



The Nexus of Community-Led Planning and Rural Affordable Housing: towards an enhanced process.

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Glossary of terms

ACRE	Action for Communities in Rural England
AP	Action Plan (part of the Community-Led Plan)
CDW	Community Development Worker
CLP	Community-Led Plan (aka Parish Plan)
HCA	Homes and Communities Agency
LA	Local Authority
NIMBY	Shorthand used here for those resistant to housing development
PC	Parish (or Town) Council
RAH	Rural Affordable Housing
RCC	Rural Community Council
RHE	Rural Housing Enabler
RSL	Registered Social Landlord
VDS	Village Design Statement

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The Nexus of Community-Led Planning and Rural Affordable Housing: towards an enhanced process.

1. Introduction and Context

This project was funded by the Rural Affordable Housing Project (a joint initiative between Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and Homes and Communities Agency) and carried out by the University of Reading in partnership with the Community Council for Berkshire (CCB). The intention was to reveal the existing practices, outcomes and possibilities for utilising the Community-Led Planning (CLP) process¹ as a means to encourage the consideration of affordable housing at the community level. The project is novel in that the relationship and extent of influence between the local authority strategic housing function, including housing needs surveys, and Community-Led Planning has not been subject to any real examination in the past.

This general aim comes in the context of a widespread realisation that affordable housing in rural areas is not being delivered quickly enough, or in the amounts required by rural communities, or indeed intended under wider government policy (e.g. PPS3, PPS7, PPS4). This has been recently underscored by the Taylor Report in 2008 and the government response to that advice in 2009. It has been gradually recognised that, as Community-Led Planning becomes more refined and more widespread, this community development vehicle has the potential to assist strategic authorities in designing policy and in delivering on such priorities.

While the delivery of housing has become a priority, and specifically affordable housing, the issue remains a contentious one in many places and particularly so in many rural areas. This means that careful partnership working is crucial. However we have been mindful that Community-Led Planning is holistic in scope, voluntary by nature and is the catalyst for a wide range of community action, as well as providing evidence for other agents and institutions. Community-Led Planning is not only or even primarily concerned with housing issues. Yet, it is increasingly recognised that a 'responsible' Community-Led Planning process should be aware of and take into account local, regional and national needs and policy agendas² and efforts to interleave this have begun

Partnerships have been building to ensure that communities are involved in decision-making and that Community-Led Planning is an important part of the 'new localism'. This is important as the top down priorities and the bottom-up processes do need to integrate or 'bridge'³ well in order that progress is made and mutual understandings are developed. The balance between empowering communities to set their own agenda and informing and developing awareness of need is always likely to be a delicate one. With this in mind we have worked as a team to collect and then recommend an approach that preserves the integrity of Community-Led Planning, but which ensures that the housing agenda is recognised and considered by communities at some stage in the Community-Led Planning process. Moreover, that a way of ensuring that those concerned primarily with housing are aware of Community-Led Planning actions and that the need for some further intervention is established more systematically. In short to build on the goodwill and good practice that has already been developing around and between the local authority strategic housing function and bottom-up processes such as Community-Led Planning.

In this light the report concentrates on how and what has been happening to housing issues through the Community-Led Planning process, and how the wider partnerships involved in the housing

1. For more explanation of this mechanism see: http://www.acre.org.uk/communityledplanning_index.html

2. See: Parker, G. (2008) Parish and Community-Led Planning, local empowerment and local evidence bases, *Town Planning Review*, Vol. 79(1): 61-85.

3. For more on this see: Owen, S. et al (2007) Bridging the gap: an attempt to reconcile strategic planning and very local community-based planning in rural England, *Local Government Studies*, Vol. 33(1): 49-76.



function can work more closely and more effectively with communities to deliver rural affordable housing in the future. This is set in the context of an increased emphasis on partnership working and the central role of local authorities in delivering housing. In particular the renewed attention on the delivery of rural affordable housing brings the need to maximise the knowledge, relationships and the available skills that have been developed and to find ways of using these to best effect.

As a result our focus has been on the method and results that Community-Led Planning has helped provide in developing awareness and the impact it can have on willingness to explore affordable housing at the very local level. However it is the interaction and partnership with the local authority housing function that is crucial in this examination. This includes developing a shared recognition of the limits and tensions, as well as the potentials, in enhancing Community-Led Planning in terms of housing delivery.

2. The Research Brief

The project aimed to investigate current practice and future possibilities for Community-Led Planning and the relationship with the local authority housing function. The research was orchestrated so that it has national import but the mainstay of the data collected is derived from the South East of England.

As such the brief for the project was threefold:

1. to carry out and report on research into the relationship between the Community-Led Planning process, affordable housing incorporated within Community-Led Plans and increased affordable housing delivery; and how the timing and form of local authority housing function engagement affects this relationship (focused on the South East region);
2. to analyse and report upon the relationship between the Community-Led Planning process, affordable housing incorporated within Community-Led Plans and increased affordable housing delivery; and how the timing and form of local authority housing function engagement affects this relationship (focused on the South East region);
3. to make recommendations as to the timing and form of local authority housing function engagement in the Community-Led Planning process that helps mitigate against the prevention of affordable housing as actions within Community-Led Plans and prevention of increased delivery of affordable housing; using examples that can be highlighted as 'best practice'.



3. The Approach and Methods

The project focussed on the south east region of England and detailed data was collected on Community-Led Plans (CLPs) and housing action in that Region. The case studies were drawn from across England to highlight the way in which CLP has already helped facilitate affordable housing as part of the partnership approach to strategic housing delivery. The main aim is to understand the way that affordable housing can and has found its way into Community-Led Planning action plans and how such actions are influenced by and transmitted into the Local Authority strategic housing function⁴.

We drew on the South East CLP database⁵ to gather data on the extent of housing action in Community-Led Plans. The national Community-Led Planning toolkit ‘nine stage’ process was used as a reference point in our discussions with Community Development Workers (CDWs) responsible for Community-Led Planning across the region. We interviewed all of the Development Workers in the South East region who lead on Community-Led Planning and ensured coverage of the professionals involved in mediating the strategic housing function in the 33 rural districts of the South East⁶. Both groups were interviewed using a different but similar, semi-structured interview tool. These tools were drafted and agreed by the steering group and piloted before full deployment in the study. The data was compared and triangulated and the views expressed in the report represent a summary of the attitudes, practices and issues uncovered in these interviews.

The latter sections of the report are a distillation and reflection on current practice, aimed at shaping a future ‘enhanced’ approach towards ensuring that housing potentials are maximised through the Community-Led Planning process.

