

4.3.2 Tenure

- 4.3.15 The HNA provides an assessment of the need for different types of tenure within the overall affordable housing requirement. In summary, it finds that:
- 69% of the need for affordable dwellings is **affordable housing for rent**.
 - 31% of the need for affordable dwellings is **affordable home ownership**.

- 4.3.16 The supporting text in the HNA makes it clear that the priority need for affordable housing is for rented affordable housing (i.e. social rented and affordable rented housing) to meet the needs of households who do not have other housing options.
- 4.3.17 For rented affordable housing to be genuinely affordable, it is important that rents do not exceed the Local Housing Allowance for the Broad Rental Market Area. This is to ensure that homes are accessible to households in need and households do not have to top up their rent from other income sources.
- 4.3.18 The HNA also supports a policy of seeking to deliver a significant proportion of new affordable housing at social rents to ensure that housing is affordable to lower income working households in the Borough. A 50/50 split of rented affordable housing between social rent and affordable rented homes is recommended, with larger units skewed towards social rents, given the significant affordability gap that exists for larger properties.
- 4.3.19 Development schemes that include affordable housing are expected to provide an appropriate tenure split that reflects the overall need for affordable housing set out above and summarised in the table below.

Table 1 - Percentage split between tenures

35% affordable housing		
69% affordable homes for rent		31% affordable home ownership
50% social rent	50% affordable rent capped at LHA	

- 4.3.20 These broad tenure categories include a range of different tenure types and products. These are detailed in the section below along with guidance on which of these the Council considers to be most needed.
- 4.3.21 Applicants are expected to provide a tenure mix that reflects the percentages in the above table. It is recognised that this exact mix may not be practical or appropriate on all sites and development types. Early engagement with the Housing Enabling Team and Registered Providers would assist applicants in ascertaining an acceptable tenure mix prior to submission of an application.
- 4.3.22 Where the applicant proposes a different tenure mix, they should set out clearly in their Affordable Housing Statement the reasons for this. The Council may consider some variation to the recommended tenure mix on a site-specific basis where this will meet a specific housing need, contribute to the Council's strategic housing priorities, or facilitate the delivery of onsite affordable housing. Examples of where a different tenure mix may be supported are:
- Proposals that provide an increased level of social rented homes within the affordable homes for rent element.
 - Proposals that increase the percentage of affordable homes for rent relative to affordable home ownership, where this will not undermine the delivery of mixed and balanced communities and is sustainable in that specific location.
 - Proposals where a variation in the tenure mix is necessary to achieve a more appropriate balance of tenures between different buildings or parts of the development.

- Proposals that present an opportunity to deliver affordable housing of a particular tenure and type with the aim of meeting a specific housing need identified by the Council.
- Proposals where only a small number of affordable homes are provided on the site and a change to the tenure mix (including provision of a single tenure of affordable housing) is needed to enable the delivery of onsite affordable housing.

Affordable housing for rent

4.3.23 Affordable housing for rent (often referred to as social housing) is owned and managed by local authorities and Registered Providers and is provided as long-term housing on secure tenancies for households in housing need. In Bracknell Forest, the Council no longer owns any social housing; all social housing in the local area is owned and managed by Registered Providers. Affordable housing for rent is allocated through the local authority's housing register to households nominated by the Council. A small element may be directly let by Registered Providers through their own waiting lists and internal management moves.

4.3.24 Affordable housing for rent comprises housing let at social rents and affordable rents, as explained below.

a. Social Rents are set using a government formula that is calculated to take account of the relative value of the property, the size of the property and relative local income levels. The majority of affordable homes for rent developed up to 2010 were social rented homes which, due to the rent formula and caps on rent increases, have remained by far the most affordable type of affordable housing.

b. Affordable Rent was introduced by the Government in 2011. Affordable rents can be set at up to 80% of market rent (inclusive of service charges). Affordable rented homes should be provided at rents that do not exceed the relevant Local Housing Allowance, inclusive of service charges and fees. This is to ensure that the homes are affordable to those reliant on Universal Credit/housing benefit.

4.3.25 In recent years, there has been a growing concern about the affordability of affordable rents compared to social rents. Some households on low incomes will not be able to access or afford affordable rented homes. The problem is particularly acute for larger family homes. Four bedroom properties let at affordable rents are unaffordable for many households, including those reliant on Universal Credit/Housing Benefit, severely limiting the rehousing prospects of overcrowded households.

4.3.26 For these reasons, the highest priority for affordable housing is social rented housing, as it meets the widest range of needs, and is the only form of affordable housing that is affordable to households on the lowest incomes.

4.3.27 The affordable housing on most developments should include a mix of social and affordable rented homes. The Local Plan recommends that 50% of the affordable homes for rent should be provided as social rented housing and 50% as affordable rented housing. The Housing Enabling Team can advise on the most appropriate mix of affordable and social rented housing on each individual site. Applicants should note the following points:

- Where a mix of housing types and sizes is provided, the larger property sizes should be prioritised for social rents, as these will be the least affordable at affordable rents.
- Where the mix includes 4 bedroom homes for rent, all of these should be provided at Social Rents and not Affordable Rents, to ensure they are affordable to the majority of overcrowded households who need a large size property.

Affordable home ownership

4.3.28 Affordable home ownership housing is for households that aspire to own a home but require support to do so. The term intermediate housing has also been used to describe this type of affordable housing. It provides housing for households that can afford to meet their needs in the private rental market but do not have a sufficient income to be able to buy a property without assistance; to qualify, households must usually have an income below £80,000. A range of different tenure types exist under this heading.

a. Shared Ownership is a well-established housing product that allows people who cannot afford to purchase a home on the market the chance to buy a share of a property and pay rent on the remaining amount (plus service charges). Initial purchase shares are usually between 25% and 75%. The purchaser then has the option to increase their share in the property over time (known as 'staircasing') up to 100% ownership.

b. Rent to buy provides an affordable route to home ownership to help middle income earners save for a deposit to purchase a house. Housing is let at rents which are less than market levels and must not exceed 80% of the market rent. Tenants are able to rent the properties for a minimum period of five years after which they have the option to purchase the property, usually on a shared ownership basis.

c. Discounted Market Sale is a low-cost home-ownership option for middle income earners to buy a new build property at a discounted price. The discount varies depending on the property and sale price but must be at least 20% below market value to be considered as an affordable home ownership option. First Homes are a type of discounted market sale housing introduced by the Government in 2021, with the homes offered at a minimum reduction of 30% against the market value.

4.3.29 The Housing Strategy and HNA have identified that shared ownership housing will meet the widest range of needs for affordable home ownership. The upfront costs are relatively low and the initial purchase share can be moderated to reflect the household's financial circumstances. The overall monthly cost for a shared ownership property will usually be no more than the cost of private renting, making it an affordable option for many households wanting to move into homeownership. For these reasons, shared ownership housing is the main priority for affordable home ownership.

4.3.30 Rent to Buy housing can provide a long-term route into home ownership for households that do not have a sufficient deposit to access shared ownership housing. Households will benefit from paying rents below the market rent. However, it is likely that some households will not be in position to purchase the property at the

end of the rent period. It is considered that this tenure type may benefit some households aspiring to home ownership.

- 4.3.31 Discounted market sale housing is likely to be affordable for only a minority of households that the Council seeks to prioritise for affordable home ownership housing. This is because potential purchasers will need a much larger deposit and higher incomes to support a larger mortgage, compared to shared ownership housing. The higher cost of new build housing means that a 20% minimum discount will be insufficient to make the homes affordable; it will usually be cheaper for households to purchase a full-price property in the second-hand market. Discounted market sale housing can only ever meet a small proportion of the overall need for affordable home ownership and will only be supported in exceptional circumstances and where the price of the homes meets the local authority's affordability criteria, set out in section 4.3.5 below. As the provision of discounted market sale housing imposes an additional administrative burden on the local authority, an administration fee will be charged per property to cover the cost of this.
- 4.3.32 First Homes are not currently supported in Bracknell Forest and the Local Plan does not include a requirement for First Homes to be included within the affordable housing provision. This is because the Government included transitional arrangements²⁰ allowing authorities like Bracknell Forest, whose emerging Local Plan was already at an advanced stage of preparation to defer the implementation of First Homes.

4.3.3 Type and size mix of homes

- 4.3.33 Indicative targets for different sizes of properties by tenure across the Borough have been provided in the HNA, for the period up to 2037, as shown below.

Table 2 - Indicative housing mix targets

Tenure	1 bedroom	2 bedroom	3 bedroom	4 bedroom
Market	5%	25%	45%	25%
Affordable homes for rent	30-35%	30-35%	20-25%	10-15%
Affordable home ownership	25%	40%	25%	10%

- 4.3.34 This shows that smaller (one and two bedroom) dwellings account for between 60% and 70% of the need for affordable homes for rent, with larger (three and above) dwellings accounting for between 30% and 40%. For affordable home ownership, 65% of the need is estimated to be for one and two bedroom properties and 35% for larger homes.
- 4.3.35 The indicative housing mix targets in the HNA will need to be refined and updated to reflect the latest evidence of local need. This includes details of households currently on the Housing Register and the availability of stock of different types and turnover of

²⁰ Planning Practice Guidance: Paragraph: 018 Reference ID: 70-018-20210524. Local plans and neighbourhood plans submitted for examination* before 28 June 2021, or that have reached publication stage** by 28 June 2021 and subsequently submitted for examination* by 28 December 2021, will not be required to reflect the First Homes policy requirement.

existing properties. In considering the mix of homes to be provided on individual development schemes, the latest evidence of need will be considered along with the potential of the development site to provide homes of different sizes and types.

4.3.36 The Housing Strategy identifies a significant imbalance between the demand for and supply of different property sizes for affordable rent, which results in much longer rehousing times for certain property sizes. Some key findings identified in the strategy are:

- In 2020/21 there were 63 families waiting for every 4 bedroom property let compared to 6 households for every one bedroom property let.
- Households needing larger affordable rented properties wait on average 3-4 times longer than other households needing a smaller property; the average wait for a four bedroom property is over 6 years, compared to 1-2 years for a smaller property.
- The majority of households seeking a one or two bedroom property have a relatively low assessed housing need, whereas households waiting for larger homes are much more likely to have a high level of housing need.

