

Neighbourhood *Planning*



Rural Affordable Housing

Local housing for local people

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is affordable housing?

Affordable housing is part of a Government initiative designed to help individuals and families gain better access to housing and help first time buyers get a foot on the property ladder by providing low cost housing.

As a result of high property values there are two affordable housing 'products' that are best suited to rural areas, these are:

Shared Ownership

This product is part buy and part rent of an affordable home. The purchaser buys a share in the property, usually 25%, 50% or 75%, and pays an affordable rent to a Housing Association (Registered Provider) on the remaining share. The purchasers have the option to buy further shares up to 80%* ownership of the property.

**In rural areas, shared ownership is capped at 80% to ensure the property remains affordable in perpetuity.*

Affordable Rent

Affordable homes are rented above social rent but below market rents. These properties are generally managed by Housing Associations and the lower rental cost is up to 80% of the full local market rent.

2. Who is affordable housing for?

Affordable housing is aimed at people who are either first time buyers, unable to buy a home on the open market or are looking to rent but cannot afford to pay market rents.

The eligibility criterion to qualify for an affordable home includes the following:

- Household income must be such that it is not possible to afford to buy or rent a property at open market values
- There must be a local connection to the immediate area

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Applicants are assessed on their suitability to the scheme and each development is different.

3. How do you ensure local people are able to benefit from the affordable houses?

New development of affordable housing is covered by a planning obligation which includes local connection criteria (outlined below) that is used when allocating the properties.

- All applicants would be prioritised against need criteria as per the Choice Based Letting banding A to D
- Resident in the Parish for the 12 months immediately preceding the date of application for the Affordable Housing Unit or who have at any time previously resided in the Parish for at least 5 years; or
- have a Strong Local Connection with the Parish through a (i) close family connection in the Parish
(ii) being employed within the Parish

4. How is need for local housing established?

Housing need is established through the Borough Council's Strategic Housing Market Assessment (updated July 2013) which is developed in-line with Government guidance and provides an assessment of housing need at an operational level. This document provides the Council with an indication of the level of need for affordable housing in an area.

5. How do you ensure the houses remain affordable in the future?

In rural areas, ownership is capped at 80% to ensure the property remains affordable in perpetuity.

6. How are the affordable homes allocated?

The houses would be advertised and allocated by the Housing Association who has undertaken the development according to the planning obligation outlined in question 3 (i.e. local connection). This would be done in partnership with the Parish Council and Borough Council.

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7. Can the Parish Council be involved with the allocations of the properties?

This would depend on the Housing Association, although the Borough Council would recommend they were not involved with decision making but oversee the process.

8. Who manages the affordable homes once they are developed?

The homes will be managed by the Housing Association who developed them.

9. Can local people influence the development?

The Borough Council prefers that any development of affordable housing needs to be done in partnership with the Parish / Town Council and the community should be consulted. Housing Associations usually talk to Parish / Town Councils at an early stage and will where possible take their views on board.

10. What can the local community do if it disagrees with the proposed location of a development?

If the community identifies a more appropriate site for development at an early stage of the process they should notify their Town / Parish Council who will inform the Housing Association. The Housing Association would then investigate the feasibility of the preferred location in terms of availability of the land, planning policy etc.

Documentation prepared by Housing Strategy, Cheshire West and Chester Council