4. See, for example; the IDeA ‘*Community leadership and the strategic housing role in local government*’ (2006): <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/aio/6514426>

5. The database is located and explained at: <http://www.clp-se.org.uk/>

6. The South East region districts that fall into the ‘Rural 80’, ‘Rural 50’ and ‘Significant rural’ categories of the rural definitions and local authority classifications created by Defra in 2005, see: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/evidence/statistics/rural/rural-definition.htm>

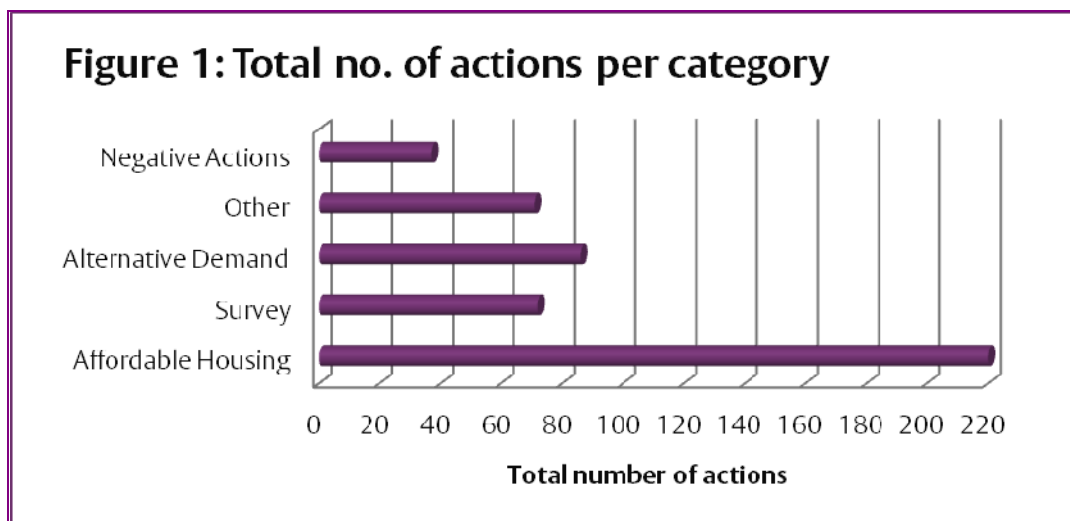


4. The Findings of the Research

This section is split into three parts where we set out the results of our analysis of the South East regional Community-Led Planning database and the primary data collected.

4.1 The South East Community-Led Planning database analysis

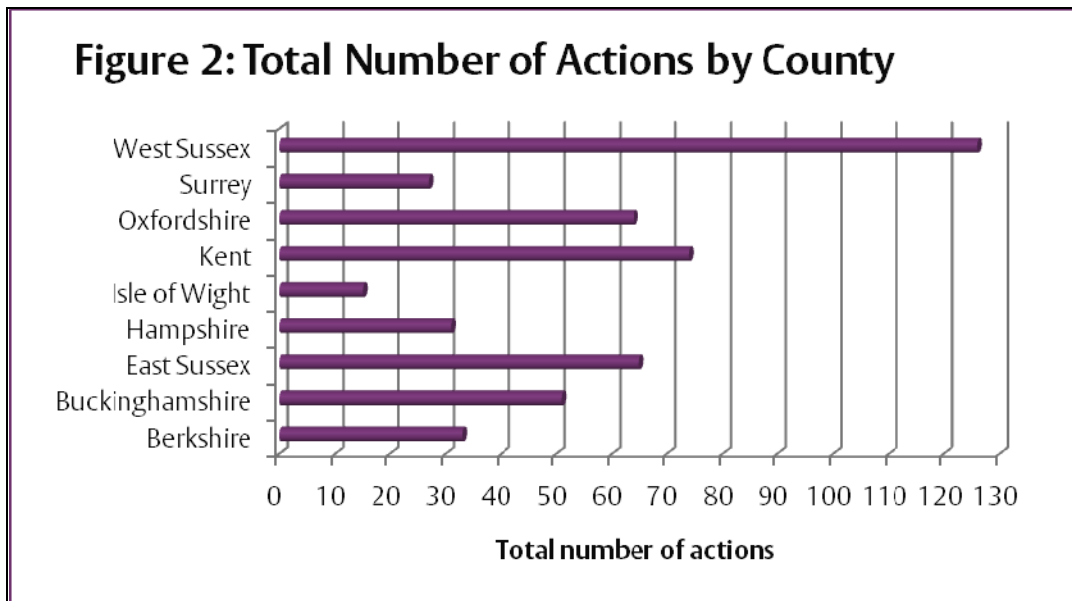
4.1.1 The database of Community-Led Plans was launched in 2009 and is an ongoing active database with new Plans and Actions being uploaded. We looked at the database in February 2010 and there were a total of 20,904 action points from c1, 047 Plans loaded on the database at that time⁷.



4.1.2 We looked at the CLP Action Plans using the search facilities available and identified 486 separate actions relating to housing (see Figure 1). Of these actions 220 were specifically on affordable rural housing. We further broke these into five sub-categories to show how communities typically express such housing actions or what they want to do next. These were: negative actions (n=27) such as ‘oppose any development’, then more positively; ‘conduct a housing needs survey’, ‘encourage affordable housing’ and an ‘other’ category which includes entries such as: ‘consult/educate the public on planning applications/affordable housing’.

We also were able to identify the actions on a county by county basis, see Figure 2 below. We can see from this that Sussex (East and West) show the most housing actions overall.

7. There are some issues as the database is both rather new and will need to be maintained over time. As such the data contained there may not be comprehensive and may increasingly become historic. (Nb. The number of plans entered on the database actually rose during the process of conducting this research).



4.1.3 These figures show that housing features quite strongly in Action Plans already. We can also compare the relative performance of Community-Led Plans in terms of housing actions and as a proportion of parishes in each county (see table 1, below and Figures 3 & 4). We can see the proportion of completed plans per county with a median coverage of just below 25% of parishes in the region.

Table: 1 South East Community-Led Plans and housing actions

Area	Parishes	Complete CLPs	Parish / proportion CLP	Actions	Housing AP per Plan	Rank
Berkshire	102	29	28.4%	31	1.07	(=5)
Bucks.	216	51	23.6%	49	0.96	(7)
Sussex ⁸	261	98	37.5%	184	1.88	(3)
Hampshire	258	10	3.9%	31	3.10	(2)
Kent	319	17	5.3%	64	3.76	(1)
Oxfordshire	320	53	16.6%	64	1.21	(4)
Surrey	88	23	26.1%	15	0.65	(8)
IoW	33	14	42.4%	15	1.07	(=5)
Totals:	1597⁹	295	Median: 24.85 %	453¹⁰	Median: 1.07	

(The statistics expressed in table 1 are expressed in figures 3 and 4 below.)

This shows that while Kent and Hampshire has proportionately fewer plans, there are more housing action plan points in those areas. Sussex has a lot of housing actions and a good plan coverage (37.5%

