

# HOPE for those who can no longer afford to live in Wealden

AVERAGE house prices in Wealden have risen by 67% over the last four years to stand at £236,244 in June 2004. With many households in rural areas only bringing in £20,000 a year, taking on a mortgage has become increasingly difficult.

A housing needs survey of 38 parishes carried out by Action in Rural Sussex on behalf of Wealden and local parish councils indicated the need for around 500 affordable housing units, with one bedroom flats the chief requirement. Single people and couples aged between 20-29 years were most in need of affordable housing. Other needs included older people looking for suitable smaller accommodation and teenagers who will need accommodation in the future.

## How we make housing affordable

Much of Wealden's countryside is protected for its landscape and nature so the availability of housing development is limited, pushing up its value. To keep development costs down, the HOPE (Housing Our PEople) scheme identifies sites not eligible for full residential planning permission but where, under new planning guidance, community housing can be built.

Landowners can expect a price higher than agricultural value, and the village will get new homes for dependant relatives and key local workers. The new homes will be owned by housing associations, and provide mainly rental accommodation.

The first affordable homes are unlikely to be built for two years. Each village is being consulted about the inclusion of sites for community homes in their parish as part of the non-statutory Draft Local Plan. Normal planning procedures will then have to be followed before any building begins.

## Helping those who want to live and work locally

Priority for affordable housing in each village will be given to:

- people who have lived there for at least 12 months or have been brought up in the village,
- previous residents who have been forced to leave through lack of affordable accommodation,
- people who do important jobs which require them to live close to the community,
- people with a genuine offer of local employment who are unable to take it up because of the lack of affordable housing.

The need for affordable homes in Wealden towns is covered by development rules which stipulate that 20% of any new housing development of a certain size provides homes for the low income sector.



Wealden has over 150 households living in temporary accommodation, as well as over 2000 names on our housing register of people looking for accommodation.



Average adult earnings in Wealden have risen by less than 4% since 2000, according to the Government's New Earning Survey.



Wealden's HOPE project was short-listed for Beacon Status by the Government for its work with affordable housing.

