

Local Government and Communities Committee

Strategic Housing Investment Plans

Response from Argyll and Bute Council

Dear Mr Doris

Consideration of Strategic Housing Investment Plans (SHIPs)

Thank you for your letter dated 31st May 2017. Argyll and Bute Council welcomes the committee's consideration of the SHIP process and we note with interest the contents of the official report. On behalf of the Council, I am happy to provide the following information in response to the specific queries contained in your correspondence.

a) How you decide on the number of specific house types, house sizes and tenures that will be delivered in your area.

As you will be aware, the council is required to carry out a formal Housing Need and Demand Assessment in accordance with Scottish Government guidance and following the prescribed methodology set out by the Centre for Housing Market Analysis. This provides a range of broad brush scenarios for the new build requirement, split by sub area and tenure, and is primarily driven by demographic trends and affordability analysis. The local authority will then agree Housing Supply Targets with key partners and stakeholders, mainly within the context of the Argyll and Bute Strategic Housing Forum. These Targets are determined by a number of factors which include economic development objectives; the capacity of the local construction industry; a realistic assessment of available resources; and infrastructure capacity. This latter factor will include, inter alia, the capacity of our Health and Social Care partners, in terms of support services, local G.P. services etc., to provide the requisite support to sustain specialist accommodation in specific localities and rural or island settlements.

These high level Targets are set out in the Local Housing Strategy and provide the general context for more localised, project-based consideration within the Strategic Housing Investment Plan. For instance, the LHS currently sets out an overall target for at least 550 new affordable homes to be delivered over the current five-year planning cycle; of which at least 80% should be for social rent, and a minimum of 10% of the cumulative total should be purpose-designed specialist provision.

All new build should be designed to Housing for Varying Needs standard and therefore should be sufficiently flexible and adaptable to meet changing needs and circumstances of occupants over their life time. These high level targets

reflect the profile of needs recorded in RSL' waiting lists as well as the profile of the general population as evidenced in the HNDA.

Once a project or priority area for development has been identified within the SHIP, the council will liaise with the RSL/Developer and the local area team from the Scottish Government to confirm specific proposals in terms of sizes, type and tenure. This will involve consideration of a number of factors, including the nature and capacity of the site; resources; availability of, and access to, local amenities and services etc. Identified needs, as expressed in RSL waiting lists, will be key in determining the project proposal; and where we can obtain input from other partners, such as Health and Social Care on any specific requirements of individual cases, this will also inform decisions. The Council or individual RSLs may undertake further consultation with local communities and, where alternative or intermediate tenures are proposed, may also carry out additional market testing. It is often the case that these alternative tenures will not prove viable or financially feasible in certain rural contexts, and robust business plans are required before these options will be progressed within the SHIP.

In terms of sizes, it may be worth noting that currently over 46% of the local Common Housing Register applicants in this authority require 1 bedroom properties and 36% require two bedrooms. Therefore, while we will continue to consider larger, family units on a site-by-site, project-by-project basis, the focus inevitably tends to remain on smaller sized properties.

b) How you monitor and evaluate whether the SHIP, and the projects finally delivered, meets the requirements and needs of the local area and also contribute to the Scottish Government's target of 50,000 affordable homes by 2021.

Argyll and Bute Council has made a commitment in its LHS and SHIP to increase the supply of affordable housing in support of these national targets; and has therefore set ambitious targets for new build, substantially above the baseline HNDA requirement. This is in line with local economic objectives and the community planning partnership's aim of reversing population decline within this authority area. In terms of evaluating the overall impact of the SHIP, in 2016 the council commissioned independent consultants to carry out a detailed study of the SHIP outputs over the previous five years i.e. over the life of the last LHS. This was designed to consider the social impact as well as cost benefits of the overall SHIP programme. The exercise identified a number of data issues which limited the evaluation assessment, and therefore Council Housing Services are currently introducing a revised output template for monitoring and evaluating the outcome of SHIP completions, which will take account of allocations, impact on local waiting lists etc. We are also exploring the use of follow-up assessment surveys for tenants, landlords and

local communities/ neighbourhoods, to be conducted after a set period, following completion of projects.

In this way, we hope to develop more robust evidence of the ultimate value and impact of the SHIP on local and national strategic outcomes and on the overarching vision for the local housing system.

I hope this clarifies the position within this authority, but please do not hesitate to contact me should you require further information on this matter.

Yours sincerely

Donald MacVicar
Head of Community & Culture