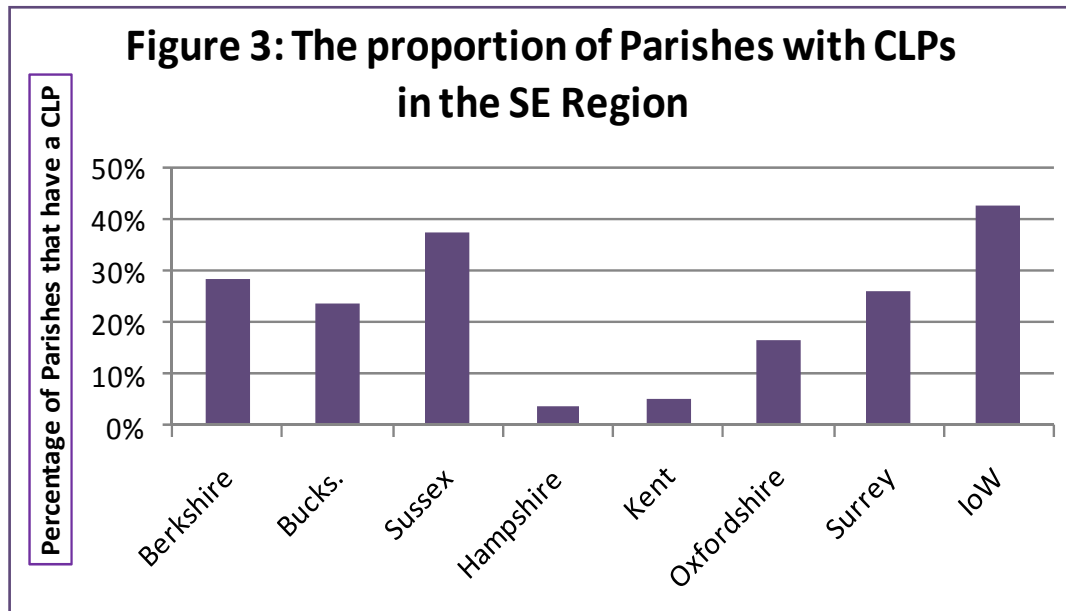
8. The statistics for Sussex are combined numbers for East and West Sussex due the coverage of the single RCC for Sussex.

9. There are a total of 10,397 parishes in England and as such CLP coverage is more than 15% of parishes in England.

10. The 33 AP points difference (i.e. 486-453) relates to parishes not in 'rural' districts.

of all parishes have a plan) although they no longer appear to have proportionately more housing actions (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: The Proportion of Parishes with Community-Led Plans in the South East region



4.1.4 We told each interviewee about the statistics expressed in section 4.1.1-4.1.3 and about the number of housing action points in Community-Led Plans in their area. They confirmed that we had the correct figures but also claimed that more housing Action Plans would feature as newer plans were entered onto the database. In Surrey for example, five more plans are already completed but not as yet on the database. Kent also had ‘a few plans not on the database’.

In terms of getting Action Points on housing included in the Plans, Hampshire thought that it very much depends on who oversees the Community-Led Planning process. The Hampshire situation is that the Local Authority housing officers have their own priorities, while rural housing enablers are working with Parish Councils, sometimes without Community-Led Planning and this process is said to be ‘not really joined up’. Concern about questionnaire design in the consultation phase was also highlighted; as this can take communities away from facing housing issues responsibly (see also section 6). Oxfordshire thought that there may be more housing issues tagged under a single topic on the database. Buckinghamshire appeared to face a lot of NIMBYism but a less negative view was being developed gradually and when the notion of ‘locals first’ housing was discussed; housing seemed to become more palatable for communities.

There were a lot of action plan points featuring housing in Sussex (n=184) but they felt that there could be more. They tended to encourage these from the beginning of the process and make sure that, if housing is identified as a theme, it goes forward to the action plan or that a Housing Needs Survey is recommended. In their view this should not be too problematic as it: ‘doesn't actually mean that units have to be built: the demand/no demand has to be proved’.



Figure 4: Number of Housing Related Action Plan Points per County in the South East Region

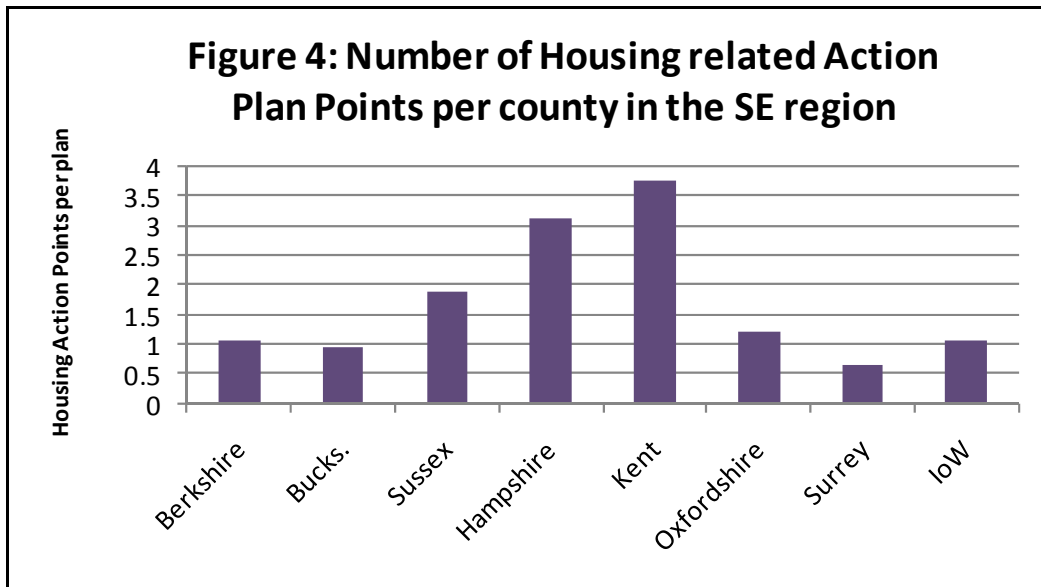


Figure 4 also shows how fewer plans in some areas have produced more housing actions.

It was also pointed out during the interviews that this research was also prompting the Community Development Workers to think about housing more and their relationship with the Rural Housing Enablers and the strategic housing function.

4.1.5 We now turn to the explanations of current practice and ideas for future integration and enhancement of Community-Led Planning, derived from our primary data collection exercise. The attitudes and practices adopted are likely to be replicated across England as a whole, although more extensive research is advisable.

It is notable that the number of Community-Led Plans completed according to ACRE, are significantly lower than the number already on the South East CLP database (see table 2). What this table does demonstrate is how these Plans are becoming more widespread and how rapidly they are being recorded. Taking the national figures (from Table 2) we can extrapolate the average population coverage of the 1,047 plans recorded on the South East database. These appear to cover an estimated population of over 2,113,000. When examined alongside Table 1, we can also glean encouragement that housing action plan points may be further developed, given the differences found across the counties, and as discussed below.

**Table 2: National Coverage of Community-Led Plans¹¹**

Region	Estimated plans completed	Principal LAs	All LAs	Approx. population
Eastern	810	8	44	964,000
East Midlands	271	6	39	301,000
North East	100	5	20	243,000
North West	32	3	31	45,000
South East	599	14	53	1,209,000
South West	834	12	46	1,379,000
West Midlands	1376	6	27	2,612,000
Yorks & Humber	196	12	23	465,000
Total	4,218	66	283	7,218,000

This data overall shows us that there are likely to be different practices across the regions and some significant differences in the Action Plans with housing actions included. The following sections turn now to describe and explain how housing is discussed through the Community-Led Planning process and between the Community Development Workers and those seeking to fulfil the Local Authority strategic housing function.

4.2 Community-Led Planning Process Interview Findings

The approach we took was to interview the Development Workers (CDWs) based across the South East region individually and about their role in terms of supporting and developing Community-Led Planning (CLP). We specifically asked about how they approached the issue of housing. The relationship between themselves and the housing function was explored and we identified where, in the CLP toolkit stages, housing either came up from, or was otherwise introduced to, communities.

