

Sarah Brooke-Taylor
Rural Housing Enabler

Bringing local connection affordable
homes to rural communities.

Background

A national programme of independent Rural Housing Enablers was set up in 2001, and the Warwickshire RHE project started in 2003:

- To raise awareness of the need for affordable housing in rural communities
- To work with rural communities to identify local housing need
- To work with rural communities to identify potential sites
- To raise awareness in rural communities of the importance of producing plans and strategies, for example parish plans

Why?

Housing is unaffordable in some places & unsuitable in others.

WRCC plays a part in ensuring that more people have access to the right home, in the right location and at a cost they can afford.

An independent organisation is significant in building trust, building relationships and in enabling schemes to progress.

WRCC is seen as an 'honest broker'.

Smaller rural settlements may either die or gentrify

- High rates of home ownership in rural areas can mask a range of housing-related challenges.
- Local households don't have the capacity to compete.
- Housing problems confronting rural communities can appear less urgent than those affecting urban areas with more concentrated and visible challenges.
- Notions of the 'rural idyll' (a happy community residing in thatched cottages or the equivalent) but the reality is a countryside of 'haves' and 'have-nots'.

What does the RHE do?

The Rural Housing Enabler works with rural communities:

- to assess the local housing requirements (housing needs survey)
- to explore what mechanism might be used to bring forward local homes
- to identify possible locations for a Local Needs scheme

Undertakes initial discussions with landowners

Introduces a housing association

Supports the parish council and community throughout the process

Is involved with the scheme design and organises public consultation

Scheme requirements

It is usual that local connection schemes ...

- Are small scale
- Have the support of the local community via the parish or town council
- Respond to an identified need
- Are prioritised to people with a local connection to the parish, both initially and in perpetuity

Local connection

Allocations are made to households who can demonstrate a local parish connection:

- Currently living in the parish and have done so for past 12 months
- Previously lived in the parish for 3 years out of the last 5 years
- Work in the parish (average 16 hours per week, for 12 months)
- Immediate family in the parish (parent/s, sibling/s, child/ren)
- Born in the parish or parents were resident at time of birth

Where?

Rural affordable homes are usually built on Rural Exception Sites.

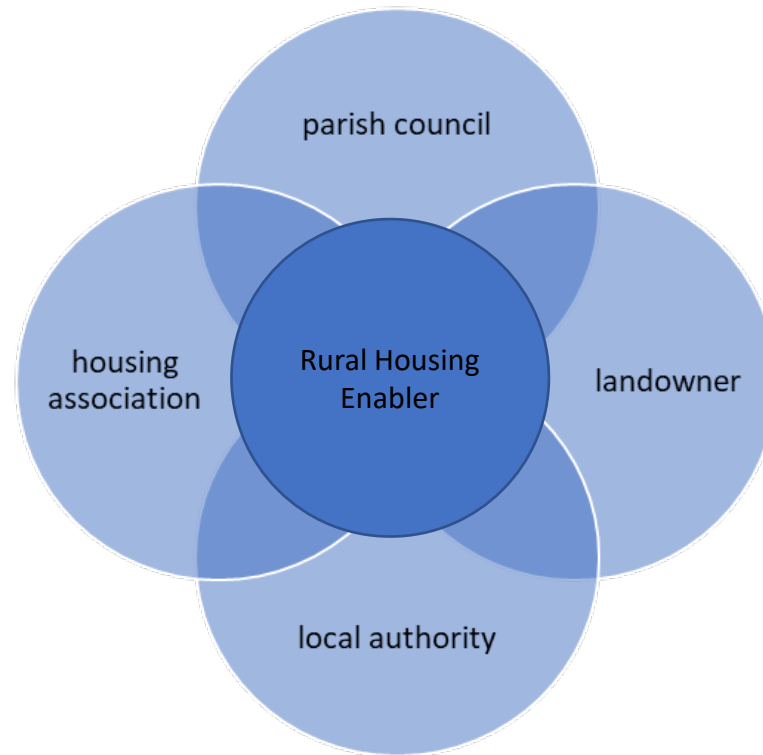
The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) defines Rural Exception Sites as ‘small sites used for affordable housing in perpetuity where sites would not normally be used for housing’.

These are often sites situated on the edge of a village so the homes must be sensitively designed, keeping with the character and appearance of the local area.

Progressing rural schemes

- Stable and long-term working partnerships are vital
- Landowner motive / expectations can make or break a scheme
- Supportive local plan policy, with affordable housing as a corporate policy
- Acquiring the right evidence and building community support through the parish council
- Developing homes that reflect local priorities
- Funding that recognizes the challenges of rural projects

Working in partnership



Number of homes by village



Ultimately, it's about the people ...

Miss C, Lighthorne Heath:

“This is my forever home. It's my safe place and my forever family home. It's really quiet here. All the kids play with each other and we all look out for them. It's safe for them. I love it.”

Mr J, Priors Marston:

“It's smashing. It's worked out really well. We lived elsewhere in the village and we wanted to downsize, and we got this. It's great.”

Mrs D, Snitterfield:

“It's lovely. We've got a big garden. We really love it.”



