

Chapter 8 - HOUSING POLICIES

Introduction

It is the intention of national housing policy that everyone should have the opportunity of a decent home, that there should be greater choice of housing and that the housing needs of all in the community should be recognised. The Council therefore, through the housing policies and proposals laid down here, seeks to meet the housing requirements of the whole community in providing sufficient land but giving priority to re-using previously-developed land within urban areas, bringing empty homes back into use and converting existing buildings, in preference to the development of greenfield sites.

The amount of new housing that the UDP is required to make provision for is set by Regional Spatial Strategy (RPG13). This requires the Council to monitor and manage the availability of land so as to achieve the provision of 410 houses per year for the period from April 2002 to 2016. In addition, an allowance of 100 dwellings per year has been added to this total to provide for clearance replacement. This figure represents a slowing down in the rate of housebuilding compared to the last ten years when some 1,000 new houses per year have been constructed in the Borough. It has not proved necessary to specifically allocate sites for new housebuilding in the Plan although sites with planning permission for housing (housing commitments) are shown on the Proposals Map for information. The remainder of the housing requirement will be provided by dwellings arising from conversions and changes of use of non-residential buildings and by so far unidentified sites (windfalls) which are likely to come forward at a similar high rate as in recent years.

Also derived from Regional Spatial Strategy is the target that 80% of new dwellings to be provided between 1996 and 2016 will use previously developed (or brownfield) land and existing buildings in the part of Greater Manchester that includes Wigan Borough. Most of the land that is likely to come forward for new housing development will be previously-developed but the target of 80% is a realistic one in view of the greenfield sites with planning permissions which were granted before the publication of Planning Policy Guidance Note 3 and the shift in emphasis in housing policy away from the development of greenfield sites. Such sites have produced houses since 1996 and will continue to do so into the future.

~~R1 — LAND FOR NEW HOUSE BUILDING~~

~~THE COUNCIL WILL ENSURE THAT PROVISION IS MADE IN THE BOROUGH TO ACCOMMODATE AN AVERAGE OF 510 DWELLINGS PER YEAR. AT LEAST 80% OF DWELLINGS PROVIDED BETWEEN 2002 AND 2016 WILL USE PREVIOUSLY DEVELOPED LAND AND EXISTING BUILDINGS IN SUSTAINABLE LOCATIONS WITHIN THE URBAN AREA~~

~~Regional Spatial Strategy requires that the Borough makes provision for an annual average build rate of 410 dwellings per year in the period up to April 2006 as its contribution to meeting its share of the projected regional growth in population and households. The Council will extend this annual average rate of provision to 2016 until such time as any different rate is adopted following a review of Regional Spatial Strategy.~~

~~Since the regional provision figure is net of clearance it is necessary to add an allowance for the replacement of cleared dwellings. However, some of the clearance anticipated is likely to be of long-term vacant Council-owned houses which do not require replacement. The estimate of 100 houses per year therefore excludes the clearance of these dwellings. The gross housing requirement figure for the Borough therefore is 510 dwellings per year.~~

~~The target is that 80% of the new dwellings provided between 2002 and 2016 will use previously developed (or brownfield) land and existing buildings in sustainable locations as defined by the criteria in Policy R1B. The plan will maximise the reuse of vacant and under-used land and buildings, make allowance for the contribution that can be made by conversions to residential use and sub-division of existing dwellings and allow for the replacement of cleared dwellings.~~

~~POLICY DELETED~~

The Urban Area

The urban area is defined as those parts of the Borough not designated as Green Belt or Safeguarded land.

~~* R1A — Housing Provision~~

~~The Council will provide for the development of an average of 510 dwellings per year from April 2002 on sites with planning permission, on new sites and by the reuse and conversion of existing buildings.~~

~~Sites with planning permission for residential development which will contribute to the housing land supply are shown on the Proposals Map and listed in Appendix 4.~~

~~*(See Appendix 4)~~

~~The supply of land to meet the housing requirement during the 14 years of the plan period identified in Policy R1, is made up as follows:~~

	No. of dwellings
Dwellings on sites under construction ♦	1066
Dwellings with planning permission ♦	2278
Dwellings from new sites not yet identified (windfalls) (estimate of 258 per annum) ∞	3612
Dwellings from conversions and change of use (estimate of 75 per annum based on past performance)	1050
Dwellings from mixed use allocations ♦ Wigan Pier Quarter and Bickershaw Colliery (917 dwellings) Leigh Sports Village (117 dwellings)	1034
TOTAL HOUSING SUPPLY APRIL 2002 TO APRIL 2016	-9040

