



**Housing Policy Working Party  
Minutes of meeting held on Wednesday 12th  
April 2017 at 2pm in the Kasen Room**

---

**Present**

<b>Councillors</b>	<b>Tony Boto (Chair)</b>	<b>CllrTB</b>
	<b>Richard Lewis</b>	<b>CllrRL</b>
	<b>Sarah Peacock</b>	<b>CllrSP</b>
	<b>Steven North</b>	<b>CllrSN</b>

**Also in attendance**

<b>Head of Planning Services</b>	Paul Bland	PB
<b>Planning Policy and Conservation Manager</b>	Richard Palmer	RP
<b>Housing Strategy and Delivery Manager</b>	Carol Conway	CC
<b>Housing Services Officer</b>	Louise Bagley	LB
<b>Environmental Protection Manager</b>	Jenny Walker	JW

**Present for item 1**

<b>Communities and Local Government</b>	Mario Wolf	MW
<b>Head of the North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit</b>	Andrew Longley	AL

**Present for item 2 onwards**

<b>Benefits Manager</b>	Lucy Hogston	MW
-------------------------	--------------	----

		<b><u>ACTION</u></b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Custom and Self Build – Presentation by Communities and Local Government – Custom Build Task Force – Mario Wolf</b>	
1.1	AL introduced MW, who had earlier that day given a presentation to the Tresham Garden Village Working Party.	
1.2	<u>Aims/Benefits</u> Fits in with Government White Paper and responds to the	

	<p>challenge the Government and local authorities face – the number of completions has declined over the years and there is upward pressure on house prices.</p> <p>Custom and self build can help turn round the local housing market giving housing choice, diversity, sustainability, community cohesion and affordability. For local authorities it will speed up delivery and provide better quality development, some using modern methods of construction. It supports the labour market by providing 4.3 jobs per house and supports SME's as there is less financial risk for them because the funding is received from the person having the house built. It makes developments more attractive and marketable.</p>	
1.3	<p><u>Statistics</u></p> <p>There is significant national demand for custom build and up to a million households could be interested if more properties or opportunities were available, with 35-44 year olds the most interested. Many people are unaware that local authorities have a duty to keep a register of persons/organisations wanting to self and custom build and to ensure that there are enough serviced building plots available to meet demand. The UK has the lowest number of this type of build compared to other countries building less than 10% of homes this way, whereas in Germany it accounts for 60%.</p>	
1.4	<p><u>Other Facts</u></p> <p>The biggest scheme in the UK is at Graven Hill, Bicester, where there will be 1,900 homes. The first phase of plots has been released. Twenty-eight players providers are offering self and custom build mortgages. Affordable housing policies can comply with this model and it could also be linked to S106 obligations. It can be a model for older people downsizing. Design codes are important to get balance right allowing diversity. Not all local authorities have a self and custom build register and some are charging high fees for interested parties to go on the register.</p>	
1.5	<p><u>Way Forward</u></p> <p>A lot of generic advice is available on line. In February this year the Custom Build Task Force funded by the Nationwide Foundation and supported by the Government was set up. They aim to support eighty organisations over the next three years. Richard Bacon MP is leading on this and can visit councils to talk to officers and members. It is not an entirely free service but is 50% subsidised for the first 5 days of any project.</p>	
1.6	<p>TB invited questions to MW.</p> <p>PB mentioned Tresham Garden Village as an example where this could be used. Could be used for Rushden East SUE (2,000 homes) where there are three parties involved</p>	

	<p>Duchy of Lancaster (employment) and Barratts/Taylor Wimpey (volume housebuilders). It was considered members would be interested in self and custom build as it provides an opportunity for a speedy build and diversity.</p> <p>MW said that some big builders like Persimmon/Barratts are offering customers the opportunity to choose a plot/floor space/fit outs on housing estates and are classing this as self and custom build.</p> <p>AL said that the Joint Core Strategy does cover this area and therefore there is a hook for dialogue with developers. MW said we need to prove there is a demand to large builders.</p> <p>RP said we need to push/enhance/promote the self build register. Numbers on the register are increasing. MW can provide examples of good practise by other local authorities for the register. Local authorities need to ask the right questions to ascertain demand.</p> <p>AL said the intention is to seek to engage the Custom Self Build Task Force for Tresham Garden Village.</p>	
	<b>At 2.40 pm Mario Wolf and Andrew Longley left the meeting</b>	
	<b>At 2.40pm Lucy Hogston joined the meeting.</b>	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Apologies</b>	
2.1	Apologies were received from Councillor Helen Harrison, Sharn Matthews and Aine Cooper	
<b>3.</b>	<b>Minutes of the Meeting of 1st March 2017</b>	
3.1	The minutes were approved and signed by the Chairman.	
<b>4</b>	<b>Matters arising</b>	
4.1	Action arising from 1.2 of the minutes in respect of the Housing Mix consultancy has been completed.	
<b>5</b>	<b>Updates:</b>	
<b>5.1</b>	<b>Housing</b>	
5.1.1	CC said the final draft of the Older Peoples Accommodation Study for Northamptonshire had been completed and would be on the agenda for the next meeting of the WP.	
5.1.2	Homelessness Reduction Bill is going through the House of Lords and Royal Assent is imminent. It will place additional duties and administrative burdens on local authorities. The Government will give local authorities some additional	

