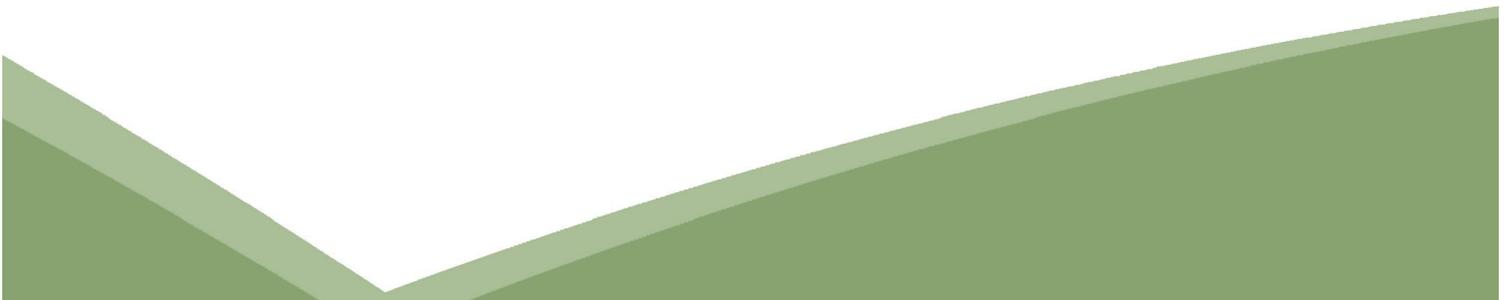


HOUSING – PLANNING PROTOCOL

RURAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING SCHEMES

October 2008



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HOUSING – PLANNING PROTOCOL

RURAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING SCHEMES

INTRODUCTION

Cabinet identified the issue of affordable housing as a key priority of the Council and agreed to include a review of delivery, especially in rural areas where need is most acute, as part of the 2007-2008 work programme of the Community Scrutiny Committee.

As a result a working party was established to review rural affordable housing and the HOPE project and a number of recommendations were made including:

“A delivery project team be created for each site which includes representation from, planning, housing, local member, RSL and parish council. A key aim of this is to provide consistency of approach”.

This document lays down a protocol for the delivery of rural affordable housing schemes Using exception sites. It is anticipated that a further protocol will be drafted in respect of a project team approach for major allocated / windfall sites.

Key to the success of delivering Rural Exception Sites will be a partnership approach, with Community Leaders i.e local Wealden members and Parish Councils coming forward and promoting sites to meet the needs of local people.

It is accepted however that the majority of affordable housing in the district as a whole will not come from rural exception sites but from major allocation/ windfall sites .

PRINCIPLES:

- a) Affordable housing is a major priority of the Council. It is important that all parties work together in partnership to maximise the provision of affordable housing within the District to meet need, as well as protecting and enhancing the environment.
- b) Regular and open discussion is crucial in the progression of affordable housing projects, so that all parties are aware of the risks/constraints and to ensure consistent advice is provided by the Council to landowners/ prospective applicants and RSLs

KEY PARTNERS TO TAKE RURAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING FORWARD

The partners in an affordable housing scheme will vary on a project by project basis, but the main partners and their roles are detailed as follows:

a) Landowner Agent Developer: A key to providing affordable housing in rural areas is finding suitable sites and getting the agreement of the landowner particularly as Land values will need to be considerably lower than open market value, in order that the scheme can be made “affordable”.

b) Local Ward Members: as Community leaders need to be actively seeking out Landowners to bring forward suitable sites, that would otherwise be unacceptable if they were not for affordable housing. Local Ward Members need to be sponsors of affordable housing sites in their wards and be a key link with local people, developers and Parish Councils.

c) Parish Council: To work with the District Council and local Ward Members to sponsor the need for affordable housing in their parish. The Parish Council needs to work with the Local Ward Members to encourage Landowners to bring forward suitable sites, that would otherwise be unacceptable if they were not for affordable housing. The Parish Council needs to ensure that the local views of the community are expressed, but also that the local community is appraised of the issues with housing need etc.

d) Officers of the Council: Housing Development Officers - who will establish the need for affordable housing, and Planning Officers who will consider site suitability in relation to planning policy.
NB: other specialist officers from Policy/ Building Control / etc will be involved as required.

e) Registered Social Landlord (RSL): To take forward Wealden’s requirements and design and develop an acceptable scheme. To liaise with funders, land owner and others in securing and developing the site.

f) Statutory Authorities: To provide timely advice and guidance in providing the necessary infrastructure etc. to allow development of the scheme, e.g. highways, water etc.

THE ROLE OF PARTNERS

The role of the partners is to progress suitable sites for affordable housing to formal planning application stage, with a view to facilitating an efficient, effective and consistent process to aid in the delivery of Affordable Housing. The partners role is not to act as a planning committee or meet at every stage of a project as a whole team. The goal of the partnership is to improve the delivery of the recognised need for affordable housing.

