

Chapter 8

Housing

8.1 Introduction

Overview

- 8.1.1 Housing is a key strategic issue for town planning and can be a determining factor in people's quality of life. There is increasing pressure to provide new housing within the borough as the numbers of households grow. Barnet's high quality environment creates an attractive place where people want to live, which adds to the demand for new dwellings. To enable people to continue living in attractive surroundings and enjoying a satisfactory quality of life, the provision of new housing needs to be balanced against maintaining and improving environmental quality.
- 8.1.2 New residential development should respect the character of an area and the local environment, which can be achieved through promoting high quality design and applying appropriate density and amenity standards. In addition, it is important to encourage a suitable mix of dwellings, in terms of type, size and tenure, to meet the diverse needs of Barnet's people. This means planning, for example, to meet the needs of those on low incomes, those without homes, those who require specialist care or supervision, and gypsies and other travelling people.
- 8.1.3 This chapter sets out detailed policies on housing, which aim to provide for the needs of Barnet's population and to protect and enhance the character and appearance of the borough in accordance with the council's aims and priorities.

National Planning Policy Context

- 8.1.4 The government's objectives for housing are set out in a series of Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs) and Planning Policy Statements (PPSs). PPG12 – *Development Plans* recommends the inclusion of policies on additional housing requirements, and the setting of targets for development on previously-developed sites. PPG1 – *General Policy and Principles* (1997) emphasises the need for high quality design in new developments.¹ The guidance recommends that in planning for housing, local authorities should:
- Identify an adequate supply of land;
 - Make effective use of land within urban areas;
 - Promote land that is well served by public transport with good access to local facilities; and
 - Include a mix of housing.
- 8.1.5 PPS 1 – *Delivering Sustainable Development* states that “good planning is a positive and proactive process operating in the public interest through a system of plan preparation and control over the development or use of land”. It sets out a commitment to the protection and enhancement of the quality of the natural and historic environment, and recommends that policies should take account of climate change and the protection of wildlife. There should be a prudent use of natural resources, for example, by building housing at higher densities on previously-developed land. PPS1 strongly emphasises that good design is indivisible from good planning and argues that:
- Design which is inappropriate in its context, or which fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, should not be accepted.
- 8.1.6 PPG3 – *Housing* (2000) introduces a “sequential approach” to housing development, which involves using previously-developed land before greenfield sites. The guidance highlights the importance of increasing densities in order to minimise the amount of land required for new development. It recommends that when considering a site for residential development, its location and accessibility to public transport need to be taken into account. The other main objectives of PPG3 are:
- To ensure that there is a greater choice of housing to reflect the needs of all in the community;
 - To promote mixed use developments and socially mixed communities;
 - To ensure that new housing is well designed; and
 - That new housing contributes towards improving the quality of urban life and promotes an urban renaissance.

¹ Although PPS1 supersedes PPG1, reference is made to it because of its significance in guiding the preparation of this UDP.

- 8.1.7 PPS3 – *Housing* was published in draft in 2005. The final PPS3 will replace PPG3 and Circular 06/98. This states that Local Planning Authorities should set minimum size-of-site thresholds, expressed as the number of homes or the area of the development site, above which affordable housing will be sought from property developers. It sets an indicative national minimum threshold of 15 dwellings per site, but states that Local Planning Authorities may set a different threshold, or a series of thresholds, where this can be justified.
- 8.1.8 The government's Circular 06/98 deals specifically with the provision of affordable housing, and recommends that local authorities should provide a mix of dwellings, and encourage mixed and balanced communities, in order to avoid social exclusion. The Circular encourages the setting of policies that seek an element of affordable housing to be included in new residential developments, and which indicate how many affordable homes will be needed throughout the period of a development plan. Paragraph 8 of the Circular indicates that in preparing plans, authorities should ensure that policies on affordable housing are compatible with their general objectives for land use planning and economic development. This means that size-of-site thresholds, set to determine the size of schemes to which policies seeking affordable housing will apply, should not frustrate delivery of housing more generally by inhibiting smaller schemes.
- 8.1.9 The report of the Urban Task Force, *Towards an Urban Renaissance*, tackles the problems of urban decline and recommends solutions for urban regeneration. The recommendations that will impact on housing policies are:
- The promotion of higher housing densities and resisting developments that are too low in density;
 - Accelerating the release of land no longer needed for employment for housing development;
 - Applying a sequential approach; and
 - The aim to achieve a 60% rate of development on brownfield land.

Regional Planning Policy Context

- 8.1.10 The *London Plan* stresses the need to provide in the capital sufficient housing of the appropriate size, quality, type and location. To make London a better city for people to live in, it is necessary to achieve targets for new housing, including affordable housing, that will cater for the needs of London's existing and future population, meet any special needs, and give more people who require it access to homes they can afford.
- 8.1.11 As part of assessing the capacity of boroughs in London to accommodate growth in household numbers, the GLA has prepared *London's Housing Capacity* (2000) that showed that housing provision would meet demand between 1997 and 2016.² The provision of 17,780 dwellings is required in Barnet to help meet the demand. The conventional provision of new-build housing will provide 14,780 of these dwellings in Barnet, of which:
- 37% should be from large windfall sites (10 units and above);
 - 23% should be from large identified sites;
 - 20% should come from smaller sites;
 - 15% should be from small conversions; and
 - 4% should come from office conversions.
- In addition, 3,000 homes could be provided that are non self-contained Houses in Multiple Occupation (e.g. hostels, sheltered accommodation and students' halls of residence).
- 8.1.12 The *London Plan* specifies that 50% of new housing in Barnet should be affordable, in a 70:30 split between social rented and intermediate housing. The *London Plan* requires each borough to set its own target for the proportion of additional housing provision which is to be affordable, based on an assessment of housing need and supply in its area. In setting targets, boroughs should take account of:
- Regional and local assessments of need;

² The *London Plan* commits the Mayor of London to produce a new housing capacity study to inform the review of the *London Plan*. On the basis of the 2004 *London Housing Capacity Study*, the Mayor proposed setting new housing targets in *Draft Early Alterations to Housing Provision Targets, Waste and Minerals* (October 2005).

- The *London Plan* target for affordable housing provision and the objective, within that, for the split between social rented housing and intermediate provision; and
- The ideal of promoting mixed and balanced communities.

- 8.1.13 The *London Plan* does not stipulate a London-wide affordable site-size threshold but states that boroughs should set thresholds above which affordable housing requirements will apply at no greater than 15 units and that they are encouraged to seek a lower threshold where this can be justified (paragraph 3.46 of the *London Plan*). Evidence on thresholds in London has been provided in *Thresholds for Application of Affordable Housing Requirements* (March 2003) which suggests that in terms of development economics, thresholds lower than 15 units per site are capable of delivering affordable housing without reducing overall supply.