	<p>burdens funding and we need establish how it will be used, particularly in light of the implications for the Housing Options Contract. A report will be submitted to the Policy and Resources Committee in June. SN asked how the money would be allocated, CC said the money would be allocated to local authorities according to a formula</p> <p>LB said we are using the Travel Lodge for temporary B&amp;B accommodation, which is not best for families. If a person turns down accommodation, we do not discharge our duty; we still have to investigate the homelessness issue but do not have to provide further accommodation.</p> <p>JW said the Housing and Planning Act came into force on 6 April 2017 with additional powers and duties in respect of private rented properties, covered by three sets of guidance.</p>	
<b>5.2</b>	<b>Welfare Reform</b>	
5.2.1	<p>LH advised of the withdrawal of the housing cost element of Universal Credit for under twenty-two year olds when they move onto UC. Only a few people are affected at present and there are lots of exemptions. Live service roll out will be February 2018 in Rushden.</p> <p>From 6 April 2017 for Housing Benefit and Child Tax Credit claims only the first 2 children will be included in calculations. Only new claims will be affected, but there are some exceptions eg multiple births. HMRC will deal with appeals. The bedroom tax is not affected by any additional children.</p>	
<b>6</b>	<b>Housing Mix Project Brief Update</b>	
6.1	<p>RP provided a brief update since last WP meeting. He along with CC and TB had met with Housing Vision to discuss the survey of employers (RP circulated a proposal from Housing Vision). Raunds had since been included in the proposal.</p> <p>It was agreed that the consultants should present a draft report to the May meeting of the working party and the final report with the employer's survey to the July meeting.</p> <p>SN advised the Project Board was aiming to deliver the Vision Statement for Rushden East SUE to July Full Council meeting. PB advised there should be sufficient detail from the draft report to inform the housing mix.</p> <p>The proposal was to collect data from the last five years – but it was considered the data was needed on the present and the future - incoming businesses, rather than historic data. We need to establish if employers are having difficulty recruiting because of a lack of the right kind of housing and</p>	

	<p>to use the study to make any necessary changes to the housing mix.</p> <p>Discussion ensued on which employers should be targeted. Need to contact Crown Estates for Rushden Lakes and Roxhill and Howdens for Warth Park.</p> <p>It was agreed that RP should go back to the consultant with suggested improvements and to seek to keep costs within budget.</p>	RP
<b>7</b>	<b>Housing White Paper and Build to Rent Consultation Responses</b>	
7.1	CC briefly went through the report which is to be submitted to the Policy and Resources Committee on 24 April 2017. Councillors from the Planning Policy Committee and from the WP had been requested to consider the respective planning policy and housing officers' suggested responses to the Housing White Paper and to put forward any amendments for inclusion in the report. The consultation period ends 2 <sup>nd</sup> May. WP members were satisfied with the proposed responses in respect of the housing elements of the White Paper	
7.2	The Build to Rent Consultation had also been published to encourage more institutional investors into the private rental market and to provide more secure tenancies. Suggested officer responses were also considered and approved. The consultation period ends 1 May 2017.	
7.6	RL proposed approval of report to go forward to Policy and Resources Committee and SN seconded.	
<b>8</b>	<b>Work Plan Update</b>	
8.1	CC reported that the clawback policy had been moved to the "Completed Work" as this was deferred for the time being.	
8.2	JW reported that the council had purchased two properties in Duck Street, Rushden. JW would be making a site visit tomorrow to ascertain the work required and would then submit a report to the Policy and Resources Committee.	
8.3	JW reported that the Compulsory Purchase Order on a property in Rushden was progressing and that the owner would probably not contest the Order, in which case, ENC would take ownership in July 2017.	
<b>9</b>	<b>Risk Review</b>	
9.1	Risk 4 – The Homelessness Reduction Bill will increase	

	duties on the council. It was agreed that the ‘Service Impact’ element of the risk may in the future have to be increased to level 3 i.e. “Unacceptable level of complaints. Adequate service level cannot be maintained”.	
9.2	Risk 6 – The Local Housing Allowance Cap. Although the introduction is delayed, we will have to put the “Likelihood” element of the risk back up to level 4 i.e. ‘Very High’ as it will still happen (was level 3 – High).	
<b>10</b>	<b>AOB</b>	
10.1	SN advised that after the Full Council meeting on 17 May 2017 there may be changes to the membership of working parties and committees.	
<b>11</b>	<b>Next and future meetings</b>	
11.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 24<sup>th</sup> May 2017</li> <li>• 5<sup>th</sup> July 2017</li> <li>• 13<sup>th</sup> September 2017</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	
11.2	The meeting concluded at 4.05pm	