~~♦ Figures for these categories represent the position at April 2002.~~

~~∞ Estimate of future windfalls based on average brownfield completions 2000 to 2002.~~

~~The supply of housing therefore meets the requirement expressed in Policy R1. Almost all the sites which are expected to come forward are on previously developed land although some of the sites under construction and those with planning permission are on greenfield land where permission was granted prior to the issuing of Planning Policy Guidance Note 3: Housing. Where planning permissions for housing expire, renewal applications will be considered against Policy R1B. Permission will not be granted for such sites which are greenfield when previously developed sites are available (unless they meet the requirements of clauses (i) to (iii) of Policy R1B.)~~

~~In line with the Government’s plan, monitor and manage approach to new housing provision, the Council will monitor housing requirements and the way that they are met so as to keep under review the supply of new housing land and its rate of release. It will also monitor housing clearance so that if the estimate of 100 dwellings per year (given in Policy R1) does not occur, a different allowance for clearance replacement can be made. Subsequent reviews of the Plan will provide the mechanism to adjust policies in line with the results of that monitoring.~~

POLICY DELETED

R1B New Housing Sites

Residential development on previously-developed sites within the defined urban area will be acceptable only when the site meets the following criteria:-

- (a) it is readily accessible to jobs, shops and services by modes of transport other than the car;**
- (b) there is capacity in the existing and potential infrastructure, including public transport, water and sewerage, other utilities and social infrastructure (such as schools and hospitals) to accommodate the consequences of the development;**
- (c) that the proposal has the ability to build on existing communities to support new physical and social infrastructure and to provide sufficient demand to sustain existing local services and facilities;**

- (d) there are no insuperable physical or environmental constraints on the development of the land including, for example, ground contamination, stability and flood risk;**
- (e) that the development would not result in an unacceptable loss of amenity for nearby existing residents or sub-standard amenity for prospective residents and, preferably, would result in an environmental gain through the removal of dereliction, the improvement of an eyesore, the regeneration of a neglected or untidy site or the regeneration of the wider area.**

In the following exceptional circumstances, residential development may be allowed on greenfield sites:-

- (i) The site is considered to perform better against the criteria in this policy than available previously-developed sites; and**
- (ii) The site is within the urban area as defined on the UDP Proposals Map.**

This policy is intended to regulate the release of brownfield windfall sites in line with the sequential test put forward in PPG3 and the sequential approach to meeting development needs laid down in Regional Spatial Strategy. This approach gives first preference to the effective use of existing buildings including the re-use or conversion of empty ones, second preference to the use of previously developed land and finally to the development of previously undeveloped land.

The relatively low housing requirement total (compared to past build rates) and the fact that much of the housing requirement over the plan period is taken up by existing planning permissions means that there are no specific housing allocations on the Proposals Map. However, evidence from urban capacity work and the experience of past windfall sites indicates that there is a plentiful supply of previously-developed sites which will come forward for housing development over the plan period. It is not envisaged that there will be any significant amount of new greenfield housing development during the plan period and that there will be a significant reliance on windfalls. Accordingly, and in line with Government advice (in *Planning to deliver. The managed release of housing sites: towards better practice*), this criteria-based approach to releasing windfall sites is used to assess which are the best sites to develop in line with the sequential approach of Regional Spatial Strategy.

The average annual rate of housing completions will be one of the key indicators which will be continuously monitored, as referred to in Chapter 4. When the Council considers that, on the basis of the annual average rate of housing land requirement (i.e. 510 dwellings) there will be an undersupply of housing land, it will apply the provisions of Policy **R1B** to remedy the situation. If all sources of land, apart from safeguarded land, are insufficient to satisfy the requirement, the LPA will initiate a review of the plan to identify housing allocations from within areas which are subject to that designation.

Such a review of the Plan to identify housing development sites from within safeguarded land would assess sites against the following criteria:

- That first priority would be given to previously-developed sites;
- That sites would be considered against clauses (a) to (e) of this policy;
- That poorer quality agricultural land would be used before that of higher quality;
- The site's contribution to remedying urban fringe problems and producing attractive, well-landscaped urban edges; and
- That regard is had to environmental and landscape quality.

R1C Care Homes and Homes for the Elderly

The development of new buildings or the change of use of existing buildings to form care homes and homes for the elderly will be permitted provided that:-

- (a) other policies of the Plan are complied with; and**
- (b) there is no unacceptable impact on the surrounding area.**

In the past there has been significant growth of this type of accommodation by both new-build and the change of use of existing buildings. The Council welcomes such provision in principle provided that it complies with other relevant policies of the plan, in particular Policies **R1B**, **R1D** and **R1G** and that its impact on the amenity of the surrounding area is carefully considered. The Council has produced guidelines relating to proposals for care homes and homes for the elderly in the form of Supplementary Planning Guidance which is available to guide the detailed planning of such proposals.

