

Chew Magna Parish Council

Affordable Housing Policy

5th September 2017

Issue 01

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1.0 Introduction

Chew Magna Parish Council is committed to following the guidelines laid down in the Rural Housing Alliance document 'Affordable Rural Housing: A practical guide for parish councils' and in the BANES Planning Obligations, Supplementary Planning Document.

Affordable Rural Housing: A practical guide for parish councils (Ref 1.)

<https://www.rsnonline.org.uk/images/files/ruralhousing-guideforparishcouncils2014.pdf>

BANES Planning Obligations, Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (Ref 2.)

http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sitedocuments/Planning-and-Building-Control/Planning-Policy/SPDs/planning_obligations_spd.pdf

There are a range of other documents which will be used to guide the process including the BANES Placemaking Plan and the Chew Valley Neighbourhood Plan.

This policy is indented to provide clarity of the process that will be followed and is intended for local residents, developers and other parties involved in the delivery of affordable housing.

2.0 Process - Summary (As defined by Ref 1.)

The document Ref 1 outlines the process to be followed and should be referred to for more detail about the process for securing Affordable Housing in the parish. The summary below outlines the key steps in the process.

2.1 What is Affordable Housing

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 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 local house prices. Affordable housing should include provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.

Social rented housing is owned by local authorities and private registered providers (as defined in section 80 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008), for which guideline target rents are determined through the national rent regime. It may also be owned by other persons and provided under equivalent rental arrangements to the above, as agreed with the local authority or with the Homes and Communities Agency.

Affordable rented housing is let by local authorities or private registered providers of social housing to households who are eligible for social rented housing. Affordable Rent is subject to rent controls that require a rent of no more than 80% of the local market rent (including service charges, where applicable).

Intermediate housing is homes for sale and rent provided at a cost above social rent, but below market levels subject to the criteria in the Affordable Housing definition above. These can include shared equity (shared ownership and equity loans), other low cost homes for sale and intermediate rent, but not affordable rented housing.

Homes that do not meet the above definition of affordable housing, such as “low cost market” housing, may not be considered as affordable housing for planning purposes.’

This definition is reflected in the BANES Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document.

New affordable homes help sustain communities by offering local families, couples and single people the chance to stay living in the place where they have strong connections.

2.2 Establish the local housing needs

The first step is to establish the local need and this is usually done through a housing needs survey. This survey should be updated periodically to ensure it is representative of the current needs.

BANES encourage all people with housing needs to register on home search (www.homesearchbathnes.org.uk) and this is then used to keep housing needs requirements up to date.

2.3 Find a suitable site

Potential sites are identified by carrying out a Sequential Land Search and by publicising a call for sites from local site owners. Once all the potential sites have been identified these should be worked through to find the most suitable site that meets all of the criteria and can be made available. This process of working through potential sites should be documented in a

Sequential Land Search document which is periodically up-issued and made publically available.

2.4 How many and what type will be build

The evidence of local housing need will help to decide how many homes to build. The aim is to make sure that the number of homes provided is sustainable by having recurring demand for the homes.

2.5 Design

The design is usually commissioned by the housing association or developer who will deliver the site. The design should appreciate the sensitivity needed in a rural development and should take note of the guidelines in the local neighbourhood plan, as well as ensuring it meets the design obligations laid down by the local authority.

2.6 Community consultation

Community consultation is at the heart of developing new affordable rural homes. The community should be kept informed of progress towards affordable housing and a formal community consultation is essential before any planning application is submitted.

2.7 Funding

The Parish Council will not be expected to contribute to the funding of the development but it is common for some public money to be required to deliver the scheme. The housing association or developer can apply to the Homes and Community Agency for grant funding to assist with the development and/or funding may come the local authority. For Rural Exception site development, it is unusual for market housing to be developed at the same time but in some cases this is allowed if the chosen site is not viable without cross-subsidy from market houses.

The PC may need to commit funds or other capacity to promote earlier stages of work on identifying affordable housing need and sequential sites searches/call for sites.

2.8 Planning application

All work leading up to a planning application will be undertaken by the developer in consultation with the Parish Council. The developer will submit the planning application.

The Parish Council will support the application both in writing and by presentation at Planning Committee if required.

2.9 Building works

The developer will be responsible for the construction of the new homes but will ensure that the PC are kept informed of progress and any issues arising as the new homes are built.

The PC may like to identify a single point of contact for the developer and Site Manager to engage with.

All developers are encouraged to use 'Considerate Constructors' accreditation to ensure that the building of these new homes impacts on neighbours as little as possible. <https://www.ccscheme.org.uk/>

2.10 Allocating the homes

Allocation of affordable homes in the parish will be through the Council's Homesearch register and with reference to the Chew Valley Neighbourhood Plan. The PC may be asked to comment on the strength of local connection (this will depend on the practice of the RP around rural allocations). The PC may also be asked to actively engage in promoting the housing opportunity on offer and encouraging or supporting Homesearch applicants to bid on opportunities when they arise.

