

A final word ...

Seeing a development of housing for local people through to its successful conclusion is a real achievement. Whatever the difficulties along the way, you will have provided something of lasting benefit, which many people will remember and thank you for.

Working for you

Housing for local people in rural areas:

A guide for Parish Councils, landowners and local communities



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Introduction

Many people who live in a rural area will be familiar with the problems caused by the lack of affordable housing; and many have direct experience of younger family members being unable to get a foot onto the property ladder and being forced to move away from the area in which they grew up.

The Council is active in trying to address this problem in various ways such as through existing planning policies and more recently, through the appointment of a Rural Housing Enabler, who works with Parish Councils to investigate the need and progress affordable housing development.

What is affordable housing?

It's simply for people who are unable to afford to buy or rent a home on the open market. It is widely referred to as being for people on low incomes but escalating rents and house prices mean that affordable housing is needed by a much wider range of people, including many local workers and those on average incomes and above. These schemes are funded through Registered Social Landlords (RSLs or housing associations), which are not for profit organisations governed by The Housing Corporation.

It's important to note that affordable housing is not only built to the same quality and by the same house builders who build open market housing, but may also have to comply with additional guidelines set out by The Housing Corporation, such as space standards.

Mr Gerald Hemmingway,

Project Manager from Home Housing Association:

“We have produced a very visually pleasing development. The properties benefit from high specification and quality finish and are built in coursed stone with slated roofs and timber sash windows, which gives an appearance that suits the local landscape. We have worked hard on the development and with financial support from the Housing Corporation and help provided by Harrogate Borough Council, the Parish Council and the local residents, we have achieved something to be proud of.”

What can Parish Councils do next?

You can start to look for sites where you may like to see housing for local people and speak to landowners who may wish to sell and speak to

The Rural Housing Enabler on **01423 551 656** or email **Khyati.Prajapati@harrogate.gov.uk**.

If you would like further information on any of the items mentioned in this leaflet, including current planning policies, affordable housing need in your village or Community Land Trusts, please contact the Rural Housing Enabler above.

Mr John Leggett, Pateley Bridge Town Council

“It is the Town Council's policy to support affordable housing for people with a local connection. The Council has been energetic with this policy, firstly, with the development at Lupton Springs and more recently with a development at The Sidings. The Town Council's view is that it's very important to provide housing for local people and welcome a fresh initiative for a new survey to establish, more precisely, the need for housing for local people.”

A recent case study



The Whinfields, Summerbridge

The Whinfields is the most recent example of an exception site. It's a development of 7 two and three bedroom houses for rent, for local people. The project was managed by Home Housing Association and completed in November 2005.

Mr Jim Stark,

Clerk to Hartwith-Cum-Winsley Parish Council:

"All the evidence points to a need for affordable housing in the district, we need these small projects to help us provide housing particularly for young people who we want to encourage to live and work locally.

The recently completed development in Summerbridge is a start, but is it enough? There are many other Parishes that possibly need to look at local housing needs. Is the process simple? Well...!

There are many hurdles to be overcome, but if residents and Parish Councillors believe there is a local need, you have the start. The second stage is for a formal survey to be completed, and if this confirms a local need, then the "Why, Where, and for Whom debate will begin!"

Communication is vital and Parish Councils must take the lead to ensure the whole process can move swiftly on, and avoid the problems created by a long term process."

The Government's definition

Planning Policy Statement 3 states that 'Affordable housing includes social rented and intermediate housing, provided to specified eligible households whose needs are not met by the market.

Affordable housing should:

- Meet the needs of eligible households including availability at a cost low enough for them to afford, determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices.
- Include provision for the home to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or, if these restrictions are lifted, for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision'.

Affordable housing for local people can be for rent or intermediate ownership (also known as low cost home ownership, such as shared ownership).

Is there a need for affordable housing?

There is a need for affordable housing across all areas of the District. This is shown by the Housing Needs Survey Update 2003, which identifies the number of households who are in unsuitable housing and who need to move to solve their housing problems but who cannot afford to rent or buy even at the lowest market prices. In total, there is a need for 978 additional affordable homes each year from 2003-2008 and 291 of these are needed in rural areas.

The 2007 Housing Needs Assessment also indicates high levels of housing need across the District. The results are currently in draft format and a final report is due to be published early in 2007. For further details please contact the Rural Housing Enabler on 01423 551656.

How does the Council obtain affordable housing?

One of the ways the Council continues to address the housing problem is through existing planning policies within its Local Plan. These include;

- 1. Quota sites.** These are sites within the development limit or built up area of the village, comprising market and affordable homes.
- 2. Exception sites.** These are sites adjoining the built up area of the village and are for 100% affordable housing for people with a local connection to the area. We prefer to use the term “housing for local people” when describing exception sites, rather than affordable housing, as this is a more accurate description.
- 3. 100% affordable housing sites.** These sites are within the built up area of the village and for 100% affordable housing. This includes previously Council-owned housing land.
- 4. Providing grants to owners of empty properties.** The Council’s Empty Property Strategy enables owners of empty properties to apply for a grant to refurbish an existing dwelling, which is structurally sound, or convert an empty building to lease to an RSL for a fixed period of time to be used for affordable housing.

Usually, developers have snapped up quota sites within the built up area of the village, so land for new homes is becoming increasingly difficult to find. If we want to meet the need for local housing, we must actively seek exception sites, which guarantee affordable housing now and for the future.



Washburn Cottages,
Fewston

Q. Will the Parish Council be consulted on occupiers?

A. No, but local connection will be checked with the Parish Council if necessary. Nominations will be made to future vacancies in accordance with the Section 106 agreement, drawn up in consultation with the Parish Council.

