

### **How do we find out if there is a need for affordable housing in our village?**

If the Parish Council considers that there may be a need for affordable housing, then the first step is to invite the Rural Housing Enabler (RHE) to attend a Parish Council meeting to explain the process. If a decision is made to proceed, the RHE will organise a Housing Needs Survey.

Before the survey is conducted it is widely publicised in the village by means of posters and articles in the newsletter or on the village website.

Forms are then individually tailored for each parish and hand delivered to every household. The results of the survey are analysed and will offer a good indication of need.

### **Our village does have a need, what is the next step?**

The next step is to search for a suitable piece of land. Rural affordable housing schemes are always built on 'exception sites'.

Exception sites are plots of land which are not earmarked for development. However they can be given 'exceptional' planning permission to meet affordable housing needs. As the land would not gain planning permission for any open market housing, this helps to keep the cost of the land down and the homes affordable.

Schemes are often built on farmland, redundant allotments or glebe land.

### **How big would a development be?**

This does depend on the need established but exception schemes are generally small, in the region of six to eight properties and occupy about half an acre.

### **How long does the process take?**

All schemes differ and this does depend on many factors. Schemes could take from 18 months to 5 years but typically from conception to completion the average development takes approximately three years.

### **How much consultation will there be?**

As the democratically elected body, the Parish Council should be central to the process. Working closely with the RHE, they should be involved from the beginning and help drive the project through the various stages. The Parish Council will be consulted on every aspect of the scheme from the beginning and regular Parish Council meetings will allow residents to keep up to date and to contribute. A Village Consultation Day will be held to encourage the parishioners to air their views and to give everybody a detailed insight into the development.

### **What will the houses look like?**

Affordable doesn't mean a compromise on design. The development will respect the character of the settlement and be in scale with it. Affordable housing is built to Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4, a higher standard than current market housing.

Input from the Parish Council or the Village Design team on design issues is encouraged and taken into account where possible.



## Who will get the properties?

Properties built on rural exception scheme sites will only be allocated to people with a very strong local connection to the parish.

As a condition of gaining planning permission a legal agreement called a Section 106 is entered into between the Housing Association and the Local Authority with input from the Parish Council. This agreement lists the criteria to be met by applicants and includes:

- People who have been permanently resident within the Parish for at a minimum of three to five years
- People permanently employed in the Parish for at least three to five years
- People who have a strong connection with the Parish such as family associations
- People who have previously lived there

The dwellings are then to be allocated in order of priority need.

## Will the properties be 'lost' onto the open market?

In parishes with a population of under 3,000 and on all rural exception schemes, the 'right to acquire' homes rented from a housing association does not apply.

A property sold as a shared ownership dwelling is also covered by covenants in the Section 106 agreement. This means that the property can never be sold outright and must always be sold to purchasers that meet the criteria of the s106, that is a strong local connection primarily.

To ensure that this happens, the amount of equity that a purchaser may own is limited to a maximum of 80%, ensuring that the Housing Association will always maintain a stake in the property.

# Affordable Rural Housing Your Questions Answered

## RURAL EXCEPTION POLICY

There is a planning policy, known as the Rural Exception Policy, which allows for the provision of housing in small villages and settlements if a need is established. Homes that will remain in perpetuity for the benefit of parishioners with a strong local connection, homes that will remain affordable and will not be sold on the open market. To find out more about this policy <http://tinyurl.com/cermybf>

As a Parish Council you may be aware, through the Parish Plan or may have heard local people raise concerns that high open market prices are forcing those who want to continue to live, work and support services in their villages, to move away. This housing helps to build and maintain a vibrant community and makes a real difference to peoples' lives offering a lasting benefit for rural villages.

## What is affordable housing?

Affordable housing is low cost housing for shared ownership or rent, usually delivered through a housing association, to meet the needs of local people who cannot afford accommodation on the open market. Currently the Homes and Communities Agency, a government body, part funds the development of the properties and sets guidelines for affordable rents.

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