

# Rural Homes: supporting Kent's rural communities

A PROTOCOL FOR DELIVERING AFFORDABLE  
LOCAL NEEDS HOUSING IN RURAL KENT



English Rural Housing Association





---

## **CONTENTS**

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>p.3</b>
<b>1. Vision.....</b>	<b>p.4</b>
<b>2. Why do we need a Rural Housing Protocol?.....</b>	<b>p.5</b>
<b>3. What is affordable local needs housing?.....</b>	<b>p.6</b>
<b>4. Who are the main delivery partners?.....</b>	<b>p.7</b>
<b>5. Process Map.....</b>	<b>p.9</b>
<b>6. Engaging with the community.....</b>	<b>p.10</b>
<b>7. Identifying need.....</b>	<b>p.12</b>
<b>8. Making it happen.....</b>	<b>p.13</b>
<b>9. Implementation.....</b>	<b>p.18</b>
<b>Annex A: Things to consider.....</b>	<b>p.20</b>
<b>Annex B: Example housing needs survey.....</b>	<b>p.23</b>
<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>p.28</b>



## INTRODUCTION

*This Protocol has been developed as a direct result of a recommendation within the Kent Forum Housing Strategy, which identified a lack of affordability of housing in rural areas as a key concern for the County of Kent (including Medway). 85% of the land within Kent is classed as rural and 40% of the County's businesses are based in rural areas, so it is imperative that we get this right.*

*The focus of this Protocol is on rural affordable local needs housing, which is delivered via specific areas of land known as exception sites. The aim of the Protocol is to encourage a consistent, pragmatic approach to affordable rural local needs housing development across the County, to help to increase the delivery of such housing in rural areas and enable rural communities and businesses in Kent to thrive and prosper. It is intended to be used by local housing and planning officers, highway officers, Registered Providers, Parish Councils, landowners and local communities.*

*It sets out the process of delivering affordable local needs housing, potential obstacles and ways in which these can be overcome. It also contains a helpful list of practical "things to consider" for all the major partners involved in the delivery process and a sample housing needs survey.*

*The Protocol has been developed at a time of great change at the national level. The majority of the new proposals from the Coalition Government are still in the initial phases and this Protocol does not seek to second-guess the government's intentions.*



English Rural Housing Association



## 1. Vision

Rural housing is a vital component of ensuring that rural communities thrive and prosper. The average rural house price remains substantially higher than the average urban house price – and the gap is widening. As a result, housing need, demand for housing advice and the number of households on housing register lists in rural areas has been rising.

Providing rural housing is about giving rural communities the opportunity to thrive and if necessary grow and develop. There is a strong link between housing and economic prosperity and sensible development can support economic growth.

Through this Protocol, we will work together to:

- 1) Ensure the **provision of high quality, affordable homes** that meet the needs of Kent's rural communities
- 2) Support and enable Kent's **rural economy** through planned and sustainable managed growth in rural areas
- 3) **Raise awareness** and **understanding** amongst rural communities, landowners and Members of rural local housing need and how it can be met
- 4) Ensure the provision of **support and advice** to rural communities about how to provide housing to local people
- 5) Develop and maintain a **consistent, proportional** and **efficient approach** to the **delivery** of affordable local needs rural housing across Kent
- 6) Develop new and innovative ways of **facilitating** the delivery of affordable local needs rural housing across Kent
- 7) Support and encourage local authorities to have robust **rural allocations** policies

We will do this by:

- Working together to **overcome** any organisational or policy **barriers** to delivery
- Developing and adopting commonsense and **pragmatic approaches** in relation to **design, quality, timescales, highways and planning issues** in affordable local needs rural housing applications
- Developing **best practice** for **housing need assessment** in relation to affordable local needs rural housing
- Encouraging each local authority in Kent to have an **exceptions site policy**



- Developing **best practice** to respond to **local people's need** through **allocations**
- Working with rural communities, Parish Councils and Local Members to **highlight** the opportunity for affordable local needs rural housing and demonstrate the **benefits** it can bring
- Ensuring we have an adequate independent **Rural Housing Enabling Service** within Kent

## 2. Why do we need a Rural Housing Protocol?

### 2.1 Background

85% of the land area of the County of Kent (including Medway) is classed as rural. With around 1 in 3 of its 1.3m residents living in a rural area, compared to 1 in 5 nationally and 1 in 4 in the South East, Kent has one of the largest rural populations of any county in England.

40% of the County's businesses are also based within rural areas, with the Kent rural economy estimated to be worth around £5.5billion.



Rural housing issues, therefore, tend to have a proportionately greater impact on Kent than many other counties – particularly when coupled with the County's proximity to London.

Recent trends have shown that Kent is moving towards an ageing rural population, with more middle age and fewer young people (15-29s) than the general population. Younger age groups and families are under-represented in rural communities and are being replaced by inward migration amongst older groups. This has implications for the continued sustainability of local rural services and businesses, as well as for the communities themselves.

### 2.2. The nature of the problem

The key problem is one of affordability. The average rural house price within Kent remains substantially higher than the average urban house price, meaning that people living in the rural parts of the County are unable to afford accommodation from the open market, i.e. through home ownership or private renting.

The availability of either affordable local needs housing or private rented accommodation within rural areas is relatively low. This means that there are few options for people living in the rural parts of the County to have their housing needs met locally. The result is that many of these people will move away from rural areas to places where housing is more



affordable. This creates a number of wider economic, social and environmental impacts, including lower paid workers not being able to live locally, young people being unable to set-up home close to their families and disproportionate numbers of older people living within rural communities.