4.2.1 Most of the Development Workers in the South East are employed by the Rural Community Councils and they ‘sit’ in the Rural Community Council (RCC) office. In the Isle of Wight the Community Development Worker is a local authority officer but actually sits in the RCC offices – the change of status was made as Community-Led Planning became seen as ‘crucial’ on the Island. In Sussex some district councils have their own CDWs, but the Community-Led Planning worker is employed by the RCC. In Hampshire the situation is slightly different where there is no dedicated Development Worker. However all the South East regional Community Development Workers were, for example, aware of the Rural Housing Enablers that are active in their area.

4.2.2 The Community Development Workers had a range of approaches for briefing the community in their areas about Community-Led Planning. Many either approach Parish Councils or respond to their approaches. We asked the Development Workers about when housing typically features in the CLP process. For the purposes of the interviews, and the timeline analysis in section 5, we added a Stage ‘0’ as a ‘preparation’ stage for the professionals involved, prior to approaching communities.

¹¹. Adapted from a presentation by the Director of Development, ACRE, 3rd March 2010 to the RCAN network chairs meeting, London.



Many stated that stage one ‘getting started’ was where housing would first be mentioned (see table 3), however some Development Workers preferred to allow issues to emerge organically. This reflected a general concern to ensure that the process was allowed to develop by the communities themselves. However there was a general acceptance that there were opportunities and means of ensuring that housing was brought to the attention of communities. Some clearly noted where it could be counterproductive to talk about housing, citing the variable make-up of CLP steering groups. They would instead tend to respond or remind groups if housing had come up earlier and to query whether it should be included in the consultation stage (4) or the Action Plan stages (6/7). The Isle of Wight argued that they did not prompt at any particular stage, but kept housing towards ‘the top of the agenda all the time’. They all tended to agree that there was not much early co-operation or linkage between Rural Housing Enablers and Community Development Workers as yet, although further on in the process of developing potential housing sites there is said to be good cooperation between the RHEs and other housing delivery actors.

4.2.3 A mix of responses was gathered to the more specific suggestion that discussion of housing could be developed earlier in the Community-Led Planning process. There was a general feeling that if it was earlier then it would need to be handled carefully and not over and above other issues or topics. One interviewee argued that if it is dwelt on too much, it would probably ‘skew the Plan’. As such the main driver should be from the bottom-up; otherwise the community may think that Community-Led Planning is centred on the planning and development process. This could be problematic as they may already be ‘carrying some baggage’ on this topic area, or have a strong NIMBYist lobby in the community.

We then shifted our attention to discuss the relationship and degree of collaboration existing between the CDW and the housing delivery professionals. We wanted to know when interactions over housing might take place and if they had a formal or informal system in operation. In most places there were close relations but they were conducted informally, or on an *ad hoc* basis. This may be because most Development Workers and in particular Rural Housing Enablers work in the same offices and this approach appears to do service. Where this situation does not pertain it may be less workable.

The system is quite informal in Berkshire. The Community Development Workers alert the RHE and they record everything they do each month and there are informal team discussions rather than meetings. Oxfordshire claimed that they collaborate ‘All the time,’ and ‘throughout the 9-stage process’ and the Isle of Wight indicated similarly. Sussex tended to collaborate at the ‘getting started’ stage (1) and ‘consultation’ stage (4). Kent admitted to ‘not a huge amount of collaboration’ but here the CDW makes the RHE aware at stage 6 of the toolkit process and it will be acted on if housing comes out as a need.

In Surrey the relationship is operated on an *ad hoc* basis, however the Housing Enabler is also the line manager of the Development Worker. They do meet up and update each other on all communities being worked with, but it is not done through formal meetings as such. Typically the CDW raises the issue when a community wants a Needs Survey and the RHE is put in touch with the Parish Council or CLP steering group. Thus it is largely at stages 6 & 7 when the Development Worker clearly knows from the community about this conclusion. That stage is seen therefore as a good time to meet the Housing Enabler about a survey, what is involved and the possible outcomes.

4.2.4 We then asked the Community Development Workers about whether they thought current CLP methods and processes were appropriate in terms of highlighting or ensuring that housing need goes forward to the Action Planning stages of Community-Led Plans, or to professionals focussed on

housing. In Berkshire and Buckinghamshire they thought that things were working well, but it was stressed that housing was only one topic in a wide range and as such it doesn't get prioritised. Buckinghamshire noted that the RHE would have to determine if there was genuine need as Community-Led Planning is not comprehensive on the subject. Sussex clearly responded in the affirmative here while the two Oxfordshire Development Workers argued that it depends on the individual community. Some are wary of affordable housing and Community Development Workers can, where appropriate, use the process to explain affordable housing. This view was echoed by the Isle of Wight who thought that by raising the issue from the beginning people can have the opportunity to discuss it, and that expectations should not be too high (e.g. planning restrictions or where no land is available). Hampshire stated that it depended on how the Community-Led Planning consultation was carried out, and who writes the questions. They claimed that in one case a parish, which sent out a Housing Needs Survey in parallel with their CLP questionnaire, got a very good response and probably much higher than if the Housing Needs Surveys were sent out separately. This view is not one that is confirmed elsewhere (see 4.3.8).

Table 3: Where Housing currently tends to feature in the Community-Led Planning Process (Community Development Worker view)

Stage ¹²	Getting started	Steering group	Project plan	Consult.	Prioritise	Draft plan	Final plan	Implement	Monit. & Review
Area	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Berkshire	✓	×	✓	✓		✓			
Bucks.	✓			?		?			
Sussex		✓		✓	✓		✓		
Hampshire	✓			?					
Kent	✓						?		
Oxfordshire	✓	×	×	✓					
Surrey		✓		?		✓	?		
Isle of Wight	✓	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?

× signifies a recommendation NOT to introduce housing overtly at that stage; ? signifies 'Possible';
✓ signifies 'Yes'.

Kent also thought that Community-Led Planning was a 'grassroots bottom-up process' and that housing should not be imposed. Surrey also thought that Community-Led Plans should very much be owned by the community. The Rural Housing Enabler is seen as a different mechanism to specifically push housing forward and is separate to the Community Development Worker role. However this means that the Housing Enabler can approach the community in a different way. If the discussions about the future of the community are done properly then housing is very likely to arise indirectly. This does show that Development Workers are quite wary of highlighting one issue above others and recognise the risk of jeopardising the integrity of the bottom-up CLP process. However it appeared that it depends on how it is raised, as much as when.

12. These are the stages expressed in the Community-Led Planning toolkit produced by ACRE. See: http://www.acre.org.uk/communityengagement_parishplans_toolkit.html



4.2.5 The instigation of Community-Led Planning activity around affordable housing is usually placed at the door of the Community Development Worker. In most places the housing advice comes in later or when there is a direct request. In Berkshire the Housing Enabler comes in only if there is an expression of interest or request for a Needs Survey is developed with the Parish Council. As such the Community Development Worker is the springboard for the Housing Enabler to come in and this acts to pave the way for discussion. In Oxfordshire, Kent, Surrey and Buckinghamshire it is more organic, and initially this comes directly from the community, but people are made aware that help is available on the housing topic.

For Hampshire it also tends to come up through the consultation process and therefore it comes up organically. They were not aware that anyone goes out to ensure Rural Affordable Housing (RAH) is part of this however. Some Local Authorities are keen to make more links and in Hampshire the HARAH starter pack for affordable housing¹³ is already available and they are trying to make sure that there is a link with the Community-Led Planning toolkit.

