

MOTION ON NOTICE

18 March 2019



OPENNESS AND TRANSPARENCY IN PLANNING APPLICATION VIABILITY ASSESSMENTS

With Plan for Homes 3 recently agreed at Cabinet, and the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan nearing adoption, it is important that Plymouth City Council demonstrates a commitment to building the right homes for the right people in the right place. To meet future housing needs, Plymouth needs to deliver a wide choice of high quality homes which widen opportunities for home ownership, meet needs for social and rented housing, and create sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities. Ensuring that affordable housing is maximised from developers in accordance with Policies SPT3 and DEV07 of the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan is therefore vital to the overall strategy of the plan.

In order to achieve this, the planning system should be open, transparent and understandable. Everyone involved in the planning process - including local communities - should be able to understand how affordable housing levels have been calculated, so that there is trust in the system, and that developers are not unduly maximising profit at the expense of community and social obligations through the viability assessment process.

The 2018 National Planning Policy Framework states that: “Any viability assessment should be supported by appropriate available evidence informed by engagement with developers, landowners, and infrastructure and affordable housing providers.... Any viability assessment should be prepared on the basis that it will be made publicly available other than in exceptional circumstances. Even in those circumstances an executive summary should be made publicly available.”

It is important that this is proactively delivered and that proposed levels of affordable housing in developments are fully and properly justified. Council therefore instructs the Strategic Director for Place to:

1. Publish all viability assessments together with planning applications on the Council’s planning portal websites, except in exceptional circumstances.
2. Publish the Council’s formal viability review of the applicant’s viability report in the same way.
3. Require the applicant to fund the Local Planning Authority’s reasonable costs associated with the viability assessment as outlined in the relevant Planning and Infrastructure Fees Policies.

Proposed by Councillor Bill Stevens by email 10 March 2019

Seconded by Councillor Jonny Morris by email 10 March 2019