

**Question 1(a) Do you agree with the proposed standard approach to assessing local housing need? If not, what alternative approach or other factors should be considered?**

As a general point, in the last few years, the objectively assessed housing needs of Arun District have drastically increased and our Policy Team have had to work incredibly hard to just try and keep up with the ever moving goal posts. Whilst it is welcomed that there will be a standard formula which will mean that excessive debates and scrutiny are avoided and more certainty in plan making is created, it is considered that the results of this approach for Arun are completely unrealistic and unachievable.

In recent years, housing delivery in Arun has averaged about 600 dpa. The highest figure was 890 in 2015/16. This delivery is not as a result of an inadequate number of planning permissions - there are currently about 3,500 dwellings approved and waiting to be built - requiring the delivery of 1,200 dpa in Arun is completely unrealistic as the development industry cannot and will not deliver at that rate, even if sufficient sites were allocated and permissions granted.

Whilst capping any proposed increase is sensible, the proposed 40% seems excessive. In reality, a 40% increase is a significant increase that is very unlikely to be able to be accommodated within the short term, especially in areas where there might be significant environmental constraints.

Whilst the proposed formula provides a nationally consistent, starting point for deciding future levels of housing provision it is important that the final scale and distribution of housing provision is considered and agreed by partners working at the level of the Housing Market Area (HMA). There also needs to be greater scope to reflect other 'local factors' such as significant growth in local employment levels, land availability, transport planning and minerals and waste which can be better assessed through collaborative working at a HMA level.

**Question 1(b) How can information on local housing need be made more transparent?**

This information should be published by the Government annually on a national basis, at the same date each year, in a similar format to the 'housing needs consultation data table' which was published alongside the Government's current consultation.

**Question 2**

**Do you agree with the proposal that an assessment of local housing need should be able to be relied upon for a period of two years from the date a plan is submitted?**

No. At the very least, councils should be able to "freeze" the basic OAN number once they have published the Regulation 19 pre-submission document for public representations, but ideally it should be earlier than this in the process, to allow a smoother preparation of the Regulation 19 document.

Councils should be able to rely upon an assessment of housing need for a period of three years from the date a 'pre-submission' plan is published. This will ensure that there is greater certainty for all involved in the plan-making process as to the number of homes that are required, in case of unexpected delays in the plan-making process later.

As proposed, Councils will constantly be playing 'catch up' with the published data until such time as they submit their Plan. In reality, this may have resulted in evidence needing to be updated (at significant cost and delay) earlier in the process.

### **Question 3**

**Do you agree that we should amend national planning policy so that a sound plan should identify local housing needs using a clear and justified method?**

Yes. Arun District Council agrees with this proposal, which would make scrutiny of the Local Plan process more straightforward for stakeholders.

### **Question 4**

**Do you agree with our approach in circumstances when plan makers deviate from the proposed method, including the level of scrutiny we expect from the Planning Inspectors?**

Yes.

### **Question 5(a)**

**Do you agree that the Secretary of State should have discretion to defer the period for using the baseline for some local planning authorities? If so, how best could this be achieved, what minimum requirements should be in place before the Secretary of State may exercise this discretion, and for how long should such deferral be permitted?**

Arun District Council disagrees with the proposal that after 31 March 2018 the new method for calculating the local housing need will apply as the baseline for assessing the five year housing land supply.

### **Question 5 (b)**

**Do you consider that authorities that have an adopted joint local plan, or which are covered by an adopted spatial development strategy, should be able to assess their five-year land supply and / or be measured for the purposes of the Housing Delivery Test, across the area as a whole?**

No comment

### **Question 5 (c):**

**Do you consider that authorities that are not able to use the new method for calculating local housing need should be able to use an existing or an emerging local plan figure for housing need for the purposes of calculating five-year land supply and to be measured for the purposes of the housing delivery test?**

Not relevant to Arun District Council.

### **Question 6:**

**Do you agree with the proposed transitional arrangements for introducing the standard approach for calculating local housing need?**

The transitional approach is sensible.

### **Question 7 (a):**

**Do you agree with the proposed administrative arrangements for preparing the statement of common ground?**

It is essential that statutory bodies such as drainage and health provision are required to work and invest at the same speed that the strategic planning is required progress. Additional powers should be provided to require these bodies to work alongside local

planning authorities on strategic planning. Without them, agreements on strategic issues is exceptionally difficult.

In the case of Arun, we fall within two different HMA's and requiring SOCG's with all of these authorities (some of which where there are very limited functional linkages) will be an additional burden.