Borough Context

- 8.1.14 Two key aims for the council, as set out in its Corporate Plan, are to work together with partners to provide assistance to those most in need, and to create a sustainable, healthy environment. This will involve the council continuing to develop its partnerships with all housing providers and delivering housing to meet the diverse needs of Barnet's population. The council recognises the importance of providing adequate housing for its residents. A housing strategy is produced by the council, which gives an overview of housing need within the borough and sets out objectives to meet those needs. The borough's Local Agenda 21 Strategy, *New Century, New Start*, sets out a commitment to improving the quality of people's lives by ensuring there is good quality housing for all. The importance of providing housing is reflected in the guiding principles of this strategy, which states that new housing should meet local needs, be accessible and should include an element of affordable housing. Half of all planned additional homes achieved in Barnet should be affordable. This target includes affordable housing from all sources and not just that secured through planning obligations. It includes 100% affordable schemes by housing associations, intermediate housing, non self-contained accommodation, gains from conversions and from bringing long-term vacant properties back into use as well as new housing. An appropriate tenure split for Barnet has been clarified in the *Supplementary Planning Document on Contributions to Affordable Housing*.

Strategy

- 8.1.15 With regard to housing provision, the council has the following objectives:
- To ensure an adequate supply and mix of housing to meet the diverse needs of all those living in the borough.
 - To adopt a sequential approach to housing development by using previously-developed sites within urban areas first.
 - To achieve a balance between the need for new housing development and the protection of the environment.
 - To ensure new housing development is designed to preserve and enhance the character of the locality and improve safety, security and accessibility.

8.2 Strategic Policies

- 8.2.1 The key strategic policies that will guide the provision of new housing while balancing the need to maintain and improve environmental quality are as follows.

Policy GH1 – Housing Supply

~~The council will seek the minimum provision of 17,780 additional homes to contribute to local and regional housing provision between 1997 and 2016 through:~~

- ~~• Allocating sites in the UDP for residential development;~~
- ~~• Redevelopment of existing sites;~~
- ~~• Conversion of large dwellings into small units;~~
- ~~• Conversion of space above shops and offices into residential accommodation;~~
- ~~• Development of infill sites in residential areas; and~~
- ~~• Bringing empty homes into use and non self-contained accommodation.~~

Policy GH2 – Dwelling Mix

~~The council will seek to ensure that the mix of dwellings in terms of type and size accords with the needs of the borough's population.~~

Policy GH3 – Affordable Housing

~~The council will seek to ensure that half of the 17,780 additional homes to be delivered between 1997 and 2016 are affordable homes meeting the needs of residents unable to buy or rent housing on the open market.~~

8.3 Detailed Policies

8.3.1 Housing Supply

Provision

- 8.3.1.1 As a Local Planning Authority, the council is responsible for ensuring that there is sufficient land available to meet the housing requirements of the borough. Housing is a basic human need and failure to provide enough could result in a shortage of social housing, and place stresses on those least able to compete in the housing market.
- 8.3.1.2 The Greater London Authority uses a dwelling-constrained set of population projections that assesses population growth in the context of the capacity of the urban area to absorb it. When the GLA calculated these projections in 2005, dwellings were expected to increase in Barnet by 17% to 149,000 between 2001 and 2016. This results in a projected increase in Barnet's population of 12.6% between 2001 and 2016, to just under 360,000. Subsequent to the release of these official GLA projections (known as 'Scenario 8.07'), the council's own information suggested that the actual increase in dwellings in the borough was likely to be a little higher and result in an extra 3,000 dwellings by 2016 (i.e. 152,000). Work with the GLA using these more recent data suggests that the 2016 population is likely to be a little higher than originally thought – 366,000. For more details of the official GLA estimates (Scenario 8.07) see *Barnet in Facts and Figures* (available on the council's website <http://www.barnet.gov.uk/>).
- 8.3.1.3 This population growth will lead to an increase in the demand for new dwellings, and it has been estimated that Barnet has the capacity to provide an additional 17,780 homes between 1997 and 2016 to help in meeting this demand. Of this amount, 14,780 will be provided by conventional sources of new build and 3,000 through the provision of non self-contained accommodation, for example bedsits and HMOs. The *London Plan* has therefore set Barnet a minimum target provision of 17,780 homes by 2016. To provide 17,780 new homes by this date, an average of 889 homes will need to be completed each year. The council is confident that this figure can be met given the completion rate of recent years, and from 2005 has published detailed completion figures in its *Annual Monitoring Report*.
- 8.3.1.4 However, to ensure that Barnet is able to meet this target, land needs to be reserved for housing through this Plan. Therefore, the council has identified land as suitable for housing which can contribute towards meeting demand, and these sites are listed in the Schedule of Proposals in the "Implementation" chapter, with numbers prefixed by an 'H'. The selection of these sites has followed the sequential approach to housing as recommended by PPG3. In order to ensure that these sites are retained for housing, the council will not normally consider other uses to be appropriate for such sites. Exceptions may be acceptable in circumstances where another use meets an identified need in the local community, or where the proposed use provides an important employment function.

Policy H1 – Housing – Allocated Sites

The council will safeguard sites identified in the Unitary Development Plan as suitable for housing. Proposals for non-residential development on such sites will not normally be granted.

- 8.3.1.5 In recent years, the majority of housing completions has taken place on sites not previously identified for housing development. It is reasonable to assume that such ‘windfall’ sites will continue to make a significant contribution towards Barnet’s housing. It will be important that the location of any such development does not compromise the environmental quality of the borough and enables easy access to jobs and everyday services. Therefore, when considering sites for housing development, the first priority should be previously-developed sites within the urban area. This will help to reduce pressure on greenfield sites, improve environmental quality and decrease the need to travel. To achieve this, the council will adopt a sequential approach to the location of new residential development on sites which are not allocated in the Plan.
- 8.3.1.6 The preferred locations for new residential development are on previously-developed land, more specifically:
- On sites at the higher range of densities, with high accessibility to public transport facilities, such as those at railway stations or which are easily accessible to the stations and the rail network;
 - Redevelopment of land currently used for housing but at higher densities;
 - Re-use of existing buildings, including bringing empty properties back into use;
 - On redundant or derelict sites;
 - By the productive use of vacant sites within the urban area which are not allocated or required for another use; and
 - On land on the edge of urban areas, outside the Green Belt and close to public transport and services.
- 8.3.1.7 Greenfield sites will only be considered where it can be demonstrated that all other opportunities have been explored. In accordance with policies in the “Open Environment” chapter, the agricultural land quality and nature conservation value of any site will be taken into account when assessing proposals for residential development. Back gardens can contribute towards open space in the borough and can also be important for nature conservation and provide habitats for wildlife, and in such cases should be protected.
- 8.3.1.8 Proposals for residential development in town centre locations or as part of mixed use developments, will be encouraged because they provide the opportunity to live and work in one area, thus reducing road traffic and the need to travel.
- 8.3.1.9 The council will expect new housing development to conform with design policies elsewhere in this Plan. New housing developments can create a need for ancillary community facilities, therefore, proposals for residential development will need to take account of policies in the “Community Services” chapter.