Problems of delivery have also helped to prevent the provision of affordable local needs rural housing. A lack of suitable sites or landowners reluctant to release sites and often complex, intensive and costly planning and highways requirements for rural developments, combined with a dwindling public finance resource, are all common barriers to new housing provision.

In addition, local public opposition to new development can either block development completely or cause lengthy and costly delays to development.

However, these are barriers that must be overcome if Kent's rural communities are to survive. The impact of a lack of affordable housing on villages can be devastating as fewer rural residents are present to support local businesses and services.

### **2.3 Building thriving rural communities**

A thriving rural community is one with a good mix of residents, a sense of its own identity, strong social networks and good local amenities such as shops, schools and transport, which is able to provide local residents with the ability to access employment opportunities.

The *Living Working Countryside* Review identified that just a few affordable homes can help a rural community to thrive. Increasing the number of people living within a rural community helps to maintain local services, such as the school, the village pub and the local shop.

Affordable rural local needs housing can also help to maintain local businesses by providing both customers and employees, particularly for the horticultural and agricultural industries, which often struggle to accommodate their workers locally.

## **3. What is affordable local needs housing?**

Affordable local needs housing provides quality homes to people who have been priced out of the open market. This is particularly important in rural areas, where house prices are significantly higher than the national average but household incomes are lower.

Affordable local needs homes are provided by Registered Providers and most are either rented or shared ownership, where the occupier part-buys and part-rents the property.



English Rural Housing Association



Local needs housing refers to housing that meets the housing needs of the local community and businesses. In rural areas, new affordable local needs housing is delivered through exception sites and is intended to remain for people with a proven connection to the local community in perpetuity (ie permanently).

#### 4. Who are the main delivery partners?

Partnership working is critical to the delivery of affordable rural local needs housing. To successfully complete a new rural development, the input of a range of different partners is needed, who all bring unique expertise and specialist skills to the table.

A summary of the main local partners involved in affordable rural local needs housing and their role and responsibilities are set out in the table below.

<b>Who are they?</b>	<b>What is their role?</b>
<b>Elected Members</b>	Elected Members provide local leadership on housing, acting as great ambassadors and advocates for new affordable rural local needs housing, particularly where there is concern amongst local residents.
<b>Parish Councils</b>	Parish Councils can initiate a housing needs survey where they have identified a potential need for affordable housing and can advise on possible sites for new development. They have a critical role in ensuring that the local community is involved and informed about the development process and can help facilitate communication between local residents, Registered Providers and council officers. They are also a statutory consultee within the planning process.
<b>Homes and Communities Agency</b>	The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) is a Government body responsible for housing and regeneration across England. Rural housing is a one of their strategic priorities.
<b>Registered Providers</b>	Registered Providers (RPs) of social housing provide affordable housing to people at below market rents and include both not-for-profit Registered Providers and stock-owning local housing authorities.  RPs will commission the architect and construction company to design and build a new development and submit the planning application. The RP ultimately manages the affordable homes once they are built and occupied.
<b>Local Housing Officers</b>	Local housing authorities (Districts and Medway Council) have a housing enabling role and are responsible for making sure the needs of their rural communities are met. Officers will make sure a proposed development fits in with their overall housing strategy and can provide data to assess local need. They can help with engaging the community and promoting the benefits of development to local residents. They also advise on the allocations process.

