

How can we help deliver new affordable homes?

The development of affordable housing is complex and time consuming. We are facing huge challenges to deliver the right homes in the right places, and this is a particular challenge when delivering homes in rural and coastal areas. The Councils have declared a Housing Crisis and our adopted Housing Strategy details what this is and how we will address issues, which includes increasing the delivery of affordable housing in the Joint Local Plan area.

This is not a new problem; however, it is one that has grown worse in recent times. High property prices, delays in house building, increase of short-term holiday lets and the ability to work from home has resulted in an increase in the migration of people from other areas.

We are striving to deliver new affordable homes for local people and the Housing Crisis that was declared in South Hams enables us to be creative with delivery, such as the introduction of the South Hams Housing Offer.

Getting started

Communities are usually the first to identify the need for affordable housing locally and will then engage specialist help to develop this further.

A launch event is a great way to involve as many from the community as possible at the outset. As the democratically elected body, the Parish or Town Council are usually central to the process, and they will hold an essential role in supporting and promoting the delivery process within the local community.

The Affordable Housing Team can support with organising the information for the launch event. Designed to meet the needs of the community, a workshop style event is simple, effective and can be easy to organise. Issues to cover could include:

- Organisational structure of the group – key contacts and responsibilities
- Aims and objectives of the group
- Key issues to consider:
 - What is local?
 - What is affordable?
 - Housing need – Parish Profile/Housing Need Survey
 - Finding land
 - Housing allocations
 - Neighbourhood Plans
- Next steps and actions

The workshop is facilitated by one or more individuals who will have planned a format to suit the context. Typically, a launch meeting would last 2 hours, and a record is kept of those who attend, the points made and key issues identified.

The local Parish/Community hall would be a suitable venue for this and could be arranged through the local Council. The Housing Delivery Team can make arrangements for relevant council officers to attend and provide equipment such as laptops, projectors, display boards or flipcharts if required.

One of the most important aims would be the creation of a project plan, even if in draft form setting out key tasks and milestones.

A second aim of the launch event is to identify people who are interested in sitting on the project team or willing to support the project where and when they can.

There is a wealth of publicly available information for groups exploring the possibility of forming a community housing organisation (see links on the Resources web-page for some examples). It is recommended that once a group has formed they join an organisation such as The Community Land Trust Network (see [here](#) for details of membership which is currently £85 for the first year). Part of the South Hams Housing Offer Direct Support Grant can be used to cover the cost of a subscription.

The following sections provide an outline of some of the key issues to consider in Affordable Housing Development. Further details can be found in links on the resources page, or by contacting an Affordable Housing Officer at the Council.

Assessment of local need

Parish Profile on Housing:

Each parish within the South Hams will have a parish profile which will detail key information on the type and tenure of the stock in a parish. This will also include the number of people, turnover and number of properties within the parish with our Registered Providers. The average cost of a home and capacity within the local schools will be included in this information. If there are a number of people registered through Devon Home Choice and a site has been identified, we will proceed to the next assessment stage.

Housing Needs Survey:

If the possibility of a site is identified, we will need to collect further information on the community's requirements for housing. Each community has unique housing needs that should be assessed by a housing needs survey which will ascertain the level and nature of the need. The results will inform what kind of action is required. It is vital to get information on all types of housing need, including: 1. People who have left the village but wish to return. 2. Older people who wish to move to smaller, more manageable accommodation. 3. Single people and couples living with family.

Neighbourhood Plans:

Where an adopted Neighbourhood Plan is in place, a Housing Need Survey may have been undertaken. This will have been used as part of the evidence to adopt the plan by the Planning Inspectorate and will also have been through a referendum with the local community. Some Neighbourhood Plans will have allocated sites for Affordable Housing within their policies.

Land for potential sites

A significant challenge will be to find an appropriate site or property for development and The South Hams Housing Offer can help with this process. The results of the Housing Needs Survey should be analysed to see if it identified how many homes are needed and if any sites are identified. An Exception site may be considered for areas facing difficulty with the supply of land for affordable housing to meet identified local needs. This allows for small sites within or adjoining settlements to meet the local affordable housing need of the right tenure.

Exception sites

The 'Exception Sites Policy' allows small scale developments in rural communities to meet local housing needs within a particular Parish. They are usually provided on sites that would not otherwise be allocated for housing.

An exception site may be granted planning permission if a scheme:

- Is affordable housing led i.e. majority of the homes are affordable as per policy TTV27 of the Joint Local Plan [Joint Local Plan](#)
- Meets an identified need for affordable housing in the community
- Is in scale and keeping with the village
- Is well related to community services and facilities
- Is adjacent or adjoining the development boundary of the settlement In all cases planning permission will be subject to a planning condition or obligation to ensure the affordable housing remains available and affordable in perpetuity to meet local housing needs.