4.3.37 The Housing Strategy also highlights that nearly 90% of all new affordable rented homes delivered over the last five-year period (2018/19 – 2022/23) have been 1 and 2 bed properties, mainly flats, despite a significant unmet need for family homes. Over the same period, only one new four bed family house has been completed for affordable rent.

4.3.38 The significant under-delivery of new larger homes in recent years has contributed to a high backlog of need for larger affordable homes for rent. As a result, the priority need for affordable housing over the five years of the Housing Strategy is larger three bedroom and four bedroom affordable homes for rent.

4.3.39 The following housing mix targets for affordable housing are set out in the Housing Strategy.

Table 3 - Borough-wide housing mix targets

Tenure	1 bedroom	2 bedroom	3 bedroom	4 bedroom
Affordable homes for rent	30%	30%	25%	15%
Affordable home ownership	30%	50%	15%	5%

4.3.40 These targets will be reviewed annually having regard to evidence on local housing need. This includes data on demand from the housing register and the supply of affordable homes that are available. Future revisions to the tenure mix tables will be included in the Affordable Housing Needs Update published on the Council's website: [Affordable housing needs in Bracknell Forest | Bracknell Forest Council](#).

4.3.4 Reflecting market provision

- 4.3.41 The housing mix targets set out above will not be appropriate or achievable on every site and will need to be adjusted to take account of the character and form of development on specific sites.
- 4.3.42 It is recognised that future development in and around Bracknell Town Centre is likely to focus on high-density mixed-use schemes that deliver mainly smaller flatted dwellings, rather than family homes. Such sites provide an opportunity to meet and exceed the targets for one and two bedroom properties for affordable rent and home ownership, but provide limited scope to deliver family homes.
- 4.3.43 Suburban and greenfield sites provide greater opportunities to deliver family sized houses. Where development applications propose a range of family dwelling sizes for market sale, the affordable homes should similarly be provided mainly as family dwellings. These sites offer the best opportunity to meet the housing mix targets in respect of larger homes, for both rent and affordable home ownership.
- 4.3.44 In order to meet the borough-wide housing mix targets for three and four bedroom properties for affordable rent, it is expected that a higher proportion of larger properties will be provided on those sites where larger family homes for market sale are proposed. Such sites should aim to deliver an indicative affordable housing mix as follows:

Table 4 - Affordable housing mix targets

Tenure	1 bedroom maisonettes/ flats/bungalows	2 bedroom houses, flats and maisonettes	3 bedroom houses	4 bedroom houses
Affordable homes for rent	10%	40%	35%	15%
Affordable home ownership	5%	60%	30%	5%

- 4.3.45 The indicative housing mix represents the current position. The targets will be reviewed and adjusted, if necessary, as part of the annual affordable housing update.
- 4.3.46 The guiding principle is that the type and size of affordable housing provided on each individual site should mirror the type and size of the market housing provided on the site. For example, where the development proposed on a site is mainly low-rise houses, most of the affordable housing should similarly be in the form of two, three and four bed houses. Where smaller homes are provided, maisonette style properties are preferred. Some level of flatted development in small low-rise blocks may be acceptable. However, proposals to deliver the majority of affordable housing as smaller flatted homes in developments where this does not mirror the market housing, would not be acceptable.
- 4.3.47 The proposed mix of property types and sizes for affordable housing should be considered at the outset in the pre-application process and in discussions about the design and layout during the application. The Council's Housing Enabling Team will be able to provide advice on the appropriate type and size mix of affordable housing on each site.

4.3.5 Affordability

- 4.3.48 Where affordable housing rents or sales are linked to open market prices (as a percentage of the market value) there is concern that these may no longer be affordable as a result of continuing rises in both private rents and house prices.
- 4.3.49 The definitions of affordable housing in Annex 2 of the NPPF suggest that such housing should be made available at a discount of at least 20% from Open Market Value (OMV). However, as house values and rents continue to rise, a discount at that level may be insufficient to ensure that the homes are affordable. In some locations, the cost of new build housing, even with a discount of 20% or more, will be more expensive than that typically available in the open market.
- 4.3.50 The HNA sets out affordable purchase costs for discounted market sales housing of different sizes, based on households spending no more than 35% of income on housing. These are provided in a range, with the lower limit being the price at which all households with a sufficient income to afford private rented accommodation could afford to purchase an affordable home. The upper limit represents the entry-level price for market housing, such that if the purchase price is at or above this level, it can no longer be considered to meet the criteria for affordable home ownership.
- 4.3.51 Taking the mid-point of the range in Bracknell Forest for each property size and indexing to reflect values in 2024 the table below provides a guide to what the Council may consider to be affordable in considering discounted market sales proposals.

Table 5 - Bracknell Forest price limits for discounted market sales housing

1 bedroom	2 bedrooms	3 bedrooms	4 bedrooms
£154,000	£215,000	£295,000	£343,000

- 4.3.52 The price limits will be reviewed over time to reflect fluctuations in the housing market and [the updated figures will be provided in the Affordable Housing Needs Update published on the Council's website: Affordable housing needs in Bracknell Forest | Bracknell Forest Council](#).

Future revisions to the tenure mix tables will be included in the Affordable Housing Needs Update published on the Council's website: [Affordable housing needs in Bracknell Forest | Bracknell Forest Council](#).

4.4 Affordable housing proposals

4.4.1 What details are required?

- 4.4.1 Where a full planning application is submitted for residential development on a site where an affordable housing requirement applies, the application documents should include an Affordable Housing Statement which sets out the details of the affordable housing proposal.
- 4.4.2 The Affordable Housing Statement should provide as a minimum the following details:
- Confirmation of the percentage and number of affordable homes proposed.
 - A breakdown of the number, property types (e.g. flats, houses) and property sizes (by bedroom) of homes to be provided under each tenure.
 - A plan showing the proposed location of the affordable homes.
 - The affordable homes to be provided as wheelchair accessible/adaptable homes.
 - In instances where discounted market sales housing is being proposed, details of the percentage discount below local market value that the units will be offered at.

4.4.2 Meeting affordable housing requirements on site

- 4.4.3 In line with paragraph 64 of the NPPF, the Council expects all affordable housing to be delivered on site (LP16.2(iv)). Only in exceptional circumstances, where the Council considers that off-site delivery or a payment in lieu is justified, and would meet the Council's affordable housing objectives, will alternatives to onsite delivery be considered.

Off-site affordable housing

- 4.4.4 Proposals for off-site affordable housing will only be considered where they:
- (i) demonstrate a positive outcome in terms of meeting the Council's priorities for affordable housing, and
 - (ii) include details of a specific site or sites where the affordable housing will be provided.
- 4.4.5 The Council expects proposed sites for the off-site affordable housing to have an extant permission for residential development and will not consider speculative site proposals which may or may not come forward.
- 4.4.6 Where an off-site affordable housing provision is agreed, this will be calculated by reference to the total housing provision on the main development site and any affordable housing requirements that apply on the sites where off-site affordable housing is proposed (such that only the net additional affordable housing provision will be counted towards the off-site requirement).

Commuted sum payments in lieu of affordable housing

4.4.7 Payment in lieu contributions will only be agreed in the following circumstances:

(i) where a positive benefit can be demonstrated in terms of meeting the Council's priorities for affordable housing and/or

(ii) evidence has been provided and accepted by the Council that it is not possible to deliver the affordable housing obligations on site. Where this is because it has not been possible to enter into an agreement with a Registered Provider to transfer the affordable housing units, the Council will seek written evidence of the approaches made to Registered Providers and copies of the replies received.

4.4.8 Not receiving a high enough offer for the affordable housing is unlikely to be considered an adequate reason for not entering into an agreement with a Registered Provider. In all cases, the Council will consider the evidence presented carefully and will seek confirmation of this from Registered Providers.

4.4.9 Where a financial contribution in lieu of affordable housing is agreed, the Council will use its Affordable Housing Commuted Sum Calculator to calculate the payment in each case. The amount of the contribution is based on the delivery of a policy compliant level and tenure mix of affordable housing on the site or, the maximum reasonable amount of affordable housing that could be provided onsite as assessed through a viability assessment. This is calculated by reference to the value of the affordable housing units that would have been provided on site, compared to the market value of the same units.

4.4.10 The calculation is based on the following formula which reflects the true cost to a developer had the affordable housing been delivered on site, in effect, the developer's subsidy towards affordable housing:

Open Market value of units on site

Less: Developer's profit, sales and marketing costs

Equals: cost of developing units on site (i.e. land + build + fees + finance)

Less: value of the units to a Registered Provider (Capitalised rents, shared ownership sales)

Equals: Cost to developer of providing affordable housing

4.4.11 In circumstances where a viability appraisal has been undertaken and agreed with the Council, the open market value of the units, based on current market research relevant to the subject site, and the profit associated with the scheme, will have been estimated as part of the appraisal. In this case, the agreed open market values will be used in the calculation of the commuted sum payment.

4.4.12 In cases where a viability appraisal has not been undertaken, the Council will undertake a calculation of the commuted sum payment with reference to the average market values in the local area. This will be based on an analysis of open market values across the Borough undertaken for the Council by independent consultants to establish a schedule of average market values within different pricing zones within the area. The relevant market values will be input into the Commuted Sum

Calculator in order to calculate the amount of the commuted sum payment associated with the level and type of affordable housing that would have been provided onsite. Market values will be uprated over time to take account of changes in house prices.

- 4.4.13 In the case of park home sites, the same basic principle applies to calculating a commuted sum payment, which will be based on the difference between the open market value of the park homes and the lower values typically paid by registered providers for affordable homes.

4.4.3 Vacant building credit

4.4.14 Vacant Building Credit (VBC) was introduced by the Government to bring back into use previously developed sites containing vacant buildings.

4.4.15 Paragraph 65 of the NPPF states:

To support the re-use of brownfield land, where vacant buildings are being reused or redeveloped, any affordable housing contribution due should be reduced by a proportionate amount.

4.4.16 The PPG sets out that where a vacant building is brought back into any lawful use or is demolished to be replaced by a new building, the developer should be offered a financial credit equivalent to the existing gross floorspace of relevant vacant buildings when the local planning authority calculates any affordable housing contribution which will be sought.

4.4.17 The PPG does not provide a definition of a “vacant building” so the Council will apply the CIL definition, which is a building that has not been in continuous use for any 6 month period during the last 3 years. This means the whole building must have been vacant, not just a single planning unit or part of the building. The building must be vacant at the time the application is validated for the VBC to be applied.

