

The 10 Stage guide to developing an affordable housing scheme in a rural community

1. Consider the idea carefully

Discuss the idea with the parish council. Determine the level of support for a scheme. Identify key individuals with the time and energy to help progress the scheme. Consider the wider benefits for the village from new housing. Gather information on affordable housing projects from publications, District Council, Action in rural Sussex and Housing Associations. Consult with other parishes that already have a scheme.



2. Assess the need

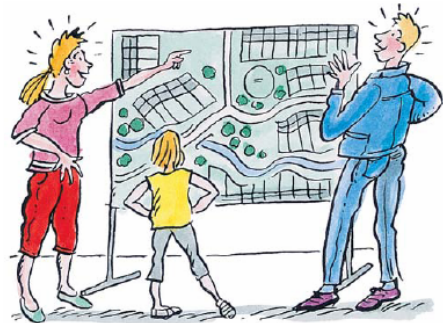
Determine housing need through a housing need survey. Approach the District Council for advice and possible funding for a survey. Carry out survey, consulting every household to gain support and identify specific need.

3. Identify a potential site

Be pro-active in looking for a site or responding to offers. Investigate all potential sources – for example, County Council, Parish Council, local landowners, the Church, Housing Associations for possible sites. Assess suitability of site with planners for access, landscape setting, services, infrastructure and in relation to the rest of the village. Is the purchase price appropriate for an affordable housing scheme?

4. Consult your community

Keep your community well informed. Make good use of local media and public meetings to encourage ongoing discussion and interest in the project. Rumour and misinformation can result in unnecessary hostility. Ensure your project reflects the views of all local people – the silent majority as well as the vociferous minority. Consider a full range of housing types and prices to retain and develop a balanced community.





5. Choose a developer

Consult your District Council – they may recommend a particular Housing Association (Registered Social Landlord) already working in your area. Get advice from your District Council or Action in rural Sussex. Visit an example of a scheme by a particular association. Ensure the developer understands and agrees with your specific requirements. Employ your local knowledge and survey results when consulting with the Housing Association, architects and District Council Planning and Housing Departments.

6. Secure funding

Approach the District Council Housing Department and refer to the annual Housing Strategy. The Housing Association can obtain a Housing Corporation grant through this strategy known as the Local Authority Housing Allocation Grant (HAG). The District Council and the Housing Association will handle any funding problems. Be prepared for possible delays or frantic activity due to budget, timing or planning problems.

7. Obtain planning permission

Allow the Housing Association to take the lead, but ensure you are involved at all stages and understand the planning and legal details. Voice your opinions and involve the community and possible tenants on the design of the scheme. Ensure the details of the Section 106 agreements are correct for your scheme. Seek the advice of Action in rural Sussex. Liaise closely with the Housing Association at all times.



8. Assist with the nomination process

Ensure the local people in housing need are aware of the nomination process. There maybe different housing lists applicable to one scheme – District Council waiting list, Housing Association list and Parish Council register. Eligibility for local housing schemes is based on local connections which over ride other criteria for need. The District Council and the Housing Association determine allocations based on local connections in consultation with the parish.

9. Build the houses

Ensure construction does not entail undue nuisance or inconvenience to local residents. Liaise with the builders over any small details which may assist the integration of the project into the village.



10. Celebrate!

All those involved in the long and complex process of developing the scheme – especially the parish council, deserve recognition and praise. Enjoy the pleasure of seeing the tenants move in to their new homes and feel proud of your achievement. Any further advice on celebration would be superfluous!

Your local Rural Housing Enabler, Tom Warder can help you on all 10 stages of the process. Contact Tom on 01273 479008 for more information.