

Appendix 12 - Housing Density

12.1 The NPPF highlights that plans should contain policies to optimise the use of land in their area and meet as much of the identified need for housing as possible. Given the constrained supply of available land to meet needs for growth in Three Rivers, it is particularly important that all new housing comes forward at a density which makes efficient use of land, and that the Local Plan secures an uplift in the average density of residential density where appropriate in accordance with other policies in the Local Plan.

Housing Density

- 1) The Council will promote high quality residential development that respects the character of the District and the area of the proposed development and caters for a range of housing needs. Development should make the most efficient use of land, without compromising the quality of the environment or existing residential areas.
- 2) New housing should be provided at a target density responding to the site, its context and the housing need, with densities normally 50 dwellings per hectare within the developable area. In areas well served by public transport, services and facilities higher densities will be expected.
- 3) There may be occasions where a lower density of development would be appropriate with regard to a site and its context; for example within an area of special historic or landscape value, or specialist forms of accommodation. Any proposals for development at a density below the target levels above should include supporting information to justify the proposed approach.
- 4) Generally, densities should be lower within the edges of the site, with an increase in density towards the centre of the site.

Reasoned Justification

12.2 Monitoring data shows that past housing completions in Three Rivers have been delivered at a range of densities. Average densities have varied year to year depending on the nature of the schemes which have come forward within that year, with some years showing a high proportion of completions at less than 30 dwellings per hectare and other years showing a high proportion of completions of 30-50 or over 50 dwellings per hectare.

12.3 The existing built up areas of the District have a varied character, including as a consequence of the density of development. For example, within Rickmansworth Town Centre, residential densities are approximately 52 dwellings per hectare, while in Chorleywood densities are approximately 18 dwellings per hectare.

12.4 Whilst it is important to make more efficient use of land, particularly to reduce pressure on greenfield and/or Green Belt sites, this should not compromise the quality of the environment and existing residential areas in Three Rivers, some of which may fall within areas of special historic or landscape value.

12.5 As such, it is considered that guideline densities of a minimum of 50 dwellings per hectare should be set for the District with higher densities expected from areas well served by public transport, services and facilities. It is considered that this will strike an appropriate balance for the District between optimising the use of land and securing an uplift in appropriate locations while ensuring due regard for the character and amenities of the District and the quality of life of residents.

12.6 Higher densities of development are not precluded, but should be delivered through high quality designs which ensure that all impacts on surroundings and future occupiers are fully considered.

12.7 Where lower densities are proposed on the basis of the character or amenities of an area, the reasons for this should be explained as part of any application.