4.4.18 In instances where there is an increase in floorspace, affordable housing contributions will be required. In such cases, the Council will calculate the amount of affordable housing required from the development in accordance with Policy LP16. A ‘credit’ will then be applied which is the equivalent of the gross floorspace of any relevant vacant buildings being brought back into use or demolished as part of the scheme and deducted from the overall affordable housing contribution calculation.

4.4.19 In calculating such a credit, the existing floorspace of a vacant building will be calculated as a proportion of the proposed floorspace (based on gross internal area) and then this ‘credit proportion’ applied in calculating either the number of affordable housing units to be provided within the development or where an equivalent financial contribution is being provided.

4.4.20 For example, where a building with a gross floorspace of 8,000 square metres is demolished as part of a proposed development with a gross floorspace of 10,000 square metres, any affordable housing contribution should be a fifth of what would normally be sought. For clarity, any rounding of the number of affordable housing units should take place at the end of the calculation only.

4.4.21 The policy is intended to incentivise brownfield development, including the reuse or redevelopment of empty and redundant buildings. It does not apply to buildings that have been abandoned or that have been intentionally made vacant in order to redevelop them.

4.4.22 In considering how the vacant building credit should apply, the Council will have regard to the intention of national policy.

4.4.23 If an applicant considers that Vacant Building Credit may apply to a scheme, it should address this as part of the Affordable Housing Statement required to accompany any application (see para. 4.41).

4.4.24 This Statement should address the following criteria:

- Is the site brownfield?
- Adequately demonstrate that the building has not been abandoned, taking into account all relevant circumstances such as:
 - the condition of the property
 - the period of non-use
 - whether there is an intervening use
 - any evidence regarding the owner's intention
 - active efforts to market the property
- Has the building has been made vacant for the sole purposes of re-development?
- Is the building covered by an extant or recently expired planning permission for the same or substantially the same development?

4.4.25 In the case of an outline application, where there is no certainty over the actual number of or size of dwellings, it will be difficult to quantify what vacant building credit will be applicable. Where the Council agrees that the VBC may be applicable, the applicant will be expected to enter into a S.106 Agreement at the outline stage to enable the matter to be deferred to a later stage when the relevant details of the scheme have been finalised.

4.4.4 Viability

4.4.26 Paragraph 59 of the NPPF states the following:

Where up-to-date policies have set out the contributions expected from development, planning applications that comply with them should be assumed to be viable. It is up to the applicant to demonstrate whether particular circumstances justify the need for a viability assessment at the application stage. The weight to be given to a viability assessment is a matter for the decision maker, having regard to all the circumstances in the case, including whether the plan and the viability evidence underpinning it is up to date, and any change in site circumstances since the plan was brought into force. All viability assessments, including any undertaken at the plan-making stage, should reflect the recommended approach in national planning guidance, including standardised inputs, and should be made publicly available.

4.4.27 The Local Plan affordable housing requirements have been tested in the Viability Testing Report undertaken by BPS Chartered Surveyors November 2021, as part of the evidence base for the preparation of the Local Plan. The viability evidence underpinning the Local Plan has determined that the majority of development types assessed in the report are viable with the planning contributions, including affordable housing, expected in the Local Plan.

4.4.28 The Council expects that financial viability assessments will only be submitted in exceptional circumstances. If such circumstances exist, the developer is expected to submit a written document setting out site-specific circumstances that mean that the Local Plan affordable housing policies should not apply. This should refer back to the Viability Testing Report which informed the plan and summarise why the site is significantly different from the development types tested, or why the costs of development vary significantly from standard models of development. The PPG provides further guidance on this:

Such circumstances could include, for example where development is proposed on unallocated sites of a wholly different type to those used in viability assessment that informed the plan; where further information on infrastructure or site costs is required; where particular types of development are proposed which may significantly vary from standard models of development for sale (for example build to rent or housing for older people); or where a recession or similar significant economic changes have occurred since the plan was brought into force.

- 4.4.29 The weight given to the submission of a viability assessment that seeks to reduce the affordable housing contribution below the policy position of 35% will be a matter for the Council. The relaxation of normal policy requirements will usually only be considered where there are costs associated with a particular site which could not have been envisaged at the plan-making stage, or where circumstances have changed since the plan was adopted, or where development typologies have been found to be unviable in the Local Plan Viability Testing Report. If the Council decides that a viability assessment is not justified, the relevant requirements of Policy LP16 will apply.
- 4.4.30 For developments in and immediately around Bracknell Town Centre, the Local Plan Viability Testing Report has found that development may not be viable at 35% affordable housing. In these locations, the applicant may submit a financial viability appraisal where they consider that meeting the 35% affordable housing requirement is not viable. The level and type of affordable housing to be provided on such sites will be discussed following the outcome of an independent review of the applicant's viability appraisal. This may include some flexibility to vary the mix of tenures to improve viability. The Council will try to strike the right balance between maximising the level of affordable housing and ensuring that identified needs and priorities for affordable housing are addressed.
- 4.4.31 In cases where the Council has agreed that a viability assessment is justified, it should be submitted to the Council along with the other application documents. It should follow the method as set out in PPG Viability paras 010 to 019 and include, as a minimum, a detailed cost plan and specification, evidence justifying proposed sales values and a detailed valuation of existing use value. It should also include a summary which clearly explains the findings. Applicants should demonstrate that their proposal is deliverable and that their approach to viability is realistic. Where the scheme shows a significant deficit, even before planning obligations are provided, the applicant should demonstrate how they propose to deliver the scheme.
- 4.4.32 The applicant will be required to pay for the Council to undertake an independent analysis of the applicant's viability assessment. The Council will commission its own choice of independent consultant and the consultant's fees will be agreed with the applicant. The applicant will have an opportunity to review and comment on the Council's viability report and the consultant will consider this and make any necessary revisions before issuing their final report. If the applicant refuses to pay, or fails to pay for the Council's report, it will result in the planning application being refused.
- 4.4.33 It should be noted that in line with the PPG, viability assessments should be prepared on the basis that they will be made publicly available, other than in exceptional circumstances. Where an exemption from publication is sought, the local planning authority must be satisfied that the information to be excluded is commercially sensitive. Simply stating that the report is commercially sensitive is not an adequate

reason for not making it publicly available. The onus is on the applicant to provide specific reasons setting out what information is commercially sensitive and why. The PPG advises:

Information used in viability assessment is not usually specific to that developer and thereby need not contain commercially sensitive data. Where an exemption from publication is sought, the planning authority must be satisfied that the information to be excluded is commercially sensitive. This might include information relating to negotiations, such as ongoing negotiations over land purchase, and information relating to compensation that may be due to individuals, such as right to light compensation.

- 4.4.34 In these circumstances, the viability report will still be made publicly available on the basis that specific elements of data that are agreed to be sensitive may be aggregated as part of the total cost figures.

4.5 Other considerations

4.5.1 Dealing with fractions of an affordable housing requirement

- 4.5.1 Policy LP16.2(ii) refers to cases in which the application of the 35% requirement for affordable housing result in a fraction of an affordable dwelling. In such cases, the applicant can choose to round up the quantum of onsite provision to the next whole number. Alternatively, if the applicant chooses to round down the quantum of onsite provision, then the fraction of a unit that results will be translated into a financial contribution of broadly equivalent value to that which would have been required on-site.
- 4.5.2 For example, if the application relates to a residential development of 45 dwellings, then the 35% affordable housing requirement results in the provision of 15.75 affordable dwellings. The applicant may choose to round this up to provide 16 affordable dwellings or to round it down to 15 dwellings, in which case a financial contribution representing the value of 0.75 of an affordable dwelling will be required.
- 4.5.3 The amount of the financial contribution will be calculated using the Council's affordable housing fraction of a unit calculator. This will be based on the relevant average market values for the area that the site and the type and size of properties being developed on the site.

4.5.2 Approach to sites below the threshold that are part of a larger site

- 4.5.4 The NPPF recognises that small sites can make an important contribution to meeting local housing requirements and should not be required to provide affordable housing where they are below the threshold for a major residential development. Policy LP16.1 defines the threshold as developments below 10 dwellings or occupying a site of less than 0.5ha.
- 4.5.5 However, circumstances can arise where a larger site that would attract an affordable housing requirement is artificially split into smaller parcels, which are submitted as separate applications, below the threshold at which affordable housing requirements apply. This can take place chronologically with part of a site initially submitted for planning, and after planning approval is granted, a second application submitted for an adjoining piece of land or for an extension to the first application.
- 4.5.6 The Council will carefully consider any evidence that suggests that small site proposals have been drawn up with the intention of circumventing the Borough's planning policies. Where a site is, or has been, in a single ownership, and is part of a larger site, artificial sub-division into smaller sites to avoid provision of affordable housing will not be permitted.

4.5.3 Provision within phased developments

- 4.5.7 Larger sites, which are likely to be developed in phases, will be treated as single sites for the purposes of affordable housing, even if phasing is proposed. Large sites cannot be split up to attempt to avoid meeting the affordable housing requirements.
- 4.5.8 Where a large site has been divided into smaller parcels to assist delivery, or where a site is owned by more than one party, an outline planning application will be expected for the entirety of the site. The outline application should include details of

the quantum and type of affordable housing to be provided and the proposals and timescales for delivering these over a number of 'parcels' or 'phases'.

- 4.5.9 The Council's starting point is that each individual phase should deliver the policy requirement for 35% affordable housing, along with policy expectations regarding the tenure, type and size of properties. Variations in this approach may be agreed where the Council considers this will achieve positive benefits, such as providing early delivery of affordable housing or an improved mix of affordable housing that meets the Council's priority needs.

