

Darlington Local Plan

Inspector's Matters, Issues and Questions for Examination

Response on behalf of Taylor Wimpey (UK) Ltd

Matter 5 – Meeting particular housing needs

Q5.1. Is the Council's proposed modification to the opening paragraph of policy H4 necessary to make the Plan sound and, if so, would it be effective in so doing?

Whilst Taylor Wimpey welcome the proposed modification to the opening paragraph of policy H4 to provide flexibility, they consider that further modifications to the support text associated with the policy is needed.

Evidence on housing need and local housing market conditions dates very quickly and, as such, Taylor Wimpey welcome the acknowledgment in the policy that housing mix can be informed by 'other evidence' in support of a planning application. This must however include market intelligence from a housebuilder, as they are most aware of current market conditions and demands. Taylor Wimpey would therefore suggest that the supporting text to the policy is amended to include further details on the type of evidence that would be acceptable. This would make the policy more positively prepared and effective.

Q5.2. Is the Council's proposed modification to the requirement in policy H4 for accessible and adaptable homes necessary to make the Plan sound? Is the modified requirement (47%) justified by up to date and proportionate evidence including about need and viability having regard to relevant national guidance?

Taylor Wimpey are fully supportive of providing high quality living accommodation but as required by PPG the introduction of the optional standards must be justified and evidence based. Guidance contained in the PPG outlines what evidence should be used to demonstrate a need to set higher accessibility, adaptability and wheelchair housing standards. It states:

"Based on their housing needs assessment and other available datasets it will be for local planning authorities to set out how they intend to approach demonstrating the need for Requirement M4(2) (accessible and adaptable dwellings), and/or M4(3) (wheelchair user dwellings), of the Building Regulations. There is a wide range of published official statistics and factors which local planning authorities can consider and take into account, including:

- *the likely future need for housing for older and disabled people (including wheelchair user dwellings).*
- *size, location, type and quality of dwellings needed to meet specifically evidenced needs (for example retirement homes, sheltered homes or care homes).*
- *the accessibility and adaptability of existing housing stock.*
- *how needs vary across different housing tenures.*
- *the overall impact on viability.*

To assist local planning authorities in appraising this data the government has produced a summary data sheet. This sets out in one place useful data and sources of further information which planning authorities can draw from to inform their assessments. It will reduce the time needed for undertaking the assessment and thereby avoid replicating some elements of the work". Paragraph: 007 Reference ID: 56-007-20150327

"Local Plan policies for wheelchair accessible homes should be applied only to those dwellings where the local authority is responsible for allocating or nominating a person to live in that dwelling". Paragraph: 009 Reference ID: 56-009-20150327

Taylor Wimpey welcome the proposed modification to reduce the M4(2) requirement in line with the conclusions of the 2020 SHMA which provides some evidence to try and establish the level of need. It does not however provide any information to address the other requirements outlined in PPG.

Moreover, the policy still requires 9% of all new dwellings to meet M4(3) despite PPG clearly advising that local plan policies for wheelchair accessible homes should only apply to those dwellings where the local authority is responsible for allocating or nominating a person to live in that dwelling. It is therefore unclear how the policy is intended to operate and as currently worded the policy is not consistent with national policy.

Taylor Wimpey are also concerned that there is no transitional period before these requirements are imposed and would suggest that such an approach is adopted so planning applications that have already been submitted do not have to comply, allowing housebuilders to adjust to the new requirements. Stockton Borough Council adopted this approach in their Local Plan adopted in early 2019.