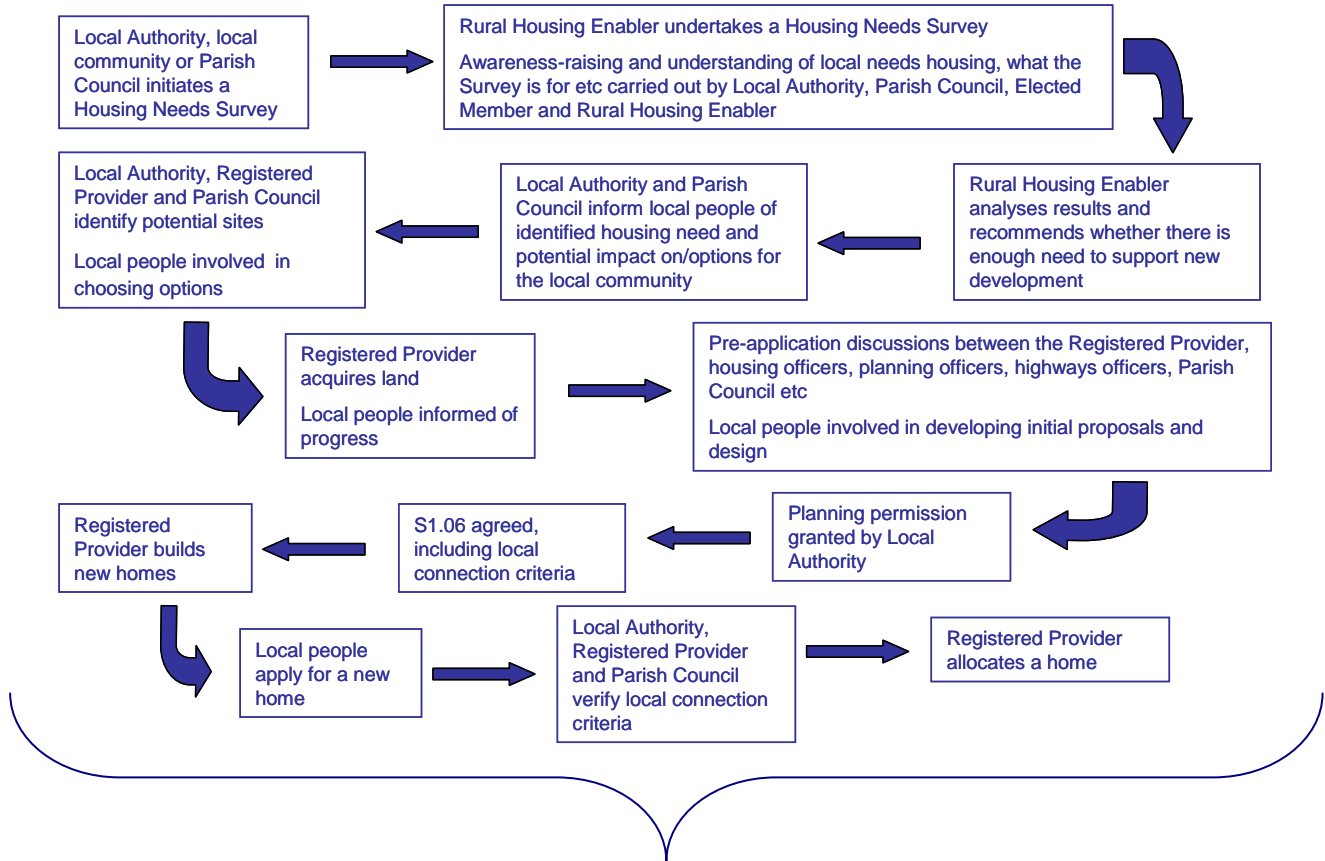
<b>Local Planning Officers</b>	Local planning officers from Districts and Medway Council can provide pre-application advice on potential sites, design and quality of proposed developments. They also process the final planning application.
<b>Highway Officers</b>	Highway officers from Kent County Council and Medway Council provide advice on transport accessibility, highway safety, layout design and quality and parking requirements for new developments. They should be consulted with early on in the development process to identify any potential issues with proposed sites. Where new streets are to be created, highway officers can also advise on the procedures for them to become maintainable by the highway authority.
<b>Rural Housing Enabler (RHE)</b>	The RHE service is provided within Kent by Action with Rural Communities in Kent. The RHE has a crucial role in helping Parish Councils and local housing authorities assess housing need within rural communities. They can also act as a fully independent and impartial advisor and negotiator between different parties, and can help with engaging local residents in the development process.
<b>Landowner</b>	The owner of land identified as a potential site has a crucial role to play in releasing that land for development. Landowners can range from local individuals to Parish Councils, District and County Councils and land-owning institutions such as universities and the Church of England.
<b>Environment Agency</b>	The EA is a Government body which aims to protect the environment, manage water resources and protect communities from flooding risks. They should be consulted with early on the development process to identify any potential issues or concerns, particularly with proposed sites.



English Rural Housing Association



## 5. Process map



**Local family move in**

## 6. Engaging with the community

A key part of making any affordable rural local needs housing scheme a success is to engage positively with the local community.

### 6.1 Raising awareness

Local residents are often understandably concerned about the potential impact of new development within their village or rural community. Raising awareness within the community of the local need for affordable housing and the potential positive impacts it may have on the lives of local people, such as enabling families to live close to each other or local amenities to remain open, can help to alleviate concerns and minimise opposition.

Providing local people with the opportunity to register their interest in an affordable home if a development should take place and encouraging them to register with their local housing authority's Housing Needs Register will also help to reinforce the message that any future properties will be for the benefit of the local community.

### 6.2 Early and continuous involvement

Dialogue with local communities should begin at any early stage, before development has been agreed and local people should be kept involved in decision-making and informed of progress throughout the development process.

Engaging early, consulting on potential sites, initial proposals and building design and quality in an open and transparent manner will help to build trust amongst local residents and a feeling that they are part of the process and not having development "done to them".



English Rural Housing Association

In Newington in Shepway for example, a local drop-in session was held when the housing needs survey was first issued to local residents. That allowed the local authority and Parish Council to start promoting the idea of affordable local needs housing and what it could do for that community and ensured that local residents understood what they survey was about and what they were being asked. In Sevenoaks, a public meeting was held in Knockholt where local residents were invited to help identify potential sites for a proposed affordable local needs housing development.

Holding an information day or other type of community event once plans of the development are available is a good way of getting community feedback on the proposals and can help to alleviate any misconceptions about the proposed development, such as who it is for, how big it will be and what the likely impact will be on the community.



For example in Smarden, a village information and consultation event was held in the village hall. Publicised locally, the proposed plans were made available for feedback, representatives from English Rural Housing Association, Smarden Parish Council, Ashford Borough Council and the Rural Housing Enabler were available to answer questions, and residents were able to leave comments for consideration. The event also gave those interested in applying for one of the homes the opportunity to find out more about how to register an interest.

### **6.3 Who should be involved?**

Parish Councils are key to engaging with the local community. Local housing authorities and Registered Providers should work with the relevant Parish Council to identify who should be engaged with and the best method for reaching as much of the local community as possible. The Rural Housing Enabler can also help to facilitate communications with local people.

Elected Members will also have a pivotal role to play here, by visiting the parish and talking to local residents, attending Parish Council meetings, attending local consultation events and positively promoting the new development and its potential benefits within the local media and to other elected Members.

