

Affordable housing ideas referred from Communities Overview Scrutiny Committee 20th January 2010 –

Actions agreed following Communities Think Tank held 17 February 2010

	Item raised	Actions/thoughts	Action to take
1	General Planning		
1.1	Link a series of rural sites together – initial risks/costs carried by Council. Then offer to RSLs	Shouldn't be just rural sites. Need a pot of money for initial work on potential sites. RSLs at WHSP supported idea of linking sites together.	A development 'pot of money' would make sense and needs to be considered corporately. *
1.2	Why do needs assessments? We know there's a need. Assessments take time.	Arrangement with CCD only funds about 4/5 assessments per year. Strategy team investigating whether information held on Housing Registers etc would be sufficient to show need. What data will be available from Devon Home Choice?	Check whether Planning policy would tolerate a lower standard of "general evidence". *
1.3	Ensure community buys into the process – need strong community leaders	Need to work with town and parish councils – possibly hold 'summit' for them, or attend their meetings to spread knowledge, hear concerns etc	Part of LDF process is picking this up – work with clusters of villages.
1.4	New rural position statement – stop gap between low land values and result of SHLAA. Sites need to be viable.	Situation forms part of LDF.	Achieved. Further work required for LDF.
2	Rural Issues		
2.1	Internal investment in experience/staff to speed up process	Mostly we are working through 'third parties'.	A matter for Rationalisation Board.
2.2	Interim rural departure policy – sustainable?	Rural position statement already in place.	Achieved (interim policy pending LDF).
2.3	Older people – schemes often for families – need to consider retirement issues and better incentives to downsize	May mean sites don't meet density requirements if building bungalows etc. Need to talk to local community. TALCP undertaking work on downsizing incentive scheme. Also need to consider outcome of decommissioning exercise and what use houses/land that are decommissioned can be put to	Not accepted, contrary to Housing Market Assessment. Recognise need for downsizing work (in hand via TALCP), 'Extra Care' Homes are required.
2.4	Bottlenecks – why do schemes take so long? Rural schemes can take up to 5 years to deliver	New interim policy may speed things up	Excellent Rural; Housing Enabler guidance on streamlining is now available. Suggest a workshop for Members. *
3	Housing & Communities		

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3.1	Exploring non traditional methods of construction	Is Council prepared to subsidise this? Strategy Team to do more research on what has taken place elsewhere etc	Agree the principles but this is longer term as the current economic climate is not conducive to lending on such property.
3.2	Acquiring ready built properties	Tried and need to continue – but lack of money	Some work completed. Costs likely to be prohibitive compared to rent.
3.3	CPO – sites with planning permission not yet implemented		CPO's are a last resort, and high cost. No immediate need.
3.4	Flexibility of policies – more time for negotiating individual sites	Planning are flexible	Already in hand.
3.5	Community Infrastructure Levy waived for RSLs	Won't apply immediately to RSLs – consider at a later date	CIL not yet in place. Longer term matter
3.6	Seed funding – LA to put money into partners to do preliminary investigation work	Similar to 1.1 as pot of money required	See response to 1.1
3.7	Private sector – better integration – empty homes into use	CPOs? See 3.4 above	See 4.1 below
3.8	Government to properly fund the cost of affordable housing	Need to lobby government	Lobbying government already on returning their annual levy to use for affordable housing.
4	Private Sector Housing & Empty Homes		
4.1	Empty homes – effectively bring back. Concern that not enough is being done. Council works with EHA – need more resources in ED – large potential pool	To be taken up by Environmental Health. Could be picked up by their policies	CPO's (see 3.3) – Change of use of key village facilities needs to be considered in LDF, Empty Homes - already directly being contacted (if long term empty). Management controls are available in extreme cases but there is a significant cost.
4.2	CPOs		
4.3	Speed with which process is dealt with – need to be more aggressive		
4.4	How can private sector help meet need – empty pubs etc – need to be more flexible/proactive		*
5	Planning Policy		
5.1	Housing need in all areas across district		This is recognised and being addressed.
5.2	Scrap planning policy	No. This is a legal requirement	Not legally possible. LDF is opportunity for change.
6	Key points – blue sky		

thinking session			
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6.1	Why does affordable housing need to be built to a higher standard than open market housing?	To access grant funding. If council build directly without using grant funding doesn't need to be to that standard	This is only a condition of funding. Brownfield redevelopment an especial financial problem.
6.2	Need to address 'nimby'/'banana' attitudes – strong messages need to go out to communities	See 1.4	Continue contact with Parishes.
6.3	Need to address under-occupation in council housing. Can we have clause in secure tenancy agreement? Improve the incentives offered?	See 2.5 above Strategy Team to investigate further whether secure tenancy agreement can be used in this way. No response received to call on Housemark.	See 2.3 re downsizing – already being addressed. (Does not increase housing stock or rental income however).
6.4	Increase the tax on 2nd and 3rd homes – probably enough housing in Devon but much not properly used	Strategy Team to research tax on 2nd and 3rd homes	Already maximised. (90% is legal maximum)
6.5	Council keen to work with anyone putting in bids for funding from HCA	Need to get the message out to all communities	Message to be promoted.
6.6	Difference between base rate and mortgage rates inequitable – need to raise with government		Being raised by local MP.
6.7	ED low wage economy – some people in full time work on benefits	Statement links to other work	Issue recognised and being addressed generally.
6.8	Need a can do approach – many developments declined initially and only come through on appeal	Need to lose the policy driven mind set – adopt a 'how can we deliver affordable housing here?' attitude	Virtual Affordable Housing team established to tackle this.

*Actions now to be taken