Neighbourhood Planning

Neighbourhood Plans were introduced through the Localism Act 2011. Communities can shape development in their areas through the production of Neighbourhood Development Plans or Orders. Once adopted, Neighbourhood Development Plans and Orders have statutory weight. Decision makers will be obliged by law to take what it says into account when considering proposals for development in the area the plan or order covers.

<https://www.neighbourhoodplanning.swdevon.gov.uk/>

Section 106 (s106) agreements

A Section 106 agreement is a list of planning conditions that must be fulfilled by a developer wishing to build a scheme. It must include all financial and on-site contributions which are required for the following:

- Onsite affordable housing
- Offsite contributions for affordable housing
- Education
- Highway improvements
- Open Space and Recreation (OSSR)

For example, a scheme in a town may require a contribution to a traffic management scheme or towards nearby open space or play facilities.

For rural schemes the s106 will include clauses referring to keeping the houses for local people, and the size, type and tenure of the properties.

It will also include information regarding the allocation criteria (circumstances around who can live in the houses).

Community Land Trusts

Community Land Trusts or CLTs are democratic, non-profit, community-based organisation that are run by representative (volunteer) directors who develop housing and other assets, such as business units, that are owned and controlled by the community.

- A CLT must be set up to benefit a defined local community - the individuals who live or work or want to live or work within the area.
- A CLT must be not-for-profit - they can, and should, make a surplus as a community business, but that surplus must be used to benefit the community.
- Local people must be able to join the CLT - those living and working within the community must have the opportunity to join the CLT as members if they support the CLTs aims.
- Members control the CLT - members must have a controlling vote in Annual General Meetings and the Board, though other stakeholders can be included in the governance.

CLTs are a way of ensuring that homes are permanently and genuinely affordable and that the community assets are kept for the benefit of the local community in perpetuity.

People set up and join CLTs for a number of reasons; lack of affordable housing, turning around local areas or shaping their local area long term.

In order to deliver schemes CLT's will often work in partnership with the Parish Council, the District Council, a Registered Provider and Landowner. This team will need to:

- Engage and consult with the local community
- Help with the assessment of the local need
- Identify land or property for potential sites
- Liaise and negotiate with the planning authorities, design and project consultants and building contractors
- Access loans and grants to fund the development
- Provide expertise to ensure that developments are well-designed
- Build the homes
- Manage the properties and land

Self Build

Defined in the Self Build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015, individuals or persons working with or for individuals or associations of individuals, build or complete houses to be occupied as homes by those individuals. It can include affordable housing and may be part of a Community Led Housing scheme. All Local Authorities must have a register of people who would like to be involved in a self-build property or project.

Funding projects

The South Hams Housing Offer is designed to fund preliminary layout sketches in order to confirm the number of properties a site can accommodate and if it is viable or not. To develop the scheme further additional funding will need to be secured which can be from a variety of sources including:

- Homes England funding
- S106 receipts held by the Council

- Registered Provider own borrowing
- Crowd Funding
- Community Land Trust specific funding

The Housing Delivery Team will work with you in formulating a strategy to take projects forward.

Managing the properties

There are Registered Providers (RPs), formerly known as Housing Associations who currently work within the South Hams area. The Council will be able to advise you on this and suggest who might be the most appropriate RP to develop the scheme in your parish. Some RP's have minimum numbers of properties that will need to be on site for management purposes. Additionally, they may also need to have other stock in or around the location of a potential site.

Allocation of Affordable Rented Properties

Devon Home Choice

Council and Housing Association homes which are available to rent in Devon are advertised on Devon Home Choice. People who are registered with Devon Home Choice can look at the properties available and say which ones they would like to be considered for by placing a 'bid'.

When 'bidding' through Devon Home Choice (www.devonhomechoice.com) has closed, the allocation shortlisting is completed by the relevant registered provider to ensure that applicants meet the relevant criteria before a formal offer of accommodation can be made. Where there are complex requirements, such as strict local connection criteria or priority for a need for adaptations, it may take some time for the verification process to be completed and for a formal offer to be made.

Affordable rented properties are allocated in accordance with Devon Home Choice policy and the Local Allocations Policy. This enables the Council to respond to the priorities of the local community to achieve a more balanced and sustainable community. The Allocations Policy prioritises applicants to ensure that 50% of all new affordable rented homes in the four main towns are set aside for applicants in housing need (bands A to D) who qualify through the local connection criteria listed below. In rural areas with less than 100 general needs affordable rented properties, those with a local connection to the parish in housing need bands A to D will take priority for an allocation.

Schemes delivered on a Rural Exception Site will be allocated to those registered on Devon Home Choice who have a local connection to the parish of provision, or 'parish cluster', if this is meeting the needs of the wider parish catchment area in Bands A – E.

Local Lettings Plans:

This can stand alone or in addition to a section 106 agreement that will determine who can live in affordable properties. This can secure connections to work, family and employment as well as other 'reasonable' reasons, to ensure that people important to the community are housed in an affordable home if they are not able to rent or buy from the open market.

Local connection criteria:

- Residence in the parish/town for 3 out of the 5 years preceding the allocation.