### **6.4 Neighbourhood planning**

The move towards localism will see an increase in community-led planning at the local level, enabling parishes to set out their own local development priorities, in consultation with local residents, within the Neighbourhood Plans.



More than 100 parishes in rural Kent and Medway have already commenced or completed preparation of their own community-led plans to set a range of social, economic and environmental priorities for the future. A majority of these plans have identified provision of affordable housing as a priority and led to further community-led work on the development of local needs housing in particular. Two examples of this, which are at differing stages of progress, are Bridge and Preston. In each case Housing Needs Surveys

have been conducted following completion of a community-led plan, and Registered Providers appointed to help take forward schemes.

It is therefore critical that local housing authorities engage with Parish Councils and local communities in the preparation of these plans, to ensure that where a need or potential need has been identified, affordable local needs housing is highlighted as a priority within the Neighbourhood Plan. Authorities can either do this directly or through the use of an independent service such as the Rural Housing Enabler service to help facilitate discussions, particularly with community groups.

## 7. Identifying need

The first step to providing new affordable rural local needs housing is to establish what the housing needs are of the local community within the relevant parish.

### 7.1 Understanding local need

Any new housing provision should be suitable for the local community and meet the needs and aspirations of people who live there. Rural housing development should be tailored to the requirements of local people and local housing authorities and Parish Councils should ensure they understand the needs of the local community.

### 7.2 Collecting information

The process for identifying need should be evidence-based. Some of this can be gathered by looking at the local housing authority's Housing Register or District-wide data that may have been collected.

A very valuable source of evidence is information provided direct by local residents about how many people are in need of affordable housing within the parish, what type of housing they need, what they can afford and how many residents would meet the required local connection criteria (see 8.6 below) to be allocated a home once they were built. It is also a good idea at this stage to gain some understanding of the likely support within the community for affordable local needs housing.

This information can then be used throughout the development process to help Registered Providers ascertain how many houses to build within a development, what type of properties would be in demand, whether rental or shared ownership properties are most appropriate etc. This can then be used in support of planning applications.



English Rural Housing Association

This information is normally collected through a Housing Needs Survey. A suggested example is attached at **Annex B**, although the exact questions to be answered will be determined at a local level. Some local housing authorities facilitate a rolling programme of surveys to keep such information current and up-to-date. In Ashford, for example, the local housing authority decided to undertake a refresh of a Housing Needs Survey when a proposed development was challenged, to prove that there was still a current need for the new homes that development would provide.



### **7.3 Who should be involved?**

The Parish Council, local community or the local housing authority can initiate a Housing Needs Survey, if they think there is a potential need for affordable rural housing within a particular area.

It is very important that the survey process and subsequent analysis are unbiased and carried out by an impartial party. The survey must be robust enough to support any future planning application if there is found to be a need to be met. In most cases the survey and analysis are undertaken by the independent Rural Housing Enabler (RHE), who will normally recommend whether there is enough evidence of local housing need to support an affordable local needs housing development in that parish.

## **8. Making it happen**

### **8.1 Identifying sites**

Once a housing need has been identified within a parish, a suitable site needs to be found to build the required new homes. The Rural Housing Enabler and the Parish Council can help here to identify potential sites through a table-top search and then a walk around the parish, often with the local housing and planning officers and the Registered Provider if they are already engaged. Where appropriate, the Rural Housing Enabler can either talk to the landowner direct of a potential site or advise the Parish Council on how to secure the release of the land.

Local planning and highway officers can also help by providing pragmatic advice on the general suitability of potential sites, without requiring Registered Providers to carry out detailed and costly scoping work on all potential sites, such as habitat surveys, at this initial stage.



### **8.2 Acquiring land**

Acquiring a site for development is often one of the trickiest aspects in delivering new housing in rural communities, as land is rarely openly available and private landowners are often reluctant to sell for housing development.

Where there is a need to be met, local authorities should consider whether they or their public sector partners have suitable land within the relevant parish that could be used for housing development.



### 8.2.1 Incentives

In some cases where the suitable land is in private hands, the landowner will agree to make some land available for affordable development to help their local community. Where landowners are more reluctant, local authorities and Registered Providers should consider the use of incentives, such as nomination rights for a small percentage of the properties, to get the landowner to release the land. These could be particularly attractive for local businesses that own land and require accommodation for their workers.



Such an arrangement has experienced success in 2 schemes in Essex: Hatfield Broad Oak, where a landowner directly nominated a retiring farm worker for a shared ownership property and Uttlesford, where the landowner was able to nominate 3 families for first letting/sale. In both cases, the nominations still had to meet local connection criteria.

Where there is robust local evidence to show that rural affordable housing need is not being adequately met and insufficient land is being

made available to acquire, local authorities may wish to consider implementing a departure from policy to allow for a proportion of development within an exception site (see below) to be permitted for open market sale, whilst the rest remain as affordable local needs housing. Authorities would need to set stringent conditions around this to ensure that open market development in rural areas is carefully controlled. Example criteria could include requiring a certain high percentage to be affordable local needs housing, only allowing this to occur on sites on the edge of communities, limiting it to sites of a certain size or only allow the open market properties to be sold once the affordable units are fully occupied.

This could have the benefit of both unlocking sites where a landowner is reluctant to release the land (due to the higher value of the “open market” part of the site) and minimising reliance on grant, by enabling the sale of the open market homes to effectively cross-subsidise the building of the affordable local needs homes. Such an approach has been taken by several local housing authorities in the South West of England, who have had a chronic shortage of affordable local needs homes and land being made available.

