

Great Langborough Residents' Association

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To: Councillor Mark Ashwell,
Executive Member for Planning & Regeneration, WBC

12th August 2016

Dear Mark,

Wokingham BC Affordable Housing Plan - Delivery Record Impacts Credibility

On behalf of the Great Langborough Residents Association, I wish to bring to your attention an apparent huge inconsistency between the commitment by Wokingham BC to provide Affordable Housing and the actual delivery performance in recent years.

Furthermore, I am seeking your agreement to urgent action to rectify the shortfall.

The Borough Housing Strategy 2015 – 2018 on page 8 contains the following statement:-

"In the next 3 years, we aim to: complete 1,000 additional affordable homes through WHL, our housing association partners and private developers"

The importance of achieving this number as a minimum is further highlighted in the above strategy document on page 5:

"An update to the Housing Needs Assessment was commissioned by five Berkshire Authorities and completed in February 2012. The updated assessment reinforced the need for continued delivery of affordable housing in the borough, with key findings including the following:

1. There is a need for at least 390 units per annum of affordable housing (excluding shared ownership) in Wokingham Borough."

However, Wokingham Borough Council – Housing Facts and Figures, January to March 2016 table on page 9 states:

"2. Affordable Housing Supply

The charts below shows how many new affordable homes have been completed through our partnership with Registered Social Landlords. During 2015/16 there were 123 completions. Around 300 completions are expected in 2016/17."

The jump from 123 to 300 annual completions is enormous and plans to close the gap is apparently unsupported by recently published data. The bar chart in the above document shows that the completions for the 5 years to the end of 2015/16 were 146, 91, 108, 95, 123; totalling 563 – an average of under 113 per annum.

The credibility of the Borough's commitment to affordable housing targets is further undermined by viability assessments that we hear have reduced the policy target of 35% in major greenfield development areas to 24% in Montague park and Zero in Elms Field.

In the absence of firm plans in any WBC public source that we can identify, we must conclude that the expectations of 300 affordable housing completions in 2016/17 and 1,000 in the 3 years 2015- 2018 are unrealistic and unachievable.

If we are mistaken, we would like to be given the opportunity to be reassured as soon as possible.

I look forward to hearing from you soon

Regards

Pat Smith,
Chair, GLRA