Sussex provided a mixed picture here with both organic development of the issue and some communities starting to identify Rural Affordable Housing before Community-Led Planning starts. The Enabler gave training on what Affordable Housing is, how to get the community to buy into the idea and explained all the technical terms. Once demand is identified the RHE will help to find out exactly what is required and contact landowners. In the Isle of Wight, sometimes the Community Development Worker will introduce housing at the question setting stage (3/4), or sometimes this comes from Community-Led Planning steering groups directly.

4.2.6 We then sought views about whether and how the relationship (described in 4.2.2 *et seq*) could be improved. The general view was that things could be tightened up or formalised more. Resources were cited as one issue that prevents better joint working (e.g. Oxfordshire, Hants). There was a recognition of the benefits of formalising the relationship or the information exchanged (e.g. Buckinghamshire, Hampshire). Hampshire have begun developing an improved relationship that should get the Rural Housing Enabler involved at an early stage; to share information with Community-Led Planning steering groups. In Berkshire they claimed to be beginning to do that. The RHE has begun liaising with chairs of CLP steering groups, which has not been done in the past. In the Isle of Wight the informal approach worked well enough - perhaps due to the smaller scale of their operations. In Kent, Surrey and Sussex they appeared happy with the way that they operated and on a similar informal basis and were 'constantly talking anyway' (Sussex). Surrey thought, that while they passed information between the two roles, they cautioned that: 'Community-Led Planning is complex enough'; meaning that adding tasks to already overloaded Development Workers would not be very popular. This response is unsurprising as there have been no clear steer or overt recognition of the potentials and integration of these two different roles and foci until now.

4.2.7 The Community Development Workers were then asked to reflect on the possible dangers or things to look out for in prompting for housing during the Community-Led Planning process. There appeared to be a real consensus about phraseology, linkage and awareness of the relationship between housing and other issues or activities that were important to explain to communities (e.g. older, younger and key workers housing) and links to the viability of community services and facilities. This

13. The pack is available at: <http://www.harrah.org.uk/pdf/starter-pack.pdf>



needed to happen to overcome NIMBYism (Buckinghamshire) and to work on ‘myth busting’ (Hampshire) and ‘approach sensitively’ (Sussex) and ‘nurturing relationships’ (Isle of Wight). Although in one county this issue is avoided by not prompting on the housing issue. Surrey saw Village Design Statements as a method of entry to explore the housing issue where dealing with people concerned with the impact on property values. They indicated that the ‘process could take longer’ but it could be ‘worth the wait’. One county wanted to see more support from Local Authority housing officers through the Community-Led Planning process.

They all seemed to recognise that close liaison with those charged with delivery of affordable housing made sense here and to make sure that all parties were realistic about housing in their communities. This does also highlight how some of the blockages towards new development are related to both site availability and planning policy and its interpretation in rural areas¹⁴.

4.2.8 We then pushed further to understand whether more housing actions could be reasonably produced through the Community-Led Planning process, and when this might happen in the process. Berkshire, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, the Isle of Wight and Hampshire thought that ‘yes’ there could be. The idea of a preparation stage ‘0’ is seen as important by Berkshire to ensure knowledge and understanding of the community and at present the action point formulated is usually to instigate a Housing Needs Survey. Otherwise CLP groups sometimes ‘get to housing circuitously’, e.g. when discussing issues such as energy efficiency or design related matters.

Oxfordshire recognised that working more intensely on this could be useful; they claim prognostically that ‘in every village housing need is always there’. Buckinghamshire saw stage 3 as important but not necessarily earlier. Hampshire would have liked to see more support from housing officers and thought that it should be pushed as early as possible. For the Isle of Wight the main thing was to recommend that Parish Councils carry the whole action plan through and that there was scope to maintain housing throughout the whole process.

Sussex thought that housing action required that an in depth survey has been done, questions and action points should be general and it is the Housing Needs Survey that will determine specifically what needs to be done. As such they saw that prioritising in stage 5 is important. Kent said that potentially if there is a strong feeling at the start, then they could put communities in touch with the Rural Housing Enabler or equivalent and part of the group can deal with housing separately. Lastly, Surrey saw that sometimes it is about consultation, sometimes more about a better breakdown of the issue in the Plan and so it was regarded as important to liaise or get more information - and as a result they saw potential in stages 5 & 6 of the CLP toolkit process.

4.2.9 The Development Workers were asked about Housing Needs Surveys and whether there were reasons for Community-Led Planning *not* putting in a Needs Survey as a CLP action point. In principle the overriding view was that there should not be any reason to avoid doing this. However if the Parish Council have already done an HNS recently, or are actively pursuing one already it may not be necessary. Kent also pointed out that a housing development may have recently been agreed or constructed there and it may be hard to justify in that situation. This is one aspect of this research that it not been possible to pursue. Future research should talk to a sample of Parish Councils to discover

14. These are well recognised issues. See, for example; CLG *Incentivising landowners to bring forward additional land* paper (November 2009) and the Taylor report (July 2008).



whether Community-Led Plans did not have a Housing Needs Survey as an Action Point because the Parish Council have used another avenue, or already done a Needs Survey in the recent past. There is also a linked and more general issue here about over-consulting communities.

Buckinghamshire maintained that it has to come from the community as a genuine need. However our view is that the community will not know if there is a need unless it is demonstrated through such a Survey. The Isle of Wight thought not and indicated that everybody should be involved and to ensure that the steering group are aware of this when Community-Led Plans are being put together. The view here was that everyone should be involved and the process should carefully designed to 'get what they want'. Surrey responded that the community should come up with their own questions, but it was conceded that there was room for more on housing, if handled carefully. It was generally accepted that if there was a question on housing in the CLP survey there would be more chance that there will be a subsequent Housing Needs Survey. All groups were likely to pass this issue immediately to the Housing delivery professionals if there were enough people in favour.

Particularly on this latter point, our reflection is that even if a small number of people indicate need this should be enough to prompt an action plan point, or other trigger, for a Housing Needs Survey. This issue is not one of *quantity* of need and it would be inequitable to marginalise an important need expressed by a minority.

4.2.10 The role that professionals involved in delivering the Local Authority Strategic Housing function in the Community-Led Planning process, and particularly the housing enabling role, was investigated by discussing this with the Development Workers. In Berkshire this liaison occurs via the Principal Policy Officer for Community-Led Planning who will send the draft Plan to all Heads of Service, including the Housing Department, for comment. This is fed back to the community planning team through the policy officer for Community Planning. The Rural Housing Enabler will also make comment on the draft plans. Communities can also request to discuss housing issues with the most relevant person at regular Surgeries throughout the year. In Oxfordshire Local Authority housing may be involved directly and early on but the Development Workers here generally feel that this can be counterproductive, 'because they have targets to meet' and prefer later engagement through the 'neutral' Rural Housing Enablers.

In Buckinghamshire, Surrey, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight there is little or no direct connection with the local authority early on and this is largely considered to be appropriate. For Buckinghamshire it is not formalised, especially not towards specific Local Authority departments. In Hampshire this is something people would like to see happen and it was claimed that there is very little engagement between the strategic level and Community-Led Planning. Similarly, in Kent liaison occurs when the community comes up with an issue, but they were not sure if it had actually happened in practice. In one county the Local Authorities are seen as 'not so hot on Community-Led Planning', although affordable housing is received favourably amongst some of the districts in that same county.