R1D The Design of New Residential Development and House Extensions

Proposals for new residential development and house extensions will be required to create attractive living environments and deliver sustainable development through:-

- making more efficient use of land;**
- promoting better accessibility to local facilities and public transport;**
- supporting crime prevention and community safety;**
- creating more socially inclusive communities;**
- promoting energy efficiency and innovation in building design;**
- protecting amenity.**

In particular, they will have regard to:-

- (a) the scale, layout, design and materials of surrounding buildings or, in the case of extensions, of the existing building;**
- (b) the retention of existing site features;**
- (c) landscaping and boundary treatment which will help the development to be assimilated into its surroundings;**
- (d) the provision of safe and convenient means of access to local services and facilities, to the local highway network and adequate off-street parking*;**
- (e) density of development which makes the best use of land. Proposals with a capacity of 3 dwellings or more should have a density of between 30 and 50 dwellings per hectare and will not be permitted at a net density of less than 30 dwellings per hectare. Greater intensity of development will be sought at places with good public transport accessibility;**
- (f) the provision of adequate levels of privacy and amenity for occupiers of new and existing neighbouring property by applying the following interface standards:-**
 - the minimum distance between the main front and rear elevations of two-storey dwellings containing windows of habitable rooms shall be**

no less than 21.5 metres or by reason of design or orientation will not result in significant overlooking of neighbouring property;

- **the minimum distance between the main front and rear elevations of two-storey dwellings containing windows of habitable rooms and a gable or windowless elevation must be no less than 12.2 metres unless the proposal is so designed or orientated as to avoid appearing over-dominant from neighbouring property **;**
- (g) **the development would not prejudice the development of any larger area to which it is related;**
- (h) **the development would not result in a vehicular access which would unduly affect the amenity of adjoining occupiers or the visual amenities of the street scene;**
- (j) **the need to design housing with an accessible approach to the entrance visitors would normally use so that people with disabilities can visit.**

The Council recognises that the development of backland sites raises specific issues. Consequently, in considering proposals for backland development, in addition to the above, the following will apply:

- (k) **where subdivision of a garden is involved, sufficient outdoor space and privacy should be retained commensurate with the scale and function of the original building.**

**Car parking standards are given in Policy A1S.*

*** The minimum interface distances given may need to be increased where steeply sloping sites produce particular problems of overlooking or where development exceeds two storeys.*

Good design and layout of new housing is of great importance in order to create attractive, high-quality living environments in which people will choose to live. At the same time it is important that new development respects existing development and does not detract from the environment enjoyed by existing residents. Good design should be the aim of all those involved in the development process and, in addition to the provisions of this policy, will be aided by the use of the lessons laid down in "By Design: Better places to live", the companion guide to Planning Policy Guidance Note 3, which is the Government's policy guidance for the planning of new housing. See also Policy **EV3 Design**. Supplementary Planning Guidance will be produced by the Council to give further guidance on the design and planning of new housing. Guidance on the design of house extensions is available from the Council.

R1E Open Space in New Housing Developments

In considering new residential development (including the conversion of buildings to residential use) the Council will require that:-

- (a) **Where a scheme consists of between 1 and 99 dwellings, developers make a financial contribution to the capital and commuted maintenance costs of off-site amenity open space and play space provision commensurate with the number of units in the scheme, in lieu of on-site provision, unless otherwise agreed or required by the Council;**
- (b) **Where a scheme exceeds 99 dwellings, developers provide a total amount of public open space equivalent to a minimum of 25m² per dwelling and a**

financial contribution in lieu of play equipment provision and to cover commuted maintenance costs unless otherwise agreed or required by the Council.

The above standard for open space has been adopted by the Council in order to ensure that appropriate provision for general amenity purposes is provided for in new development.

In view of the problems of providing open space on small housing sites without detriment to adjoining properties and creating spaces which are too small for high quality recreational and amenity provision, the Council will seek a financial contribution from developers towards the cost of off-site amenity and play provision in schemes of under 100 dwellings, the sum required being proportionate to the number of dwellings in the scheme. Such provision will be local to the development and accessible from it. In larger schemes the Council will expect developers to provide for public open space in accordance with the above standard in an appropriate location within the site but will also seek a financial contribution towards the cost of play equipment which the Council will provide, either on or off-site at its discretion and to cover the commuted maintenance costs. As part of the open space provision, the Council will expect developers to have due regard to the potential for nature conservation enhancement and progress towards targets set in the Greater Manchester Biodiversity Plan.

