

Our Ref: EW/010036/Higby 03-08

Ms Lissa Higby
Programme Officer
Rochford District Council
Council Offices
South Street
Rochford
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SS4 1BW

05 August 2010

Dear Lissa

Affordable Housing Viability Study

Thank you for emailing a link to the Affordable Housing Viability Study. We have now had the opportunity to read the contents of this document and I set out our comments below.

The document provides a useful evaluation of the housing markets within the District and carefully considers a range of factors that influence costs and residual values.

We concur with the report that the current target set out in the Local Plan is too low. We also concur with the conclusion that applying a 35% target for the district as a whole is "generally too ambitious for the District in the current climate" (paragraph 6.25 option a). The Council should take the opportunity to carefully consider whether it is appropriate to continue to follow the RSS target given its revocation and the findings of this report.

We recognise that there is merit in applying a split target as set out under paragraph 6.25 at options b and c. We note that the Three Dragon's report concludes that they would encourage the District to adopt a split policy target, reflecting more specifically local market circumstances. We agree with the approach to require a reduced target of 25% for Hullbridge (Rawreth and Battlebridge) and Rochford and Ashingdon would be appropriate.

We suggest that the Council's policy on affordable housing should be revised to reflect the changes proposed in the Viability Study. Flexibility within the policy is required to recognise the local market circumstances.

It is also important to recognise that other factors noted in the report, such as the cost per dwelling of contributions is taken into consideration. The Study works on the basis that a contribution of £5,000 per household will be made and notes that as contributions increase, values are reduced.

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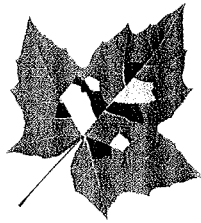
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Flexibility should be built in to the policy to allow for changes to the percentage of affordable housing if there are significant changes to other factors which in turn affect land values.

Yours sincerely

Emma Walker

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(by email only)