**Question 7 (b):**

**How do you consider a statement of common ground should be implemented in areas where there is a mayor with strategic plan-making powers?**

Not relevant to Arun District Council.

**Question 7 (c):**

**Do you consider there to be a role for directly elected mayors without strategic plan-making powers in the production of the statement of common ground?**

Not relevant to Arun District Council.

**Question 8:**

**Do you agree that the proposed content and timescales for publication of the statement of common ground are appropriate and will support more effective co-operation on strategic cross-boundary planning matters?**

Yes. Authorities in West Sussex already have a document that would be broadly equivalent to the SOCG in the form of a Local Strategic Statement. Arun District Council would ask that there is some way of recognising the existence of documents where they are already in place.

The statement of common ground is intended to be "part of the evidence for an individual plan examination" and will "not be separately examined by the Planning Inspectorate". However, any statement of common ground will be subject to a high degree of scrutiny by a local plan inspector, who will use it both to make a judgement on whether the plan is sound. Given this anticipated high degree of scrutiny, further clarification of exactly what should be included in a statement of common ground and the level of detail expected would be welcomed.

**Question 9 a):**

**Do you agree with the proposal to amend the tests of soundness to include that:**  
**i) plans should be prepared based on a strategy informed by agreements over the wider area; and**  
**ii) plans should be based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic priorities, which are evidenced in the statement of common ground?**

Agree with this in principle, but it is unclear how the strategy will be agreed, and what consultation will be undertaken to inform this. Also concerned that delays agreeing the statement of common ground could delay the plan-making process.

**Question 9 b):**

**Do you agree to the proposed transitional arrangements for amending the tests of soundness to ensure effective co-operation?**

Yes.

**Question 10 a):**

**Do you have any suggestions on how to streamline the process for identifying the housing need for individual groups and what evidence could be used to help plan to meet the needs of particular groups?**

The guidance for preparing Strategic Housing Market Assessments (SHMAs), as well as the NPPF, should be amended to make clear the identification of housing needs for different groups.

**Question 10 b):**

**Do you agree that the current definition of older people within the National Planning Policy Framework is still fit-for-purpose?**

Yes

**Question 11 a):**

**Should a local plan set out the housing need for designated neighbourhood planning areas and parished areas within the area?**

In theory, this is a reasonable requirement. However, in Arun, we have recently tried going through a process where we have suggested future housing numbers to parish's/town's as part of the Local Plan strategy. This has resulted in a number practical issue;

- i. A fundamental concern from parish's and town's that the District Council is 'dictating' the requirements, which isn't part of Localism.
- ii. A general resistance to providing numbers that are not likely to be popular.
- iii. Some parish's/town's want to prepare Neighbourhood Plans and some do not.
- iv. The data in the HELAA showing deliverable sites does not automatically mirror the 'settlement strategy'; some large settlements have relatively few sites, some smaller settlements have a large number of sites.

In Arun, the previous version of the emerging Local Plan did set out specific numbers for Neighbourhood Plan groups to allocate in their Plans. However, this resulted in approximately 50% of this overall number being allocated and has also resulted in all of these now 'made' Plans being out of date as they were based on out of date housing requirements.

Neighbourhood plans are optional and prepared by volunteers and delivery of housing through this mechanism is uncertain and unpredictable. Neighbourhood plans should therefore only deliver locally identified needs rather than a proportion of the strategic needs of the area. Neighbourhood plans should deliver this housing growth as an addition to that established through the local plan process.

**Question 11 b):**

**Do you agree with the proposal for a formula-based approach to apportion housing need to neighbourhood plan bodies in circumstances where the local plan cannot be relied on as a basis for calculating housing need?**

No. Parts of the district are highly constrained, and as such it would not be possible for neighbourhood plans in these areas to meet their housing need, based on the 'apportionment' approach. This could lead to a shortfall in the provision of homes across the district. The only sensible approach in this case would be for housing numbers to be left entirely to the Local Plan to distribute, with Neighbourhood Plans indicating instead preferred locations of housing growth rather than exact numbers and locations of sites.

**Question 12:**

**Do you agree that local plans should identify the infrastructure and affordable housing needed, how these will be funded and the contributions developers will be expected to make?**

This approach is essentially the same as existing. However, in order to make it work as effectively as possible, detailed longer-term engagement from utilities providers will need to take place; too often, near-complete certainty of costs can often only be provided 5-8 years ahead. This can make it difficult for Local Authorities to understand what some of the infrastructure costs might be, especially on larger sites.

