

WHAT IS YOUR VIEW ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING?

In recent years, the dramatic rise in property values has led not only to first time buyers but also people on modest incomes being priced out of the housing market, especially in rural areas. Yet these are exactly the people who often work in key service areas (such as the local Primary School teacher), contribute greatly to the local community or who have strong ties to the village.

People are being forced to move out of villages, away from communities in which they have lived and contributed. Affordable housing gives local people the opportunity to stay – where at the moment they have little option.

Rural affordable schemes are small scale not large scale developments. We are typically looking from 4 up to 14 properties on individual sites.

Where a village has an identified need, the new occupants will be limited to those with an already established, strong local connection to the village. This applies to new and subsequent occupants.

Providing homes that are more affordable means providing both rented housing and shared ownership. Shared ownership (now sometimes referred to as Home Buy) allows people to purchase usually between a 25% and a 75% share in the property they live, so they pay part mortgage and part fair rent. Households can purchase an initial 25% and after time purchase a greater share – this is called staircasing.

A legal agreement would be included to limit stair casing, or the share of ownership in a property, to 80% (for every occupant) to help ensure properties remain affordable in the future. There is no Right to Buy on these schemes.

Affordable housing does not mean poor quality housing. Building Regulations must still be enforced.

Provision of affordable housing is not limited to new development. Whenever possible it includes utilising existing redundant property.

Little Leigh Parish Council has been approached about affordable housing and supports the Borough Council in conducting a survey on the subject. A questionnaire will be sent out in January and its intention is to gather the views of the wider community on the provision of affordable housing in the Parish and establish the degree of need for affordable housing from people with a local connection to the Parish.

For more information you can contact Phil Addison on telephone 01606 867879 or email phil.addison@valeroyal.gov.uk. Funded by DEFRA (Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs), Phil is this region's Rural Housing Enabler whose role is to advise on rural affordable housing.