

West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041 (adopted June 2025)

11 Development Management Policies: Delivering Housing

Policy DM16

First Homes Exception Sites

First Homes exception sites, suitable for first-time buyers which offer affordable housing, will be supported adjacent to existing settlements with a settlement boundary in the spatial areas of Newbury/Thatcham and the Eastern Area subject to satisfying the following criteria:

- a. The site is proportionate in size to the scale of the adjacent existing settlement;
- b. Development is not located within and does not compromise the natural beauty or specific qualities of the National Landscape or other assets of particular importance⁽¹²⁶⁾;
- c. Any development of market homes included on the site is small in proportion to the total number of dwellings and is essential to enable grant funding of the First Homes on the site;
- d. Dwellings delivered will be subject to restrictions that limit occupation to those in affordable housing need, with those in a designated rural area⁽¹²⁷⁾ subject to additional restrictions that afford priority to households with a local connection; and
- e. The mix of dwellings provided reflects the local housing needs of first-time buyers and/or renters, subject to consideration of site character, context and development viability.

It is expected that First Homes exception schemes will deliver 100% affordable housing. In some cases, a proportion of market housing may be acceptable where this enables the closing of a funding gap for the delivery of affordable housing within the scheme. The market homes should be integrated with the affordable homes to form a single scheme. Where market housing is being used to financially support a First Homes exception scheme, the following evidence is needed:

- i. A financial appraisal demonstrating the viability of the scheme and the financial relationship between open market and affordable housing;
- ii. The measures being taken to ensure the use of affordable housing is to meet local needs in perpetuity; and
- iii. The relationship of open market housing to meeting local need, in terms of location, design, visual character, and type of accommodation.

Supporting Text

11.1 The Written Ministerial Statement on First Homes⁽¹²⁸⁾ includes a provision to support the development of First Homes exception sites suitable for first time buyers unless the need for such homes is already being addressed within the Council's area. Evidence identifies a high level of need for affordable housing, and development viability constrains the level of delivery that can be achieved through development sites. The Council does not, therefore, consider that there is justification for constraining support for entry-level exception sites on the basis that the need for such homes will already be met in the District.

11.2 The Written Ministerial Statement is clear that First Homes exception sites should not be located within or compromise the protections accorded to areas or assets of particular importance as set out in the NPPF, including Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Policy DM17 sets out the policy for exception sites in rural areas.

11.3 The Written Ministerial Statement allows local authorities to set local connection criteria. Local authorities are also allowed to permit a small proportion of market homes on these sites where this is essential to enable grant funding of the First Homes on the site.

126 As defined by the NPPF footnote 6

127 The North Wessex Downs National Landscape and areas designated as 'rural' under Section 157 of the Housing Act 1985

128 Written Ministerial Statement on First Homes: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2021-05-24/hlws48>