The PC may also be asked to engage in local promotion when a property becomes available for re-sale or re-letting.

2.11 Managing the homes into the future

The Registered Providers (RP) will own and manage the homes delivered under the exception policy. They will be responsible for repairs, maintenance, housing management and allocation of the rented / or sales of the new homes. Shared ownership homes, if delivered will not progress to full freehold ownership and re-sales will also prioritise people with a local connection in accordance with the planning agreement.

Additional benefits from a development such as open space, play areas, allotments may continue to be owned and managed by the RP but may be transferred to the PC or Local Authority.

3.0 Rural Exception Sites

Rural exception sites are covered in the BANES planning obligations document under policy RA4. Unlike many other planning activities for rural exception sites the parish council should be a key stakeholder in developing homes under policy RA4. This means that it is extremely unlikely that planning would go ahead or be approved without the support of the parish council.

4.0 BANES Policy RA4: Rural Exception Sites

As an exception to other policies of the development plan, residential development of 100% affordable housing will be permitted provided that:

- *It meets a demonstrated need for affordable housing*
- *The housing remains affordable in perpetuity*
- *Occupancy of the affordable housing would remain, as a first priority, for those with demonstrated local connections*

- *The development is in scale and keeping with the form and character of its location*
- *The development is well related to community services and facilities*

A small proportion of market housing will be appropriate only where it can be demonstrated that the market housing is essential to cross-subsidise the affordable housing and that the site would be unviable without the cross-subsidy.

5.0 Parish Council Commitments

The parish council is committed to;

- Actively supporting the provision of affordable housing in the parish to meet the identified needs of local residents and workers
- To make the process open and inclusive, particularly ensuring that households in housing need are engaged and encouraged to have a voice.
- To be actively engaged in the sequential site search work and the selection of a site to take forward to consultation.
- To minute in the monthly PC minutes a summary of affordable housing activity and meetings that have taken place in the month.
- To make available key documents and information. These documents are listed in Appendix A.
- To ensure that the developer carries out public consultation prior to any planning application for affordable housing being submitted, and to actively support the consultation process.
- To have a formal vote at the PC meeting by all parish councillors in support of a specific site only after public consultation has taken place and in advance of any planning application being submitted. (See note 1 below)
- To require a majority of 2/3 of the Parish Council to vote in favour of a specific site before proceeding to planning.
- To listen to the community and to balance the views of local people with the wider objective of meeting housing needs.
- To support the delivery of sustainable affordable housing that complements and enhances the parish community.

Note 1. For clarity, the PC will not formally vote in support of a specific site prior to undertaking public consultation but will have been involved in determining which sites should progress to consultation.

6.0 Affordable Housing Working Group

Chew Magna Parish Council has set up a working group to assist with the delivery of affordable housing in the parish. The committee should be made up of a maximum of 5 councillors and at no time should a majority of the PC be part of the Working Group. The current group is made up of;

Date: Sept 2017

Paul Cornelius (Councillor and group leader)

Nick Scholefield (Councillor)
Rodney Andrews (Councillor)
Heather Montague (Councillor)
Nick Hasell (Councillor)

The group is supported by
Liz Richardson (Ward Member)
Louise Davidson (BANES)
Gary Ward (BANES)
Housing Association and/or Developer (at appropriate stage of process)

As suggested in Planning Obligation 3.1.86 (Ref 2) the parish council may use local forums and/or local residents who can represent local affordable housing needs, the needs and concerns of the parish, or who can bring expertise that will assist in the delivery of affordable housing to assist with the process.

7.0 Appendix A – Publically available documents

The documents that will be publically available to the public currently are;

- PC minutes containing a record of affordable housing activity each month
- The affordable housing needs document
- The sequential site search document
- The results of any public consultation
- A list of publically available BANES documents including planning applications that relate to affordable housing in the Chew Magna Parish
- National Planning Policy Framework
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>
- Bath and North east Somerset Placemaking Plan
<http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/placemaking-plan/placemaking-plan-pre>
- Chew valley Neighbourhood Plan:
<http://www.cvnp.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/CVNP-ReferendumVersion2LowRes.pdf>
- Affordable Rural Housing: A practical guide for parish councils
<https://www.rsnonline.org.uk/images/files/ruralhousing-guideforparishcouncils2014.pdf>
- BANES Planning Obligations, Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)
http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sitedocuments/Planning-and-Building-Control/Planning-Policy/SPDs/planning_obligations_spd.pdf