4.5.4 Older people's specialist accommodation

- 4.5.10 As noted in 4.2.1, the requirement for affordable housing applies to specialist housing for older people where the site is delivering a gain of 10 or more (gross) self-contained units. This applies regardless of whether the development is defined as use class C3 or C2 (i.e. housing with care and support).
- 4.5.11 It is recognised that some forms of provision of specialist housing for older people may be more costly than mainstream housing, especially those that include onsite facilities and specialist features for residents. The Local Plan Viability Testing Report identified that older people's accommodation providing specialist care was likely to be unviable at 35% affordable housing. Financial viability will be assessed on such schemes in accordance with the guidance set out in **Section 4.4.4**.
- 4.5.12 Where an affordable housing requirement applies, the Council expects developers to engage positively in considering options to provide affordable housing for older people within the design of the overall scheme. In practice, this may mean providing some separation of the affordable housing element within the scheme, in order to avoid the higher service and management charges associated with the market element, and to allow separate management by an affordable housing provider. Whilst this may not be possible on all schemes, developers should explore potential options with Registered Providers and the Housing Enabling Team, rather than assuming that no onsite affordable housing provision is possible.

4.6 Design standards and considerations

4.6.1 Integration of affordable housing within developments

- 4.6.1 Affordable housing should be carefully designed into schemes to promote mixed, balanced, and sustainable communities.
- 4.6.2 It is important that the onsite affordable housing is integrated and dispersed within developments in an appropriate way, with no difference in external appearance compared to market housing. On larger sites, the affordable housing should generally be in the form of clusters comprising up to 20 dwellings.
- 4.6.3 Registered Providers' preference is for discrete areas of affordable housing provision in order to facilitate management of the dwellings. In flatted developments, separate cores for the affordable housing are usually preferred. Pepper-potting of individual affordable housing dwellings is not usually supported by Registered Providers.

4.6.2 Space standards

- 4.6.4 All affordable homes should meet the Government's prescribed space requirements for the size and type of properties being built, set out in [Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/technical-housing-standards). It is important to ensure adequate built in storage capacity as well as meeting minimum room requirements. Applications should include details within their application documents (for example, in the Design and Access Statement or Accommodation Schedule) that demonstrate compliance with the Nationally Described Space Standards.
- 4.6.5 Affordable dwellings should be designed and built with living spaces and bedroom sizes that maximise occupancy and increase their potential use by families. This means that all two bedroom properties for affordable or social rent should be designed as 4 person units; all three person properties should accommodate at least 5 persons; and all four bedroom properties should accommodate at least 7 persons.
- 4.6.6 Two bedroom three person and three bedroom four person properties do not provide an acceptable level of accommodation.

4.6.3 Registered Provider considerations

- 4.6.7 Many Registered Providers have their own standards and criteria for affordable housing, in addition to those set out in national guidance. Developers are expected to ensure that the design of the affordable housing takes account of the policies and expectations of Registered Providers.
- 4.6.8 This is best achieved through early engagement with Registered Provider regarding the design of the proposed affordable housing provision. The Housing Enabling Team can provide the contact details of Registered Providers, if needed.
- 4.6.9 The following is provided as a guide to Registered Providers' criteria and expectations in considering affordable housing proposals:
- All dwellings should have access to private amenity space, in the form of individual gardens or good size usable balconies for all flatted dwellings.
 - Concentrations of one bed flats in larger blocks should be avoided.

- Terraces or semi-detached dwellings for affordable housing should be of a single tenure.
- Well-designed, one and two bed self-contained maisonettes, in small blocks, with separate entrances and gardens are preferred to flats on greenfield sites.
- Flats should be located in affordable tenure blocks or have their own separate core from the market homes in order to minimise service charges and facilitate management arrangements.
- A mix of dwellings at both affordable and social rents in a single block will not generally be supported.

4.6.10 Other considerations that will help to ensure that Registered Providers look positively at proposals for affordable housing are:

- High levels of energy and thermal efficiency are important to ensure fuel bills are affordable to future residents.
- Green energy sources such as air and ground source heat pumps, and photo-voltaic panels are increasingly expected in place of gas boilers and appliances.
- EV vehicle charging points for the affordable dwellings.
- Adequate parking, in line with the Council's usual parking standards, for the affordable dwellings (unless there are exceptional reasons for not doing so that have been agreed with a Registered Provider and the Council).
- Provision of space to work and do school homework, given the increasing emphasis on working from home.
- Edible planting, such as fruit trees, in gardens.

4.6.4 Accessible and adaptable homes

4.6.11 Policy LP38 specifies that on developments of 10 (gross) or more new build dwellings at least 5% of all dwellings should meet the Part M4(3)(2)(a) standard for wheelchair adaptable dwellings.

4.6.12 This policy applies to all dwellings, including market and affordable homes. Applied to the affordable housing, this means that at least 5% of affordable dwellings should be built to M4(3) wheelchair accessible/adaptable standards.

4.6.13 The section on market housing explains that where the 5% requirement applied to all dwellings results in a fraction of a unit, applicants are encouraged to round this up to the next whole number. For example, on a development of less than 20 dwellings the 5% requirement will be a fraction of a dwelling; in this case a single wheelchair adaptable property would be required.

4.6.14 Where application of the policy results in a requirement for only a single or two wheelchair adaptable homes across the development as a whole, it is appropriate that where a need for affordable housing that is wheelchair adaptable has been identified, preference should be given to providing this within the affordable housing element of the scheme.

- 4.6.15 The Housing Enabling Team will be able to advise on the provision of wheelchair adaptable housing in relation to the affordable housing on each individual development and on the type, size and tenure of wheelchair accessible/adaptable dwellings needed, taking into account the evidence of demand on the housing register. The demand for wheelchair homes extends beyond a need for one bed flats; there is also a demand for two and three bed wheelchair adapted properties to accommodate families with a wheelchair user.
- 4.6.16 Policy LP38 further states that where evidence from the Council's Housing Register points to a current local need, affordable schemes should include provision for Part M(4)(3)(2)(b) wheelchair accessible dwellings. Wheelchair accessible properties are distinguished from wheelchair adaptable properties in that they will be constructed with specific adaptations already fitted to meet the needs of a wheelchair user.
- 4.6.17 The Council will set out its current need for wheelchair accessible properties in its annual Affordable Housing Needs Update. The Housing Enabling Team will advise at the point of application on the need for fully fitted Part M(4)(3)(2)(b) wheelchair accessible properties to meet specific identified needs.

4.7 Securing provision

4.7.1 S.106 Legal Agreements

- 4.7.1 Planning obligations, including the provision of affordable housing, will be secured through a legal agreement (known as a Section 106 Legal Agreement (s106)) between the Council and the landowner and any other parties with an interest in the land.
- 4.7.2 The Council will expect developers to enter into an appropriate s106 covering all aspects of the delivery of affordable housing on the application site. The developer will be expected to meet the Council's legal costs in drawing up the agreement.
- 4.7.3 The s106 will usually cover the following matters relating to affordable housing:
- Definitions of affordable housing and the affordable tenures to be provided
 - Details of the tenure mix and property sizes of the affordable housing
 - Provisions to ensure that the affordable housing remains affordable in perpetuity
 - Mortgagee in Possession clauses and limitations
 - Conditions regarding the allocation and occupation of the affordable dwellings
 - Restrictions on the occupation of dwellings prior to delivery of the affordable housing
 - The requirement and process for a review mechanism (where applicable).

4.7.2 Affordable Housing Scheme

- 4.7.4 In some cases, for example, on outline applications, the affordable housing details will not have been finalised at the point of drawing up the s106 agreement. In these cases, the s106 agreement will include a requirement for the submission and approval of an Affordable Housing Scheme prior to commencement of the development. The Affordable Housing Scheme should confirm in full the details of the number, tenure, property type and sizes and location of the affordable housing.

4.7.3 Changes to the affordable housing provision

- 4.7.5 Proposed changes to the tenure, mix or type of affordable housing set out in a s106 agreement may be considered, especially if this helps to secure delivery of onsite affordable housing (for example, by meeting certain conditions or criteria specified by Registered Providers) or improves the affordable housing scheme in line with the Council's priorities for affordable housing.
- 4.7.6 Where changes are proposed, these should be discussed with the Housing Enabling Team in the first instance. If the proposals are acceptable in principle, it may be possible to accommodate these changes within a new Affordable Housing Scheme, providing the s106 agreement allows sufficient flexibility in the affordable housing provision to do so. This is a matter that the Infrastructure and Implementation team can advise on.
- 4.7.7 In other cases, the process is likely to require a Deed of Variation to the s106 agreement. For this, the applicant should submit a formal written request setting out the proposed changes, and the reason for these, and the relevant sections of the

s106 agreement that will need to be amended. It is likely that formal approval will be needed under the Executive Director for Place's delegated authority powers. If this is agreed, then the applicant's lawyers should prepare a draft deed of variation. An administration fee will be charged for this work, and the Council's legal costs will need to be met.

4.7.4 Proposals for additional affordable housing

- 4.7.8 The Council is keen to support Registered Providers and developers to deliver additional affordable housing over and above the requirements set out in Policy LP16. Registered Providers are encouraged to discuss any such proposals with the Council's Housing Enabling Team at an early stage.
- 4.7.9 The s106 agreement sets out the minimum requirement for affordable housing based on Policy LP16. There are various ways in which additional affordable housing above the policy compliant level may be proposed. For example:
- The applicant may reach an agreement with a Registered Provider to sell additional units above the minimum policy level to be delivered as affordable housing.
 - The development may be led by a Registered Provider on land that they own or have agreed to acquire, with the intention of providing additional affordable housing above the policy compliant level.
 - A developer may decide following approval to sell the whole site to a Registered Provider that chooses to provide more than the policy compliant level of affordable housing.
- 4.7.10 On some developments, the proposal may be for 100% of the dwellings to be provided for affordable housing. In other cases, particularly on larger sites, a mix of market and affordable homes may be proposed, with an enhanced level of affordable housing.
- 4.7.11 The provision of additional affordable housing is generally regarded as a positive benefit, given the high, unmet need for affordable housing in the borough. Such proposals will usually be supported and encouraged, especially where the additional affordable housing is of a type that meets the Council's priority needs for affordable housing.
- 4.7.12 The provision of additional affordable housing is usually supported by grant funding from Homes England. Homes England has rules that prevent the funding of affordable housing where this is included as a requirement within the s106 agreement or as a planning condition. This means that additional grant-funded affordable housing cannot be legally secured within a s106 agreement.
- 4.7.13 The approach of the authority in these cases will be to secure the minimum level of affordable housing required by policy in the s106 agreement. Therefore, at application stage, the applicant will need to clarify which homes are to be specified as meeting the affordable housing policy requirement (separately from those to be treated as additional affordable homes), and these should be in a mix that complies with the tenure split in the supporting text to Policy LP16.

