

case study 3

Gedling Borough Council – delivering homes on smaller sites

Innovation topic: Pro-growth local authority collaboration with developers on small sites

Summary

- Gedling Borough Council is preparing policies in its Local Plan to deliver 7,250 new homes on small sites across the borough.
- The Council has set up a developers' forum to help understand the barriers faced by a range of different-sized housing developers, and to feed this understanding into the Local Plan process.
- A local needs assessment has been carried out to inform the preparation of the Local Plan. It identified the need to diversify the range and type of housing available in some rural settlements.
- The Council wants to meet the needs of its ageing population by investigating the potential for extra-care homes on surplus employment sites.

'The Council has worked closely with a range of developers of various sizes to address obstacles and challenges to development, both generally and on a site-specific basis.'

Councillor Jenny Hollingsworth, Portfolio Holder for Growth and Regeneration, Gedling Borough Council

Introduction

Gedling is a borough within Nottinghamshire, home to 113,500 people and covering an area of 46.3 square miles. It contains a mixture of towns and rural villages bordering Sherwood Forest to the north, the River Trent to the south-east, and the city of Nottingham to the south-west. Around 80% of the population of the borough lives in the Nottingham suburbs of Arnold and Carlton, with the rest living in a number of villages. Gedling has drawn up an ambitious plan to meet housing need up to 2028 by supporting the development of smaller sites through the plan-making process.

Housing and planning context

The Greater Nottingham Aligned Core Strategies for Broxtowe, Gedling and Nottingham City were adopted in 2014.²⁴ The Aligned Core Strategies present a joined-up vision for the future of the wider area, provide a broad guide for development, and set out locations for major development sites of over 500 houses. The Aligned Core Strategies identify a need for 7,250

new homes in the borough of Gedling over the 2011-2028 period.

The Aligned Core Strategies also set out a settlement hierarchy, creating the framework for development in Gedling by outlining the planned distribution of new homes across the borough, primarily in urban areas and those places seeking regeneration, but also including some rural development. The Aligned Core Strategies allocate three strategic sites within Gedling borough. Development in the rural areas is focused in three settlements that have been identified as key settlements for growth, but it has also been recognised that there is a need to provide a low level of development in the other villages to meet local needs. Directed by this overarching hierarchy, the emerging Gedling Local Plan outlines policies for the delivery of 24 smaller, non-strategic housing sites across the borough.

How is it innovative?

Gedling Borough Council has taken an active role in identifying and delivering sites to meet

Notes

²⁴ Broxtowe Borough, Gedling Borough, Nottingham City Aligned Core Strategies. Part 1. Local Plan. Broxtowe Borough Council/Gedling Borough Council/Nottingham City Council, Sept. 2014.

<http://www.gedling.gov.uk/planningbuildingcontrol/planningpolicy/emerginglocalplan/gedlingboroughalignedcorestrategy/>



A site at Carlton identified by Gedling Borough Council

housing need. This has been viewed as important in order to minimise risk and ensure the smooth delivery of sites, as well as to ensure early delivery wherever appropriate. Examples of this approach include:

- assessing risk to the deliverability of individual sites and identifying appropriate actions to reduce this risk;
- establishing relationships and working in partnership with developers, especially for key site clusters;
- taking a strong focus on early and pre-application discussions with developers/landowners to increase certainty in the development process and to address any planning issues early on; and
- preparing development briefs for key sites, as necessary.

Delivery on some of the sites has been complicated and has required a dedicated approach from the Council. In some instances, this has involved the formation of a development team that includes key service and infrastructure providers as well as developers and the necessary specialist expertise.

The Council has worked closely with a range of developers of various sizes to address obstacles and challenges to development, both generally and on a site-specific basis.

The outcomes of this work have fed in to the preparation of the Local Plan and has helped to foster a holistic public and private sector approach as part of the plan-making process. The Council has made use of a developers' forum, comprising council leaders, the Chief Executive, senior officers, and representatives of the local development industry. The forum meets quarterly and provides opportunities for ongoing discussion on planning delivery issues.

The Council has relied on an extensive and robust evidence base to justify the selection of sites for allocation, and has ensured that the consideration of sites has been presented in a clear and comprehensive manner, to allow decision-making to be clearly understood. A local housing needs document has been prepared, drawing together information from a variety of sources, including the 2011 Census, to inform decisions about the number, type, size and tenure of new homes to be built in the smaller rural villages. The results of the local needs assessment have been balanced against the availability and suitability of sites for development.

Community engagement has also been an important part of the process throughout, and there has been a strong emphasis on informal engagement through workshop sessions focused on both development management policies and decisions on site selection. The Council has reported that these sessions were well received by the local community and provided an important opportunity to increase understanding of the plan preparation process among both parish councils and individuals.

Lessons

Gedling Borough Council's approach shows the benefits of developing an open and collaborative attitude to developing smaller sites, through among other things the use of a developers' forum. It illustrates the role of the planning process in engaging with all stakeholders, including residents and developers, to identify and secure appropriate sites for housing. The Council's collection of evidence, including through the local needs assessment, has provided a strong justification for those sites selected for development in the draft Local Plan.

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