Policy H2 – Housing – Other Sites

Proposals for residential development on sites not allocated for housing under Policy H1 will be assessed in terms of:

- Whether the site is appropriate, having regard to a sequential test;
- The impact of the proposal on its surroundings (including the environmental impact of developing back gardens);
- The availability of access by a choice of means of transport;
- Access to educational and community facilities; and
- Whether land is required for another use, as identified in this Plan and associated planning briefs.

Loss of Residential Uses

- 8.3.1.10 Given the high demand for housing in the borough and the need for Barnet to meet strategic housing requirements, the loss of residential uses will not be acceptable. The loss from the current dwelling stock of residential units of a type which are in short supply or serving a special housing need, including Housing in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) or other low cost or affordable housing, will normally be resisted.

- 8.3.1.11 There may be some circumstances where the loss of residential uses may be acceptable to meet another community need. For example, in predominantly residential areas changes of use may be necessary to provide important local facilities, such as doctors' and dentists' surgeries, children's nurseries and places of worship. Any such proposal will be considered on its merits having regard to the impact on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers, car parking and traffic. The loss of residential use may also be acceptable where the presence of factors such as noise, vibration, smells, smoke and activity have made the continued use of a building for residential purposes undesirable. However, the deterioration and poor state of repair of a residential property will not in itself be regarded as a valid reason to allow a change of use. It is recognised that a net loss of residential units may be necessary in order to upgrade certain types of accommodation such as sheltered housing and bedsits.
- 8.3.1.12 Changes of use may also be acceptable outside predominantly residential areas, where they directly assist local businesses or other commercial ventures and where such a change is not detrimental to amenity or local character. However, they will not be acceptable where the demand for the proposed use can adequately be met elsewhere.

Policy H3 – Loss of Residential Uses

Planning permission will not be granted for changes of use from residential to other uses unless:

- i. The proposed use is for a community facility; and
- ii. The location is no longer environmentally suitable for residential use and cannot be improved; and
- iii. The proposal is for an important employment-generating use outside a predominantly residential area, provided that it is not detrimental to residential amenity and does not conflict with other policies of this Plan; and
- iv. The demand for the proposed use cannot adequately be met elsewhere; and
- v. The housing units are not of a type in particularly short supply.

Dwelling Mix

- 8.3.1.13 Barnet's population has a range of housing needs requiring a variety of types of housing. This is likely to alter during the period of this Plan due to changes in the population structure and household composition. A comparison of 1991 and 2001 household data from the UK census shows an increase in one-adult households in Barnet from 29% of the total to 31%. Over the same period, the number of lone parents rose from 3,667 to 9,130.
- 8.3.1.14 Many of these households will prefer units with more than one bedroom. Research has shown that there are many factors, other than household size, that influence the choice of housing such as affordability, proximity to friends and relations, a good quality environment and access to public transport. Therefore, the council recognises the importance of encouraging a range of housing types in new developments in the borough, and will apply this approach to all large housing sites (those with over fifteen dwellings).

Policy H4 – Dwelling Mix

~~In housing developments of fifteen dwellings or more, there should be a mix of dwelling type and size in order to meet the range of housing needs required in the borough. The council will use its planning powers to achieve this.~~

8.3.2 Accommodation for Particular Needs

Provision of Affordable Housing

- 8.3.2.1 The high cost of owner occupation and private sector rented accommodation in Barnet means that many households on low to middle incomes find it difficult to afford homes in the private market. The council is committed to ensuring that people's housing needs in the borough are met, and recognises the role that Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), the voluntary sector and other

organisations can play in providing different sizes and types of homes which are affordable and meet the needs of residents on lower incomes.

- 8.3.2.2 In Barnet, affordable housing is defined as housing designed to meet the needs of households whose incomes are not sufficient to allow them to access decent and appropriate housing in the borough. Affordable housing comprises social rented housing, intermediate housing and in some cases low cost, market housing. This definition gives the financial certainty to house builders and developers when preparing schemes, in partnership with the public sector, to make effective use of land to assist in meeting local and regional housing need. The level of affordability to the housing authority of such schemes will be a factor taken into account, in order to maximise the supply of affordable housing delivered by the limited social housing grant available for projects by the local authority. Shared ownership can play an important role in providing mixed communities and can be controlled to ensure that such housing is available in the long-term.
- 8.3.2.3 Intermediate housing is positioned between social renting and full owner-occupation. These homes are for those who are priced out of the housing market, locally and regionally, but who are necessary for the economic growth of the region, such as 'key workers'. In Barnet, intermediate housing is defined as housing available for people on moderate incomes who cannot afford to buy or rent general market housing. This should apply to those on incomes of between £15,000 and £40,000 per year, updated by a measure of wage inflation. Such housing may take the form of shared ownership, low cost home ownership (including discounted for sale) or sub-market rented housing. These sources of intermediate housing can play an important role in providing mixed communities, and ensuring that key workers who are necessary to support the economy and public services in London are housed. They can be controlled to ensure that intermediate housing is available in the long-term.
- 8.3.2.4 The GLA's London-wide *Greater London Housing Requirements Study* (2004), which supplements Barnet's *Housing Needs Survey*, stated that:
- There were 4,511 households in Barnet living in unsuitable housing and requiring a move within the borough; and
 - 82% of these could not afford a solution in the local housing market.
- 8.3.2.5 The level of housing need is reflected in the demand for housing services in the borough. For example, in April 2004, there were 10,732 households on the council's Housing Register. During 2003/04, 1,084 households were accepted as homeless and in priority need and there were 1,987 homeless households in temporary accommodation.
- 8.3.2.6 Barnet has a net supply of social housing lettings that is smaller than the number of homeless households it has a responsibility to house each year (a problem found elsewhere in North and West London). In summary:
- In 2003/04, the council let a total of 705 homes and had nomination rights to a further 188 Registered Social Landlord homes – a total of 893. This was a 29% fall from the 1998/99 figure of 1,259 homes available, and the long-term trend is for further reductions of supply.
 - The situation is worse for larger households, which are predominant in this demand, as only 17% of the number of homes available from 1996-2001 were three bedrooms or more in size.
 - Certain areas of Barnet are under more pressure – an applicant willing to live in the west of the borough is competing for more than twice the supply as someone who will only accept living in the south and east.
- 8.3.2.7 Barnet has introduced a choice based lettings scheme for all its social housing. While this cannot address the basic shortage of housing, it does make the position more transparent and enables home seekers to make more realistic choices. There is a significant body of people who do not have the highest priority but find that they are able to bid successfully for less popular properties. Particular difficulties remain around the supply of larger properties and homes for those with very particular needs. The council will work with housing developers to customise new homes for households with very particular needs, such as wheelchair accessible housing.