BUILDING AND MANAGING AFFORDABLE HOMES IN RURAL WARWICKSHIRE

Established in 1989 to
provide affordable
homes in the rural
villages of
Warwickshire



Delivered almost 600
homes for local
people in 44 villages
across the County



HOMES FOR LOCAL PEOPLE ARE A SHARED SUCCESS STORY



- Partnership approach of Councillors, Officers, Enablers, PCs and housing organisations
- Committed and informed Councillors - political support, understanding and will
- Engaged Parish Councils and communities
- Site finding through local consultation
- Delivered through partnership working and partnership funding
- Planning agreements influenced to ensure local priority and partner communication to allocate correctly





RURAL WAY OF WORKING: DEVELOPMENT



- Not market reliant
- Have to start from scratch
- Local Authority relations
- Needs led approach
- Local consultation (ongoing scrutiny)
- Rural proofing of strategies and policies





RURAL WAY OF WORKING: DEVELOPMENT



- Rural Exception Sites
- Section 106 homes
- Cross subsidy model / Local Market homes
- Community Led Development
- Existing building conversion





RURAL WAY OF WORKING: HOUSING MANAGEMENT



- Labour intensive allocation process
- Local liaison on allocations (Parish Council and Local Authority)
- High levels of community scrutiny (allocations, ASB etc.)
- Scheme based local lettings plan
- Sensitive and proactive housing management is a primary reason for being invited back. Reputation is at stake
- Local scrutiny remains after the homes are built and allocated
- Asset Management Strategy to improve energy efficiency and affordability of existing homes

7 homes in Bearley

- ✓ Community-led
- ✓ Passivhaus construction
- ✓ Solar panels
- ✓ Air source heat pumps
- ✓ Low running costs



Partnership working
including a social
enterprise training
builders on site

Award winning Passivhaus scheme at Wootton Wawen



Very positive resident
satisfaction in terms of
comfortable
environment
(temperature, low
noise and low energy
bills)

DELIVERING HOMES AS WELL AS INNOVATION AND BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY



AND IT'S MUCH MORE THAN JUST HOUSING...





www.warwickshirerha.org.uk





Stratford-on Avon District Council: policy and allocation

Ensuring the homes are for local people



Renata Mosz

Housing Strategy
& Development
Manager

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Policy including local connection

- Council Plan 2023-2027: 'Affordable, Well Built and Maintained Homes'.
- Sustainable Homes Sustainable Communities Stratford-on-Avon District Housing Strategy 2021-2026.
- Stratford-on-Avon District Core Strategy 2011 to 2031 (and emerging South Warwickshire Local Plan).
 - Part S, Development Requirements SPD (Supplementary Planning Document).
- Home Choice Plus Allocation Scheme - lettings



Housing Strategy & rural homes

Aim 1: To support communities and build sustainable affordable homes.

Action 4: Continue to encourage and enable local communities to meet their local housing needs.

Aim 2: To improve existing housing and help people live independently.

Aim 3: To prevent homelessness and reduce the harm caused by it.



Definition of affordable housing

- **National**

NPPF - National Planning Policy

Framework, Annex 2 Glossary: "*Homes for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market*"...

- **Local**

Informed by local housing market assessments and embedded in

- Core Strategy.
- Development Requirements SPD.
- Housing Strategy.



Key requirements for all local need schemes

1. Meet an identified and evidenced local need - needs surveys, Home Choice Plus (Housing Waiting List) data etc.
2. Be supported by the relevant town /parish council.





Local needs schemes - planning

- Core Strategy policies CS.15(G), and AS.10.
- Evolution of previous Local Choice initiative.
- Any settlement – can be greenbelt.
- Small-scale community-led schemes brought forward to meet a need identified by a community.
- Can include both affordable and local market housing.



Local need schemes - planning & lettings - local connection

- S106 legal agreement restricts occupation of all homes:
 - Born in the parish / parents residing at time of birth.
 - Currently resident in the parish for 12 months or more.
 - Currently employed in the parish for 12 months or more and at least 16 hours per week.
 - Previously resident in the parish for at least 3 years.
 - Current residence of a close family member for at least 3 years.



Local need schemes - planning & lettings - local connection



- Cascade
 - Preference to Parish in first instance (1st tier).
 - Adjacent parishes (2nd tier).
 - Rest of the District (3rd tier).
 - Designated housing market area e.g. Coventry/Warwickshire (4th tier).
 - The rest of England (5th tier).



Home Choice Plus

- District Council's housing register / Housing Waiting List for *rented* affordable homes.
 - Homes owned by Housing Associations / other Registered Providers.
 - District Council has 100% nomination rights.
- Mechanism for prioritising housing need.
- Banding system - measure of housing need and *District* local connection.



Home Choice Plus - lettings

- Properties advertised for 7 days and applicants choose properties by placing bids.
- Shortlisting once advert closes by parish local connection. **Documentary evidence obtained to confirm local connection.**
- Then shortlisting by Housing Need and in accordance with the Local Lettings Plan. The latter reflects identified needs and seeks to ensure sustainable mixed communities.



Home Choice Plus – lettings, shared ownership & local market homes

- Council nominates eligible households to landlord.
- Landlord does pre allocation checks, offers property, and tenant(s) sign up.
- Housing association and developer respectively prioritise local people for any shared ownership and local market homes.
- Most rural schemes oversubscribed - people only express an interest when they see the homes being built.

Further information

Housing Policy & Development Team: Renata Mosz, John Gordon, Lisa Davies

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[Developing Affordable Homes | Stratford-on-Avon District Council https://www.stratford.gov.uk/homes-properties/developing-new-homes.cfm](https://www.stratford.gov.uk/homes-properties/developing-new-homes.cfm)