Sussex Rural Community Council has good links with the county and district councils. They get the latest strategies and top priorities sent through to them. The Development Worker links this with the Community-Led Plan and introduces those factors to the communities seeking to inform and educate them about those strategic conditions. If housing is an issue or priority in the strategy in question then this will need to be considered by those communities. In this process the parishes are involved at the start and the community get in touch to say that they have started the Action Plan process. At the



consultation stage the Local Authority can link together and improve consultation. They argue that it is possible therefore to involve the Local Authority housing function from the beginning.

We queried with all Community Development Workers whether the Local Authority Strategic housing function could be drawn in better beyond the Rural Housing Enabler role. There was a feeling that things might be better if planners were involved at the appropriate stage, bearing in mind that each community was different. Buckinghamshire thought this would be from the Action Planning stage but Oxfordshire thought this could be even earlier; if the conditions were right. It was explained by several counties that they did not have enough resources to be involved early on, despite recognising the potential merits.

This aspect demonstrates how there is a role for housing and planning departments in discussing this topic with CLP groups in some cases – however there needs to be further work done to look at exactly how beneficial or useful this is. One rationalisation that could be useful would be to explain that housing needs should be established prior to any further engagement and as such discussion should be limited to the Community Development Worker and or the Housing Enabler – this has a twofold benefit. Firstly, it conserves scarce officer resources and, secondly it develops understanding and recognition of housing needs in the community, prior to overt involvement by the relevant local authority.

4.2.11 We asked if any other actors were involved in introducing housing to Community-Led Planning groups and communities. The responses showed that in most cases the Rural Housing Enabler based with the Rural Community Council or the Local Authority has helped significantly. The Local Authority Planning department were often involved on the Isle of Wight. Hampshire noted that there was a strong partnership that had been developed with a specific focus on rural affordable housing (HARAH) and this had helped, but this also meant that Community-Led Planning was not the main thrust for housing in that county. In Sussex the Local Authorities, through the in-house officers, as well as the Local Strategic Partnership, and Housing Associations were involved in Rural Affordable Housing, and indirectly with Community-Led Planning.

4.2.12 We also asked whether Parish Council attitudes to housing, after the Community-Led Planning process, improved generally. Across seven of the counties there was a clear affirmative response. Only Hampshire felt that it has not made much of a difference. Anecdotal evidence in some cases there show that, as a result of CLP, some Parish Councils have been less keen. This may require some attention in terms of how the issue is brought up – and indeed this is discussed elsewhere in this report.

Oxfordshire and Berkshire both thought that Parish Councils had been positive. In Surrey Parish Councils took the issue seriously after the Community-Led Plan recommended housing action and they liaised with the RHE to pursue it. Both Buckinghamshire and the Isle of Wight thought that it has helped lessen NIMBYism and that when Parishes are shown schemes that have already taken place the attitude improves. Sussex and Kent said that many communities knew what Rural Affordable Housing was only after the Community-Led Planning process - beforehand many did not really understand this label. Here the Rural Housing Enablers are informing the community and the Parish Councils so that they get a clearer idea of what it is. In Kent they thought that previously there would have been an immediate rejection of Rural Affordable Housing straightaway in many Parishes.

This shows overall that CLP appears to have an educative role in developing awareness of the nature of Rural Affordable Housing, in breaking down initial barriers and assisting in getting housing ‘on the agenda’ of the Parish Councils.

4.2.13 The Community Development Workers noted that both local politics and resource constraints hampered them somewhat. Surrey interestingly acknowledged that different styles and approaches are possible for Rural Housing Enablers, compared to the Development Workers who are dealing with a much more complex and holistic project. For Development Workers the ethos of community development is of primary importance and therefore they tend to accept what it is the communities say, rather than seek to challenge them on it. We queried whether Community-Led Planning had raised the profile of affordable housing as an issue in the areas. The response here indicated that ‘yes’ it had with very few exceptions, but that the success stories and publicity required to build on this could be improved.



4.3 Rural Housing Enablers, the Strategic Housing Function and Community-Led Planning

Before turning to consider the housing function responses we checked with Community Development Workers to gauge how knowledgeable they were about some of the planning and related rules regarding Rural Affordable Housing sites. All but one of the Development Workers were aware of the general rules relating to exception sites. Where applicable these issues were discussed by the Development Workers in roughly half of the areas – otherwise the information and knowledge is known to reside with the Rural Housing Enablers and such matters would typically be passed onto them.

4.3.1. We checked for whom and where Housing Enablers worked and for how long they had been involved in this work. Seven of the ten Enablers interviewed are employed and sit within the Rural Community Councils. They had been in post for an average of just under five years with the longest serving RHE having performed the role for 8 years. (One point that we did not pursue in this research is that the reliance on informal systems can be disrupted when staff turnover is experienced. At present the relationship and communication between Community-Led Planning and housing relies on low staff turnover to ensure mutual understanding and knowledge of local conditions is maintained).

Several Enablers are employed by the local authorities in the region (i.e. Isle of Wight and Chichester, Hampshire). In one local authority the Housing Enabler is employed and based in-house with the Local Authority and has a range of generic housing duties, which includes getting involved in larger housing schemes as well as smaller ones. On the Isle of Wight the Housing Enabler is employed by the Local Authority but sits within the Rural Community Council office, which provides good sectoral linkage. In Hampshire the RHE works across 6 Local Authorities that form the HARAH partnership, which focuses on rural affordable housing in that sub-region, and which receives funding from the Homes and Communities Agency, the six district councils, Hampshire County Council and Hyde House Association.

4.3.2 We wanted to check on the state of working relations from the housing function perspective, to refer back against the performance of Community Led Planning in terms of housing. Overall relations were seen as ‘very good’ by most of the Enablers. However several thought that this could be improved further. Two thought that this was ‘Good but could be better’ and they would see merit in working more closely together with other stakeholders at an earlier point in the Community-Led Planning process. This would help communities better understand the role good housing plays in their community (see below, 4.3.4). A similar sentiment was expressed by Kent, Sussex and Hampshire, partly due to the informality that might be usefully tightened up in some way. Surrey claim to work closely together and in Oxfordshire, when housing is raised as an issue in a Community-Led Plan, there is a prompt for the Housing Enabler in taking action forward and typically with the Rural Housing Enabler doing a presentation on housing to that community.

4.3.3 We also wanted to know more about the operational relationship with the Community Development Workers and to marry this up with the similar question posed about the RHE and the local authority rural housing function (see 4.2.6). In Berkshire the Development Workers provide communities with opportunities to engage with the Housing Enabler when formulating their questionnaires and, if required, at CLP ‘Surgeries’ the Housing Enabler will come and answer

questions. Once a Community-Led Planning action plan is drafted (i.e. at stage ‘6’) the Housing Enabler will lead on taking forward any housing actions identified. Oxfordshire and Hampshire are similar; whereby the Housing Enablers are kept informed about Community-Led Plans and consulted on questions regarding housing. They had less knowledge of initial contacts and processes of Community-Led Planning however. The Isle of Wight appear to communicate well but the Enabler only gets involved with the process when there are discussions on affordable rural housing, and afterwards when following up on the Action Plan. Similarly in Sussex the relations were slightly less structured and discussions were done on a ‘case by case basis’ and in one county it was said that there was ‘not much collaboration’.