- 4.7.14 The applicant will be asked to confirm the additional affordable housing (as well as the policy compliant affordable homes) in a separate Affordable Housing Scheme, to be submitted to the Council following full planning approval and before commencement of the development. This should specify the details of the s106 affordable units and the additional affordable units in terms of their tenure, type, size and location. Completion and approval of the Affordable Housing Scheme will be necessary in order to consider an application for CIL Social Housing Relief for the additional affordable housing units.

4.8 Delivery of affordable housing

4.8.1 The role of Registered Providers

- 4.8.1 In most cases, the onsite affordable housing will be delivered by Registered Providers who are registered with and regulated by the Social Housing Regulator. In the case of affordable homes for rent, these can only be owned and managed by Registered Providers.
- 4.8.2 Bracknell Forest Council does not have preferred partner Registered Providers. Developers are therefore advised to approach all Registered Providers actively developing in the local area.
- 4.8.3 A list of affordable housing development contacts is maintained and regularly updated by the Housing Enabling Team. The list includes all Registered Providers that have expressed a commitment to developing in Bracknell Forest. Most of these Registered Providers already own and manage affordable housing in the borough and have established working relationships with the Council.
- 4.8.4 Registered Providers that are new to the area and do not currently own any stock in the borough will be expected to satisfy the Council of their suitability to own and manage affordable homes in the local area and their commitment to Council housing policies. Proposals will be assessed by on a case-by-case basis. The key considerations are:
1. They must agree to provide nominations to the Council and to sign the Council's Nomination Agreement with respect to all new developments of affordable housing.
 2. They will be expected to demonstrate how they will provide an effective housing management service to local residents, especially if they have no housing management base within the local area.
 3. They must be registered with the Regulator of Social Housing and have a satisfactory track record with regard to financial, performance and governance assessments undertaken by the Regulator.

4.8.2 Nomination agreements

- 4.8.5 Registered Providers will be required to enter into a Nomination Agreement with the Council which sets out the arrangements for the allocation and occupation of affordable dwellings. The Council will normally require 100% of nomination rights on all initial lettings of affordable homes for rent and a minimum of 75% of nomination rights thereafter.
- 4.8.6 The nominations agreement also includes arrangements to ensure that the marketing and sale of shared ownership properties gives priority to local residents. Registered Providers are expected to give priority to households with a local connection (through living or working in the area), except where the shared ownership homes are funded by Homes England grant.
- 4.8.7 In certain cases, the Council may agree a local lettings plan with a Registered Provider which allows for a variation from the usual Nominations Agreement. This will

usually only occur where there are specific factors associated with the location, type or character of the development that require a sensitive lettings plan.

4.8.3 Trigger points and limitations for delivery of affordable housing.

4.8.8 The s106 legal agreement includes a number of provisions to secure the delivery of the affordable housing. These limit the ability of the owner to proceed with development until progress has been made at key trigger points towards transferring and completing the affordable housing. They include:

- Not allowing the commencement of the development until a contract has been entered into with a Registered Provider to transfer the affordable housing on its completion.
- Not permitting the occupation of any dwellings until the developer has entered into a legal agreement to transfer the affordable housing to a Registered Provider.
- Limiting the percentage of open market homes that can be occupied until all of the affordable housing units have been completed and transferred to the Registered Provider.

4.9 Review mechanisms

4.9.1 The operation of the Review Mechanism ('claw back') provisions

- 4.9.1 The Local Plan allows for a 'clawback' provision to be included in the s106 agreement where the Council has accepted a lower level of affordable housing (following an open book assessment of the scheme's costs and revenue). The clawback provision is in the form of a viability review mechanism which allows the Council to determine whether a development is capable of viably providing additional affordable housing close to completion of the scheme.
- 4.9.2 The Council will expect a review mechanism to be included within the s106 agreement in the following scenarios:
- a) Where developments are providing less than 35% affordable housing following a viability assessment that has been accepted by the Council.
 - b) Where developments are providing 35% affordable housing but with a tenure mix that provides a lower level of affordable housing for rent than is required by policy, following a viability assessment that has been accepted by the Council.
- 4.9.3 Where the review mechanism determines that additional affordable housing can be provided (because development values are higher and/or build costs are lower than were estimated in the application-stage viability assessment), this will be in the form of a payment in lieu of affordable housing to be made to the Council.
- 4.9.4 The operation of the review mechanism is intended to provide a clear, simple, and certain method for calculating the amount of this payment that is understood and agreed at the outset by both the Council and the applicant. The review will generally take place at the point at which 75% of the market homes on the development have been sold. The benefit of this is that the review can be based on actual values achieved and costs incurred.
- 4.9.5 The approach adopted in Bracknell Forest Council uses the late-stage review mechanism developed by the Greater London Authority and commonly used by London boroughs. This approach compares Gross Development Value (GDV) and build costs at the point of the Late-Stage Review with the estimated values in the original viability assessment. Where there is a net increase in value, effectively a surplus profit, 60% of this (once the Owner's profit has been deducted) will be paid to the Council to be used for additional affordable housing.
- 4.9.6 The additional payment due at the late-stage review shall be calculated using the following formula:

X = Late Stage Review Contribution

$$\mathbf{X = ((A + B - C) - (D + E - F) - P) * 0.6}$$

Where:

A = Late Stage Review Actual GDV (£)

B = Late Stage Review Estimated GDV (£)

C = Application Stage GDV (£),

D = Late Stage Review Actual Build Costs (£)

E = Late Stage Review Estimated Build Costs (£)

F = Application Stage Build Costs (£)

P = (A + B - C) * Y

Y = Target Return (%) as a percentage of GDV as determined at the time that planning permission was granted.

- 4.9.7 The additional affordable housing payment will be capped at an amount based on the delivery of a fully policy compliant level of affordable housing. The cap is calculated using the following formula:

X = Late Stage Review Cap

$$X = (((A * D) - (B * D)) * E) + (((A * D) - (C * D)) * F)$$

Where:

A = Average Open Market Housing Value (£)

B = Average Low Cost Rent Housing Value (£)

C = Average Intermediate Housing Value (£)

D = [] m², being the average Habitable Room size for the Development

E = the shortfall in Low Cost Rent Housing (by Habitable Room) when compared with the Affordable Housing Target Tenure Split

F = the shortfall in Intermediate Housing (by Habitable Room) when compared with the Affordable Housing Target Tenure Split.

4.9.2 Role of the independent assessor

- 4.9.8 In undertaking the review mechanism, the applicant will be expected to provide robust evidence of build costs and sales values for the completed units. The Council will assess the information submitted in order to determine whether a Late-Stage Review Contribution is payable in accordance with the formula above and the amount of any payment.
- 4.9.9 The Council may appoint an External Consultant of its own choosing to independently assess the information submitted. Costs incurred by the Council in the assessment and negotiation of viability reviews, including the cost of employing an Independent Assessor, will be met by the applicant and paid for in advance.

5. SPECIALIST HOUSING

5.1 What is specialist housing?

- 5.1.1 This can include specialist housing within use class 'C3 dwellinghouses' or 'C2 residential institutions' (use for the provision of residential accommodation and care to people in need of care, or a nursing home), and is accommodation designed and designated for occupation by older people, disabled people, and/or vulnerable people with specific housing needs.
- 5.1.2 "Care" is defined in the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 as 'personal care for people in need of such care by reason of old age, disablement, past or present dependence on alcohol or drugs or past or present mental disorder, and in class C2 also includes the personal care of children and medical care and treatment'.
- 5.1.3 Specialist housing can comprise both affordable housing (if the housing is self-contained) and market housing.
- 5.1.4 A number of terms may be used in planning applications relating to specialist housing such as: retirement, dementia, sheltered, extra care, assisted living, care home, nursing home, older people etc.
- 5.1.5 Should park/mobile home accommodation be promoted on the basis that it is specialist housing, it will be expected to adhere to the requirements of the development plan and guidance in this SPD. This is particularly the case if it is seeking to provide accommodation to meet the BFLP indicative requirements for specialist housing for older people.

5.2 Specialist housing for older people

5.2.1 What is specialist housing for older people?

- 5.2.1 The NPPF glossary defines 'older people' as those approaching retirement age, including the active, newly-retired through to the very frail elderly, whose housing needs encompass accessible and adaptable general needs housing through to the full range of retirement and specialised housing for those with support or care needs.
- 5.2.2 The Council's evidence base (HNA, 2021) is based on those aged 65 and over. The state pension age is currently set at age 66 for both men and women. This is due to gradually increase over the coming years. Given the NPPF definition of older people being 'those approaching retirement' age and the evidence base, the Council will use the starting point for 'older people' as meaning those aged 65 and over. Any accommodation proposing a different age threshold will need to be justified as part of a planning application submission.
- 5.2.3 An exception to this will be 'age restricted general market housing' (see below) which the PPG defines this type of housing as generally for people aged 55 and over.
- 5.2.4 The BFLP (para. 6.204) refers to the following types of specialist accommodation for older people:
- retirement living/sheltered housing (housing with support),
 - enhanced sheltered housing/extra care housing (housing with care) and
 - residential care/nursing homes (care bed spaces).
- 5.2.5 An explanation of the types of accommodation and use class are referred to in the relevant specialist housing sections below.

5.2.2 Meeting the future specialist housing needs for older people

- 5.2.6 Older people are seeking a wider choice of housing and accommodation options that facilitate independence, through options such as adaptation of existing properties and downsizing. Whilst many older households do prefer to continue to live in mainstream housing, given the substantial growth in the population of older people within the Borough, there is likely to be a need for a range of specialist housing. The level of care required will vary significantly between individuals.
- 5.2.7 National Policy (PPG) states that *"Offering older people a better choice of accommodation to suit their changing needs can help them live independently for longer, feel more connected to their communities and help reduce costs to the social care and health systems."*

- 5.2.8 The Council's 'Older Persons Accommodation and Support Strategy (2011-2026)'²¹ includes (page 7) the following objectives:
- Objective 3: Strategically plan sustainable housing that meets the needs and aspirations of older people now and in the future
 - Objective 4: Support older people to live independently, in all tenures and extend the availability of preventative services.
- 5.2.9 One of the aims the Council's Plan (2023-2027)²² is to increase long-term support being delivered at home.