- 8.3.2.8 It is accepted that the planning system can play a role in helping to meet the need for affordable homes in the borough, in addition to those which are delivered by RSLs. Therefore, when considering planning applications for housing development the council will seek to enter into legal agreements with developers to secure the provision of an element of affordable housing, as well as ensuring that over time, such housing is reserved for households that the council is responsible for helping. In requesting such provision, consideration will be given to the viability of the scheme, the site size, its suitability for affordable housing in terms of the mix in the area, whether this might undermine the realisation of other planning objectives of higher priority, whether it would be a successful housing development through the mixing of unit sizes, and to ensuring that the housing can be managed. Management is likely to be through the involvement of a RSL, or an organisation approved by the council for the provision of social rented or shared ownership/equity affordable housing. Working with partners will also ensure that properties are developed to the latest development standards and cost ceilings (Total Cost Indicators), and benchmark rents, set by the Housing Corporation. Other forms of intermediate affordable housing, such as low or subsidised private-rented or discounted sale housing, which meet the UDP definition of affordable housing, will also be considered.
- 8.3.2.9 Draft PPS3 – *Housing* states that Local Planning Authorities can set a threshold of lower than fifteen units where this can be justified. The *London Plan* states that boroughs in setting targets for affordable housing should take account of regional and local assessments of need, the Mayor's strategic target for affordable housing that 50% of new housing should be affordable, and within that the London-wide objective of 70% social housing and 30% intermediate provision, and the promotion of mixed and balanced communities.
- 8.3.2.10 Based on the council's own assessment of need, and a review of the size of housing sites developed in Barnet to date, the council will seek to negotiate the maximum reasonable amount of affordable housing on sites of ten dwellings or more gross, or on sites of 0.4 hectares or more. This could either be delivered by transferring completed homes to a Registered Social Landlord approved by the council, or by transferring a proportion of the site which is clear, free of contamination and with planning permission to a RSL approved by the council for the provision of social rented or intermediate housing. Further guidance on the circumstances in which the council expects contributions towards affordable housing are contained in the *Supplementary Planning Document on Contributions to Affordable Housing*.
- 8.3.2.11 In exceptional circumstances, where the provision of affordable housing would prejudice the realisation of other planning objectives involving community benefit, the council may consider accepting the provision of a lower-than-usual amount of affordable housing in connection with a new development.

Policy H5 – Affordable Housing

Having regard to the council's target that half the housing provision over the UDP period should be affordable, the council will seek to negotiate the maximum reasonable amount of affordable housing on sites of ten or more units gross, or 0.4 hectares or more, and to ensure that these units will continue to be affordable for successive occupiers.

Provision in Lieu of Affordable Housing

- 8.3.2.12 New housing development of a substantial scale which incorporates a mix of types and sizes of housing can help to encourage the development of mixed and balanced communities. There is a presumption in PPG3 (paragraph 17) that such housing should be provided as part of the proposed development of a site. Normally any potential management problems of a mixed scheme can be resolved through careful attention to design. In exceptional circumstances, there may be sites that are suitable for affordable housing but where a commuted payment or off-site provision is desirable. This can be to release funds to provide affordable housing elsewhere, or where the provision on-site would prejudice the realisation of other planning objectives such as providing community facilities. Such cases should provide, as with on-site provision, additional units that would not otherwise have been provided in the borough (see Circular 06/98 paragraph 22). Such

arrangements will only apply to those sites where, through the application of Policy H5, the provision of an element of affordable housing is deemed to be suitable. Provision in lieu will be a last resort, as it operates against the provision of mixed and socially balanced communities, and often results in less affordable housing being provided.

- 8.3.2.13 The underlying premise is that there should not be any financial difference to a developer whether they make provision on-site, off-site, or through a commuted sum. Further guidance on the formula for calculating commuted payments is given in the council's supplementary planning document. Any payments received by the council will be 'ring fenced' in a fund to be used by the council to provide further affordable housing in the borough.

Policy H8 – Affordable Housing – Commuted Payments

On sites which are suitable for the provision of an element of affordable housing, the council may exceptionally accept the provision off-site housing, or a commuted payment instead of such provision.

Houses in Multiple Occupation

- 8.3.2.14 In Barnet, the number of households on the council housing list increased from approximately 3,000 in March 1997 to 10,732 in April 2004, many of which will have required low cost accommodation. Due to the high cost of buying or privately renting, it can be difficult for those on low incomes to find suitable accommodation. Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) are an important source of low cost housing and can help to meet the needs of students, people on low incomes and those seeking temporary accommodation. Where there is an identified need for such accommodation, HMOs should be retained where possible and proposals for their conversion into self-contained flats will be resisted. Conversion to flats increases rent levels and reduces the availability of low cost accommodation within the borough.
- 8.3.2.15 Proposed HMOs should be easily accessible by public transport, walking and cycling. The council will expect proposals for HMOs to comply with building regulations and the standards laid down by the Housing Acts. At present there are 1,400 HMOs in Barnet and they represent the worst private sector conditions, with 15% unfit and a further 16% below reasonable repair levels. Therefore, the council will also encourage existing HMOs to be brought up to the appropriate standards.

Policy H9 – Houses in Multiple Occupation

The council will encourage proposals for, and seek to retain, Houses in Multiple Occupation, provided that they:

- **Help to meet an identified need;**
- **Do not have a demonstrably harmful impact on the character and amenities of the surrounding area;**
- **Are easily accessible by public transport, walking and cycling; and**
- **Meet the standards set out in the Housing Acts.**

Accommodation for Homeless People

- 8.3.2.16 The number of homeless households registered with the council's housing services has increased in recent years, for example from 1,474 in 2000 to 1,987 in 2004. Many homeless people are legally entitled to temporary accommodation whilst they wait for more permanent housing to become available, and the majority of homeless people in Barnet are accommodated in private sector or Housing Association-leased properties, and in hostels for the homeless. Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 provides that temporary accommodation arranged for homeless people must be suitable for the individual needs of each household entitled to assistance.
- 8.3.2.17 Providing sufficient temporary accommodation within the borough remains a challenge. However, the council recognises the negative social, economic and health impacts of out-of-borough provision. The vast majority (91% in January 2005) of Barnet's temporary accommodation provision

is within the borough boundaries, although a significant minority of people requiring emergency, interim accommodation do have to spend time outside the borough, as there is a shortage of this type of housing.