4.3.4 We asked when Rural Housing inputs were typically involved in responding or interacting with Community-Led Planning, and this provides an interesting comparison to the results expressed in table 3 above. These responses are also used to inform our ‘enhanced timeline’ discussed in section 5. This feedback showed that at present the mainstay of engagement and Rural Housing Enabler efforts came later in the process (i.e. stage 6 onwards) but some housing function interviewees did see how, if resources permitted, they could possibly engage earlier. A few Enablers also talked about how they often helped with the drafting of housing related questions for Community-Led Planning consultation (i.e. stage ‘4’) questionnaires.

Table 5: Typical Housing Function Input to Community-Led Planning

CLP Stage	Getting started	Steering group	Project plan	Consult.	Prioritising	Draft plan	Final plan	Implementation	Monit.& Review
Area	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Berkshire				✓		✓	✓	✓	
Bucks.									
Sussex				✓				✓	
Hampshire				?				?	
Kent						✓			
Oxfordshire	✓	✓			✓				
Surrey				✓				✓	
Isle of Wight				✓		✓		✓	
Chichester				✓					

Most Housing function interviewees thought that there could be more involvement both generally and earlier. A concern expressed by several related to Community-Led Planning as both an holistic process and wide-ranging view of, and from, the community. Rural Affordable Housing does emerge as an issue but the danger of flagging it up at the start may mean it has too high a profile at the expense of other things the community are concerned with. It was also mentioned that Housing function involvement may not always be at the fiat of the Community Development Worker, for example it may be the decision of the Community-Led Planning Steering Group.



Berkshire already worked together in the latter phases of Community-Led Planning where relevant and also in stage 4 (i.e. 'consultation'). It was thought that interaction and collaboration could possibly be introduced earlier on in the process without 'swamping' the overall process. Also more and earlier interaction could be feasible and, depending on the circumstances, there is a role for the Rural Housing Enabler to play 'at almost every stage'. Sussex also thought that more and earlier joint working could be beneficial, possibly in stage '3' and to give feedback on housing questions in stage '4'. The main barrier to this was said to be capacity. Hampshire said that it varies when they might get involved and they had no protocol for involvement at any particular stage.

Surrey thought that the balance and set up 'was about right' and it was not necessary to have earlier involvement as they 'get so many leads' already. Their approach is to tread carefully and engage fully at the 'Implementation' (stage 8) phase, if there is a housing action point. It was pointed out that a Housing Needs Survey can be a 'quick win' for the parish and may be a nice way to show how Community-Led Planning works (or is worthwhile). This means that mutual benefit can be achieved in these circumstances.

In terms of whether housing needs should be introduced earlier we feel this has to be considered on a case by case basis. In some instances the Needs Survey could be introduced very early on to remove the necessity of having to cover it in the questionnaire (i.e. stage 4). However, in section five below, we recommend that the profile and importance of housing is raised here and that communities are pressed to include a Housing Needs Survey Action Plan point in their Plans (see below, 4.3.6 *et seq.*).

4.3.6. We asked if the Rural Housing Enablers envisaged any issue or problem in asking for a Housing Needs Survey in *all* Community-Led Plan action plans. Most thought not but Kent and Oxfordshire thought that there was a problem in this, arguing that the community should decide what questions are in the Consultation stage (4). Hampshire had similar point here, preferring that the Local Authority introduces Affordable Housing; the interviewee emphasised that there may be a conflict between Community-Led Planning approaches and the Rural Affordable Housing issue. This indicates how the specific approach taken in terms of exactly who, when and how the housing topic is integrated is important; as is the quality control of questionnaire design in Community-Led Plans.

Berkshire thought that while there were no specific issues with the idea in principle, there 'will always be those communities that resist conducting a Housing Needs Survey to the bitter end' - due to a NIMBYist tendency (and perhaps sometimes where it would be inappropriate to develop housing anyway). The Isle of Wight underscored this by highlighting how 6 parishes on the Island were 'completely against undertaking a Housing Needs Survey'. Sussex said that communities should be asked, although it will depend on when the last one has been conducted and so it may depend on the context. Surrey thought that it is useful if the questionnaire asks if there is a need, but that it should not be the only question regarding housing. They also highlighted that Community-Led Plan questionnaire returns tended to be higher than Housing Needs Survey returns. However if Community-Led Planning surveys are carried out first, this may improve Housing Needs Survey responses (see 4.3.8).

Our view overall on this aspect is that it really depends on how it is handled (process dimension) and the circumstances or context in which the Community-Led Planning and housing question is being explored. Our view again is that the working out of good, simple questions for CLPs on housing is necessary, for example: *Q. Do you know if there is housing need in your area or not?* This should then provoke an Action Plan point to conduct a Housing Needs Survey in most cases. The more resistant



communities may need other methods or attention, or for the Local Authority to conduct a Needs Survey anyway. This clearly points to one aspect and justification for semi-formalising the Community-Led Planning and housing linkage process. This should assist in communication and appropriate action over housing that is *present* or *absent* from Community-Led Plans and their Action Plans.

4.3.7 In order to see how the process and communication works presently between the Community Development Workers and the rural housing delivery function, we asked whether the Housing Enablers would know if a Housing Needs Survey request emerged from a Community-Led Planning group. All the Enablers said that they would know if this were happening but that there was a lack of formalization, such as monitoring or recording in most areas.

4.3.8 We then asked the Rural Housing function interviewees about their views on doing Community-Led Planning surveys and Housing Needs Surveys (HNS) separately and at different times. We also asked about how Community-Led Planning helped in getting Needs Surveys done later on. The view was that the Needs Survey should be kept separate, although four counties thought that it might help with response rates to merge this. Several pointed out that the Housing Needs Survey was quite a long survey in its own right and that merging these could be too much for communities. Two housing interviewees thought that the sensitivity of the housing issue required a separate survey by a third party (typically via the Rural Community Council). It was felt that communities who have done Community-Led Plans are more likely to respond positively to a Housing Needs Survey and therefore this Survey should be after the Community-Led Planning stage 8. When asked about whether Community-Led Planning has helped or assisted in getting a Needs Survey done, there was a split of opinion. Hampshire, Kent and Oxfordshire all thought not, while Berkshire, Sussex and Surrey and, on balance, Chichester thought that this has helped: 'Community-Led Planning leads to an easier starting point' and 'easier to get the initial 'buy-in' from the Parish Council' (Berkshire) and 'Can enable stuff to happen where normally it wouldn't' (Surrey).

4.3.9 We wanted to explore in what way Community-Led Planning has helped the Rural Housing Enablers in their work. Only one county claimed not to be aware of CLP helping - which was at odds with most others. Berkshire sees the Community-Led Planning process as helping to break down the barriers towards affordable housing and help community leaders recognise the importance of the housing issue for the wider community. The experience there is that where good engagement has already taken place it is far easier for the housing delivery professionals to 'sell' the concept of 'local homes for local people'. Sussex argued that Community-Led Planning 'paves the way' and 'if there is a decent action plan and can lead to better response rates' (for Housing Needs Surveys). Surrey was very similar seeing that it can be an easier way in some communities where the Parish Council is not progressive. Oxfordshire, rather hypothetically, argued that 'there aren't many instances where a Needs Survey has been carried out subsequent to a Community-Led Plan that probably wouldn't have happened anyway'.