Meeting local needs – local evidence

- 5.2.10 Given the above, the Council's preference is to help people to live in their own homes for as long as possible. For further advice on what support the Council is able to offer, please see: <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/health-and-social-care>.
- 5.2.11 The indicative need for specialist housing for older people over the BFLP plan period is set out in the specialist housing sections below. However, regard should also be had to local up to date evidence referred to below.
- 5.2.12 The Council publishes a 'Market Position Statement' (MPS). The current document covers the period 2023-2025²³ and is updated regularly. It is a document that outlines what support and care services people need and how they need them to be provided.
- 5.2.13 Given the context of growing pressures on public finances, the Council will seek to ensure that proposals are appropriate and will not contribute to an oversupply of certain types of specialist accommodation which are not aligned with local up to date evidence. Applicants should demonstrate that their proposal is not likely to place unjustifiable demands on existing wider infrastructure and services in Bracknell Forest (including health, social care and education).
- 5.2.14 Therefore, whilst having regard to the indicative needs set out in the BFLP, in order to assess the suitability of proposals for specialist accommodation, applicants should also demonstrate how any proposal aligns with the Council's most up to date MPS. Early discussions with the Council's Social Care Service are encouraged.
- 5.2.15 As part of any planning application, a 'Specialist Housing Need Statement' should be submitted detailing how the proposal has had regard to and how it accords with the Council's most up to date local needs evidence.

²¹ Older Persons Accommodation Strategy: <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2021-11/older-persons-accommodation-and-support-strategy-2011-to-2026.pdf>

²² Council Plan: <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-11/council-plan-2023-to-2027.pdf>

²³ MPS 2023-2025: <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-02/market-position-statement-2023-to-2025.pdf>

Role of BFLP strategic housing allocations in meeting specialist housing needs for older people

- 5.2.16 Policy LP17 of the BFLP refers to three strategic allocations that will be expected to provide specialist older persons' accommodation to contribute to the specific housing needs of the Borough:
- Land at Beaufort Park, Bracknell (Policy LP6)
 - Land east of Derby Field, Crowthorne (Policy LP7)
 - The Peel Centre and The Point, Skimped Hill Lane, Bracknell (Policy LP8)
- 5.2.17 Whilst specific quantum/types of specialist uses are not prescribed for these sites, none the less, provision from these sites will contribute towards the overall specialist housing needs for older people.
- 5.2.18 Regard should be had to the local evidence referred to above. However, given the present need for extra care housing provision, the Council's preference is currently for extra care housing (across all tenure types) to be provided on allocated sites.

Role of windfall sites in meeting specialist housing needs for older people

- 5.2.19 Windfall sites are sites which come forward outside of the local plan process (i.e. not allocated in a Development Plan). Windfall sites may comprise new build schemes in addition to conversions of existing buildings and extensions of existing specialist sites.
- 5.2.20 A review of planning commitments data for specialist housing, indicates that a number of schemes on sites in the urban area come forward as 'windfall' development through the development management process. In order to satisfy demand, it is likely that developers/providers will continue to identify sites for such proposals. Such proposals will contribute towards the overall needs and be reported through future housing monitoring documents. Windfall sites will be determined in accordance with Policy LP39 'Specialist Housing' of the BFLP, and should have regard to the local evidence referred to above.

Provision of bungalows

- 5.2.21 Specialist housing for older people normally comprises bungalows and purpose-built flats. The HNA (paras. 6.35 and 8.8) sets out that the availability of housing options which are accessible to older people and which will provide the opportunity for older households to 'rightsize' and increase wellbeing. The provision of a range of appropriate housing options for older people should enable some households to downsize in terms of floor area and outdoor space, from homes which no longer meet their needs or are expensive to run. It would be beneficial if these options could include an additional supply of smaller bungalows (2-bedroom) as retirement living has recently tended to focus on apartments.
- 5.2.22 The Older Persons and Support Accommodation Strategy (2011-2026) also includes priorities in relation to enabling older people to remain in home ownership where possible and live in the right sized and economically sustainable homes. A

consultation exercise undertaken for the strategy indicates that 50% of people wished to remain in their own home, and that older people aspire to occupy accessible accommodation such as bungalows. Therefore, the provision of bungalows (complying with other aspects of this SPD) within housing schemes which are appropriate to the character of the area are encouraged.

5.3 **Age restricted general market housing**

- 5.3.1 For the purposes of planning applications, the Council will define this type of accommodation as Use Class C3. The PPG²⁴ defines this type of housing as:

“...generally for people aged 55 and over and the active elderly. It may include some shared amenities such as communal gardens, but does not include support or care services.”

- 5.3.2 The BFLP does not define an indicative need for this type of housing. This could comprise private sector housing where the scheme is run by a management company and affordable provision. Bungalows in addition to flats are encouraged (as set out in **Section 5.2.2**).

5.4 **Retirement living or sheltered housing (housing with support)**

- 5.4.1 For the purposes of planning applications, the Council will define this type of accommodation as Use Class C3. The PPG²⁵ defines this type of housing as:

“...purpose-built flats or bungalows with limited communal facilities such as a lounge, laundry room and guest room. It does not generally provide care services, but provides some support to enable residents to live independently. This can include 24 hour on-site assistance (alarm) and a warden or house manager.”

- 5.4.2 The indicative need for this type of specialist housing for older people over the plan period (2020-2037) is 577 units.
- 5.4.3 This could comprise private sector housing where the scheme is run by a management company and affordable provision. Schemes are expected to include a range of one and two bed- units, in a range of tenures. Bungalows in addition to flats are encouraged (as set out in **Section 5.2.2**).
- 5.4.4 On-site facilities would comprise:
- Scheme warden/manager
 - 24-hour emergency help via an alarm
 - Limited communal facilities such as: communal gardens, residents lounge, laundry room
 - No provision of personal care services

²⁴ PPG definition: ID 63-010-20190626: [Housing for older and disabled people - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-for-older-and-disabled-people)

²⁵ PPG definition: ID 63-010-20190626: [Housing for older and disabled people - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-for-older-and-disabled-people)

5.5 **Extra care housing (housing with care)**

5.5.1 For the purposes of planning applications, the Council will define this type of accommodation as Use Class C2. The PPG²⁶ defines this type of housing as:

“...purpose-built or adapted flats or bungalows with a medium to high level of care available if required, through an onsite care agency registered through the Care Quality Commission (CQC). Residents are able to live independently with 24 hour access to support services and staff, and meals are also available. There are often extensive communal areas, such as space to socialise or a wellbeing centre. In some cases, these developments are known as retirement communities or villages - the intention is for residents to benefit from varying levels of care as time progresses.”

5.5.2 The indicative need for this type of specialist housing for older people over the plan period (2020-2037) is 551 units.

5.5.3 As above, this type of housing relates to purpose built self-contained homes, including affordable provision. Such accommodation would have its own front door, kitchen and bathroom facilities to enable independent living.

5.5.4 Schemes are expected to include a range of one and two bed units, in a range of tenures, including for social/affordable rent and sale. A second bedroom is often a high priority to enable visitors (family, friends or care), or to enable couples to have their own rooms (as a result of any medical/care arrangements). Bungalows in addition to flats are encouraged (as set out in **Section 5.2.2**).

5.5.5 On-site facilities would comprise:

- Provision to meet a higher level of personal support needs such as 24/7 personal care/support services
- Access to a meal service
- More extensive communal facilities such as: reception, staff/office area, buggy/scooter store, laundry room, lounge/activity room, café/kitchen, treatment rooms, communal gardens, or small on-site shop

5.5.6 Taking account of planned developments, and existing unmet need (in particular the lack of extra care provision available and affordable rent levels), the Council's Housing Strategy (2023-2028)²⁷ sets out (page 43) that the current greatest priority for the Council is to encourage the development of extra care accommodation (including at affordable rent), as this enables people to live as independently as possible.

²⁶ PPG definition: ID 63-010-20190626: [Housing for older and disabled people - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/housing-for-older-and-disabled-people)

²⁷ Housing Strategy 2023-2028) <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-03/housing-strategy-2023-to-2028.pdf>

5.6 Residential care homes and nursing homes (care bedspaces)

5.6.1 For the purposes of planning applications, the Council will define this type of accommodation as Use Class C2. The PPG²⁸ defines this type of housing as:

“...individual rooms within a residential building and provide a high level of care meeting all activities of daily living. They do not usually include support services for independent living. This type of housing can also include dementia care homes.”

5.6.2 This can be further distinguished as follows:

- Care homes: a residential setting where a number of older people live, usually in single rooms, and have access to on-site care services. Personal care services include help with washing and dressing.
- Nursing homes: similar to a residential care home, but additionally providing personal care from qualified nurses. There will always be one or more qualified nurses on duty to provide nursing care. These are sometimes called ‘care homes with nursing’.

5.6.3 The indicative need for this type of specialist housing for older people over the plan period (2020-2037) is 730 bedspaces.

5.6.4 In relation to care bed spaces, the HNA notes that these should be treated as a maximum, as there is potential for some of this need to be met through the provision of extra care housing (in relation to residential rather than nursing care).

5.6.5 The MPS indicates that in recent years there has been a higher demand for nursing care compared to residential care. Therefore, provision of nursing care accommodation (complying with other aspects of this SPD) will be supported.

5.6.6 Residents usually live in single rooms with access to on-site communal facilities and personal care services, with support in nursing homes from qualified nurses.

5.6.7 It is expected that this type of accommodation will be built to meet the relevant ‘Care Quality Commission’ (CQC) standards²⁹.

²⁸ PPG definition: ID 63-010-20190626: [Housing for older and disabled people - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-for-older-and-disabled-people)

²⁹ The CQC is an independent regulator of health and social care in England: <https://www.cqc.org.uk/>

5.7 Other types of specialist housing

- 5.7.1 The BFLP does not define an indicative need for this type of housing. Depending on the nature of the use proposed, this type of accommodation may fall within either Use Class C2 or C3. This may include specialist housing for children, disabled people or vulnerable people with a specific housing need or require supported living. Smaller dispersed units are encouraged and will need to accord with relevant CQC standards.

5.8 Specialist housing policy requirements

- 5.8.1 All types of specialist housing (whether for older people or other groups) will be expected to accord with BFLP Policy LP39 and other development plan policies (including the BFLP and relevant 'made' neighbourhood development plans), together with any relevant national planning policy and guidance.

