

## Appendix 5

### Overview and Scrutiny Committee

5<sup>th</sup> January 2009

#### Update on Rural Affordable Housing Improvement Plan

This report is to give members an update on progress on the Rural Affordable Housing Improvement Plan endorsed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee in April 2009 and by the Council's Executive in August 2009. An updated version of this plan is attached along with an example of a parish update report.

Since the plan was adopted the following improvements have been carried out:

- Quarterly reports are being sent to Parish Councils and ward Councillors to update on progress in their Parish. . These have been generally well received, for example Wiggington Parish Council commented that the report was 'excellent and a great help'.
- A service level agreement has been signed with the Oxfordshire Rural Communities Council (ORCC) in respect of the delivery of the rural housing enabler (RHE) service
- A joint work plan for the RHE has been agreed between CDC and ORCC with clear targets for the work of the enabler.
- Greater resources have been made available to develop site appraisal work within the Council's Development Control team leading to faster turnaround on appraising suitable sites.
- A meeting has been held with senior managers at Greensquare Group (of which OCHA is a part) to emphasise the importance of delivery on rural schemes to the Council. This has resulted in OCHA agreeing that one member of the development team should be the single point of contact on rural exception sites and will be responsible for ensuring good communication with all other ORHP members and the Parish Councils.
- Greater resources have been given over to site appraisal work within the Planning Development Control service leading to faster turnaround on appraising suitable sites
- We have built on positive relationships with the Duchy of Cornwall and the Colleges resulting in negotiation over land acquisition.
- We are in the planning stages for moving to a rolling housing needs programme from April 2010. This will enable us to better understand where we should be targeting our activity.
- Initial invitations have been sent out for a training and awareness raising event for members of the District and Parish Councils on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2010.

## Outcomes

- Since the review we have started actively working with a further 6 parishes (Adderbury, Launton, Barfords, South Newington, Islip and Shipton on Cherwell) with sites identified in 3 of these parishes.
- We have undertaken a further housing needs survey in South Newington with two further housing needs surveys in Islip and Milcombe agreed for January. We have also undertaken 3 register of interests to update existing need on schemes which are at design stage.
- We are close to Planning Applications being submitted on two sites at Weston on the Green and Hornton.
- Overall delivery of rural housing is high this year with 61 homes in rural areas developed since April. The majority of these have been allocated to applicants with a local connection.

**Fiona Brown**  
**Strategic Housing Officer**  
**December 2009**

# Rural Affordable Housing Improvement Plan

*Last Updated November 2009*

Action	Desired outcome	By When	By whom	Progress/Completed
<b>Communication</b> <i>“this is something that is done to us, not for us”</i>				
Produce an ORHP annual report for Cherwell 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 Apr 2010	FB/TM	Discussion with ORHP re producing County material with section devoted to activity in Cherwell DC
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	<b>Achieved</b>		Quarterly reports now being sent with positive feedback and increased communication with PCS. Practice has now been adopted in other Districts in Oxfordshire
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	<b>Achieved</b>		To be made clear through new Cherwell information booklet – see below – and key contacts given as part of the quarterly reports
Increased promotion of activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>through Local Development Framework newsletter</li> <li>Cherwell link</li> </ul>	Greater awareness of rural affordable housing issues	Throughout 2009-10	FB/DP	Article for Cherwell Link to be written for March 2010 edition. DP to consider timing and content of article for LDF newsletter
Improve Cherwell District Council website content	Greater awareness and information sharing	Dec 2009	FB	Rural Improvement plan on website – need to improve these pages with information including new booklets
Ensure parish plan process fully encompasses affordable housing	Affordable housing gains priority in Parish Plans	<b>Achieved</b>		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	<b>Achieved</b>		DVD being distributed at PC meetings when affordable housing presentation given
Update rural affordable housing booklet and other documents ~ with clarification of definitions and distinction between rural affordable housing and exception sites, timescales for each stage of the process, key contacts and responsibilities etc.	Increased interest and better understanding of rural affordable housing	Documents produced by March 2010	FB/TM	Cherwell booklet with accompanying /summary leaflet being written. ORHP updating internal information leaflet.
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	<b>Achieved</b>		Improvement Plan endorsed by Executive
Raise the profile of rural housing issues with District Councillors through a information/training event	Increased commitment from elected members supported by increased knowledge	March 2010	FB	Planning for event in February 2010 underway.
Raise rural affordable housing issues with parishes at all available opportunities	Increased number of opportunities to work with parishes	Throughout year	TM	RHE now has a work programme which includes targets for Parish contact
<b>Working Smarter</b> <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	<b>Achieved</b>		Roles and responsibilities of group members re-clarified in January and service standards produced for publication in new booklet. SLA now signed with ORCC
Planning to identify additional staffing resources to carry out site appraisals	Improved response times	<b>Achieved</b>		Specialist officer designated to undertake this work in Jan 09 for 6-9 months. This post has since been extended
Cherwell District Council to identify targets for delivery of rural affordable	Greater priority and scrutiny of rural affordable housing	To be confirmed		Targets established with ORHP. 150 units across County over 3

