

The Rentplus model offers the opportunity for the Council and RPs to diversify the local housing offer without further recourse to public subsidy. The affordable rented period provides families and households with security of tenure, with certainty of management and maintenance by a local partner RP, and critically the opportunity to save towards purchase. As affordable rent to buy meets needs for affordable rent (the only difference being marked by the expectation by all parties of purchase), it comes with a significant benefit of freeing up existing affordable rented homes for others in priority need, as demonstrated by Rentplus schemes across England.

In diversifying the overall housing mix, Rentplus can help to create mixed and balanced communities. Rentplus tenants are on a clear path to homeownership, meaning they are more likely to remain in their property for the long-term and therefore better settle into their community. This helps to create a stronger sense of place in new developments in the long run.

Comments on the Refined Issues and Options Consultation

Firstly, **Paragraph 2.25** of the Issues and Options document explains that the current adopted Local Plan was prepared in accordance with the 2012 NPPF. However, as the NPPF was updated in 2019 and included a revised affordable housing definition, the new Local Plan will therefore reflect the latest affordable housing definition. As such, this change is welcomed.

Paragraph 5.31 of the document outlines that the LPA plans to commission a new Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) to assess the need for affordable housing, which is welcomed. In this context, it is strongly recommended that the Council updates its Strategic Housing Market Assessment to take into account the full range of affordable tenures listed within the definition of affordable housing at Annex 2 of the Framework. Rentplus has worked with consultants Lichfields to prepare a methodology to show how this need can be identified and evidenced in the SHMA (**Appendix 2**). This will provide the Council with a firm evidence base upon which it can take Local Plan production forward, which can then be subject to testing at Examination.

With the above in mind, the preceding **Paragraph 5.30** states that providing affordable housing to meet local needs is a key priority and that the LPA have exceeded affordable housing targets in recent years. The production of a new SHMA which incorporates all forms of affordable housing will enable the new Local Plan to deliver affordable housing which positively responds to Test Valley Borough Council's housing needs. Moreover, by incorporating the need for tenures such as affordable rent to buy, the SHMA and Local Plan can achieve meaningful social benefits for real families by widening home ownership and freeing up existing social housing stock.

Summary and Conclusion

Rentplus can assist in meeting local need, allocating all of its residents through the Housing Allocation Scheme; by enabling real savings to be built while renting at an affordable rent the Council can help meet the needs of low- and middle-income households, providing greater choice and flexibility in the planning system.

We welcome the Council's decision to produce a new Local Plan and recommend that its key objectives highlight the essential importance that new housing can have on the lives of real people and households. Test Valley Borough Council should take the opportunity to update SHMA to ensure the Local Plan delivers the type of affordable housing needed in Test Valley. This will secure meaningful social benefits but will also ensure compliance with national planning policy.