### 8.2.2 Exception sites

Even where new land has been made available for development by the owner, this may still not be possible as so much land within rural areas is considered “out of bounds” for new market development, being either Green Belt or within a designated Conservation Area or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

One way of enabling development in such areas is through the use of a **rural exceptions site policy**, a planning policy which allows for planning permission to be granted where a need has been demonstrated, the homes provided will all be affordable and reserved for local people in



perpetuity. These are normally found on the edge of, rather than in centre of, established communities.

The importance of a well-designed exceptions site policy to delivering affordable rural local needs housing is referenced in Planning Policy Statement 3 and was highlighted by DTZ in the evidence base developed for the Kent Forum Housing Strategy. It is therefore recommended that local authorities with Kent and Medway that have rural areas have a rural exception sites policy within their local planning policies.

As exception sites are areas of land where no other development except local needs housing is permissible, the value of land within exception sites is normally lower than that of land where open market development is permissible, helping to keep costs down and making development on the sites viable.

Local authorities, Registered Providers, Parish Councils and landowners should therefore work together to ensure that the value of exception sites reflects the circumstances under which the land can be brought forward for local needs housing and that the price of land is kept at a sensible level.

Whilst it is not realistic to try and set a standard value for exception site land, there is a need to avoid escalating land values so that development of rural affordable local needs housing schemes does not become unaffordable.



### **8.2.3 Other alternatives**

Although beyond the scope of this Protocol, in some cases it may also be possible to deliver affordable housing in rural areas on land which is not part of an exception site, for example as part of a larger mixed-use development. Although this does not have to meet the exception site requirements of local connection criteria and remaining for local people in perpetuity, it would be possible to attach similar conditions to properties to enable them to be inhabited by local people. For example, a new scheme could have a Local Lettings Plan that tied-in with the relevant local authority's local connection criteria.

### **8.3 Planning permission**

Planning permission is granted by the local planning authority, with the assessment of the application carried out by local planning officers.

Design, layout and accessibility requirements are sometimes criticised for being costly, unrealistic and disproportionate to the size of the schemes being developed. Affordable rural housing schemes mainly comprise of small developments with few houses on pockets of land.

Whilst it is right that these should be of good design and quality and in keeping with the local surroundings, a balance needs to be struck.

Local authorities can assist by adopting a pragmatic approach to planning requirements by ensuring that they are proportionate to the size of the proposed scheme.

Similarly, design requirements should be practical and take into account the potential cost of any aesthetic conditions placed on the property. For example, a development in Stone was required to put chimneys on all the properties, despite adjacent properties within the village not having chimneys, entailing extra costs for the Registered Provider involved. A more pragmatic approach was taken in Smeeth and Smarden, where a cheaper synthetic alternative to wood was approved for use as weatherboarding on the outside of the new properties due to its very similar appearance to the real thing.



**Stone**



**Smarden**

English Rural Housing Association

Accessibility and infrastructure requirements should take into account the rural nature of the proposed site and not require urban-style development within village settings. Good examples include Broomfield, where a lit pathway was run behind an existing hedgerow, thus retaining the roadside hedge and the rural feel of the area from the road. However, some rural developments have suffered from “over-engineering”, for example in Biddenden where the properties had very conventionally urban footpaths, kerbs and roads, which are a bit out of keeping with the open green space surrounding it.



**Biddenden**



**Broomfield**



#### **8.4 Working together and local leadership**

Ironing out these issues through joint working at the pre-application stage can save a lot of time and prevent potential delays during the planning application process by ensuring that the planning application submission is fit for purpose.

It is recommended that when developing the initial proposal, a roundtable discussion is held between the major players to discuss the proposal and deal with any potential issues, particularly around access and design, before the planning application is submitted. As well as organisations involved in the delivery of the specific site, such as the Registered Provider, highway officers and local authority housing and planning officers, this could include representatives of the local community, such as Parish Councillors, to ensure that local people's views are taken into account and any concerns dealt with.

Local authorities may also wish to consider operating a regular roundtable of professionals involved in the overall delivery of affordable local needs housing within their area, to enable any strategic issues to be identified and dealt with in a joined-up pragmatic manner. Such an approach has met with considerable success in Ashford.

Elected Members can also play a crucial role in removing blockages to development by engaging with other Members and senior managers where negotiations at officer level have stalled or reached an impasse.

#### **8.5 S.106 agreements**

Once planning permission has been granted for a new affordable rural local needs housing development, a s.106 agreement is agreed between the local housing authority and the Registered Provider. This ensures that the housing built on the development remains affordable and for local people from within the rural community in perpetuity. It will also set out the local connection criteria that are used to allocate the housing once completed.

Some local housing authorities, such as Ashford Borough Council, include a draft s.106 agreement alongside the request for planning permission, to speed up the planning application process and help enable decision-making.

#### **8.6 Local connection criteria**

A recognised local connection is established by assessing an applicant for housing against locally-determined criteria. It is important that these criteria are robust and enforceable to ensure that new housing will only be allocated to local people in need.

It is recommended that the following 3 minimum criteria are used:

- 1.** Length of time resident in the Parish
- 2.** Employment within the Parish
- 3.** The need to live in the Parish to give care or support to immediate family



Individual local housing authorities will set the specifics relating to these criteria, such as the length of time required and the definition of “immediate”. Local housing authorities may also set additional local connection criteria, such as the importance of an applicant’s job to the local economy.