housing	delivery			years (with a stretch target of 200). One new scheme per District per year
<b>Site identification</b> <i><b>"The biggest problem has been in obtaining land."</b></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	DP	Initial trawl of identified sites provided January 2009 and is being followed up through written appraisals of site suitability.
Investigate other rural exception sites policies, keep abreast of government changes and consider revisions to rural exception sites as part of Local Development Framework (consider Shropshire, Horsham and East Hants)	Greater incentives to land owners to release sites for affordable housing A policy framework that enables the delivery of rural affordable housing	In line with Local Development Framework timescales	DP	Local Development Framework not yet at detailed policy making stage. Emerging housing need evidence, further Local Development Framework work and needs clear needs evidence of needs plus village policy and best practice elsewhere will inform review of rural exception site policy work. CDC to respond to Government paper on Incentivising Landlords
Review of publicly owned land within Cherwell	May identify land that could be targeted	April 2009	DP	Consider sites through the site identification process. Need to follow up Church initiative to use land for affordable housing.
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	MS	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 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. Positive responses from New College and Exeter College
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	FB/TM	Rural Housing Enabler NB 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. Work being undertaken to check any empty homes (over 6 months that could be brought back into use). Budget request submitted for funding to help an RSL purchase if opportunity arises
Ensure housing needs survey carried out as part of a rolling programme in order to evidence need for rural exception sites up front. 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	FB	Programme of surveys being prepared and investigating if this can be resourced. Parish Councils will be consulted on this and on the new Housing Needs Surveys and Reports. TM and FB to look at possible process and programme for undertaking these

For further information contact Fiona Brown – Strategic Housing Officer 01295 221659 [fiona.brown@cherwell-dc.gov.uk](mailto:fiona.brown@cherwell-dc.gov.uk)

Staff key –

DP – David Peckford

FB – Fiona Brown

MS – Martyn Swann

TM – Tom McCulloch



## Oxfordshire Rural Housing Partnership Quarterly Parish Council Progress Report

**Date:** 21 September 2009  
**Name of Parish:** Hornton

**Stage of Development:** Undertaking Needs Survey/Site Identification/**Site Negotiation**/ Pre Planning Discussions/ Planning Submitted/ Scheme on Site

**Anticipated Units:** Rural Exception Site at Bell Lane- 4 units

**Current Position:** Register of Interest shall guide the final mix of houses at Bell Lane

**Documents Attached:** update report from OCHA

Action Required	By Whom	Target Timescale
Register of Interest Report to be completed and circulated	Tom McCulloch	End of September 2009

### Key Contacts

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**A copy of this report has been sent to District Councillor Douglas Webb**

For further information please contact Tom McCulloch in the first instance.