



Neighbourhood Planning Toolkit Guidance Note 15

Neighbourhood Planning: Affordable Housing

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Adopted December 2017

This document includes hyperlinks to a range of websites, and the hyperlinks can be accessed using the published version of this document, which is available to view via: www.scambs.gov.uk/npgguidance. Every effort has been made to ensure that these hyperlinks are up-to-date, however as websites change these hyperlinks can become invalid.

Herefordshire Council has kindly given permission for us to provide links to their guidance on neighbourhood planning.

Huntingdonshire District Council has kindly allowed us to take inspiration and wording from their Neighbourhood Planning Guidance.

If you have any queries relating to this document, please contact us via neighbourhood.planning@scambs.gov.uk or 01954 713183.

Introduction on Affordable Housing for local people

Many parish councils are concerned that local people are unable to remain in their village because of the growing cost of housing. Often adult children have to move further afield to be able to afford a home, those working in the village have long commuting distances and family support is no longer available.

If this is an issue that the parish council wish to address, they may want to consider including policies or sites for affordable housing within their neighbourhood plan.

How can SCDC help?

Before you embark on including policies or sites for affordable housing within your neighbourhood plan, we suggest that you speak to the Housing Strategy Team at SCDC for advice and support on delivering affordable housing for your village.

Email: Strategic.Housing@scambs.gov.uk

Or telephone 01954 713336 or 01954 713356

What to do next after agreeing your vision and objectives

In preparing your neighbourhood plan you may think that you already know what needs to be included in your plan and that with the local knowledge of your area know how best this can be achieved. Once you have agreed the vision and objectives for your plan you may be keen to launch straight into the writing of the plan policies.

However it is wise to consider whether there are alternative ways of achieving the objectives of your plan.

You may find it helpful to consider these alternative options to see what works best and what doesn't and to find out the views of your local community on which option they would prefer to see happen. It may be that the first solution that was suggested at the start of your plan making may not be the most reasonable option for your local community.

A key element of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) work that must be carried out on your neighbourhood plan is to consider the impact of your plan proposals on the environment. Through this process you will need to demonstrate that alternative options were considered prior to the formal drafting of your neighbourhood plan particularly if what you are proposing has an impact on the environment.

What is Affordable Housing?

The Government defines affordable housing as social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and house prices.

Guidance and Regulations

[NPPF](#) – Definition of affordable housing can be found in Annex 2: Glossary of the NPPF.

[SCDC Affordable Housing Glossary](#) explains in more detail what affordable housing is, the different tenure models available, who it is aimed at and how it is allocated.

The national NPPF definition of affordable housing may occasionally change as may the SCDC definition

What is an Exception Site?

Rural exception sites are housing schemes that deliver affordable housing to meet identified local housing needs.

They are usually in rural locations where market housing would not normally be acceptable because it is outside the village framework as defined in the Local Plan. Homes can be brought forward on these sites only if there is a proven unmet local need for affordable housing.

How can you ensure that affordable homes are available for local people?

Under the Council's [Rural Exception Sites Policy](#), a legal agreement is put in place to ensure the properties remain affordable, will be for people in housing need and prioritised for those with a strong local connection to the parish. Those considered to have a local connection include those:

- working in the village for the last 12 months for 16 or more hours a week,
- that have lived in the village for at least 5 years out of the last 8 years, or
- that have family members who have been resident in the village for at least 5 years.

Our Housing Strategy Team (see contact details on page 3) can provide the full text of our local connection policy of which this is a summary.

Identifying local housing needs

A housing needs survey must be undertaken to support any application for a rural exception site scheme. Surveys are undertaken independently by Cambridgeshire Acre. This is a chargeable service. The parish council may request this survey directly from Cambridgeshire Acre or it can be commissioned by a Registered Provider (housing association) where the intention is to deliver a scheme.

Other Resources

Locality guidance

[Housing Needs Assessment at neighbourhood plan level](#)

[The Housing Statistical Information Leaflet](#) also provides information relating to the numbers on the housing register with a local connection and the availability of affordable housing in the village.

[Housing needs surveys](#) facilitated by Cambridgeshire ACRE.

Who provides the Affordable Housing?

SCDC works closely with a number of Registered Providers who own and manage the affordable housing. A Registered Provider will work closely with a parish council to help identify potential sites, commission housing need surveys, design a scheme, build it out and then manage the homes.

Can the Parish Council Own and Manage the Homes?

Under the rural exception site policy, generally homes are owned by a housing association, who are well established to develop and manage affordable homes.

Community Land Trusts have been developed in other areas of the country providing community led housing.

A Community Land Trust is a legal vehicle for communities that is led and run by local volunteers. Collectively the Community Land Trust can own and manage property/land, undertake development projects themselves and lock in assets for the community. This is a relatively new model for delivering housing (not just affordable), employment and other community assets but as yet has not been tested in South Cambridgeshire.

For delivering small scale affordable housing schemes for local people, the rural exception site policy has a proven track record in South Cambridgeshire and is far less resource intensive for the local community.

Other Resources

More information about can be found on the [Community Land Trust East](#) website.

What support is available from the Council in delivering a rural exception site?

The Housing Strategy Team can:

1. Attend a parish council meeting to explain rural exception sites. Cambridgeshire Acre will also attend if required to talk about the Housing Needs Survey.
2. Undertake a walkabout with the Parish Council and Cambridgeshire ACRE to identify any potential sites.
3. Undertake an initial site feasibility assessment in conjunction with the planning department.
4. Help to identify a suitable Registered Provider to develop the scheme
5. Work with the Registered Provider to undertake public engagement and consultation.

The Registered Provider will provide design details for the scheme and submit a planning application, and will undertake construction of the scheme.

The Housing Strategy Team will keep the parish council informed of progress.

How can SCDC help?

Further information on the process to implement a rural exception site can be found on the Council's [website](#).

What do we need to include in the Neighbourhood Plan?

You may wish at this stage just to identify if there is a need for affordable housing in the village. In this case, a housing needs survey can be commissioned from Cambridgeshire Acre by the Parish Council. Where a need is identified, the Neighbourhood Plan could make provision to include an exception site to be delivered to meet the identified needs.

You may wish to take it a step further to identify a suitable site(s) to be included in the Neighbourhood Plan.