

Chichester District Council

Planning Committee

4 November 2020

Interim Policy Statement for Housing

1. Contacts

Report Author

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2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Planning Committee approves the proposed revisions to the Interim Policy Statement (IPS) for Housing for development management purposes to be used to assess relevant planning applications with immediate effect.**

3. Background

- 3.1 At Planning Committee on 3 June 2020, Members were requested to approve the use of the Draft Interim Policy Statement for Housing for development management purposes to be used to assess relevant planning applications as of that date, as well as to approve the publication of the document for a four week consultation.

This report summarises the subsequent public consultation arrangements, sets out the main responses received, and the changes which have been made to finalise the Interim Statement.

4 Consultation

Arrangements

The draft IPS was published for public consultation for a period of 4 weeks from 12 June to 10 July 2020. Notification of the consultation was sent via email or letter to all entries on the Planning Policy consultation database, which includes statutory consultees, planning agents, developers, parish and town councils and other stakeholder groups, and local residents and organisations.

A new IPS webpage was set up on the Council's website which contains information about the IPS and the consultation, with the link to the consultation portal. The portal included a Frequently Asked Questions document to assist users to make comments. The notification emails and letters invited representations to be made on the IPS via the consultation portal, via email or via letter. Hard copies of the IPS were printed and posted to those who requested them.

To support the consultation and its reach, PR drafted and distributed a media release to local and regional media outlets to announce the consultation launch on 8 June, and a reminder release was issued on 2 July. A 'Let's Talk: Planning' webpage was created with information about the consultation and containing a link to the IPS

webpage to view and make comments. The Let's Talk: Planning branding was also used to promote the consultation through the Council's social media channels.

Response

In total, 150 representations were received, 21 via the consultation portal, 126 by email and 3 by letter from a variety of individuals and groups, including residents, local stakeholder groups, parish councils, statutory consultees and agents and developers.

The response was generally mixed, with some groups (for example the development industry) expressing support for the IPS and the approach to boosting housing supply, some suggesting amendments to the criteria including deleting or adding new criteria, and others seeking to argue against the requirement for additional housing.

The main recurring themes arising from the representations include:

1. Introduction of new policies is inappropriate (wildlife corridors and environmental standards)
2. Proposed environmental standards go too far/do not go far enough
3. Requirement to consider flood risk and climate change
4. Use of settlement boundaries is inappropriate
5. Seeking clarification as to how the Council has calculated its housing need figure
6. Requirement to prioritise development on brownfield sites
7. Lack of infrastructure to accommodate development
8. Time-restricted conditions should be discretionary for each development

The representations will be published in full on the consultation portal, which can be accessed via the IPS webpage on the Council's website. A summary of representations is set out in Appendix 2.

5 Changes to the IPS

In finalising the IPS, the content of the representations has been considered. In addition, the draft Statement has been in effect for approximately 5 months, and the Council has received a number of planning applications for schemes under the IPS. This has had the beneficial impact in illustrating how the document should be further refined to make it more robust and useful in its implementation.

It is proposed that the form and approach of the IPS remains unchanged. The proposed changes are primarily wording updates to strengthen the criteria, or for clarification purposes to assist applicants.

Some key amendments include:

- Adding an element of flexibility to criterion 8 (sustainable construction standards). In amending this criterion it has been important to strike a balance between the standards being too low, or being overly restrictive.
- Addition of a new criterion requiring applicants to demonstrate that the development is deliverable through the submission of a deliverability statement. This point was in the draft IPS, but it was considered that the requirement needed to be made more prominent in the document.

- A clearer section on time-restricted conditions. The IPS sets out that the Council will condition any permission to commence within 2 years from the date of grant of permission, to maximise delivery of housing. Where outline permission is granted, the Council will take a similar approach in reducing the implementation period to ensure expedient delivery of sites.
- A paragraph has been added to encourage applicants to undertake community and stakeholder engagement in order to build relationships, particularly where developments are ahead of the Local Plan Review and Neighbourhood Plan processes.
- Strengthening criterion 11 (flood risk) to include wording from the Surface Water and Foul Drainage SPD.

Colleagues from Development Management and Environmental Protection teams have been involved in finalising the content of the Statement, the full text of which is at Appendix 1 of this report. The full list of proposed modifications is set out in the schedule of amendments to the IPS in Appendix 3.

6 Use of the Interim Position Statement

- 6.1 The Statement has been produced following experience of this approach at Chichester and elsewhere, and has been drafted in the light of advice received from the Government's Planning Advisory Service. It is important that Members understand that this Interim Policy Statement is intended to be a positive statement about how the Council will encourage development proposals in the absence of a 5 year housing supply. It is not intended to frustrate proposals for housing development which are acceptable in planning terms, but instead draws upon locally relevant evidence to promote good development.
- 6.2 Not having a 5 year supply of housing means the Council is more vulnerable to speculative planning applications on sites that are not considered to be appropriate. The purpose of the IPS is to attempt to guide and improve proposals for housing in the absence of a 5 year supply. Its use is considered an important tool in articulating to parties the Council's approach to remedying the situation, and is important in maintaining the credibility of the Council and retaining the confidence of local communities.

7 Legal Implications

- 7.1 The IPS is a non-statutory planning document that does not intend to replace national planning policy regarding how planning decisions relating to residential development should be determined. The IPS sets out how the Council is taking a proactive approach to re-establishing a five year supply by providing clarity and guidance to applicants on the type of development that may be encouraged in the absence of a five year supply.
- 7.2 The starting point in the determination of any planning application is section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, which states that determinations must be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The IPS does not form part of the development plan, but is a material consideration.

8 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Interim Policy Statement for Housing

Appendix 2 – Summary of representations to the Interim Policy Statement

Appendix 3 – Schedule of amendments to the Interim Policy Statement