

Development Matters

APRIL 2007

Harrogate
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Working for you

This Issue

Under Occupation Initiative - Frith Court P2



Success with Homebuy Plus P3



Princess Anne returns to the district - P4



Planning Update

Read about the latest building developments in the district - P3



We all know we're faced with a huge affordable housing problem in the Harrogate District. Nationally, the difficulties faced by first time buyers and others who cannot afford to buy or rent market housing are well documented, but the scale of the problem in Harrogate is mind-blowing.

The Housing Needs Assessment 2006 (draft) tells us that there are 830 additional affordable homes needed in each of the next five years to meet the shortfall. Given that planning permission will only be granted for around half that number of homes **in total** each year, we're faced with an impossible task.

Still its nice to know that we're doing everything we can to help as many households as possible. The Housing Corporation (the body that helps fund new affordable housing) has recently completed a review of the performance of local authorities in delivering affordable homes as part of market developments (sometimes referred to as 'quota' or 'section 106' sites). Regionally, Harrogate came top, literally streets ahead of the competition and 'performing incredibly well', securing almost half the number of dwellings on all qualifying sites as affordable housing in 2005/06. For further information contact Jenny Wood on 01423 556891.

In 2006/07

- 123 affordable homes secured
- 20% in rural areas
- 42% low cost home ownership, including 22 Homebuy/Homebuy Plus Grants
- 94 affordable homes completed

The Housing Corporation and the Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber are now encouraging other local authorities to work in the way Harrogate does.

So, just to remind you, here are a few of our success stories in words and pictures.....



Manor Farm, Farnham - two homes for the price of one!



Poplars Farm, Wormald Green - affordable housing that doesn't look "cheap"!



The Foldyard, Rainton - the flagship for discounted sale homes in the district.

Innovative schemes

The Council launched its under-occupation initiative in January 2007. This initiative has been set up to help council tenants who would like to move to a smaller home and therefore free up much needed family houses. There are two parts to this scheme: a cash payment of up to £500, and a move into a more suitable home (with some new-build flats being made available specifically for this scheme).



Frith Court, Knaresborough Road, Harrogate

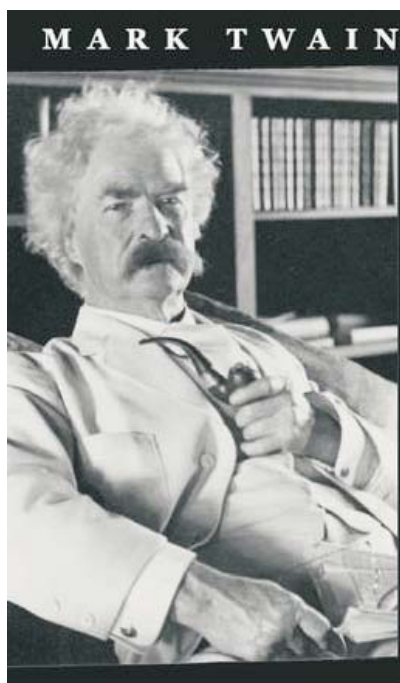
In partnership with Yorkshire Housing Association, the council is making thirteen 2-bedroom new build flats available to council tenants who are currently in 2, 3 or 4 bedroom family homes.

As part of this innovative scheme, the tenants will be 'gifted' a fridge/freezer, washer/dryer, carpets and other floor coverings.

Tenants who are interested have had the chance to view a show flat and the feedback has been extremely positive. All things going well, tenants should be able to move in by the end of May 2007.

The Council will be looking to work with housing associations to deliver more of these types of schemes.

'LIES, DAMNED LIES AND STATISTICS.....'



It's that time of year when we begin the process of providing end of year statistics on our affordable housing performance. You might think it would be easy to count houses - it's not!

To begin with, there are performance indicators and Government Returns. There are no BVPIs for new affordable housing, but there are two Corporate Objectives within the

Housing Service Plan. LDH87, target A1.3 (a) is to 'secure planning permission and/or funding for 150 homes by April 2008', whilst target A13(b) is to 'secure planning permission and/or funding for at least one rural affordable housing scheme' in the same period.

New build affordable housing generally needs both planning permission and public subsidy to make it happen. Having said that, new build discounted home ownership needs planning but not public subsidy (as the sale price is subsidised by the developer). And schemes such as Homebuy, which provide grants towards the cost of buying homes on the open market, don't need planning but do need public subsidy. The local performance indicators are therefore designed to capture all affordable housing (new build, conversions and existing properties) **secured** in any one year.

But then there are the annual Government Returns, the aptly named 'Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix' and the 'Housing Flows Reconciliation Data', between them looking at completions, planning permissions granted, transfer of dwellings from market to affordable and vice versa and number of affordable homes by tenure, by location and by bedroom number. It seems that in the world of affordable housing, there are any number of variations on a theme.