- 8.3.2.18 The council recognises its duty to ensure that temporary accommodation is available for homeless people, and will therefore encourage proposals for housing in the borough which will help to meet this need. This may include hostels for the homeless, and short-stay accommodation. Hostels for the homeless tend to offer lower standards of accommodation in terms of cooking, cleaning and washing facilities, and the council would prefer to provide homeless people with good quality, leased properties and ultimately, more permanent affordable housing. However, the council recognises that the lack of rented accommodation in the borough coupled with the high demand for temporary accommodation means that homeless hostels will continue to play an important role in the short-term in meeting local need. Proposals for temporary accommodation for the homeless should be easily accessible by public transport, walking and cycling. Regard should also be had to the impact on the character of the surrounding area. The council will expect proposals for temporary accommodation to comply with the standards laid down by the Housing Acts.

Policy H10 – Accommodation for Homeless People

The council will encourage proposals for short-stay and hostel accommodation which meet the needs of homeless people. Planning permission for temporary accommodation will be granted where the proposal:

- Helps to meet an identified need;
- Does not have a demonstrably harmful impact on the character and amenities of the surrounding area;
- Is easily accessible by public transport, walking and cycling; and
- Meets the standards set out in the Housing Acts.

- 8.3.2.19 It is important to ensure that these new places help to meet local need, and are not all taken by homeless people referred from other boroughs which do not have such positive planning policies towards the development of short-stay accommodation for the homeless. The council will therefore expect developers to enter into Section 106 agreements to ensure that places in temporary housing are allocated solely to homeless people referred by or approved by this council.

Policy H11 – Accommodation for Homeless People – Planning Obligations

Where temporary accommodation for the homeless is proposed, the council will seek to enter into a planning obligation with the developer to ensure that 100% of the accommodation is allocated solely to households referred by Barnet Council.

Supported Housing for People with Special Needs

- 8.3.2.20 Certain people in the community require housing for all or part of their lives which provides specialist care and/or supervision. Such groups include the elderly, those suffering from mental illness, people with physical disabilities and those suffering from drug/alcohol abuse or degenerative illnesses. Accommodation for these people is increasingly provided in residential care homes, supported or shared houses/flats and hostels, rather than in large institutions or long-stay hospitals.
- 8.3.2.21 The council recognises the requirement for supported housing for people with special needs within the community, and will sympathetically consider proposals for such facilities in the borough. Facilities should be easily accessible by public transport and, where appropriate, walking and cycling. Facilities should also respect the character of the surrounding area, and in particular circumstances, the specific requirements of the expected occupants.

Policy H12 – Special Needs Housing

The council recognises the requirement in the borough for supported housing for people with special needs, and will encourage proposals for residential care homes, hostels, shared houses and flats and other accommodation where an element of care is provided. Planning permission for special needs accommodation will be granted where the proposal:

- Helps to meet an identified need;
- Does not have a demonstrably harmful impact on the character or amenities of the surrounding area; and
- Is easily accessible by public transport and where appropriate, walking and cycling.

Accessible and Wheelchair Housing

- 8.3.2.22 Disability, whether it is temporary or permanent, has the potential to affect a large number of people at some stage in their lives. Many people with disabilities require special needs housing, but others are often able, and would prefer, to stay in their own homes if they can be easily adapted or are already suited to their particular needs. The provision of housing which incorporates certain accessibility and/or space standards will make it possible for people to live independently in the community, and will increase the choice of accommodation available for people with disabilities. *The Housing Needs Survey (2001)* found that 8% of all households in Barnet have a person with a physical disability.
- 8.3.2.23 From August 2006 it is a statutory requirement that a statement covering design concepts, principles and access issues is submitted with an application for planning permission and Listed Building Consent. Please refer to the 'Built Environment' chapter for more details on Design and Access Statements.
- 8.3.2.24 Revisions to Part M of the Building Regulations (which came into force in 1999) requires that all new housing development is designed to enable a disabled person to approach and gain access to the dwelling. However, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation has devised a set of 16 design features, known as 'Lifetime Homes Standards', which involve higher standards of design and make greater provision for the needs of people with disabilities than current Building Regulations – for example, the standards require larger bedrooms, wider doors and lifts. Housing designed to Lifetime Homes Standards is accessible externally and internally to visitors who have problems with mobility, including wheelchair users, and can be easily adapted to meet the changing needs throughout the course of a person's life. This may include having children, breaking a leg, having elderly parents to stay or becoming less mobile. Lifetime Homes include design features that can improve the quality of everyone's lives, including those who have a disability, and should not cost any more to construct than ordinary housing.
- 8.3.2.25 The council supports the concept of Lifetime Homes and is committed to ensuring that all new housing in the borough is built to these standards. The council will therefore seek to negotiate with housing developers to ensure that new housing developments are built to meet Lifetime Homes Standards. They should be referred to at an early stage in the design process. Further information on the standards is available from the council. Developers should also refer to the Centre for Accessible Environments' document, *Designing for Accessibility – An Introductory Guide*, for further design advice.
- 8.3.2.26 The needs of wheelchair users are often met by housing designed to Lifetime Homes and other mobility standards. However, there is a continuing requirement for housing which is specifically designed to wheelchair user standards and includes greater space requirements. The Housing Corporation has devised development standards which are applied to all wheelchair housing built by housing associations and other agencies. These standards relate to design of the environment both outside and inside the home, and aim to ensure that developers provide homes which are fully accessible to wheelchair users.
- 8.3.2.27 The council is committed to increasing the supply of wheelchair-standard housing in the borough to meet local needs, and will therefore seek to negotiate with housing developers to ensure that

10% of new housing on development sites of ten units and over (including in the private sector) is designed to standards set out by the Housing Corporation. In applying this policy, the council will have regard to the suitability of a development site for wheelchair users in terms of its topography and its accessibility to essential services such as shops and public transport. Regard will also be had to the existing provision of wheelchair housing in a particular locality. Further details of the Housing Corporation's wheelchair design standards can be obtained from the council.