Defined settlements and sustainable locations

- 5.8.2 In line with Policy LP39, proposals will be permitted within the defined settlement in sustainable locations. This includes being well served by public transport, ability to access pedestrian routes (including accessible routes for wheelchair and buggy users), and being close to local facilities such as shops and GP surgery/health centres. This is due to the aim of reducing the need to travel by residents, staff and visitors, and to encourage visits to local shops and services.
- 5.8.3 In assessing proposals, regard will be had to Policy LP2 'Settlement Hierarchy' of the BFLP. The settlement hierarchy directs new development to the defined areas of the most sustainable locations according to a hierarchy. Bracknell is a Tier 1 settlement i.e. the most sustainable.

Level of care provision

- 5.8.4 To comply with Policy LP39, criterion 2.i, specialist housing in C2 use will be expected to be supported with information detailing the level of on-site personal care. This is so that a full assessment of the use proposed, and the nature of specialist housing being provided can be made. For example, details of whether or not a proposal includes any of the following (this is not intended to be an exhaustive list):
- on-site warden/manager (and whether or not this is 24 hour support)
 - 24 hour emergency help (via alarm system)
 - reception
 - staff office area
 - on-site staff providing personal care such as washing and dressing
 - on-site nursing staff
 - live in staff

Level of communal facilities

- 5.8.5 To comply with Policy LP39, criterion 2.ii specialist housing in C2 use will be expected to be supported with information detailing the level of communal facilities to be provided. This is so that a full assessment of the use proposed, and the nature of specialist housing being provided can be made. For example, whether or not the proposals include any of the following (this is not intended to be an exhaustive list):
- communal gardens
 - residents lounge
 - activity room
 - laundry room
 - buggy/scooter storage
 - treatment rooms
 - on-site café/restaurant
 - on-site shop

- 5.8.6 Where communal facilities are included as part of a proposal and support the overall use proposed, a condition to retain the use of the facilities on the site may be included on the grant of a planning permission.

Affordable

- 5.8.7 In accordance with Policy LP16 of the BFLP, where development involves a net gain of 10 or more (gross) self-contained specialist housing units in C3 and C2 use, affordable housing requirements will apply. **Section 4** of this SPD provides further information on the consideration of general affordable housing matters.
- 5.8.8. Early discussions with the Council's housing and social care teams is encouraged in order to establish how on-site affordable can be best achieved.

Accessible and adaptable dwellings

- 5.8.9 In accordance with criterion 2.iii of Policy LP38 of the BFLP, 100% of all self-contained units for specialist housing for older people and adults with disabilities should meet the Part M4(3)(2)(a) standard for wheelchair adaptable dwellings.
- 5.8.10 This will require appropriate accessible approach routes (within the curtilage of the site), level access (including to any communal facilities), in addition to complying with minimum dimensions for corridors, door widths, habitable rooms and bathrooms. Further information is set out in the 'Buildings Regulations 2010, Access to and use of buildings' document, 2015³⁰.
- 5.8.11 As set out in the BFLP (para. 12.15), it is expected that compliance with Policy LP38 should be demonstrated in a Design and Access Statement submitted with the planning application. Applications will be assessed against the current building regulation requirements referred to above, or any subsequent update to the regulations.
- 5.8.12 If the policy requirement is adequately demonstrated through the application proposals, a condition requiring the permission to be implemented in accordance with the approved plans and maintained as such thereafter will be included on the grant of planning permission.
- 5.8.13 If the policy requirement is not adequately demonstrated as part of the application submission, appropriate planning conditions to require the submission of a scheme to demonstrate compliance with Part M4(3)(2)(a), implementation of the approved scheme and maintenance thereafter will be included on grant of planning permission.

³⁰ Building Regulations:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7f8a82ed915d74e622b17b/BR_PDF_AD_M1_2015_with_2016_amendments_V3.pdf.

Inclusive Design

- 5.8.14 In line with the PPG³¹, these issues should be considered at the beginning of the process and at every stage of the development. The approach should include the building itself and the setting of the building in the wider built environment.
- 5.8.15 Policy LP28 (design principles), criterion vii. requires proposals to ‘create inclusive places and spaces, designed for ease of movement and access, to meet the needs of all the community’. Policy LP50 (design), criterion xi requires proposals to ‘provide inclusive, safe and well-designed places for all that provide ease of access to, and within, all new development and infrastructure. This should include appropriate facilities for disabled people and those with mobility issues and, where reasonable, improve access and facilities when alterations are being made to publicly used buildings or open spaces’.
- 5.8.16 In addition to the above, the PPG³² also sets out that proposals should be inclusive and age-friendly. Proposals for specialist housing for older people should be accompanied by information to demonstrate how the proposals meet inclusive design standards such as those referred to in the PPG which are set out in the ‘Housing our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation (HAPPI)’³³, such as:
- integration with the surrounding context
 - social spaces that link with the community
 - space standards that facilitate flexibility
 - enhanced natural light
 - priority for pedestrians in outdoor spaces
- 5.8.17 The supporting information with the application should demonstrate compliance with BFLP policy requirements. It may be set out in a Design and Access Statement.
- 5.8.18 Design considerations need to cover how the Council’s parking standards are to be satisfactorily incorporated into a scheme, without, for example, visually dominating the street scene. For further guidance on this matter and the Council’s current parking standards (which is due to be updated) please see the following documents:
- Streetscene SPD, and associated highway guide³⁴
 - Parking SPD Document³⁵

³¹ PPG inclusive design: ref ID 63-018-20190626: [Housing for older and disabled people - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-for-older-and-disabled-people)

³² PPG housing for older and disabled people: ref ID 63-018-20190626: [Housing for older and disabled people - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-for-older-and-disabled-people)

³³ HAPPI guidance: [HAPPI - Design - Topics - Resources - Housing LIN](https://www.lin.gov.uk/housing/hap-pi)

³⁴ Streetscene SPD: [Streetscene Supplementary Planning Document | Bracknell Forest Council \(bracknell-forest.gov.uk\)](https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/streetscene-supplementary-planning-document)

³⁵ Parking Standards SPD: [Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document | Bracknell Forest Council \(bracknell-forest.gov.uk\)](https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/parking-standards-supplementary-planning-document)

- 5.8.19 During the plan period of the BFLP, the Council may also introduce 'design codes'. Any proposal will be assessed in line with current planning policy and advice.

Loss of existing stock

- 5.8.20 In accordance with Policy LP37 of the BFLP, there should be no net loss of existing residential accommodation. For losses of specialist accommodation, criterion 2 of the policy sets out that the following matters will be taken into consideration:

- i. reprovision of specialist accommodation in accordance with the requirements of Policy LP 39 'Specialist housing', or
- ii. demonstration that there is no longer a need for the existing use.

- 5.8.21 In the case of reprovision of specialist accommodation, it is acknowledged that in some cases, there may be a net loss of accommodation, even though specialist accommodation is being re-provided due to a need to bring care accommodation in line with relevant standards in relation to access and internal space provision. Supporting information will be required to form part of a planning application submission.

- 5.8.22 Where a proposal relies on the premise that there is no longer a need for the existing use, it will be expected that a robust assessment will accompany a planning application to demonstrate that the facility is no longer required to address the following:

- i. All reasonable efforts have been made to retain the facility, and there is no realistic interest in retaining the current use, including evidence to confirm the site has been actively and positively marketed (for a minimum of one year unless a period of time is otherwise agreed in writing with the Council), and with reasonable commercial terms (commercial terms that are construed by the Council as being reasonable, i.e. at a sound, realistic and viable price for the type of use).
- ii. It would not be economically viable to retain the site in the existing use.

5.9 Securing delivery

- 5.9.1 Where a proposal relates to a specialist use, conditions will be included on the grant of a planning permission to ensure that it remains available for its target group relating to the use permitted, whether it is for a specified use such as older persons' accommodation, retention of any proposed communal facilities and the number of units/bed spaces in order to enable accurate monitoring of the schemes within the Council's housing monitoring information (as referred to below).
- 5.9.2 As set out in **Section 5.2.1**, the Council will take specialist housing for older people as those being aged 65 and over and will include age restricted conditions as required on grant of relevant permissions (such as those relating to retirement living/sheltered housing).
- 5.9.3 In order to comply with sections 111 and 113 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, the Council will include conditions on the grant of planning permission relating to:
- Development commencement notices:
 - to require information when the development is expected to be begun.
 - Development progress reports:
 - progress that has been made/expected to be made on development (relating to each reporting period).
- 5.9.4 The information required by condition will take account of any subsequent enabling legislation and guidance issued by the Government.
- 5.9.5 The Council's reporting period relates to the 1 April-31 March each year. For large and medium sites, the Council may also require information to be submitted on a quarterly basis (end of June, September, December and March of each monitoring period).
- 5.9.6 A 'completion' will be taken as a unit capable of being lived in, even if it is yet to be occupied/sold (unless specified differently in enabling legislation).

5.10 Monitoring specialist housing needs over the plan period

- 5.10.1 Completions and outstanding commitments (by relevant specialist use class) will be recorded in the Council's annual 'Housing Commitments' document which covers the period 1 April-31 March of each monitoring year. Any losses of existing stock will also be recorded.
- 5.10.2 For specialist self-contained accommodation falling within C2 and C3 use the individual number of units (net) permitted will be recorded.
- 5.10.3 For care and nursing home uses, the number of (net) bed spaces will be recorded, and a dwelling equivalent. The dwelling equivalent is calculated by dividing the number of bed spaces by a prescribed ratio, then rounded to the nearest whole number.
- 5.10.4 Prior to December 2024, the Council had applied a 1.8 ratio to convert bed spaces to a dwelling equivalent for inclusion within the Housing Trajectory (based on the July 2018 Housing Delivery Test Rule Book). The Rule Book was updated on 12 December 2024, and now includes an updated ratio of 1.9³⁶. For past completions relating to the 2020/21-2023/24 BFLP plan period, the 1.8 ratio has been applied. The new ratio will be applied to commitments and completions for the plan period 2024/25 onwards. Should the Rule Book ratio be updated during the life of the BFLP, then the most up to date ratio will be applied.
- 5.10.5 Where an indicative need for specialist housing for older people is specified (see above), this will be updated on an annual basis through the Council's Housing AMR, in order to provide the most up to date position of outstanding indicative need.

