

## The Ripon City Plan and Housing

**This month, given that it is a key topic of concern in Ripon at present, we thought it appropriate that we outline our emerging approach to providing new homes.**

Constraints on the city's development are a key factor in our approach to housing. The risk of flooding, the risk of unstable land (gypsum dissolution) and visual and environmental impact all limit the ways in which new homes can be provided in the city.

There are also widely different views about the level of housing growth needed. Many business people believe that Ripon should be striving for a population of 20,000 for the sustainability of city centre businesses, whilst many residents are concerned by the impact of significant levels of growth, especially without substantial investment in the city's infrastructure and services.

One of our current challenges is that because the new Harrogate District Local Plan is still being developed, the level of housebuilding proposed in Ripon in the future is unknown. What is known is that in the 2009 Harrogate District Local Plan the requirement for Ripon was for 31 new dwellings per year or around 8% of a district total of 390. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), which was published earlier this year, suggested a future requirement for 621 new houses per annum across the district – a significant increase. Currently the contribution that Ripon is expected to make is unknown but next month Harrogate Borough Council should begin consulting on strategic growth options, giving us an indication of this target.

Nonetheless we have continued to develop our proposals looking strategically at the best interests of the future of the City, including links to necessary infrastructure improvements rather than being developer lead as is the current situation. We are currently proposing two sites be allocated for housing development: the Cathedral Choir School site and another site at Black Swan Yard. We are also proposing a policy that allows a more flexible approach to the conversion of vacant sites and premises that are not currently in residential use and are within walking distance of the Market Place. Finally, we also have an emerging approach to providing affordable housing and the type, mix and density of development for new homes in the city.

Housing is also a part of our proposals for the regeneration of the City. Within the suggested Bondgate Green regeneration area we propose a new "urban village" by redevelopment of vacant sites and premises for housing alongside new business workspace and hotel and leisure development.

A vacated military estate at Clothholme will be the largest brownfield site in the Harrogate District and is likely to see huge housing pressure on this site to maximise the cash receipt and also to contribute to Government house-building targets. Our approach is that the regeneration of this site should offer a clear opportunity to assist in providing land and premises for business, schools and education, new homes and playing fields as well as housing. Importantly, the existing military road network provides an opportunity to enhance the road infrastructure of the city to improve connectivity and circulation.

During the life of the City Plan, should the football and rugby sports pitches be relocated within the City, we believe that this could provide a useful road link for the west of the city and to relieve traffic in the city centre. Our approach is therefore that the road link must be provided before any comprehensive redevelopment for a range of different types of housing should take place.

Altogether, we believe that this approach could deliver several hundred new homes over the period 2015 – 2029 and all within the existing development limit of the city. Coupled with the 65 new homes which have already been granted planning permission (as at 1<sup>st</sup> May 2015), this could equate to over 50 new dwellings per annum.

Whether or not this is sufficient to meet the requirements of the strategic growth options, which will be put forward by Harrogate Borough Council, remains to be seen but it appears that without a substantial housing contribution from the barracks sites, it will not be possible for the City Plan to meet any reasonable requirement for housing from brownfield sites alone.

Finally, it would be remiss of us not to mention the City Plan approach in relation to other proposed developments. Since we published our Preliminary Draft Plan, planning applications for large housing schemes have been received within the city for sites at Ash Grove and Bellman Walk, neither of these sites were shown for housing in the City Plan. Although, as the City Plan is still in development and has not yet progressed to referendum, it currently carries very little weight in the planning system and so these applications will, or have been considered in accordance with the 2009 Harrogate District Local Plan.

The West Lane site, although geographically part of Ripon, is in Littlethorpe Parish and therefore outside the Neighbourhood Area and the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan.

If you require any further information, please contact the Ripon City Plan Team: [cityplan@riponcity.gov.uk](mailto:cityplan@riponcity.gov.uk) or call (01765) 604097.