Policy H13 – Lifetime Homes

~~When considering new housing development and conversion proposals, the council will seek to ensure it is built to Lifetime Homes Standards, providing homes which are accessible and capable of easy adaptation to meet the needs of people with disabilities.~~

Policy H14 – Wheelchair Housing

~~When considering new housing development proposals of ten units and over, the council will seek to negotiate with developers, where appropriate, to secure a minimum of 10% of new housing that is designed to wheelchair standards set out in the Housing Corporation's wheelchair design standards.~~

Gypsies and Other Travelling People

- 8.3.2.28 The legal definition of 'gypsies' encompasses persons of a nomadic habit of life who have a degree of economic independence and a long tradition of travelling. The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 removed the statutory duty of local authorities to provide sites for gypsies resorting or residing in their area. Planning Circular 01/94³ states that this is likely to lead to more applications for private gypsy sites, and recommends that development plans should include policies to guide these applications and help ensure adequate site provision. The circular notes that not all sites will be required for settled occupation, and there may be a need for temporary stopping places or transit sites for gypsies.
- 8.3.2.29 Records show that there are few gypsies currently residing in Barnet. However, there have been a number of unauthorised encampments of gypsies in the borough over the past few years. Unauthorised sites are usually lacking in basic facilities such as drinking water and sanitation, can be unsatisfactory for occupiers in terms of health, education and wellbeing, and may have a negative impact on the residential amenity of people living nearby. In addition, continually moving gypsies from place to place fails to address their accommodation needs and can involve high levels of public expenditure. The council considers that planned provision is preferable to unauthorised encampments, and will therefore, in accordance with Circular 01/94, seek to ensure that adequate site provision is made in the borough to meet the needs of any gypsies. The council will continue to monitor the numbers of gypsies in the borough and will assess their land use needs.
- 8.3.2.30 Planning Circular 22/91 requires that attention is paid to the needs of travelling showpeople, who provide travelling fairs which can be a central focus for public entertainment. These events require sites that are different to gypsy sites, as they include areas for the storage of vehicles and fairground equipment in the winter, and may be available for accommodation all year round.
- 8.3.2.31 Gypsy sites and sites for other travelling people should be located outside areas of open land where development is severely constrained, such as the Green Belt, Metropolitan Open Land and Sites of Nature Conservation Importance, and be situated within reasonable distance of community facilities. Consequently, previously-developed land can be suitable for gypsy sites. The council will also have regard to design issues such as screening, landscaping, access and internal layout, and will require that an appropriate level of services is provided on site. Planning conditions and obligations may be necessary to ensure that the site would have minimal impact on local amenity.

³In February 2006 Circular 01/2006 – *Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites*, replaced Circular 01/94. The new Circular provides updated guidance on the planning aspects of finding sites for gypsies and travellers.

Policy H15 – Sites for Gypsies and Other Travelling People

The council will only approve proposals for permanent sites, temporary stopping places and transit sites for gypsies and other travelling people, provided that the following criteria are met:

- i. The site is supplied with essential services such as water, sewerage and drainage and waste disposal; and
- ii. There is adequate parking and turning space within the site; and
- iii. There is safe access into the site; and
- iv. The site is adequately landscaped; and
- v. The site is reasonably accessible to local services and facilities; and
- vi. The site is situated outside areas of constraint, including the Green Belt, Metropolitan Open Land and Sites of Nature Conservation Importance; and
- vii. It helps to meet an identified need; and
- viii. There are conditions and/or planning obligations in place to ensure that it has no demonstrably harmful impact on local amenity.

8.3.3 Residential Development**Residential Amenity**

- 8.3.3.1 One of the council's key objectives is to improve the quality of life for people living in Barnet. One way in which this can be achieved is by ensuring any new housing development is designed to provide good living conditions. New housing schemes should have a high quality of design and in terms of scale, style and layout, be well integrated with existing patterns of development. Whilst not wishing to stifle innovative design, any local distinctiveness in the character of the area should be respected. Good design can help promote sustainable development and improve environmental quality. Residential schemes which are of poor design, are out of scale or character with the surrounding area or are detrimental to the amenity of neighbouring occupiers, will be refused. Further guidance on design is contained in the council's Design Guidance Notes, and policies for high buildings in the "Built Environment" chapter. The council will prepare a new Supplementary Planning Document/Design Guidance Note relating to the 'Three Strands Approach' that will amplify the policies in the Plan concerning residential amenity.
- 8.3.3.2 New residential development must have satisfactory access for pedestrians and cyclists, cars and buses where appropriate which is both safe and convenient (refer to policies in the "Movement" chapter). It should provide landscaping, dustbin enclosures, means of enclosure and adequate drainage to deal with foul and surface water discharge. More detailed guidance on means of enclosure/boundary treatment is set out in the council's Design Guidance Note on *Walls, Fences and Gates* (which will be replaced by a new Supplementary Planning Document/Design Guidance Note addressing issues such as standards of privacy and amenity space). The subject of front garden car parking is addressed in the "Built Environment" chapter. Schemes should also be designed so as to minimise the opportunity for crime and provide a safe environment.
- 8.3.3.3 The standards for new residential development will be applied in a manner which has regard to other policies in the Unitary Development Plan and the nature of the site.

Policy H16 – Residential Development – Character

New residential developments should harmonise with and respect the character of the area within which they are situated and should:

- Be well laid out in terms of access, car parking and landscaping;
- Provide and preserve adequate daylight, outlook and residential amenity;
- Provide a safe and secure residential environment;
- Maintain privacy and prevent overlooking; and
- Provide adequate levels of private garden or amenity space.

Privacy

- 8.3.3.4 New residential development should afford a reasonable degree of privacy for future and neighbouring occupiers. There should be sensitivity given to the impact of the bulk of a building on neighbours under Policy H16. Gardens and windows to rooms should not be significantly overlooked. Therefore, a minimum distance of 21 metres should be provided between facing windows to habitable rooms of properties, and 10.5 metres distance to a neighbouring garden. In higher density schemes, where less distance is provided, innovative design solutions must be used so as to avoid overlooking in any particular situation, such as:
- Angled windows;
 - Careful choice of window locations;
 - Obscured glazing;
 - Use of level changes;
 - Staggering of windows;
 - Screening; and
 - Single aspect dwellings.
- 8.3.3.5 In the majority of cases, higher buildings will require greater distances between them to minimise overlooking. However, exceptions may be necessary for regeneration areas or town centre developments. Normally this will involve increasing the distance required by three metres for each additional storey over two storeys, unless local character dictates otherwise. Clearly a balance has to be made between minimising loss of privacy and maximising security through surveillance. Generally, public areas and open space may benefit from being overlooked but for private gardens this is likely to be detrimental to residential amenity. Where this is the case, it is even more important that proposals must include innovative design solutions to avoid overlooking, particularly in town centres.

