

Guidance on delivering rural affordable housing

Introduction

This guidance has been produced to explain the roles of all the partners involved in establishing whether there is a need for affordable housing in rural settlements and if a need is identified, for the successful delivery of affordable housing.

The key partners in this process are:

- the relevant Parish Council (PC)
- Test Valley Borough Council (TVBC)
- Ward councillors
- Affordable Housing Provider (AHP) e.g. housing association

Test Valley Borough Council strongly believes that the best way to deliver affordable housing in rural areas is by working in partnership with key stakeholders and in particular with local communities and their parish councils.

The council will not promote or encourage new housing development where there is not a clear local unmet need. The homes provided must meet TVBC's definition of affordable housing to meet specific local needs as set out in the adopted Local Plan and Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document ([SPD specifically COM8](#)).

This guidance sets out the stages and the roles of key partners involved in establishing housing need and if need is identified, enabling the delivery of affordable homes on rural exception sites (RES) or through community led options such as Community Land Trust.

1: Getting started

TVBC has a key role in assessing and meeting local housing needs, including the enabling of new affordable housing where appropriate.

Roles in this stage

Parish council

- Represent the views of local people with concerns about housing needs
- Review information about potential needs (for instance arising from the Parish Plan process and neighbourhood plans)
- If appropriate, consider taking the opportunity to discuss affordable housing with TVBC at a parish council meeting
- Agree the process for community engagement

Test Valley Borough Council

- Provide strategic advice on affordable housing, including housing needs data for the parish, housing needs survey processes, and different options for bringing forward affordable housing development.
- Promote a partnership working approach

- Provide planning advice where appropriate and in line with planning policy and practice
- Invite the parish council to consider an investigation of local housing need where appropriate

Ward councillors

- Represent the views of local people at local and district level
- Consider how rural housing policies can help locally and adopt appropriate policies where needed
- Maintain an overview of the process

Affordable housing provider (AHP)

- Share information about potential development opportunities with TVBC
- Input and support TVBC housing strategies and policies
- Where appropriate, work jointly with TVBC and the parish council to consider investigation of local housing need and site appraisals
- Refer any direct enquiries from parish councils to the council

2: Assessing housing need

A local housing needs survey may need to be conducted to determine the level of affordable housing need in the parish. We will also include evidence from other sources such as the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and the council's housing register.

Roles in this stage -

Parish council

- Be involved in planning the investigation of local housing need in partnership with TVBC
- Share responsibility with the council for publicising and promoting the housing needs survey
- Distribute the housing needs survey form to all households in the survey area
- Comment on the findings of the housing needs survey
- Confirm support in principle for work to identify a scheme to meet identified affordable housing needs

Local authority

- Carry out the housing needs survey, analyse and produce the report using the council's standard survey and report template, or;
- Commission an independent housing needs survey through Hampshire Homes Hub (formerly HARAHA via Action Hampshire)
- Encourage householders to complete a Hampshire Home Choice register application form at time of survey if they feel they are in housing need
- Analyse the Hampshire Home Choice (HHC) register and provide details of this analysis in any Housing Needs Survey Report produced

- Discuss the Report (including analysis of HHC) with the Parish Council, Planning Officers and AHP (if known) to establish the overall number, tenure and size of housing provision to meet any affordable housing need identified

NB TVBC will ensure that individual responses to any survey are kept confidential in line with current General Data Protection Regulation (2018) legislation.

If an affordable housing need is identified, the report will give an indication of the number, type and tenure of affordable homes that are needed by people with a local connection to the parish. As a general rule, the number of homes recommended is 1/3 of the identified need.

This will include analysis of the respondents to any survey against the housing need criteria for TVBC's HHC register, as well as further analysis of those already on the HHC register who seek housing in the survey area.

The analysis will consider information on the incomes and savings of applicants in relation to their needs and local housing costs.

If a need for affordable housing is identified, the Parish Council will take responsibility for exploring options to meet that need in partnership with TVBC. If no need is required, no scheme will be investigated.

Ward councillors

- Monitor and support the survey process
- Advise and support the PC and community

Affordable housing provider

- Contribute to discussions on the survey and register findings to agree level of need and type of housing required

3: Scheme development, planning application and implementation

All partners will need to work together to find a suitable site or sites for development.