Planning

Update

Planning Permission Granted

Since the last edition, planning permission has been granted for the following:

Manse Farm, Knaresborough 5 x 1 bed barn conversions (sale)

Church Lane, Rainton 5 x 2 bed houses (rent/sale)

Fieldhurst, Pannal 1 x 1 bed flat (sale)

Mill Farm, Knaresborough 1 x 3 bed rented house (off-site provision)

After a lot of hard work we now have a Youthbuild scheme operating in the Harrogate area. Already it is proving a success with the young people it was set up to help.



Harrogate YouthBuild is based on similar successful YouthBuild schemes around the country but has been adapted to tackle the issue of housing vulnerable, 16-24 year olds in a high demand housing area. The project involves the purchase of existing residential properties for the purpose of being refurbished by trainees, under the guidance of a mentor and construction supervisor. Upon completion the refurbished properties will be rented out to the trainees, providing independent accommodation for this priority needs group.

At the same time, trainees attend Harrogate College and work towards completing a formal qualification in construction.

A property in Mayfield Grove, Harrogate, was purchased last year and two trainees are now working under the supervision of Christopher Construction Ltd to convert the property into three 1-bedroom flats. These flats should be completed by mid July 2007.

GOLDEN TRIANGLE HOMEBUY PLUS bucks the national trend



At a time when various reports are claiming that government schemes aimed at getting first time buyers a foot on the housing ladder are being shunned, our very own similar scheme in the 'Golden Triangle' between Leeds, Harrogate and York has received huge interest after its launch.

The **Homebuy Plus** scheme, jointly funded by the Golden Triangle Partnership and Northern Counties Housing Association, has attracted considerable interest from local people who need help to buy their first home in the area of high house prices in the Golden Triangle.

Industry magazine *Inside Housing* recently reported that interest has dipped in the government's Open Market Homebuy scheme, as applicants see it as too complicated or unaffordable. In contrast, demand for **Homebuy Plus** is extremely high. Since its launch in January 2007, more than 1,000 people have registered their

interest although funding is only available to help around 60 households up until the end of March 2008.

In Harrogate, two households have already completed their purchases and moved into their new homes. They would have been unable to buy a home on the open market without the help of this type of scheme. A further three applicants are due to complete in April and a further thirteen people have been accepted onto the scheme.

Demand for the scheme is shortly going to outstrip the supply of funding available but the Partnership and Northern Counties are working hard to source additional funding to help more people. Interested applicants are being encouraged to go on the waiting list by contacting Chris Jones at Northern Counties on 0845 6037604 or cjones@ncha.co.uk.

Princess Anne makes return visit



As President of the Rural Housing Trust, HRH the Princess Royal made a return visit to the District and attended a seminar on 19 February.

The Audit Commission has recognised Harrogate Borough Council's forward thinking approach to providing affordable housing particularly in the rural areas but it does require us to share our knowledge more widely, especially with our partner North Yorkshire authorities.

Princess Anne told her staff she was very keen to return to Harrogate having attended a seminar in

Kettlesing in December 2005. That seminar was aimed at Parish Councils and we have since held a seminar for landowners. The seminar on 19 February, which was also supported by Richmondshire District Council, was aimed at Members and provided the final piece in our three-pronged approach. The decisions about affordable housing lie with District Councillors whom we wanted to inform about the latest affordable housing issues and how they play a part in helping to solve them. Housing and planning chairmen from across the North Yorkshire authorities gave their support to helping rural communities by attending this event.

Moira Constable, Chief Executive of the Trust, who chaired the seminar, said:
"I praise Harrogate and Richmondshire councils for their spirit of collaboration. The knowledge and experience they have gained of rural housing issues will help other councils understand some of the tried and tested solutions."

It has to be said that the comments on feedback forms consistently commended the Kettlesing Ladies for the spectacular lunch they provided and it is also rumoured that HRH took homemade chocolate cake back to Buckingham Palace for tea!



For further information on any items covered in this newsletter please contact the Development Team at Harrogate Borough Council - Jenny Wood ☎ 01423 556891 or Khyati Prajapati ☎ 01423 551656



AND FINALLY... A warm welcome to Karen Deegan, who is soon to join the Development Team as Joint Commissioning Coordinator. Karen has worked for the Council for almost 17 years (currently within Housing Aid) and many of you will know her already. Karen's role will be to strengthen links between the Council, its housing association partners and developers to speed up affordable housing delivery and the occupation of new homes. She will also help to identify and progress new sites, with special responsibility for monitoring, data, statistics and Government returns!