

Rural Affordable Housing Improvement Plan

Last Updated: July 2009

Action	Desired outcome	By When	Progress/Completed
Communication <i>“this is something that is done to us, not for us”</i>			
Produce an annual report detailing progress made throughout the District (schemes delivered /units on site/ housing needs survey undertaken/case studies etc)	Raises profile and builds confidence in Oxfordshire Rural Housing Partnership locally	1st production Sept 2009	
Issue quarterly reports to all active parishes and District Ward Councillor to update on progress	Parish and Ward Councillor kept informed of progress and obstacles	Achieved	First reports sent April 09 and feedback collated. Next set to include complaints procedure
Single point of contact for the Parish to be identified at the start of the process – additionally a designated housing and planning contact to be assigned to the parish	Improved communications	Apr 2009	To be made clear through new information booklet and key contacts given as part of the quarterly reports
Increased promotion of activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> through Local Development Framework newsletter Cherwell link 	Greater awareness of rural affordable housing issues	Throughout 2009-10	
Improve Cherwell District Council website content	Greater awareness and information sharing	Apr 2009	Website link for housing taking this up. Improvement Plan on website.
Ensure parish plan process fully encompasses affordable housing	Affordable housing gains priority in Parish Plans	Achieved	Parish Councils are being encouraged to undertake a housing needs survey alongside parish plan questionnaires
Produce DVD to explain the benefits of affordable housing to villages	Increased interest in Affordable Housing	Achieved	
Update rural affordable housing booklet and other documents ~ with clarification of	Increased interest and better understanding of rural	Documents produced by August 2009	

definitions and distinction between rural affordable housing and exception sites	affordable housing		
Investigate if scrutiny can undertake a review of rural housing and exception sites	Addresses Parish Council concerns and District Councillors more aware of rural housing issues	Achieved	Parish Liaison Meeting feedback took place in June 2009. Report well received, with message that communication/delivery are key.
Raise the profile of rural housing issues with District Councillors	Increased commitment from elected members supported by increased knowledge	June 2009 Throughout 2009 -10	
Raise rural affordable housing issues with parishes at all available opportunities			Parish Liaison Meeting will track progress on Improvement Plan.
Working Smarter <i>“would suggest that a dedicated planner to look at rural exception sites might be beneficial to the Council.”</i>			
Put together a Service Level Agreement/Protocol for all Delivery Implementation Group members about role/tasks and timeframes for these-this should include ensuring appraised sites are ranked in order of preference	Sites progressed in a timely fashion	Achieved	Roles and responsibilities of group members re-clarified in January and service standards produced for publication in new booklet To work in partnership with Homes and Communities Agency through its Rural Housing project
Planning to identify additional staffing resources to carry out site appraisals	Improved response times	Achieved	Specialist planning officer designated to undertake this work in Jan 09 for 6-9 months and then work to be shared between 3 Senior Planners. Additional Strategic Housing resources identified Designated RSL resource identified New ORCC post holder in place with SLA being negotiated.

Cherwell District Council to identify targets for delivery of rural affordable housing	Greater priority and scrutiny of rural affordable housing delivery	To be confirmed	Targets established with ORHP. 150 units across County (with a stretch target of 200). One new scheme per District per year.
Site identification <i>“The biggest problem has been in obtaining land.”</i>			
Use the planning system to proactively identify possibilities for exception sites	A supply of possible rural exception sites is gathered for targeting land owners where local need is demonstrated	In line with Local Development Framework timescales	Initial trawl of identified sites provided January 2009.
Investigate other rural exception sites policies, keep abreast of government changes and consider revisions to rural exception sites as part of Local Development Framework	A policy framework that enables the delivery of rural affordable housing	In line with Local Development Framework timescales	Local Development Framework not yet at detailed policy making stage. Emerging housing need evidence, further Local Development Framework work on village policy and best practice elsewhere will inform review of rural exception site policy.
Review of publicly owned land within Cherwell	May identify land that could be targeted	Apr 2009	Consider sites through the site identification process
Continue to build relationships with Colleges/Duchy of Cornwall and other landowners where land owned by them may be suitable	Release of suitable land	On going	Work currently being undertaken by Sanctuary with Duchy at Weston on the Green and will use this as opportunity to discuss any other possible sites. Approaching Corpus Christi college as part of site identification at Lower Heyford. A letter has been sent to the Oxford colleges, the Church and the Duchy

			of Cornwall to request help in releasing land. Letter sent to major landowners in July 2009 regarding Rural Exception Sites.
Discuss with parishes other options for providing affordable housing other than new build – acquisitions, empty homes?	Small amounts of affordable secured where no land available	On going	Rural Housing Enabler following up through usual engagement with Parish Councils so this option can be considered. Revise housing needs survey documents to remind respondents this might be another option Oxfordshire Rural Housing Partnership could take forward.
Ensure housing needs survey carried out as part of a rolling programme in order to evidence need for rural exception sites. Need to ensure Cherwell District Council can resource this. Surveys will run alongside site identification work to allow good targeting of resources	Council will have up to date info to justify need for rural affordable housing	2009/10	Need to look at where this approach may be needed – if a site opportunity exists or where there is likely to be high need (e.g. larger settlements).

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