



WORTHING BOROUGH  
COUNCIL

**Executive Member for Regeneration**

**Ref. No: W/REG/003/17-18**

**Date of Decision: 7 February 2018**

If you have any questions about this decision please contact Democratic Services on 01903 221006 or email [democratic.services@adur-worthing.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@adur-worthing.gov.uk)

**Record of Decision:** Affordable Housing and the impact of changes made to national planning guidance

**Decision taken by:** WBC Executive Member for Regeneration

**Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests:** I hereby confirm that I do not have any disclosable pecuniary interest in this item.

**Decision:** In view of the acute shortage of affordable housing in the Borough the Executive Member for Regeneration has agreed that, in line with the Position Statement (attached as Appendix 1) :

- Vacant Building Credit should not be applied to brownfield developments in the Borough; and
- the Council should continue to seek development contributions for less than 10 dwellings.

**Key Decision:** Yes/No

**Reason for Decision:**

Vacant Building Credit reduces the requirement for affordable housing contributions based on the amount of vacant floor space being brought back into use or redeveloped. This has significant implications for the delivery of affordable housing in Worthing where a high proportion of development is on brownfield land where there are existing buildings. This impact is crucial when the level of affordable housing need in the Borough is considered.

Whilst it is acknowledged that there are many areas of the country with high levels of affordable housing need there is evidence to demonstrate that this situation is even more acute in Worthing.

The difficulty for Worthing residents in accessing market housing was clearly demonstrated within the Centre for Cities study published in January 2017. This identified Worthing as having the 8th highest affordability ratio for housing in the country (i.e. the average house price in the Borough of £279,900 when compared against the average annual wage £26,100 resulted in an affordability ratio of 10.7). Similarly, the average market rent for

residential property is beyond many households, for example, the net income required per year to rent a two bedroom property (assuming 35% of income spent on rent) is £30,891.

As a consequence there are a high number of households on the housing register across all sectors of society. In May 2017 there were 1,277 households on the Worthing Housing Register and the lack of available property means that people are often housed in temporary, and sometimes inappropriate, accommodation. In 2016 the average waiting time for a social housing property in Adur and Worthing was: Band A: 6-9 months / Band B: 9-12 months / Band C: 4-5 years. All current evidence indicates that the demand for affordable housing in the borough is likely to increase.

Given the level of affordable housing need in the Borough and the impact that the imposition of VBC could have on its delivery concerns have been rightly raised by elected Members and the local community.

**Alternative Options Considered:** To disregard the recommendations of this report. This is not appropriate as the need for affordable housing in Worthing is well documented.

**Other Matters Considered:** None

Legal Advice and Issues	x	Financial Advice and Issues	x
Sustainability Issues	x	Equality Issues	x
Community Safety Issues	x	Human Rights Issues	x
Reputation	x	Risk Assessment	x
Health & Safety Issues	x		

**Consultation:** This report was circulated to Councillors, and published on the Council's website on 29 January 2018. The following consultation responses were noted by the decision maker: None received.

In addition the decision maker notes that in the report to the planning committee of the 10th January 2018 as set out in paragraph 3.17, the Council has recently undertaken a 'call for sites' alongside a consultation on the draft Brownfield Land Register. All landowners and developers with an interest in sites in Worthing were consulted during this process and invited to put forward potential sites for development and/or reaffirm and update the position on sites in their interest. In addition, a bespoke letter was sent to the promoters of all sites that are likely to be included in the emerging Local Plan as allocations or Areas of Change. This letter asked specific questions relating to any development constraints and the deliverability of each opportunity. As already highlighted, a high number of these sites are previously developed and contain vacant buildings. It is noteworthy that the VBC was not raised or mentioned within any of the responses received during this consultation. This could be considered to indicate that the VBC is not critical to the delivery of development in the borough.

In addition the decision maker was in attendance, as a non-participating observer, at the

planning committee meeting of the 10th January 2018 to listen to the debate, where such developers were also present and no questions or concerns were raised by them under public questions in relation to this matter.

**Background Papers:**

- Appendix 1 - Position Statement
- Appendix 2 - Report to Planning Committee 10th January 2018

**Contact Officer:**

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**Call-in:** The call-in deadline for this decision will be 5:00pm on Wednesday 14 February 2018.

**Signed:**



**Date:** 7 February 2018

**Name:** Councillor Kevin Jenkins, Executive Member for Regeneration

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