The preferred sites should fit best in respect of aspects such as relationship to the built form of existing settlements, use of previously developed land, access to services and facilities, and environmental factors.

The assessment will need to demonstrate the preferred location or locations in relation to these principles. It does not include deliverability. The extent of a site search will be advised by planners to ensure consistency.

If an appropriate site emerges, detailed proposals will be worked out to confirm its feasibility taking account of the identified needs and the planning and financial constraints which apply.

TVBC planning officers will have responsibility for processing the AHP's/CLT planning application in accordance with policy and making recommendations to elected Councillors as appropriate. (No assumption that planning consent will be given).

They will need to confirm evidence of local need from housing colleagues. This evidence may need to be updated depending on the time-scale involved.

All exception site developments are subject to a legal agreement linked to the planning permission to ensure that the properties will remain affordable in perpetuity; always be for people in housing need with a strong local connection to the Parish (see local connection criteria).

Roles in this stage -

Parish council:

- Agree and organise effective consultation opportunities to engage the community in progressing site selection, in partnership with an affordable housing provider if appropriate
- Use local knowledge to help in site identification and assessment
- Bring potential sites to the attention of TVBC and the AHP as soon as possible
- Indicate views on the development potential and availability of the site(s) and agree an appropriate mix of homes in relation to overall need (housing need survey data)
- Take an active role in the early design stages of proposed development with the housing provider and planners to achieve an acceptable, viable design
- Give full consideration to the planning application based on material planning considerations

Test Valley Borough Council

- Take part in local consultation that will allow the community to view and comment on the potential sites
- Help to identify and appraise potential sites from a strategic and planning perspective and rank sites in order of preference for development
- Confirm an AHP to develop, own and manage the site
- Work with the parish council through the consultation, planning and development process
- Work with the AHP to support a bid to Homes England for Housing Grant if grant available
- Ensure that the planning application is given appropriate consideration and that the planning committee is fully briefed as to its circumstances
- Agree the terms of the S106 legal agreement with the landowner, in consultation with the affordable housing provider. The S106 agreement will ensure that homes are let/sold to qualifying persons and remain affordable in perpetuity wherever possible (all rural exception site developments are subject to a legal agreement to ensure that the properties will always be for people in housing need with a strong local connection to the Parish)

Ward councillors

- Use local knowledge to help in site identification and choice
- Input into discussions with the AHP and planners to achieve an acceptable, viable design
- Support local consultation to allow the community to view and comment on the proposed development
- Promote the selected scheme within TVBC

Affordable Housing Provider and/or CLT

- Input rural development expertise in site identification process

- When agreed with parish council and TVBC submit completed site search for consideration by planning officers
- Negotiate the site purchase with the land owner established through the site search. If higher priority sites are not forthcoming for development this must be evidenced
- Instruct an architect to plan the layout and design of the scheme
- Carry out all surveys and investigations relevant to the site
- Consult with the parish council, TVBC and key local stakeholders to further develop an acceptable viable design
- Organise local consultation event for local residents, in partnership with the parish council, to consult on scheme design and the principles of the development
- Submit a formal planning application
- Agree local lettings plan and local connection criteria/legal agreement with TVBC to ensure that the properties remain affordable in perpetuity
- Work with TVBC on the bid to the Homes England
- Secure all funding approvals to ensure that the scheme is viable and deliverable
- Build out the homes and let the community enjoy the benefit

4: Long term responsibilities

Once a scheme is completed there are responsibilities that partners must undertake to ensure that the scheme is a long-term asset to the Parish

Roles in this stage -

Test Valley Borough Council:

- Monitoring/review of development process and outcomes
- Monitor the management of the new homes
- Continue to identify applicants from Hampshire Home Choice in conjunction with the housing provider for any subsequent re-lets or re-sales of properties in line with the allocation policy and the S106 agreement.

Parish and ward councillors:

- Communicate any housing management issues to the housing provider

Parish council:

- May be asked by the AHP to confirm local connection of those nominated for properties

Affordable Housing Provider:

- Let or sell properties to applicants who satisfy the local occupancy criteria set out in the S106 agreement and who within this have the highest level of priority
- Manage and maintain the properties to ensure the homes are an asset to the community
- Consider any comments from the parish council, Councillors or TVBC officers in relation to the management of the properties