Policy H17 – Residential Development – Privacy Standards

In new residential development there should be a minimum distance of 21 metres between properties with facing windows to habitable rooms to avoid overlooking, and 10.5 metres to a neighbouring garden. This distance should be increased by three metres for each additional storey over two storeys. Where overlooking is a problem, especially in relation to neighbouring development, a higher degree of privacy will be required.

In town centre developments and regeneration areas, these standards may not apply. In the case of higher density developments where less distance is provided, proposals should include innovative design solutions to avoid overlooking.

Amenity Areas

- 8.3.3.6 The council will require a minimum area of private garden space for new dwellings. This will help to protect and improve the quality of residential areas and maintain living standards. Residential units with insufficient garden or amenity space are unlikely to provide good living conditions for future occupiers. For houses, this should be provided in the form of individual rear gardens. For flats, it could be provided communally around buildings, but must be usable. When assessing usable garden space, front gardens which do not have a reasonable level of privacy, areas around buildings which are overlooked by neighbouring development, and areas whose use is hindered by their size or the siting of dustbin enclosures, will not be considered to be usable. For flats, in appropriate locations and where there is no significant overlooking, garden space may be substituted for in the form of balconies. Extensions to dwellings will not be permitted if they compromise the minimum garden space standards. Policy H27 and policies in the “Built Environment” chapter seek to ensure new schemes respect neighbouring amenity.
- 8.3.3.7 The council encourages the development of high density development, such as flats, in or very near town centres, as they help to meet the government’s objectives for achieving sustainable development. It may not always be possible to provide amenity space for such proposals at the standard set out below. Where this is the case, proposals should have an exceptionally high quality

of urban design, to ensure alternative amenities are provided for occupiers. Policy H27, and policies in the “Environmental Resources” and “Built Environment” chapters seek to preserve the amenities of existing residents.

Policy H18 – Residential Development – Amenity Space Standards

In new residential schemes, the minimum provision of gardens or amenity space should be at the following standards:

- For Flats:
 - > 5 square metres of space per habitable room.
- For Houses:
 - > 40 square metres of space for up to four habitable rooms.
 - > 55 square metres of space for up to five habitable rooms.
 - > 70 square metres of space for up to six habitable rooms.
 - > 85 square metres of space for up to seven or more habitable rooms.

Proposals in or near town centre sites may be exempt from this requirement if alternative amenities are provided.

Public Recreational Space in Residential Developments

- 8.3.3.8 New residential development will be expected to ensure that a sufficient quantity and quality of public recreational space and facilities are available for future residents. These should normally be provided on-site. This assists in implementing Policy L14 of the “Leisure, Recreation and Tourism” chapter. Some of this space will need to be made off-site, with regards to higher density developments including regeneration areas and town centre locations. In these cases, a financial contribution may be appropriate to allow facilities and provision to be improved near to the development.
- 8.3.3.9 The definition of public open space comprises outdoor playing space and other recreational open land. Outdoor playing space has a minimum standard recommended by the National Playing Fields Association of 2.43 hectares per 1,000 population, comprising:
- Areas for pitch playing spaces (e.g. football, cricket etc.) of 0.43 hectares;
 - Areas for non-pitch playing spaces (including tennis, athletics etc.) of 1.2 hectares; and
 - Children’s playing space of 0.8 hectares.
- 8.3.3.10 This standard can equate to 30% of the land area of a housing development of average density in Barnet. In areas of open space deficiency, as shown on Map 6.1, housing developments will impose additional demands and a contribution to children’s play facilities, informal use locations and sports grounds will normally be required. There may also be a requirement for the provision of other open space outside the definition of outdoor playing space, such as allotments and ornamental gardens. On sites of less than 0.5 hectares, this provision will always be in the form of a financial contribution, due to the impracticalities of providing land. Such provision will be based on consultation with the council’s Green Spaces Service, in order to understand the exact nature of the need for improvements near to a development site.
- 8.3.3.11 PPG17 requires local authorities to undertake robust assessments of the existing and future needs of their communities for open space, sports and recreational facilities. Local standards for such provision will be established by the council on the basis of such an assessment. Barnet will conduct an assessment of provision in accordance with the PPG17 companion guide, *Assessing Needs and Opportunities*. The assessment will form an integral part of the evidence base for Barnet’s emerging Local Development Framework (LDF). In the interim, the council will apply the NPFA standards.
- 8.3.3.12 Policy IMP1 (“Priorities for Planning Obligations”) and its supporting text sets out the council’s key priorities for securing contributions from development.

Policy H20 – Residential Development – Public Recreational Space

Planning permission will only be granted for housing developments if they provide proportionate amounts of public recreational space, facilities and commensurate improvements or contribute towards providing for children's play, sports grounds and general use areas where a deficiency in open space exists as indicated on Map 6.1 and to the standard of 2.43 hectares per 1,000 population.

Residential Density

- 8.3.3.13 The density of new residential developments will have an important impact on the capacity of Barnet to accommodate more dwellings, and can impact on the quality of the living environment as well. There is pressure to accommodate more housing, and one way to achieve this is to increase the density of new residential development. To ensure an adequate supply of housing, previously-developed land must be maximised whilst respecting the character and environmental quality of the borough. This can be achieved by providing high quality design whilst increasing densities.
- 8.3.3.14 To achieve higher densities in new development, particularly in town centres, requires good quality design to overcome any detrimental effects, either on neighbours, the streetscene or to highway safety. These aims are referred to in the “Built Environment” chapter, and policies on parking standards in the “Movement” chapter. These will assist in exceeding the minimum housing capacity figure in ~~Policy GH1 of this chapter~~.
- 8.3.3.15 It is appropriate for the council to give guidance on the suitable minimum densities for new residential development to ensure capacity is maximised. This guidance will assist developers in putting forward acceptable proposals, whilst ensuring the existing character and quality of the environment is respected. It will promote the principles of sustainable development whilst ensuring the effective use of available land, and facilitate the provision of an adequate supply of housing. Density is measured in ‘Habitable Rooms Per Hectare’ (HRH) or ‘Habitable Rooms Per Acre’ (HRA). Most of Barnet is characterised by housing developments having a density ranging from 148 HRH to 235 HRH (60 HRA to 95 HRA). The definitions of a ‘habitable room’ and ‘density’ are set out in the Glossary.
- 8.3.3.16 The individual circumstances of each development site, and the merits of each proposal, will always be taken into account when considering development proposals. Large redevelopment sites, because of their size, can in some locations dictate their own character and achieve higher densities, whilst still providing an element of open space if they are in accessible locations. Irrespective of density, any development proposal must be acceptable in terms of its impact upon surrounding existing development in terms of:
- Character;
 - Design;
 - Parking;
 - The street scene;
 - Residential amenity; and
 - Other policies in the Unitary Development Plan.
- 8.3.3.17 Density considerations will be regarded as being of secondary importance to these issues. For example, areas of the borough are designated as Conservation Areas and have densities below 150 HRH, such as parts of Arkley, Monken Hadley, Totteridge and parts of Mill Hill, and the need to preserve or enhance their character or appearance will be considered when assessing appropriate minimum densities.
- 8.3.3.18 The *London Plan* seeks to maximise the potential of sites, ensuring that development proposals achieve the highest possible intensity of use compatible with local context, the design principles for a compact city and with public transport capacity. The *London Plan* identifies Cricklewood and Brent Cross as an ‘Opportunity Area’, and Mill Hill East and Colindale as ‘Areas for Intensification’. The council considers that maximum use should be made of housing capacity in urban areas within