Examples of potential local connection criteria can be found within **Q.15** of the sample Housing Needs Assessment Form at **Annex B**.

### **8.7 Advertising and allocating the new homes**

When the new affordable local needs homes are nearly complete, they can be advertised to local residents both within the parish and through Kent Homechoice, the Kent-wide Choice-Based Lettings system.

Homes will be allocated by the relevant local housing authority to people who are registered as being in housing need and who are able to prove a recognised local connection with the relevant parish.

Once an application has been received for an affordable home, the Parish Council should be consulted on and provide information to the local housing authority or the Registered Provider verifying an applicant’s local connection.



*Ashford Borough Council*

## **9. Implementation**

### **9.1 Governance and monitoring**

It is the intention that this Protocol will be adopted by all District authorities in Kent and Medway Council. It will be owned by the Kent Housing Group (KHG) on behalf of the Kent Forum.

Monitoring of the Protocol against the criteria set out below will be undertaken by the Housing Strategy and Enabling Sub-Group (HSEG) of the KHG. HSEG will report detailed monitoring to the KHG Executive Board and provide regular briefings on progress to the whole KHG.

This will be reported back to the Kent Forum by KHG as part of the overall monitoring of the Kent Forum Housing Strategy.

### **9.2 Monitoring criteria**

The intended effect of the Protocol is to increase the overall amount of affordable rural local needs housing delivered across Kent and Medway.

A baseline of affordable rural local needs housing delivered across Kent and Medway has been undertaken, which has shown that around 17% of identified rural housing need has been met over the last 4 years. The aim of this Protocol is to narrow the gap between need and delivery over the next 4 years.

To assess whether this is being achieved, and establish where any potential blockages may be, the Housing Strategy and Enabling Sub-Group will monitor the following:

1. Number of housing needs surveys undertaken
2. Number of planning consents for affordable rural local needs housing given
3. Number of affordable rural local needs houses completed
4. Length of time taken to get from survey to completion
5. Number of planning refusals and reasons given

### **9.3 Post-occupation surveys**

Once schemes are substantially complete and occupied, surveys of residents' opinions, experiences and travel habits, carried out by Kent Highway Services, will help to establish whether aims and objectives have been met. They will also contribute towards achieving even better developments in the future. It is particularly useful to compare residents' opinions about design and layout quality with professional assessments.

### **9.4 Review**

The lifespan of this version Protocol is 4 years. A formal review of the Protocol and its effectiveness will be carried out by Housing Strategy and Enabling Sub-Group (HSEG) on behalf of KHG in 2015.

If necessary, the Protocol will then be refreshed by HSEG to reflect changes in policy and procedure and any recommendations from the review.





## ANNEX A

### THINGS TO CONSIDER

This provides a summary of useful things to consider for the various players involved in delivering affordable rural local needs housing. This is not intended to be an exhaustive checklist but to act as a reference guide through the development process.

#### 1. Elected Members

- Have you engaged with the Parish Council and/or the local community where the development is proposed?
- Have you promoted the benefits of the proposed rural housing development within your ward?
- Have you highlighted your support for proposed rural housing development within your ward to other elected Members?

#### 2. Parish Councils

- Have you considered affordable rural local needs housing within your local community-led plan?
- Have you had a housing needs assessment undertaken in your parish within the last 2 years?
- Have you engaged with your local residents on the potential positive impacts and benefits the proposed development will have on your parish?
- Have you encouraged local people in housing need to register with the relevant Council?
- Have you provided information to local residents about how to apply for affordable local needs housing and advertised new available homes appropriately within your parish?
- Have you helped the relevant Council to confirm applicants' local connection to your parish?

#### 3. Registered Providers

- Have you selected the most appropriate site for affordable rural local needs housing development based on planning officers' advice?
- Have you worked closely with the relevant Parish Council and considered their views in designing the proposed development?
- Have you consulted with and reflected the views of residents of the relevant parish on the proposed development before submitting a planning application?
- Have you ensured that the design of your proposed development is appropriate for and in keeping with its potential surroundings?
- Have you engaged positively with relevant housing and planning officers and highway officers in the pre-application stage to ensure your application is fit for purpose?
- Are you keeping the relevant Parish Council up-to-date on the progress of the housing development?



- Have you ensured that the relevant Parish Council is advertising the new homes within their parish?

#### **4. Housing officers**

- Is rural housing specifically referenced within your Local Housing Strategy?
- Have you had input into the development of your parishes' community-led plans?
- Have you engaged with the Rural Housing Enabler service?
- Have you encouraged rural Parish Councils to undertake a housing needs assessment?
- Have you provided Parish Councils with the necessary skills and training to support the delivery of affordable rural local needs housing?
- Have you promoted the potential benefits of affordable rural local needs housing to your Members with rural wards?
- Have you engaged with the Parish Council and/or local community as soon as a need has been identified?
- Have you involved the Parish Council and/or local community in the identification of potential sites and Registered Providers to develop the sites?
- Have you ascertained whether the site/ scheme is referenced in your Local Investment Plan?
- Have you contacted the owner of potential sites to ascertain the likelihood of being able to purchase the required land?
- Have you established whether your Council owns any land that may be suitable to meet identified affordable rural local housing need?
- Have you engaged positively with the developing Registered Provider, highway officers and your planning officers in the pre-application stage to ensure the final application is fit for purpose?
- Have you supported the Parish Council and developing Registered Provider in their engagement with local residents on the proposed development?
- Have you informed Elected Members of the proposed development and kept them updated on progress?
- Have you advertised the new available homes on Kent Homechoice?
- Do you have agreed easy-to-understand, set local connection criteria?
- Have you engaged the Parish Council to help confirm applicants' local connections?