Q. Can affordable housing be provided solely by the landowner or a private developer on an exception site?

A. The involvement of an RSL ensures that housing remains affordable in perpetuity and is allocated to local people on the basis of need. Without these guarantees, planning permission under the exceptions policy would not normally be granted.

Q. Are there any other ways of providing affordable housing in the parishes?

A. Under the 2001 Harrogate District Local Plan, some affordable housing will be required for any site of 3 dwellings or more, or on sites of 0.1 hectares or more within the built up area of the village, subject to financial viability. These are referred to as Quota sites and are within the built up area of the village.

Q. What is a Community Land Trust?

A. A Community Land Trust (CLT) is a Trust set up by the local community for the benefit of the community. A CLT can provide facilities for the community, such as affordable housing, workshops etc. CLTs are a fairly new concept in this country and further work is being done to investigate whether the model can work.

Development opportunities

Local knowledge is the best source of information about available sites, properties and buildings. Difficulty in finding suitable sites is one of the main barriers to providing affordable housing. We need your help to identify potential sites.

Opportunities for development include:

- **Greenfield sites for new building:** a housing association can buy a piece of land for 100% housing for local people under the exceptions policy.
 - **Brownfield sites or sites within the build up area of the village:** under the 2001 Harrogate District Local Plan, projects of three dwellings or more or 0.1 hectares or more should provide some affordable homes.
 - **Empty properties:** owners of empty properties can apply for a grant to refurbish an existing dwelling, which is structurally sound, or convert an empty building to lease to an RSL.
- Once a suitable site has been identified, the Council will appoint an RSL to progress with developing the site. On exception sites this process includes consultation meetings with the Parish Council and local residents.

Intermediate ownership options

New Build HomeBuy

This scheme enables people to buy a share in a home (formerly known as shared ownership). You get a mortgage for the share that you own and pay a subsidised rent to an RSL on the share that they own.

Open Market HomeBuy

This scheme enables you to buy a home on the open market (formerly Homebuy). You pay 75% of the purchase price and receive an equity loan for the remaining 25% from an RSL.

Homebuy Plus

The same as Open Market HomeBuy except you can receive an equity loan of up to 45% of the purchase price of a property.

Discounted Home Ownership

A scheme that enables people to buy 100% of a new home at a substantial discount on its market value.

Q. How does the Parish Council or local community deal with objections to the process?

A. Inevitably some people will oppose efforts to provide affordable housing. Whilst legitimate planning concerns will be addressed prior to submission of a planning application, other concerns are harder to address and may simply stem from misunderstanding or misinformation. The following advice may be helpful when dealing with these concerns:

- Concentrate on providing facts and objective information.
- Share evidence from housing needs surveys.
- Explain that households with a local connection will occupy the homes.
- Provide examples of other successful rural schemes such as The Whinfields in Summerbridge and Washburn Cottages in Lower Washburn. (The Rural Housing Enabler can provide photographs of quality rural developments that are in keeping with the character of the village or arrange visits to these schemes).
- Keep people informed at all stages of the development process, invite people to comment and ensure that important meetings are public meetings.

Q. Will homes on an exception site remain affordable in the future?

A. Yes. Occupation of the homes as affordable housing by local people is a requirement of the legal agreement and remains on the homes as a land charge. In the case of shared ownership, occupiers can buy more shares in their homes but up to a maximum of 80%. Also, the involvement of an RSL helps to ensure that housing remains affordable in perpetuity.

Allocating the homes

The Council usually nominates occupiers of affordable housing to the RSL that is involved in acquiring the homes. In order to be considered for affordable housing there must be a housing need; the way in which the Council selects people depends on how the affordable housing is obtained.

For Council-owned homes, 100% affordable housing sites (not exception sites) and empty properties, the Council nominates occupiers according to its approved allocations policy.

For 'quota' sites the Council nominates occupiers in accordance with the Local Plan which states priority is given to people with a local connection to the sub-area in which the homes are situated.

For many exception sites, when it comes to allocating the homes, the most important issue to consider is local connection to the parish in which the homes are situated, although clearly eligible households must also have some housing need. Local connection is enforced by a legal agreement, called a Section 106 agreement, which is drawn up by the Council's solicitors. The Parish Council are consulted on the length of local connection someone needs to have in order to be offered a home.

Regarding local need, another possibility for the Parish Council to consider (particularly in a small parish) is whether to group with a neighbouring parish or parishes in order to ensure that sufficient local need is identified to make a scheme financially viable. If the Parish Council joins with another parish, if a suitable site is found within your parish, and if the Parish Council agrees to development, the legal agreement can stipulate that the people with a local connection to your parish get priority on the affordable homes to be built.

Frequently asked questions

Q. If the 2007 Housing Needs Assessment highlights a need for affordable housing within your parish, is the Parish Council committed to agreeing to a development of affordable homes?

A. No, but if the survey highlights a significant need for affordable homes, it is unlikely that the Parish Council would not wish to help local people to find more suitable accommodation within the parish. If the survey indicates a need for five homes or less, it is not usually financially viable for an RSL to proceed with a site anyway. In this instance, combining with another parish may be the answer to increase the number of households in need in order for a development to proceed.

Q. What is a Registered Social Landlord (RSL)?

A. An RSL is a housing association that has been approved by and is regulated by the Housing Corporation. Housing associations are not for profit organisations set up specifically to help people in housing need. They provide homes for rent and for home ownership at affordable prices. As well as developing new homes they are usually responsible for their future ongoing management.

Q. What is the value of exception site land?

A. The price that an RSL pays for an exception site varies and is negotiated between the housing association and the landowner up to a maximum of £5,000 per plot or per home.