COMMUNICATIONS

Communications between all parties are critical. The Housing Development Officers will ensure that all partners are kept involved and informed about the development of the site. They will regularly update partners at key stages during the project.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT OF RURAL AFFORDABLE EXCEPTION SITES

There are 6 key stages in taking forward Rural Affordable Exception Sites.

- Site Identification stage
- Assessment of Proposal stage
- Design stage
- Application stage
- Post Decision stage
- Completion stage

NB The involvement of relevant partners will not be the same throughout this process. Officers will ensure local members and Parishes are kept up to date at each stage

Site Identification Stage

Sites are identified in a number of ways:

- a. Direct approach from a landowner
- b. Approach from a developer / agent.
- c. From the local Parish Council.
- d. From the local Ward Member.
- e. From Planning Services.
- f. Direct from a RSL.
- g. From Housing

Once a site has been identified then Housing Development and Planning will establish:

- a. Planning: will establish the suitability of the site in relation to Local and National Planning Policy.
- b. Housing: will confirm the housing need and requirements in the area, and the appropriateness of the site in relation to this need for affordable housing.

Assessment Stage

Planning Services will respond in writing to Housing, the local Ward member and the Parish Council setting out the suitability or otherwise of the site. Housing Development will then contact the agent in writing (with a copy sent to the Ward Member) as to whether site is acceptable or not.

If a site is acceptable, Housing Development will encourage the landowner, developer or agent to work with one of Wealden's partner RSLs, to deliver a scheme. Housing Services will maintain a register of sites considered unacceptable.

The Landowner/ Developer/ Agent of suitable sites will be invited to work with the planning and housing departments and will be given a specific brief led by the Housing Development Officer based upon the specific local affordable housing need, to develop appropriate proposals for the site (in liaison with the planning department). Once initial proposals have been formulated, an invitation will be extended to the applicant/agent to attend one of the fortnightly meetings between housing / planning to present initial proposals. Any plans/ layouts to be tabled will be required by Officers at least 7 working days in advance. The Ward Member and a Parish Council rep will also be invited to attend. In addition, when appropriate, specialists/ external consultants will be invited to attend.

Design stage

This stage follows acceptance of the site's potential from Planning Officers and Housing Development Officers

The applicant will continue to liaise with Planning Services and Housing Development Officers to develop detailed proposals. This may be via correspondence or further meetings (plans submitted 7 working days in advance) with consultants and/or specialists invited as appropriate. Should there be any major departures from the principle discussions at the meeting which the Ward Member and representative of the Parish Council attended, Officers will inform the Ward Member / Parish Council for their comment. Planning will maintain a progress sheet, accessible on request by Members and Officers.

If Officers are aware of a potential submission date of a formal planning application, the Ward Member and the Parish Council will be alerted.

Application Stage

The application will be allocated to a Planning Case Officer. If this is not the planning officer involved at inception, then the planning officer present at inception will liaise with the Planning Case Officer in relation to the pre-application discussions. Housing Development Officers will endeavour to respond to consultation requests within the 21 day timescale and give information appropriate to the particular development, as well as in relation to the Housing Need in the particular Parish. It should be recognised that as a scheme enters the public domain there often follows an increase in demand for affordable housing in the locality. Housing Development Officers will also be available to attend any planning sub-committee meeting where a rural affordable housing exception site proposal is being considered. Once an application has been approved, Housing Development Officers will be required to liaise with planning in relation to the negotiations the S106 Legal

Agreement. Legal Services will also be notified at this stage to enable them to programme in drafting of the S106.

The partners will work together to ensure members of the Development Control Committees are fully briefed by Community Leaders and officers with regard to the proposals on local need.

Post Application Stage

This stage will follow granting of planning permission, gaining of legal ownership of land and successful grant funding. Housing Development Officers will ensure that a progress report is available to the Local Member and Parish Council representative on a monthly basis and through the Housing page of the Wealden DC website.

The Planning Case Officer for the planning application will liaise with the applicant/agent/contractor/RSL in relation to the discharge of planning conditions or the requirements of S106 Legal Agreements. Requests to discharge planning conditions will be required to be submitted on the correct forms with the relevant planning fee. Planning will endeavour to respond to condition discharge requests within the Government guideline of 8 weeks. When drawing up timescales for the development, the applicant/agent/contractor/RSL will need to plan in contingency periods for any additional condition information requested. A development timetable will be produced by RSL for Community Leaders and Officers

The RSL will ensure that appropriate project management of the construction period is undertaken to ensure that the development is carried out in a prompt manner, in accordance with the planning approval and any requirements within an accompanying S106 Legal Agreement.

