

Affordable Rural Housing & Housing Needs Surveys

What is affordable rural housing?

Affordable housing can provide homes for people with modest incomes who can't afford accommodation on the open market. It can be low cost accommodation available for rent, shared ownership or starter homes allocated on the basis of need, usually through a Housing Association.

People wishing to be considered for affordable housing need to be included in the local authority Housing Register.

Affordable homes help to sustain rural communities by offering local people the chance to remain where they have strong connections.

RURAL COMMUNITIES NEED...

Suitable housing at a manageable cost for local people who need housing but can't afford to buy or rent on the open market.

ABOUT OUR HOUSING NEEDS SURVEYS

CDA carries out surveys in the Community, through co-operation with Parish Councils, Local Authorities and often a Housing Association. CDA acts as the independent facilitator for the survey.

If a need for local affordable housing is established, discussions can progress about the type of housing development needed, with the community taking the lead over whether suitable sites exist for development.



CDA Herts: A charity with 35 years' experience in carrying out Housing Needs Surveys for Parishes across Hertfordshire. Get in touch to explore how we can work with you.

Is affordable housing a problem in rural Herts? House prices in Herts mean that people on low or modest incomes in rural communities face difficulties finding decent affordable accommodation. Costs create barriers for certain groups, e.g. young people, who are forced to move away to find a home. This upsets the balance of the communities and damages local service viability and take-up. Closure of schools, shops and pubs can result directly from unaffordable housing and businesses may struggle to find local employees.

How can housing be provided to meet local need in a way that maintains the nature of the village?

Local Planning Authorities' Rural Exception Policies operate to allow the provision of affordable housing in rural areas to meet an identified need. The goal is to permit limited affordable homes on sites where, ordinarily, development would not be permitted (eg. On Green Belt land). These are known as Rural Exception Sites. Housing should remain affordable in perpetuity, for the benefit of people with a local connection.

Schemes tend to be small (typically 4 to 8 homes). Homes are usually for rent or shared ownership, in keeping with the size, needs and nature of the village. A 'Rural Exception Site' would only be considered if a local need is established. The first step is to carry out a Housing Needs Survey among local residents to find out who needs housing and critically, if they are either unable to afford housing on the open market or if suitable accommodation isn't available.

Consultation — the community in the lead

ANY plans should undergo community consultation, making sure that local people can have their say. For certain community led projects, local people could become involved in their management and running.

Design: Design standards balance the cost of producing housing that is affordable to build and affordable to run. Designs can be influenced by the local community, including the Parish Council, who may want the homes "fit in" with the style of the village.

Who gets the housing?

Once approved and built, homes are allocated to local people in need, using criteria agreed between the Housing Association and the Local Authority. Whilst local connections should be the main criteria for housing allocation, other priorities (like disabilities) are considered. The likelihood is that not all local people needing an affordable home will get one.

People who qualify as 'local' are:

- 1) Currently resident in the parish, or**
- 2) Previously resident in the parish, or**
- 3) Permanently employed in the parish**

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