

Land at Rectory Farm (north), Yatton – response to proposed affordable housing cascade provision

Introduction

The parties had reached agreement in respect of the affordable housing provisions in the draft Section 106 agreement. However, following the round table session to discuss conditions and planning obligations the appellant advised that they intended to add an affordable housing cascade provision.

This was confirmed in writing by the appellant's solicitor on 3 October. He stated:

- my client has proposed a cascade for the tenants of affordable housing units based on their location. I understand your colleagues are considering this and it may not be agreed. It may therefore be that this will need to be drafted such that the inspector can use a blue pencil clause to exclude this

For the avoidance of doubt the Council do not agree that this provision is acceptable, for the reasons set out below.

Affordable housing need in North Somerset

The North Somerset Home Choice Policy identifies four categories of housing need, referred to as bands, and allocation criteria. The Council stores information on eligible households on an electronic database known as the housing register.

Band A includes the following categories:

- Approved homeless
- Urgent medical need
- Urgent welfare need
- Statutory overcrowding
- Under-occupying by 2+ bedrooms
- Care leavers
- Foster carers or adopters
- Disabled adaptations

Band B includes the following categories:

- Homelessness relief duty
- Homelessness prevention duty
- Significant medical need
- Lacking 2 bedrooms
- Under-occupying 1 bedroom
- Rough sleepers
- Category 1 hazard
- Supported housing 'move-on'
- Gypsies and Travellers
- Significant welfare grounds

Band C includes the following categories:

- Minor medical need
- Sharing basic facilities
- Lacking 1 bedroom
- Other homeless applicants
- Former armed forces member
- Employed applicants
- Unable to work
- Mobility/Hardship

Band D includes the following categories:

- No other housing needs

Full definitions and explanations are provided in the Home Choice Policy on the Council's website at [Home Choice North Somerset: Home Choice Policy \(n-somerset.gov.uk\)](http://n-somerset.gov.uk).

To summarise, the categories deemed to be in most urgent housing need are bands A and B. Band A are households with an urgent need to move. Band B are households with priority housing needs. Band C is for those with lower priority housing needs and Band D are households that have been assessed as not being in housing need.

Housing needs across North Somerset as a whole

The following extract from the housing register for the whole of North Somerset shows that there are 151 households in category A and 578 households in category B. A further 1,468 households needs fall within Category C and 450 households are registered within Category D, having not demonstrated any need.

Whole Register						
	Band					
	Emergency	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Grand Total
Family	0	33	246	635	162	1076
2	0	12	98	390	116	616
3	0	9	72	194	41	316
4+	0	12	76	51	5	144
Non-Family	0	75	227	567	167	1036
1	0	64	182	464	147	857
2	0	11	36	89	19	155
3+	0	0	9	14	1	24
Sheltered	0	43	105	266	121	535
1	0	35	93	250	116	494
2	0	8	12	16	5	41
Grand Total	0	151	578	1468	450	2647

Housing needs in Yatton Parish

The following extract from the housing register for residents of Yatton parish that want a home within Yatton shows that there are no households in category A and 11 households in category B. A further 20 households needs fall within Category C and 10 households are registered within Category D, having not demonstrated any need.

Lives in Yatton parish, Wants Yatton ward

	Band					Grand Total
	Emergency	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	
Family	0	0	7	7	5	19
2	0	0	3	6	3	12
3	0	0	2	0	2	4
4+	0	0	2	1	0	3
Non-Family	0	0	4	10	2	16
1	0	0	3	9	2	14
2	0	0	1	1	0	2
3+	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sheltered	0	0	0	3	3	6
1	0	0	0	2	3	5
2	0	0	0	1	0	1
Grand Total	0	0	11	20	10	41

There are a further 3 households in Category B that live elsewhere within North Somerset but do have a local connection as they currently work in Yatton. There are 7 more households in Category C that this applies to.

**Lives elsewhere, works in Yatton parish,
Wants Yatton ward**

	Band					Grand Total
	Emergency	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	
Family	0	0	1	2	0	3
2	0	0	0	1	0	1
3	0	0	1	1	0	2
4+	0	0	0	0	0	0
Non-Family	0	0	2	5	0	7
1	0	0	2	3	0	5
2	0	0	0	1	0	1
3+	0	0	0	1	0	1
Sheltered	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grand Total	0	0	3	7	0	10

Availability of affordable housing properties in Yatton

There is a current stock of 381 social or affordable rent properties in Yatton (full records of shared ownership properties are not held), with 130 dwellings delivered on major developments that have taken place in the village since 2019. Over the past year 29 properties became available for residents in need to bid for as per the Home Choice policy.

Property Date From: 01/09/2023
Property Date To: 31/08/2024

Voids and Bids in Yatton

	in Ward		Whole District	
	Voids	Avg Bids	Voids	Avg Bids
Family	10	101.10	107	137.65
2	1	226.00	41	197.66
3	4	120.00	49	112.33
4+	5	61.00	17	65.94
Non-Family	16	88.25	438	97.45
1	11	98.82	194	121.99
2	5	65.00	209	78.66
3+	0	-	35	90.09
Sheltered	3	36.67	100	34.59
1	3	36.67	81	40.31
2	0	-	19	18.68
Grand Total	29	93.19	645	105.13

Conclusion

Local letting policies or cascades with a parish connection are only appropriate in more remote areas where there is minimal existing affordable housing stock, or in large areas with significant levels of need. Cascade provisions should be reserved for exceptional situations where there is a demonstrated need that cannot be met ordinarily via mechanisms such as the housing register and Home Choice process.

North Somerset has a robust needs-led lettings policy to ensure that applicants with the greatest need to move are prioritised. A local lettings cascade would bypass that approach by offering properties to households who may not be in immediate housing need. There is a real risk this would happen in Yatton as the statistics show that there are currently only 11 households with significant need to move (within Category B) who currently live in the parish and wish to move within the parish.

Introducing a local lettings arrangement in this case would therefore have the effect that households who live in Yatton in little to no housing need could be offered a house before those in acute housing need that live elsewhere. With current residents of Yatton on the register in such relatively low numbers, and the Council advertising 29 properties last year in Yatton, the lower cascade criteria would be brought into effect making the homes available to households with more tenuous – or no – links to the parish. That would undermine the purpose of the cascade.

On the basis of the amount of households in priority need categories that currently reside in Yatton the Council conclude that a local lettings cascade is not appropriate nor justified in this case. Such a clause would not comply with CIL Regulation 122 and could not rank as a material consideration in the appeal.