Such an approach not only avoids the problems associated with disturbance and security of residents on small housing sites but also allows for much higher quality recreational and amenity provision by way of improvements to nearby existing sites.

Supplementary Planning Guidance is available from the Council giving further guidance on when on-site or off-site provision is appropriate and on the scale of charges which will be levied for both the provision and maintenance of amenity open space and the capital and commuted maintenance costs of off-site play equipment required in connection with the development. Where appropriate, such financial contributions will be agreed as part of an obligation under section 106 of the Planning Acts.

R1F Sites for Gypsies and for Showmen's Permanent Quarters

Proposals for sites to meet the needs of gypsies and travelling showpeople will be considered against the following criteria:-

- (a) it would not have an unacceptably adverse impact on the appearance of the area, on amenity, privacy or the view from nearby land and property;**
- (b) it is within a reasonably convenient distance of shops, schools, medical facilities and public transport;**
- (c) the development can be accommodated in site-planning terms and that there is a demonstrable need for the facility that is not met by other sites in the locality;**
- (d) that any business activities to be carried out on the site are consistent with the other policies of the plan.**

The Council has a duty to consider the accommodation needs of these two disparate groups of people who, whilst pursuing different lifestyles and business activities, have in common the need for caravan sites where it may be appropriate to also carry out certain elements of their traditional business activities.

There are currently two established gypsy caravan sites within the Borough. It has not proved possible to identify a further site for such a use and therefore the criteria listed in the policy will be used to assess any sites that may be proposed.

Similarly, there are some 3 established sites for travelling showpeople in the Borough. These are at Presbyterian Fold, Hindley, Bag Lane, Atherton and Gibfield, Atherton. A further site at Cemetery Road, Wigan has now been granted planning permission and is likely to eliminate any outstanding need for such sites when it is established. Any further sites proposed for travelling showpeople will be judged against the policy. It is considered to meet the requirements of Circular 1/94: Gypsy Sites and Planning and Circular 22/94 : Travelling Showpeople.

R1G Conversion to Dwellings

The Council will permit proposals for the conversion of buildings for residential use providing there is:-

- (a) no significant loss of amenity to surrounding property through overlooking, noise transmission or over-dominant extensions;**
- (b) provision of a good or reasonable level of amenity for prospective residents with regard to living space, noise control measures and privacy;**
- (c) adequate parking provision;**
- (d) adequate amenity space and refuse storage provision.**

The conversion of non-residential buildings for housing is an effective way of securing their re-use and improvement and promoting regeneration whilst minimising the amount of greenfield land being taken for development. In town centres the conversion of often vacant space above commercial property can help to revitalise the centres by securing the improvement and maintenance of buildings as well as providing affordable dwelling units. This policy is intended to promote and control such conversions in line with government guidance in PPG3 and is applicable to all types of residential conversions including conversions to flats, houses, bedsits and houses in multiple occupation.

Adequate refuse storage provision should be made to allow for the separation of different types of waste.

Supplementary Planning Guidance is available from the Council to provide further advice on the operation of this policy.

R1H Affordable Housing

The Council will require developers to provide an element of affordable housing on suitable housing sites of 25 dwellings or more or over one hectare in size where there is a demonstrable lack of affordable housing.

Alternatively, it may be acceptable for the element of affordable housing to be located on another site in the locality or for the developer to refurbish unfit housing or bring housing which has been vacant for more than six months back into use or make a financial contribution towards such refurbishment where it would result in the production of affordable housing.

The Council is in the process of carrying out a comprehensive survey of housing needs to inform its wider housing strategy. When the results of that survey have been assimilated into the housing strategy and the need or otherwise for affordable housing in local areas or in the Borough as a whole has been considered, Supplementary Planning Guidance will be brought forward to apply this policy to particular areas.* Such guidance is likely to include an indication what are considered to be suitable sites for such provision, define what the Council considers to be affordable housing in the local context and indicate how many affordable homes need to be provided in the Borough.

The provision of affordable housing will be negotiated by the Council with developers on appropriate sites. In any provision made under this policy, occupancy will be controlled by means of a planning condition, by an agreement under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act or by the involvement of a registered social landlord to ensure that it is occupied by those in genuine need.

(N.B. A Supplementary Planning Document entitled Affordable Housing Provision in New Residential Developments was adopted on 26 April 2006. This guidance applies the provisions of Policy **R1H to all eligible sites across the Borough.)*