#### **5. Planning officers**

- Does your authority have a rural exceptions site policy?
- Does your authority have a specific s.106 agreement for affordable rural local needs housing?
- Have you had input into the development of your Parishes' community-led plan?
- Have you given short, general advice on potential sites that have been identified for affordable rural local needs housing?
- Have you ascertained whether the site/scheme is referenced in your Local Investment Plan?
- Are your planning requirements for the development and their associated costs proportionate to the size of the proposed scheme?
- Are your design requirements for the development realistic in terms of cost to the developer and appropriateness to their surroundings?

- Have you engaged positively in pre-application discussions with your housing colleagues, the relevant Registered Provider and highway officers?

## 6. Highway officers

- Are your highways and /or access requirements for the development and their associated costs proportionate to the size of the proposed development?
- Have you engaged positively with the developing Registered Provider and relevant housing and planning officers in the pre-application stage to ensure the final application is fit for purpose?



English Rural Housing Association



Ashford Borough Council



## ANNEX B

### EXAMPLE HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY

Dear Householder

Owing to the high cost of housing in this area, the Parish Council is considering whether there might be a need for additional affordable housing in XXXX parish so that residents who cannot afford to buy or rent locally will not be forced to move away. Affordable housing means homes that can be rented or part bought (shared ownership) from a Registered Provider. The reason for providing new affordable housing is to help local people of all ages who would like to stay or return to their parish and contribute to the village services that still exist.

We are sending out this Housing Needs Survey to assess the demand and gauge the level of support a small scheme might have in our community. We are doing so with the approval of XXXX Council, whose housing officers have approved this questionnaire. Tessa O'Sullivan, the Rural Housing Enabler from Action with Communities in Rural Kent is assisting us to carry out this survey. **The survey will be analysed by the Rural Housing Enabler, with all information given being kept confidential.** She will then give a summary report to the Parish Council.

Depending on the outcome of this survey, we may try to find a suitable site within the parish of XXXX

The most likely type of site would be what is known as a 'Rural Exception Site', within or on the edge of the village whereby:

- All homes on the site are owned by a Registered Provider (no homes can be sold privately)
- Houses are either rented or part-sold (shared ownership) to tenants
- Only households with a genuine local connection are eligible to be tenants
- There is no Right-to-Buy on these homes so they will always remain affordable for local people.

Once a site is found a village consultation event will be held so that residents of the parish can view and discuss the proposals and put their views forward.

This is a very important issue so please take time to fill in this survey. Even if no one in your household has a housing need, we want to know your views.

**Please return this form using the FREPOST envelope provided by XXXX**

If any further information or additional questionnaires are required please contact the Parish Clerk on XXXX or the Rural Housing Enabler on XXXX

Yours sincerely

XXXX, Chairman of the Parish Council



## HOUSING NEEDS IN THE PARISH OF .....

Please complete this survey on behalf of your household.

### SECTION 1

**Q1. What type of housing do you live in?**  Council property  Private rented  Tied tenancy  
 Housing Association rented  Housing Association shared ownership  Owner occupier (with or without mortgage)  
 Other please specify \_\_\_\_\_  Living with relatives

**Q2. Please enter the following information -**  
Number of bedrooms in your home  Number of people that currently live in the property

**Q3. How long have you lived in the parish?**  
 Less than 1 year  1-5 years  6-10 years  11-15 years  16-25 years  26+ years

**Q4. Have any members of your family/household left the parish in the last 5 years?**  Yes  No

**Q5. If you answered yes to Q4, please state what relationship they have to you.**  
 Child  Parent  Other relative  Other please specify \_\_\_\_\_

**Q6. Please indicate the reason why they left**  
 Lack of affordable housing  To attend university/college  Employment  
 Other please specify \_\_\_\_\_

**Q7. Would they return if more affordable accommodation could be provided?**  
 Yes  No

**Q8. Would you support a small development of affordable housing if there was a proven need for people with a genuine local connection to the parish?**  
 Yes  No

**Q9. Please use this space if you wish to explain your answer to Question 8.**

**Q.10 Do you or a member of your household need separate or alternative accommodation either now or in the next 3 years?**  
 No  Yes, now  Yes, next 3 years

**IF YOU HAVE ANSWERED YES PLEASE CONTINUE WITH SECTION 2.**



## SECTION 2

## HOUSING NEEDS

If you or anyone else living in your house is in need of alternative housing, please continue with the questionnaire. Please complete one form per household in housing need. If you need another form please contact the Rural Housing Enabler on 01303 813790

Q11. Are you completing this form for yourself or someone else?

- Self       Someone else

Q12. If you are completing this for someone else please state their relationship to you and where they currently live eg. with parents, private renting etc.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Please continue to complete this form by answering the questions in respect of the person/household in need of alternative accommodation.

Q13. If you live outside the parish do you wish to return?       Yes       No

Q14. If you live in the parish do you wish to stay in the parish?       Yes       No

Q15. What is your connection with the parish? Please tick all that apply

- I currently live in the parish and have done so continuously for the last 5 years
- I have previously lived in the parish and have immediate\* family who currently live there and have done so continuously for the last 10 years
- I have lived in the parish for a total of 7 out of the last 10 years
- I am in full time or part time\* employment in the parish
- I need to move to the parish to take up full time or part time\* employment
- I need to move to the parish to give or receive support to or from an immediate family member

\*Immediate = mother, father, children or brother/sister

\*Part time = a minimum of 10 hours per week

Q16. What type of household will you be in alternative accommodation?

