



## **Is the 30% Affordable Housing promise by RBWM light on substance and heavy on populism?**

RBWM is one of the most expensive places to live in the country outside of London with property prices more than double the national average. Whilst the council are proposing 14,240 additional dwellings in the proposed Local Plan, they fail to grasp the actual needs of the Borough's residents, which is the need for more affordable housing. Recent study by Oxford Brookes University shows that Affordable housing has fallen by 43% in the last 8 years. What will RBWM do to ensure that the current plan will deliver real affordable housing? Below, are 10 questions which the council thus far seem reluctant to answer.

## **The 10 questions on Affordable Housing we'd like the Council to answer:**

### **1. What price range does the Council consider to represent "affordability"?**

Average house price in RBWM is £480k, which is 13 times the average local salary. The website Zoopla identifies the current average asking price for a two-bedroomed house in Windsor and Maidenhead at £405k. The same site identified the current average rent for just a single bedroomed flat as being £931 per month.

### **2. How can the Council commit to building 30% Affordable housing when you have no control over the "viability assessment" loophole?**

Figures show developers have sidestepped local planning policy to avoid building 79% of social homes they initially committed to, due to legal loophole called a "viability assessment". In some areas this loophole has allowed developers to build only 1% affordable housing. It has emerged that Kensington & Chelsea used the same loophole to avoid fulfilling the commitment to build more than 700 social homes in the borough which would have been enough to house all the survivors of the Grenfell fire plus many more.

### **3. Can residents be assured that the Council will insist at all stages of the development that 30% of these houses will be "affordable"?**

The Council is looking at entering a Joint Venture Partnership with a developer to build on the Maidenhead Golf Club site with 2,000 houses, will affordable homes be one of many items for negotiation along with sustainable materials, biodiversity, good design, playing pitch and open space provision, noise and air quality improvement, safer roads, and much more, as part of a "planning gain package".

### **4. If you are serious about Council owned sites – such as Maidenhead Golf Club – delivering 30% affordable housing, why is this not secured by policy in the proposed Local Plan?**

**5. What share will each of the “Affordable Housing” models have in the Council’s overall 30% commitment?**

”Affordable housing” is a description that includes several different models of “affordable”: social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing (shared ownership, equity loan).

**6. What is the Council’s target market for the proposed affordable house?** For example, is it intended for 1<sup>st</sup> time buyers, people on low wages, Key workers, accommodation for homeless people, people with special needs, families, single people, younger or older people, existing communities or from outside?

**7. What research has the Council carried out that shows that 30% affordable housing will be sufficient to meet all the needs?** Because we believe the need is much higher.

**8. How will the Council ensure that this proposed housing plan will enable the Borough to house and support our residents, especially the ones on low income, and not just disrupt lives by pushing some of the most vulnerable members of our community onto other Boroughs?**

Recent survey by Shelter highlights how local authorities struggle to find affordable homes for people they have a statutory obligation to help. More than a third of people currently living in temporary accommodation will still be homeless in a year’s time. RBWM as you know is currently struggling to house the homeless and the residents that are in dire need of accommodation. A recent example of this was in the front page of Maidenhead Advertiser last week where according to the newspaper, about a dozen people including a 14-week-old baby were evicted in Bray and were then shunted by our council out of the Borough to a West London cockroach infested hostel. This was despite the parents working locally and their children going to schools locally.

**9. A nearby planning authority defines a high housing density as being something between 49 and 74 dwellings per hectare. The Royal Borough is planning to double that figure, with housing being built at 145 units per hectare, on part of the Maidenhead Golf Course site. Can we therefore take it the Council sees such crowding as the only practical means of providing affordable housing, and that the occupiers of affordable houses should expect to have smaller than average rooms, and sub-standard to zero provision of private open space?**

**10. Can the Council answer the above nine questions, backed by tangible evidence, to ensure that our Borough will be committed to protecting and supporting our young and old people, our key workers, our homeless, our future generations and our existing communities as well as accommodating new ones?** Bearing in mind that a neighbouring council recently made some inflammatory comments in relation to the proposed Borough Local Plan. The plan was slammed as “social cleansing” and “Exporting the poor people”, Stating that “RBWM know what they are doing, they know what their desired clientele is and who should live there.”

These are questions our elected councillors should be asking Council leaders but unfortunately, to date most of them have failed to, so it is left up to all of us, the residents, to question the repeated sound bites made by them.

RBWM Residents Action Group (RRAG) believes that the proposed Borough Local Plan will not deliver on the 30% Affordable homes promises that are repeatedly being made by the Council. Such statements thus far have been heavy on populism but light in substance. Unfortunately, they are just sound bites.

Please register via our website [www.rbwmresidentsactiongroup.co.uk](http://www.rbwmresidentsactiongroup.co.uk) to be updated on what is happening in our Borough.