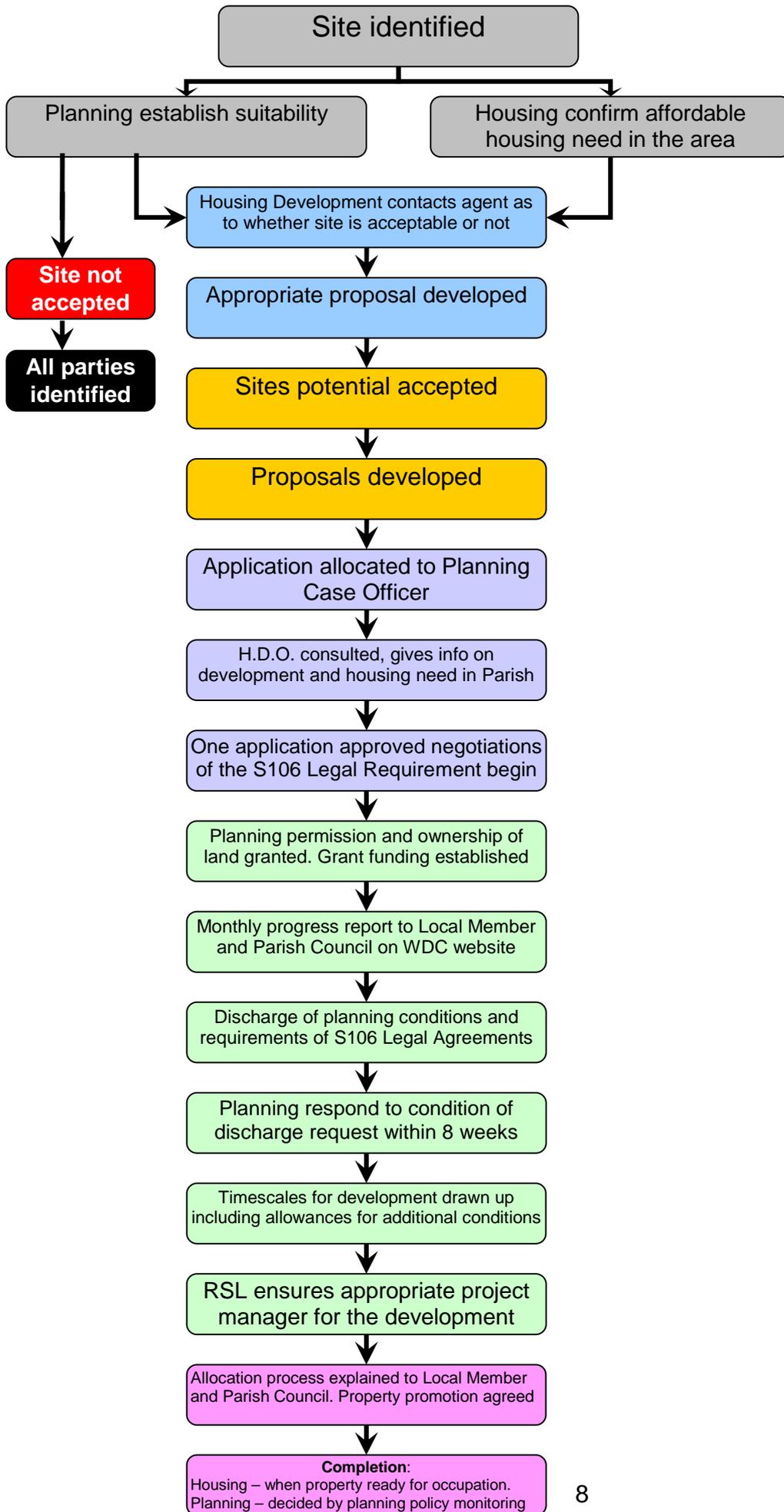
Completion Stage

Six months prior to the completion of the scheme, the Housing Options Team Leader will meet with the Local Member and the Parish Council to explain the allocations process and timescale. He / she will also agree how the properties will be promoted to ensure maximum publicity with local people.

Should a major problem occur with the development, i.e. the contractor going into liquidation then the Ward Member and Parish Council will be informed and kept up to date with negotiations.

Completion for Housing purposes will be when the property is ready for letting / occupation. Completion for Planning purposes will be determined by planning policy monitoring.

Flow Chart detailing Project Management Of Rural Affordable



Stage	Responsibility
Identification Stage	Planning / Housing
	Housing Development
Assessment Stage	Housing Development / Developer / Landowner / Agent
	Planning Officer / Housing Development Officer
Design Stage	Applicant / Planning Services / Housing Development Officer
	Planning Case Officer / Planning Officer
Application Stage	Housing Development Officer
	Housing Development Officer / Planning
Post Application Stage	Housing Development Officer
	Planning Case Officer / applicant / agent / contractor / RSL
	Planning
	Applicant / agent / contractor / RSL
Completion Stage	RSL
	Housing Options Team Leader / Local Member / Parish Council
	Planning / Housing