

Controlling Type and Tenure of New Housing

1. Background

Early in the Housing Working Group's investigations it became obvious that the Bridport Area must confront and deal with two difficult factors. The current demographic imbalance (where the elderly outnumber the young at an increasing rate) is one, and the lack of access to housing by a high proportion of locals is the other. The Group believes that unless appropriate checks can be introduced on new housing, both situations will spiral out of control to the detriment of the Neighbourhood Plan Area.

This short paper looks into what is allowed, and what other NPs have written in to their plans.

2. Rules

Our consultant Jo Witherden advises as follows (emphases are those of this paper's author):

The key test of a neighbourhood plan lies in it having regard to national policy on guidance and being in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan.

Section 6 of the NPPF is entitled "Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes", and refers to meeting "the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area". Para 50 goes into a bit more detail:

To deliver a wide choice of high quality homes, widen opportunities for home ownership and create sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities, local planning authorities should:

- plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community (such as, but not limited to, families with children, older people, people with disabilities, service families and people wishing to build their own homes);
- identify the size, type, tenure and range of housing that is required in particular locations, reflecting local demand; and
- where they have identified that affordable housing is needed, set policies for meeting this need on site, unless off-site provision or a financial contribution of broadly equivalent value can be robustly justified (for example to improve or make more effective use of the existing housing stock) and the agreed approach contributes to the objective of creating mixed and balanced communities. Such policies should be sufficiently flexible to take account of changing market conditions over time.

So any restrictions need to:

- (1) be justified by local evidence as being necessary
AND
- (2) not be so restrictive that the 'full need' (which, from the SHMA, will include an element of in-migrants to the area) won't be met
AND
- (3) not undermine the delivery of the housing on economic grounds (the local plan gets tested for viability – and this builds in a degree of headroom in case of worsening economy, but if a supplementary policy were to significantly skew this, then it may make the housing financially undeliverable)."

3. Controls in Other NPs

Local knowledge and NP online forums have led to discovery of a small number of other NP areas whose situations are sufficiently similar to ours to make controls in their NPs relevant. At the time of writing not all had been “made” (jargon for having passed inspection and referendum) so may yet fail in their aims. Those identified at time of writing are summarised below.

Electronic copies of these plans are in the Housing Working Group on-line file archive.

NP Area	Housing Controls	Relevance to Bridport Area
Frome (Somerset)	Policy includes redressing imbalance. Quality rules for 100+ home sites; Uses LPA affordability rules for 10+ home sites.	High. Similar size and challenges.
Thame (S Oxon)	Thame-specific “Affordable” policy on sites of 6+, mix of tenure types required. NP has amended sites allocated by Local Plan.	High. Market town, pop. 11,000.
Woodcote (S Oxon)	Prioritise smaller homes and limit extending them; 40% affordable; new sites of 25+ homes not allowed.	High-ish. Smaller (pop 2600 and falling), similar affordable housing and demography issues.
Lynton & Lynmouth (Devon)	Restrictions on market value housing. Only allowed if it funds affordable; must be for locals, or improve community balance; no second homes.	Medium. National Park special rules; desperate for “affordable”.
St Ives (Cornwall)	50% affordable on 10+ home sites; holiday homes barred.	Medium. Comparable size but holiday homes is their problem.
Wilmslow (Bucks)	20% affordable homes awarded to a new CLT.	Medium to low. Relatively well off, pop. 4650, used courts to reject Local Plan big development.
Winsford (Cheshire)	No obvious pressure to balance demography, but rules on street design to ensure new-build integrates with town.	Medium. Comparable size (pop. 30,700), needs 3150 new homes by 2030.
Buckland Newton (Dorset)	Restrictions on size; 50% affordable at 65% market value	Low. Much smaller (pop. 622).
Loders (Dorset)		Low. Next door, but very rural.

4. Conclusions

Few other NPs have been found where the problems of unbalanced demography and affordability are specifically written-in as policy.

The wording in Frome’s NP (Policy H2 - Building a balanced community, Policy H4 - Delivering major projects, Policy H6 - Self build and Community housing) are the most relevant to Bridport Area. Although Thame NPs contains brave headings (H4: Integrate allocated sites, H8: Provide affordable housing, H10: Provide a Thame-Specific Affordable Housing) the wording within each is weaker and it is hard to see how they will not be over-ridden by ambitious developers.

Vision 2030: Neighbourhood Plan

for Allington, Bothenhampton & Walditch, Bradpole, Bridport and Symondsburly



As it's hard to follow multiple other NPs at once, Bridport Area's best approach is to start by learning from the experience of Frome, particularly to cultivate a link to find out how their NP policies operate in practice. Frome are about 18 months ahead of us so there is time to learn from them and incorporate the findings into Vision-2030.

Meanwhile NP team members should continue to look out for ones which do (this report can be updated from time to time if new examples are found).

Unfinished draft