³⁶ Housing Delivery Test Rule Book (December 2024)1: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/housing-delivery-test-measurement-rule-book/housing-delivery-test-measurement-rule-book>

5.11 Requirements for planning applications

- 5.11.1 Prior to the submission of a planning application, applicants are encouraged to submit a pre-application enquiry³⁷.
- 5.11.2 Applicants are also encouraged to engage in early discussions with the Council's housing and social care teams regarding the nature of proposals and how they meet local specialist housing need and can best achieve affordable housing provision.
- 5.11.3 In addition to standard planning application submission requirements, it would assist the assessment of proposals relating to specialist uses if the following information could be clearly set out as part of a pre-application/planning application submission (notwithstanding that some of the matters referred to are policy requirements). This list is not exhaustive:
- i. How the proposal addresses policy requirements in relation to being sustainably located within a defined settlement.
 - ii. Existing and proposed use, including level of care/communal facilities.
 - iii. Net increase in self-contained units/bed spaces.
 - iv. Net increase in floor area (square metres).
 - v. Whether all elements of a proposal are specialist or include some general market housing.
 - vi. Whether the proposal is specific to specialist accommodation for older people or more generic (available to all age groups with specific housing needs).
 - vii. Details of the proposed use class/type of accommodation – this should align with one of the types set out in **Sections 5.3-5.6**. Any departures from this will need to be justified as part of the application submission.
 - viii. How the proposal aligns with the Council's latest local evidence of need through the provision of a 'Specialist Housing Need Statement'.
 - ix. Justification of any age restriction below the age of 65 (for example retirement and sheltered accommodation)
 - x. Details of how the proposal accords with the requirements in Policy LP16 in an 'Affordable Housing Statement' where self-contained units are proposed.
 - xi. How the proposal meets the requirements of Policy LP38 in relation to accessible and adaptable dwellings.
 - xii. How the proposal has incorporated inclusive design considerations.
 - xiii. Where a loss of existing specialist accommodation is proposed, information justifying any loss in relation to Policy LP37.

³⁷ Pre-planning application advice: <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning/planning-applications/pre-application-planning-advice-developers/preparing-pre-application>).

6. SELF AND CUSTOM BUILD HOUSING

6.1 What is self and custom build housing?

- 6.1.1 The NPPF glossary defines self and custom build housing as housing built by an individual, a group of individuals, or persons working with or for them, to be occupied by that individual. Such housing can be either market or affordable housing. A legal definition, for the purpose of applying the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 (as amended), is contained in section 1 (A1) and (A2) of that Act.
- 6.1.2 The BFLP (para. 6.215) sets out the differences between the two types of housing:
- Custom build: the eventual occupiers take on a “project management” role, coordinating the services of designers, architects, planners and construction staff. They may get actively involved in some aspects, but generally physical involvement is kept to a minimum.
 - Self-build: the occupiers take on an active role, procuring, designing and building their own home. They may outsource elements of the project, where their skills or time do not allow it.
- 6.1.3 The PPG³⁸ is clear that in considering whether a home is a self-build or custom build home, relevant authorities must be satisfied that the initial owner of the home will have primary input into its final design and layout, and that off-plan housing, homes purchased at the plan stage prior to construction and without input into the design and layout from the buyer, are not considered to meet the definition of self-build and custom housing.

6.2 Self and custom build housing needs

- 6.2.1 The BFLP does not set out a specific need over the plan period for self and custom-build homes. However, the Council maintains a register of those individuals/associations who have registered an interest in building such homes. The process for registering an interest and eligibility is set out on the Council's web site³⁹
- 6.2.2 In providing a register, the Council makes no commitment to provide such plots for housebuilding. However, two strategic allocations in the BFLP include the requirement to provide 5% of plots for self and custom build (see below).
- #### **6.2.1 Meeting future needs**
- 6.2.3 Self-build and custom build plots can be delivered in a number of ways, ranging from multiple individual serviced plots within large developments to single or small sites identified by individuals, or by town and parish councils through the neighbourhood plan process.

³⁸ PPG ‘Self-build and custom housebuilding’, PPG ID ref 57-016-20210208: [Self-build and custom housebuilding - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/self-build-and-custom-housebuilding)

³⁹

Self-build Register: [Building your own house | Bracknell Forest Council \(bracknell-forest.gov.uk\)](https://bracknell-forest.gov.uk/building-your-own-house).

Role of BFLP allocations

- 6.2.4 The BFLP includes two strategic allocations that will be expected to provide on-site plots for self and custom build accommodation, suitable for those on the Council's Self-build Register:
- Land at Beaufort Park, Bracknell (Policy LP6)
 - Land east of Derby Field, Crowthorne (Policy LP7)
- 6.2.5 Serviced plots equivalent to 5% of the total homes provided shall be provided on the site and offered for sale to self or custom builders. If the plots are not taken up for self-build after a reasonable period of marketing, they may be developed for alternative housing. The details of the arrangements for this will be included in a s106 (see **Section 6.4** for further details).
- 6.2.6 As set out in the PPG⁴⁰, a serviced plot is a plot of land that either has access to a public highway and has connections for electricity, water and wastewater, or in the opinion of a relevant authority, can be provided with access to those things within the duration of a development permission granted in relation to that land.

Role of windfall sites

- 6.2.7 It is expected that smaller sites will come forward for self and custom build plots, which will be assessed on their merits.

6.2.2 Monitoring self and custom build housing over the plan period

- 6.2.8 The Council's Housing AMR will contain a summary of the number of individuals and associations on the Council's Self-build Register, and the preference for property type (e.g. detached), size (e.g. number of bedrooms) and locations (by Parish).
- 6.2.9 It will also record the number of schemes secured through the planning application process specifically for self and custom build homes (those permitted during the relevant monitoring period, where these have been deemed to meet the definition of self or custom build such as the initial owners having had a primary input into the final design and layout) and monitor progress on completions.
- 6.2.10 The number of plots delivered during the monitoring year will be monitored through CIL exemption certificates (see below).

⁴⁰ PPG ID ref: 57-026-20210508: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/self-build-and-custom-housebuilding>)

6.3 Self and custom housing requirements

- 6.3.1 Planning applications will be expected to meet the requirements for other types of housing such as market and affordable. They will be assessed on their merits in accordance with the guidance in this SPD and policies in the development plan (including the BFLP and relevant 'made' neighbourhood development plans), together with any relevant national planning policy and guidance.
- 6.3.2 During the plan period of the BFLP, the Council may also introduce 'design codes'. Any proposal will be assessed in line with current planning policy and advice.

6.4 Securing delivery

- 6.4.1 Where a proposal has been submitted on the basis that it relates to self and/or custom build units and the application is approved, the following will be used to secure the delivery of plots:
- i. Description of the development covering the fact that the proposal includes self and/or custom-build plots.
 - ii. Planning conditions to require that:
 - a) the development be constructed as self and/or custom build housing,
 - b) the Council be notified of the person/persons who intend to take up first occupation of the plots,
 - c) the submission of reserved matters (where an outline permission is involved) include evidence of how the intended purchaser has had a primary input into the design and layout of the units.
 - iii. A legal agreement which may include matters relating to proof of occupation, details of marketing, delivery and disposal of units.
- 6.4.2 In instances where plots are part of a larger development scheme, a legal agreement will include provisions covering circumstances where plots are not taken up by the public after being marketed for an appropriate time. In such cases, consideration will be given to allowing them to revert to conventional build plots. A planning obligation will set out the circumstances under which the requirement to deliver self-build/custom build plots will be relaxed or released.
- 6.4.3 In relation to justification for self and custom build plots not being taken up, this should include:
- i. evidence to confirm that the site has been actively and positively marketed (for a minimum of one year unless a period of time is otherwise agreed in writing by the Council), and
 - ii. with reasonable commercial terms (commercial terms that are construed by the Council as being reasonable i.e. at a sound, realistic and viable price for the type of use).
- 6.4.4 In order to comply with sections 111 and 113 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, the Council will include conditions on the grant of planning permission relating to:
- Development commencement notices:
 - to require information when the development is expected to be begun.
 - Development progress reports:

- progress that has been made/expected to be made on development (relating to each reporting period).

6.4.5 The information required by condition will take account of any subsequent enabling legislation and guidance issued by the Government.

6.4.6 A 'completion' will be taken as a unit capable of being lived in, even if it has not yet been occupied/sold (unless specified differently in enabling legislation).

6.5 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) exemption

- 6.5.1 The Council implemented CIL charging on 6 April 2015. The CIL regulations set out circumstances under which charging authorities can grant exemptions from the levy, one of which relates to a 'self-build exemption'.
- 6.5.2 For individuals to benefit from the exemption, they must own the property and occupy it as their principal residence for a minimum of 3 years after the work is completed. An applicant can apply for self-build exemption at any time as long as development has not commenced. Further information is set out in national guidance⁴¹.
- 6.5.3 It should be noted that the process of applying for self-build exemptions under the CIL is separate to that for applying for other potential self or custom build exemptions. The approach must conform with the CIL regulations 2010 (as amended). For instance, obtaining an exemption for biodiversity net gain has no impact on the granting of a CIL self-build exemption. In addition, there may also be instances where non-compliance with the CIL regulations 2010 (as amended) results in the disqualification of the CIL self-build exemption, whilst other exemptions remain valid.

6.6 Requirements for planning applications

- 6.6.1 Prior to the submission of a planning application, applicants are encouraged to submit a pre-application enquiry⁴².
- 6.6.2 Where an application includes self and/or custom build plots, this should be made clear on the planning application form and be reflected in the description of the development.
- 6.6.3 As set out in the PPG (referred to in **Section 6.1**) any application for self or custom build properties should include information to demonstrate that the initial owner has had a primary input in the final design and layout of the scheme. Details setting out who the purchaser is that intends to take up first occupation of the dwelling will also be required.
- 6.6.4 Where the plots are part of larger sites, planning applications for self and/or custom build schemes should be supported with a marketing strategy for the self-build plots on the application site together with details of other measures intended to ensure effective engagement with the community and parties on the Self-build Register.

⁴¹ National CIL guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/community-infrastructure-levy>

⁴² Pre-planning application advice: <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning/planning-applications/pre-application-planning-advice-developers/preparing-pre-application>)