**Question 13:**

**In reviewing guidance on testing plans and policies for viability, what amendments could be made to improve current practice?**

Nothing specific.

**Question 14:**

**Do you agree that where policy requirements have been tested for their viability, the issue should not usually need to be tested again at the planning application stage?**

Yes, in principle, although clearly the longer the time-gap between the Local Plan being adopted and sites coming forwards, the greater the chance of various costs and values changing in a way that might legitimately impact viability. Further, viability assessments at a district-wide level make a number of assumptions. These may not all be applicable to each and every site. Viability information should be required at the application stage only if the applicant claims that they cannot deliver key policy requirements.

Where the LPA needs to assess the contents of a viability report, perhaps through an independent expert (such as the District Valuation Service), legislation/guidance should make clear (after being altered, if necessary) that LPAs can legitimately recharge the costs to the applicant – in too many cases, developers have tried to argue that LPAs cannot lawfully recharge this cost to them.

**Question 15:**

**How can Government ensure that infrastructure providers, including housing associations, are engaged throughout the process including in circumstances where a viability assessment may be required?**

Having a commitment to, and understanding, the full infrastructure costs at the time of preparing a Plan is essential. Too often an infrastructure provider will confirm that there is a solution but will not have this solution costed. It is therefore impossible to test viability accurately and comprehensively. We are currently in a position where infrastructure plans are for 20 years, whilst utilities business plans only cover the next 5 years and do not account for planning development unless it has permission.

**Question 16:**

**What factors should we take into account in updating guidance to encourage viability assessments to be simpler, quicker and more transparent, for example through a standardised report or summary format?**

**Question 17 (a):**

**Do you agree that local planning authorities should set out in plans how they will monitor and report on planning agreements to help ensure that communities can**

**easily understand what infrastructure and affordable housing has been secured and delivered through developer contributions?**

Yes, these could be set out in Authority Monitoring Reports, which must already be produced and published on councils' websites on an annual basis.

**Question 17 (b):**

**What factors should we take into account in preparing guidance on a standard approach to monitoring and reporting planning obligations?**

Each report should cover a single financial year only and contain information on all receipts and spending, plus the developments that they relate to.

**Question 17 (c):**

**How can local planning authorities and applicants work together to better publicise infrastructure and affordable housing secured through new development once development has commenced, or at other stages of the process?**

Arun has tried to encourage developers for a long time now (with very limited success) to set up and manage dedicated web pages to specific developments that are being constructed. This would be updated weekly setting out what is taking place on the site (this will often mean that the local authority will not get a large volume of telephone calls asking what is happening) and what key milestones are for delivery.

We have also sought monitoring data from developers (and this is often required by s016 agreements) so that planning obligation delivery can be accurately managed but again this is rarely submitted.

Unfortunately, due to resource constraints, local authorities are often only able to react to situations as they arise rather than being able to resource a pre-active approach to managing on-site delivery.

**Question 18 a):**

**Do you agree that a further 20 per cent fee increase should be applied to those local planning authorities who are delivering the homes their communities need? What should be the criteria to measure this?**

The answer is both yes and no. Planning authorities are not in control of the delivery of housing; they can ensure that there are enough sites with planning permission but they cannot ensure that housing is delivered. The criteria should be based around what a local authority is able to control. Those criteria would relate to keeping an up to date Local Plan and ensuring that sufficient planning permissions are granted.

Further, any additional fee income should be guaranteed for a specified number of years. If it is a one of income one year, but could be taken away the following year, it would be impossible for authorities to properly manage those resources to deliver improved resources to the customer.

**Question 18 b):**

**Do you think there are more appropriate circumstances when a local planning authority should be able to charge the further 20 per cent? If so, do you have views on how these circumstances could work in practice?**

Keeping an up to date Local Plan and ensuring that sufficient planning permissions are granted.

**Question 18 c):**

**Should any additional fee increase be applied nationally once all local planning authorities meet the required criteria, or only to individual authorities who meet them?**

To individual authorities.

**Question 18 d):**

**Are there any additional issues we should consider in developing a framework for this additional fee increase?**

Nothing to add to points above.

**Question 19:**

**Having regard to the measures we have already identified in the housing White Paper, are there any other actions that could increase build out rates?**

The fundamental issue delaying the delivery of housing sites was not addressed in Housing White Paper. In areas such as Arun District where there are only 5 – 8 house building companies delivering significant numbers of units, there is no way that these housebuilders will suddenly significantly increase supply as it is not in their interest to compete with themselves. They will therefore (and quite understandably) deliver at a rate that suits their market, which results in large sites taking many years to complete.