town centre walking catchment-areas. Such areas are defined as within a ten minute walking time (i.e. approximately 600 to 800 metres) of the nearest part of the Major and District Town Centre shopping areas, taking into account the urban grain, busy roads and other barriers to pedestrian access.

- 8.3.3.19 The borough's Major Town Centre is Edgware. The District Town Centres are Chipping Barnet, North Finchley, Brent Street, Burnt Oak, Church End Finchley, Cricklewood, East Finchley, Golders Green, Mill Hill, New Barnet, Temple Fortune, Hendon Central, Colindale The Hyde and Whetstone. The Local Centre at West Hendon is the focus for a new high density, mixed use development which will provide up to 2,200 homes together with leisure, community and retail facilities. In these locations, and where possible under other policies, residential development should not be developed at below 250 HRH, whilst areas outside but nearby the boundary or along transport corridors with bus routes, should not be developed below 200 HRH. Other areas should be above 150 HRH. These densities equate to more than the 30 dwelling units per hectare minimum density recommended in PPG3.

Policy H21 – Residential Density

The council will favourably consider proposals for higher density, residential development within Barnet's Major and District Town Centres, together with the West Hendon Local Centre, Cricklewood and Brent Cross, Mill Hill East and Colindale, provided such proposals comply with Policy D1 and relate satisfactorily to their surroundings.

Conversions

- 8.3.3.20 The conversion of existing dwellings into flats, houses in multiple occupation and apartments, and the conversion of buildings in other uses, can make an important contribution to the provision of housing, in particular the provision of small units, which are in short supply. Also, conversions can make more effective use of urban land and promote sustainable development. However, conversions can harm the amenity of neighbouring occupiers by reason of increased noise, disturbance and activity, because they normally involve an intensification of use. They can also adversely affect the appearance of street scenes through the provision of hardstanding in front gardens to form off-street car parking and dustbin enclosures. The cumulative effect of conversions is that they can damage the quality of the environment and be detrimental to the character of established residential areas.
- 8.3.3.21 Flat conversions must therefore be situated in appropriate locations. More acceptable locations include areas in or adjacent to town centres or easily accessible to public transport, along major roads, and areas characterised by non-family units such as flats, bedsits, Houses in Multiple Occupation, hotels and guest houses. In roads characterised by houses in single family occupation, conversions would not normally be appropriate, as it is in these areas that housing meets a need for larger homes to balance housing provided in town centres. The council will consider parking provision an important factor in such schemes. The standards of noise insulation in party walls between neighbouring houses are not normally improved under Building Regulations, consequently the living rooms and kitchens of converted flats should be located as adjacent as is practical to similar rooms in the neighbouring property, to minimise noise disturbance to their bedrooms.

Policy H23 – Conversion of Residential Property

The council will permit the conversion of single dwellings into flats provided that the development has an acceptable impact on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers, the established character of the locality and the appearance of the street scene.

- 8.3.3.22 There are other uses that can also contribute towards housing supply, such as space above shops, vacant retail premises on the edge of primary retail frontages capable of providing an acceptable standard of amenity, and office space that cannot practically provide any employment use. In order to allow a change to residential use, the council must be satisfied that the premises (whether used for a business, shop or office) have been actively marketed on realistic terms for the original or a related purpose for 18 months, as stated in Policy EMP7.

Policy H24 – Conversion of Non-residential Uses

The council will permit changes of use from non-residential to residential provided that:

- The building or the site is in a suitable area for housing, having a reasonable standard of amenity; and
- There is no realistic prospect of re-use for employment purposes or other non-residential use.

- 8.3.3.23 The council will require a reasonable standard of amenity for both the future occupiers of converted flats and neighbouring properties. Proposals for residential conversions should include details of the refuse storage methods and the areas of garden space to be provided. Adequate provision must be made for off-street car parking in accordance with the council's standards, depending on its location. Parking spaces must be laid out in such a way that they do not adversely impact on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers, the appearance of the street scene or the safety of pedestrians and vehicles. Further guidance on conversions is set out in the council's Design Guidance Note on *Residential Conversions*.

Policy H26 – Conversion of Residential Property – Design

Proposals for residential conversions must:

- Involve no large extensions or alterations to roofs which are unacceptable in terms of their appearance;
- Be in houses with a useable rear garden of more than 50 square metres and meet the garden space standards set out in Policy H18;
- Include suitably enclosed refuse storage areas at the rear of the property (if this is not practical, storage areas at the front or side of the property should be adequately screened so as not to become a dominant feature, and to avoid loss of amenity);
- Provide adequate and properly located car parking retaining as much front garden as is practical; and
- Be designed to have the minimal impact on the amenities of neighbours through the layout of rooms.

- 8.3.3.24 The council will consider the use of residential buildings for live/work purposes (see the "Employment" chapter), and the use of suitable domestic garages for other uses, subject to Policies H23, H26 and H27.

Extensions and Ancillary Buildings

- 8.3.3.25 Alterations, extensions to dwellings (including roof extensions) and the erection of ancillary, detached buildings on residential property can help to improve people's quality of life. However, any such development must be constrained by the general requirement to protect and enhance the character of the area and respect the amenities of neighbouring occupiers. The following policy sets out the criteria against which such proposals will be judged. Further guidance on household extensions is set out in the council's Design Guidance Note on *Extensions to Houses*.

Policy H27 – Extensions to Residential Property

Extensions to houses and detached buildings within their grounds must harmonise with existing and neighbouring properties, maintain the appearance of the street scene and have no significant adverse effect on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers. They should be in keeping with the scale, proportion, design and materials of existing and neighbouring properties.