



CAN WE WORK TOGETHER?

There are several options for landowners contemplating an affordable housing scheme:

- to develop it themselves
- to sell land to the Rural Housing Trust to develop (using the RHT exception site model of development)
- to use the Rural Housing Trust as (paid) advisers

Our regional fieldworkers will be pleased to discuss your ideas.
If you do not know your local fieldworker,
please contact us at the address below or see our website.

The Rural Housing Trust, established 1976 at the National Agricultural Centre, is a leading developer of affordable housing for local people in small villages. Since 1990, the Trust has built 3,000 homes in nearly 350 villages in 34 counties. Schemes usually contain 8–12 houses, occasionally more, and are for shared ownership or for rent. We work in partnership with Parish Councils and local communities to ensure schemes are well supported and meet genuine housing needs. Our aim is to help sustain balanced, and therefore thriving, rural communities.

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Affordable village housing through the

Rural Housing Trust

How landowners can help



The Rural Housing Trust has worked with many different kinds of landowner, including small farmers, large family estates, private companies, local authorities, the Diocesan Boards, Church Commissioners, National Trust and Crown Estate. We are fieldworkers, working with local communities to research and promote housing schemes and we are not for profit developers, building homes to meet needs.

Many landowners are sympathetic to the circumstances of local people who cannot afford open market housing and are unable to find suitable rented accommodation. Some have provided land for affordable housing developed by others; a few have developed such housing themselves.

The best way to achieve affordable housing in small villages is through the tried and tested rural exception site policy (see below).

Planning policy

The RHT model does not use land which would attract planning permission for residential use under normal planning policies. The cost of any site allocated for open market housing is prohibitive. Instead, we look for land which is not allocated for open market housing, but which may nevertheless be suitable for development.

We can usually obtain permission under the local needs exception policy, provided our proposal meets certain criteria:

- there is a proven need;
- the scale of development is modest;
- the site is well related to the village;
- the houses will be available to local people in perpetuity;
- there is general local support for the proposed development.

Local Planning Authorities cannot consider proposals for exception sites that include open market housing.

If planning permission for open market housing elsewhere in the village requires a “quota” of affordable dwellings to be provided, we can sometimes provide these on an exception site, if the two developments proceed simultaneously.

Rented housing

The tenure mix of any scheme depends on the outcome of a housing need survey. If research shows that rented housing is needed, then public subsidy is required. We therefore enter into a contract with a local Registered Social Landlord (also known as a housing association), to which we as developer transfer the properties on completion. The RSL can obtain grant of about 45% towards the capital cost, enabling it to charge lower than market rents. The RSL retains long-term control over the houses and over the selection of the occupiers.

Shared ownership housing

Although RSLs can also obtain funding for shared ownership housing, the Trust prefers to provide this form of housing itself without subsidy because we do not then have to offer the right to “staircase”. By fixing the equity, the same discount can be passed on to future purchasers. For details of RHT shared ownership see our [Fact Sheet: What is Shared Ownership](#) or our booklet [Living as a Shared Owner with RHT](#)—both available to download on www.ruralhousing.org.uk.

Quality versus cost

For subsidised housing, regulations govern design and sustainability standards and total cost.

Design standards are high, especially in terms of space, insulation, facilities, disabled access and construction methods. Many modern affordable housing schemes are of a higher standard than open market housing.

Cost limits are reasonable but they mean that land has to be acquired very cheaply.

Terms of acquisition

We pay around five or six times current use value for “exception” sites and we normally need just under an acre. We acquire land freehold or on very long leases (999 years). Generally we can contribute towards vendors’ legal fees.

Undertakings

We cannot promise the vendor that they can nominate occupiers of the houses, but we can inform him or her of every vacancy so that employees and others who might qualify are encouraged to apply. The housing need of every applicant is assessed on a points system.

Safeguards can be included to ensure that if ever the houses are sold on the open market, the original vendor of the site (or successors) shares in the gains. We hope this will never happen, but we cannot guarantee future policies.

We consult the landowner about the design and layout of the scheme and we always consider comments, provided they can be accommodated within the cost limits and planning requirements. Our standard of design and build quality usually far exceeds local expectations.

The owner is not asked to sell the land until we have planning permission, so is in a strong position to approve the plans before they are submitted for planning. We appoint the architect, although we will consider architects suggested by the landowner.

We maintain a list of preferred builders but we will always consider adding others if they can satisfy our criteria.