- Single person       Couple       Family       Other \_\_\_\_\_

Q17. How many people in each age group need alternative accommodation?

**MALE**

0-9     10-15     16-19     20-24     25-44     45-59     60-74     75+

**FEMALE**

0-9     10-15     16-19     20-24     25-44     45-59     60-74     75+



**Q18. Why are you seeking a new home (please tick all that apply)**

- |  |   |  |                                     |
|--|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Present home in need of major repair  | <input type="checkbox"/> To be nearer family    | <input type="checkbox"/> To be nearer work               | <input type="checkbox"/> Retirement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Present home too expensive            | <input type="checkbox"/> Need smaller home      | <input type="checkbox"/> Divorce/separation              | <input type="checkbox"/> New job    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Current home affecting health         | <input type="checkbox"/> Private tenancy ending | <input type="checkbox"/> First independent home          | <input type="checkbox"/> Lodging    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Setting up home with partner          | <input type="checkbox"/> Need larger home       | <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty maintaining home     |                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sheltered accom due to age/infirmity  | <input type="checkbox"/> Disability/disabled    | <input type="checkbox"/> Cannot afford existing mortgage |                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> To move to a better/safer environment | <input type="checkbox"/> Access problems        | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____                     |                                     |

**Q19. What is your current housing situation?**

- |   |  |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Owner occupier with/without mortgage | <input type="checkbox"/> Living with relatives | <input type="checkbox"/> Renting from Council | <input type="checkbox"/> Shared ownership |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Renting from Housing Association     | <input type="checkbox"/> Tied tenancy          | <input type="checkbox"/> Renting privately    | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____      |

**Q20. Please tell us in your own words why you need to move and what prevents you from doing so.**

**Q21. What type of housing do you need? Please tick any that apply.**

- |   |   |                                   |  |
|---|---|-----------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Flat   | <input type="checkbox"/> House  | <input type="checkbox"/> Bungalow | <input type="checkbox"/> Sheltered housing (suitable for older persons with limited support via a warden or lifeline system) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accommodation suitable for older persons without support | <input type="checkbox"/> Extra Care housing (suitable for elderly people with range of support options) |                                   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other please specify _____                               |   |                                   |  |

**Q22. Which tenure would best suit your housing need?**

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Renting - Housing Association/Council | <input type="checkbox"/> Shared ownership - Housing Association | <input type="checkbox"/> Private renting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other please specify _____            |   |  |

**Q23. How many bedrooms will you need?**

- |                            |                            |                            |                            |                             |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5+ |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|

**Q24. Please indicate the total gross annual income (before tax) of the household in housing need (joint if a couple). Do not include housing benefit or council tax benefit.**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Under £10,000     | <input type="checkbox"/> £30,000 - £35,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> £10,000 - £15,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> £35,000 - £40,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> £15,000 - £20,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> £40,000 - £50,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> £20,000 - £25,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> £50,000 - £60,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> £25,000 - £30,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> More than £60,000 |



Q25. How much money could you raise towards the purchase of a property; taking into account any access you have to capital (e.g. equity in your home or savings) as well as the amount you could borrow on a mortgage?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Q26. How much money would you be able to raise as a deposit towards buying your own home?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Q27. Do you have any particular or specialised housing requirements e.g. to assist with a disability or special need? (Please provide details).

Q28. Which method of transport is usually used by members of your household to travel to their place of work/study? Please tick all that apply

- Own car       Car share       Train       Bus       Bike       Walk  
 Mainly work from home       Other please specify \_\_\_\_\_

Q29. How many vehicles are usually available for use by the household?

- 0       1       2       more than 2

Q30. Are you registered on the council's housing register?       Yes       No

To be considered for affordable housing you must also register on ----- Council's Housing Register. If you would like to register contact the Housing Services Team on -----

If you are interested in Local Needs Housing and it is found there is sufficient demand, further survey work may be needed to establish the exact extent of the need.

If it is necessary to update this survey in the future and you are willing to be contacted again, please provide your name, address, telephone number and email address in the space below. All information will be treated as confidential.

\_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM IN THE FREEPOST ENVELOPE PROVIDED**



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This Protocol follows a direct recommendation within the Kent Forum Housing Strategy, which built on research into rural housing carried out by Kerry Higgins from DTZ.

It was developed by a Task and Finish Group set-up by Kent Housing Group. The Group was chaired by Tracey Kerly from Ashford Borough Council and consisted of:

Phillip Bell, Diocese of Canterbury Property Services  
Tim Broomhead, Countryside Landowners Association  
Sophie Day, Homes and Communities Agency  
Ian Hardman, Ward Homes  
Keith Harrison, Action for Communities in Rural Kent  
Liz Harrison, Kent County Council  
Dawn Healy, Hyde Housing Association  
Brian Horton, Kent County Council  
Chris Knowles, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council  
Simon macLachlan, Kent Rural Board  
Adrian Maunders, English Rural Housing Association  
Anita Pearce, Homes and Communities Agency  
Jill Pells, Kent Housing Group  
Jo Purvis, Kent County Council  
Jennifer Shaw, Ashford Borough Council  
Bob White, Kent Highways

The drafting of the Protocol was carried out by Jo Purvis from Kent County Council.