- Lived in the parish/town for 6 out of 12 months preceding the allocation
- Immediate family (parents, siblings and children) have lived in the parish/town themselves for 5 years preceding the allocation.
- Permanent employment in the parish/town – not of a casual nature

Schemes delivered in Dartmoor National Park and on exception sites will be controlled by specific criteria responding to the needs of a particular parish.

Planning process

The planning process is subject to its own rules, its own legislation and the process of submitting a planning application can be found at <https://www.southhams.gov.uk/planning>.

If a scheme is submitted for 100% Affordable Housing then the Pre-application service is free of charge. This is something the Council Housing Delivery team can organise on your behalf as part of the South Hams Housing Offer.

Glossary

The Council is aware that different terminology and phrases can be used in Affordable Housing. The Glossary below is a guide to make interpretation of this more user friendly.

Affordable Housing: Affordable housing includes social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing (including Low Cost Home Ownership options), provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market

Allocated Site: An allocated site is one whereby the principle of development is agreed. Allocations are accompanied by specific policy requirements related to the allocation. An allocated site does not mean the site has planning permission – a planning application would need to be approved before development can begin. However, as the use on the site has been agreed ‘in principle’, the planning application would set out the details – including how the scheme would meet the policy requirements related to the allocation

Community Land Trust (CLT): Community Land Trusts are a form of community-led housing, set up and run by local people to develop and manage homes as well as other assets. CLTs act as long-term stewards of housing, ensuring that it remains genuinely affordable, based on what people actually earn in their area, not just for now but for every future occupier.

Commuted Sum: Also known as S106 financial contributions. These are a financial sum taken in place of on-site provision of affordable housing. Its future use will be to support affordable housing delivery, but this need not be in the community where it has been levied.

Covenant:	A formal and binding legal agreement between two or more people. Can be used to secure long-term affordability of homes developed as affordable housing
Custom build:	Custom build homes are where an individual or a group works with a developer to help deliver a home. The developer may help to find a plot, manage the construction and arrange the finance for the new home. This is more of a hands-off approach compared to self-build but the home will be tailored to match the individuals/groups requirements
Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG):	A mandatory means-tested grant payable by a local authority to meet or contribute to the cost of improvement and/or adaptation to a disabled person's property, the adaptation which is intended to assist with independent living in the community.
Discount Market Housing:	Homes sold at below market value with the percentage reduction secured for future sales by covenant and/or a Section 106 Agreement.
Economic Viability Assessment/ Financial Development Appraisal:	Assessment of the costs of building and the income of a proposed scheme. Used to determine if or how a scheme could be financially viable.
Fuel poverty:	A term used to refer to households with high heating costs relative to income. In 2013 the government changed the definition and methodology used to calculate fuel poverty although the basic principle remains the same.
Homes England:	A government agency with responsibility for housing and regeneration including providing investment for new housing development and acting as the regulator for social housing providers in England.
Joint local plan:	The document that South Hams & West Devon adopted with Plymouth City Council to reflect planning legislation with a local perspective
Neighbourhood Plan (NP):	A development plan for a formally defined Neighbourhood Area by a Neighbourhood Planning Group. Once it has been approved through a formal Inspection and passed by a local referendum it becomes part of the Local Plan for the area.
Planning Conditions:	Conditions imposed on a grant of planning permission. They may require additional approvals for specific aspects of the development or restrict the use of the site, such as that the housing should be occupied by people with a defined housing need and local connection
Planning Obligations (also known as S106 Agreements):	Private agreements between local authorities and developers that are attached to a planning permission to make acceptable a development that would otherwise be unacceptable. This runs with the land, not the developer, so providing perpetuity to

the requirements, such as occupancy and local connection criteria.

RP: Registered Provider (Housing Association)

Rural Exception Site : Small site within or adjoining a rural settlement that would not normally be considered suitable for residential development but may be granted planning permission where the development meets a local need for affordable housing in perpetuity.

Self and Custom Build Housing: Defined in the Self Build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015, individuals or persons working with or for individuals or associations of individuals, build or complete houses to be occupied as homes by those individuals. It can include affordable housing and may be part of a Community Led Housing scheme

SHMNA: Strategic Housing Market Needs Assessment: The Government's National Policy Planning Framework (NPPF) requires each Local Authority to undertake a SHMNA as part of the evidence base required to inform Local Plans. A SHMNA seeks to assess the long term need and affordability of housing in the area and is based on demographic and economic trends. The latest SHMA for South Hams and West was published in 2017.
<https://www.plymouth.gov.uk/sites/default/files/StrategicHousingMarketNeedsAssessmentPart2.pdf>

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD): Formally adopted document produced by the local planning authority that provides detailed guidance for the implementation of policies in the Local Plan. These are often subject specific, for example, affordable housing or design.

Threshold/affordable housing threshold: The size of development or site that will trigger an affordable housing contribution. This, along with the size of the affordable housing contribution, will be set out in the Local Plan.