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**Peterborough Local Plan**

**Space Standards Proposal for Affordable Homes**

**June 2017**

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# Introduction and Planning Policy Context

**Introduction**

* 1. The provision of rented tenure affordable homes is a priority for Peterborough. There are currently 3027 households on the Housing Register and 280 households in temporary accommodation. We want to work with our housing providers to maximise the provision of good quality affordable housing that will alleviate this growing demand for rented housing and therefore would value your feedback on the likely impact on delivery of requiring space standards for rented tenure affordable homes in Peterborough.

**Planning Policy Context**

* 1. Peterborough City Council is in the process of preparing a new Local Plan. The emerging Plan does not currently include a policy that requires new dwellings (of any tenure) to be built to the national space standards (the existing adopted Local Plan does not require space standards for new homes either).
  2. We are considering including a policy requirement for all new **rented tenure** affordable homes to be built to the national space standards in the next version of the Plan which is due to be published for public consultation towards the end of 2017. The aim of this informal consultation is to seek the views of Registered Providers on this proposal before a final decision is made.
  3. A Local Plan is a statutory document that sets out how future development will be determined within an administrative area, in this case Peterborough City Council local authority area. Preparing the Plan involves three rounds of public consultation followed by a public examination by the Planning Inspectorate and finally adoption by Full Council.
  4. To date two rounds of public consultation have been completed for the emerging Plan. A six week consultation on the Preliminary Draft version of the Plan was undertaken from 15th January 2016 and the key issues arising from this consultation were taken into account when preparing the Further Draft version of the Plan. The Further Draft of the Plan was consulted on from 16th December 2016 for an eight week period and the comments received from this consultation are currently informing the development of the Proposed Submission version of the Plan.
  5. The Proposed Submission version of the Plan will be published towards the end of this year for a final round of consultation before being submitted for public examination.
  6. The final round of consultation is different to the previous two rounds in that the council will not be able to change the Plan in response to issues raised. All comments will be submitted to the Inspector who will consider whether the comments show that a particular aspect of the Plan is unsound, and therefore needs to be amended. The inspector will determine what changes, if any, will be made to Plan that has been submitted for examination.

**Why we are undertaking this informal consultation**

* 1. In view of the more limited opportunity for stakeholders to shape the final version of the new Local Plan through the last public consultation stage, we have decided to undertake an additional informal consultation with our key local affordable housing registered providers on the specific policy proposal to include a requirement for space standards on rented tenure affordable homes within the Proposed Submission version of the Plan.

1. The National context in relation to Space Standards
   1. Following the Housing Standards Review (2013/14), government issued a written statement on 25 March 2015 which confirmed the government’s intention to prevent Local Plans from setting their own standards and instead impose national standards via the Building Regulations system. In addition to the mandatory standards within Building Regulations, the new system included three new optional standard that a Local Plan can require, including a new national space standard. A Local Plan can only require one or more of these optional standards if the standard will address a clearly evidenced need and the viability implications of introducing the standard have been adequately considered.
   2. Here is a link to the national space standards if you require more detail:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/technical-housing-standards-nationally-described-space-standard>

# The Peterborough context in relation to Space Standards

* 1. The rationale for including a policy requirement for space standards on rented tenure affordable homes is because rented affordable homes have to be fully occupied to avoid attracting bedroom tax and the council's allocations policy reflects this. The removal of the HCA Housing Quality Indicators system as a measure of the quality of affordable homes means that there is no longer that safeguard in place to ensure that affordable housing is built to a reasonable size standard. The absence of any regulation of space standards means that Developers have no incentive to ensure that homes that will need to be occupied to maximum capacity are fit for purpose.
  2. We are aware that the application of space standards will impact on build costs because of the bigger land take that these dwellings will require, and that this will ultimately impact on the overall cost of the affordable provision within a scheme.
  3. In recognition of this and to minimise the impact on cost, we are not proposing a policy that requires space standards for affordable home ownership products on the basis that purchasers can choose to under occupy these homes, so they are not subject to the same pressures.
  4. A Viability Study that was commissioned to inform the Council's ongoing work with preparing the new Plan, was published in November 2016. The study assumes the application of space standards for all new dwellings when assessing the cost implications for policies that have a financial impact on development, including the provision of 30% affordable homes on schemes of 15 or more dwellings. The Viability study concludes that this policy requirement for affordable provision is viable in Peterborough.
  5. Therefore a policy which requires space standards on the rented element only of affordable housing provision, while effecting cost for these units, should not affect the overall viability of a scheme.

# Proposed Policy Text

* 1. Supporting text: “This Local Plan introduces the first optional standard on space standards for all new rented tenure affordable dwellings only. This is in recognition of the need for minimum space standards for what are likely to be fully occupied homes.”
  2. Policy text: “All new rented tenure affordable housing will be required to be built to meet minimum national space standards for the intended number of residents (defined by bed spaces).”

# Consultation Questions

We would be grateful if your responses to the consultation questions could consider the social implications as well as the financial considerations of the Space Standards policy proposal.

* Do you agree with the proposal to include a policy requirement for space standards on rented tenure affordable homes in the new Local Plan?
* Are there any unintended consequences of introducing this policy?
* Would you support a policy requirement for space standards on all tenures of affordable housing in the new Local Plan?
* Do you have any alternative options that we should consider?

# Responding to the Consultation

* 1. This consultation will last for three weeks from 30 June to 21 July 2017. Your early response would be appreciated.

* 1. Please email your responses to the questions in this consultation to [anne.keogh1@peterborough.gov.uk](mailto:anne.keogh1@peterborough.gov.uk)