

Hastoe Housing Association response to Epping Forest District Council Housing Allocations Scheme review.

As a rural housing specialist we have a particular interest in allocation policies for rural exception site schemes. These schemes are developed to meet specific local needs and not district wide needs. Therefore there is a need to ensure that district wide allocations policies do not conflict with the need to maintain the local connection for these rural schemes. The development of exception sites is normally dependent on the support of a local landowner and the support of the Parish Council and this support will not be forthcoming if the local connection for lettings is not protected. Similarly, the exception site planning permission is granted because the homes are meeting a specific rural local need. If the local connection is not protected these schemes will not come forward for development.

Appendix 4 Clause 2.4

We believe this clause needs expanding to confirm that applicants will still be accepted on the housing register where they do not meet the district wide local connection criteria but do meet the local connection criteria for the exception site as set out in the S106 agreement. The local connection criteria in the S106 is set to take account the size of the area, the local need and the fact that some residents may have had to move out of the area because they could not find affordable accommodation there. For example, our schemes in Matching Tye and Abbess Roding have a local connection criteria which requires that a person has lived in the village or neighbouring village 'for at least five of the preceding ten years'. If the district wide policy of excluding those who have lived in Epping Forest district for less than five continuous years immediately preceding registration is applied then some households who meet the S106 local connection criteria may not be able to join the housing register.

We request that the clause confirms that an exception site local connection criteria would take precedence over the district wide connection criteria. This would mean that where an applicant identifies that they are applying for a specific exception site scheme, they would be allowed to join the housing register if they meet the local connection requirements in the S106 for that scheme (even though they may not meet the district wide local connection criteria).

Secondly, we request that an additional clause is added allowing under-occupation by one bedroom of homes on rural exception sites, where there are no applications from local households (either from the main named parish or named neighbouring parishes) who meet the exact property size. Rural exception site schemes are developed to meet the long term housing needs of a rural location and therefore the

homes developed will not always perfectly match the specific housing need when a vacancy arises. Some households will of course expand and fully occupy homes over time. A clause which allows under-occupation by local households prior to considering households outside the local area helps ensure that the homes are protected for local people.

We have attached an example of how these issues can be covered in an Allocations Scheme. In Appendix 2, page 35 of Uttlesford District Council's Allocation Scheme the section **Rural Housing - Exception Site** covers these issues.

We are happy to suggest a specific form of wording if this would be helpful.

Thank you for giving consideration to these issues.

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