Chichester saw that it will depend how early housing is voiced in the Community-Led Planning process. In some respects it can be a problem as a Parish Council can publish that housing is not wanted, but in other places it can be a benefit as the first stage of getting a Parish Council on board.



The mode of practice there appears to rather different and this respondent found it difficult to say that Housing Needs Surveys result from Community-Led Planning, even where one has been carried out.

4.3.10 We wanted to know how many Housing Needs Surveys had been carried out derived from a Community-Led Planning prompted request. The following numbers were collected as an indicator (see table 5 below). Berkshire also piloted one Housing Needs Survey as part of the Community-Led Plan questionnaire with limited success (saying ‘it made the whole thing too long’). Hampshire wanted to make it clear that Community-Led Plan surveys: ‘are not robust enough’ to cover or tease out housing need at the moment. Again, this is due to design quality and the need to ask about a wide range of issues – thus reducing the scope to ask all the required questions on housing.

Table 5: Housing Needs Surveys derived from Community-Led Planning

Area	HNS	HNS from CLP
Berkshire	24	12
Chichester	14	-
Hampshire	-	4
Isle of Wight	16	10
Kent	-	‘very few’
Oxfordshire	-	‘not many’
Surrey	12	50%

4.3.11 The Housing Enablers tend to be primarily involved in bringing forward exception schemes, but other housing also comes forward with their advice. Therefore we checked how many exceptions versus other schemes involved the Enabler in each area. In Berkshire there were 2 exception schemes with planning permission (involving 26 units), 1 further was awaiting determination (with 7 units), 1 application was currently being drafted (for 8 units) and a further 4 were at site appraisal stage (totalling 40 units). Sussex claimed about a 50% / 50% split with eight exception schemes and two non-exception sites; reflecting how the non-exception sites tend to be bigger.

One local authority based officer reminded us that the downturn in the market was slowing the process but so far exception sites had delivered 12 units there and expected 4 more sites in the next 3 years, all with a: ‘decent amount of units’ in each. Hampshire and Oxfordshire both stated that they had dealt with around 90% exceptions sites and 10% ‘other’ sites. Kent had exclusively worked on exceptions sites and the Isle of Wight had delivered four schemes (three exceptions and one non-exception site). One county had delivered none as yet, but had schemes ‘in the pipeline’. These responses confirm how rural sites deliver fewer units per scheme and they tend to take some time to complete.

4.3.12 We invited the Housing interviewees to reflect on the relationship and any issues arising with other actors. Oxfordshire, claimed ‘excellent working relationships’ existed there between the Local Authorities, the Rural Community Council and the Registered Social Landlords and Surrey’s response indicated a similar set of relations. It was seen by Sussex that the relationship works best where there is commitment from the ‘top down’. One county identified the need for ‘the political will to deliver on tricky issues’, another thought that the relationships are worse in those Authorities that have limited engagement with their parishes. The ratings other respondents gave on this basis to their districts went

right across the board; showing the range of relations and contexts that are being operated and maintained.

4.3.13 We queried whether the identification of Rural Affordable Housing as an issue in Community-Led Planning had resulted in more or less opposition to schemes coming forward. In four areas there was a clear notion that opposition to Affordable Housing had decreased (Isle of Wight, Sussex, Berkshire, Surrey). The feeling was that Community-Led Planning breaks down barriers and ensures that the community is aware of what going on. One county (Surrey) highlighted the usefulness of the third party i.e. the Rural Community Council to avoid pre-existing tension that can be there between Parish Councils and district councils. In three cases there was a feeling that it had not really changed much (Hampshire, Oxfordshire, Kent) while in one area it was said that the Parish Councils are 'quite mixed but are not very supportive' and it is therefore uncertain if they are affected either way by Community-Led Planning.

4.3.14 In terms of how many affordable housing units have been completed/approved - where a Housing Needs Survey was an action from a Community-Led Plan – the Enablers indicated that there had been some success but that the process can be lengthy. In Kent and Oxfordshire they did not know for sure. Surrey thought 'none as yet' with the Isle of Wight claiming ten. Berkshire stated that there were 16 approved but it is 'early days' for the project there; but that almost all schemes coming forward through the pipeline are linked to Community-Led Planning. One district stated that 12 would be in place by end of the year with a total of 35 units estimated by the end of next year. Another county said that all of the units involved were quite recent and still in the delivery pipeline.

4.3.15 We wanted to see how the housing function was joined up in terms of dealing with the Housing Enablers function located both in and outside of Local Authorities. There appeared to be good relationships with districts who were proactive so there was a feeling of 'it depends' in one area. Indeed this variable view was the norm in most areas; Kent claimed good relations with all or most of the 13 Local Authorities in their area. One county level Enabler said that: 'With one of the Local Authorities the relationship is so good I know that I can pick up the phone and speak to Planners and Housing officers at anytime and get very positive feedback. This happens to be the one Authority that is also fully engaged with the Community-Led Planning process'. We also asked about relations with Registered Social Landlords (RSL) and housing trusts. Berkshire thought that in general these were good, they all work differently, and there were 'better relationships with some than others'. Some see the RHE role as finished once the RSL/developer is engaged, though generally the Parishes want to maintain the Rural Housing Enabler presence in the process. One area had good relations with two Registered Social Landlords: namely Hastoe and English Rural Housing, another had 'excellent' relations with one 'preferred' RSL.

4.3.16 In terms of other alterations that might be made to improve working relationships the housing interviewees thought that the uncertain policy environment was not helpful. There was concern expressed by one area about some of the recommendations about housing delivery in the 2008 Taylor report. In one area there were concerns about new policies being proposed, where communities decide planning applications themselves. The recent policy idea (Conservative green paper on planning, 2010) to devolve local resources to Parish Councils to deliver Rural Affordable Housing, where and as they think appropriate (e.g. exception sites), could well result in less Affordable Housing delivery. This is due to housing being a contentious issue and the proposal gives the community 'both the power to do something, but also the power to do nothing'. Otherwise it was felt that there is unlikely to be much progress. This was for two main reasons: firstly most communities or Parish



Councils at that level have not got resources to handle the responsibility. Secondly, there must be a recognition of delivery based on housing need and that the appropriate mechanisms and duties are needed at that level.

Berkshire thought that there could be better engagement with communities on the housing issue and more collaboration between the Local Authorities and Registered Social Landlords and the Rural Community Councils. The Local Authorities could provide more opportunities for those tasked with the Housing function to access Parish and Community events. Kent would also like to see Rural Affordable Housing promoted more to the groups that are thinking about Community-Led Planning, but also claim that there is not the time to promote housing specifically. Sussex wanted to maintain a ‘blurring of roles’ between Community Development Workers and the Housing Enablers, both to maintain collaboration but also the perceived ‘independence of Rural Housing Enablers’. It also cropped up in several places that the quality and refinement of housing related questions in Community-Led Plan surveys really need to be looked at carefully.



5. An Enhanced Process: Community-Led Planning and the Housing Issue

The second part of the project overall was designed to look at how, where and when housing can be brought into, or *bridged* into the process of deliberations and action involved in Community-Led Planning in the *future*. This is based on what was garnered in the earlier part of the research, as expressed in section 4. This includes reflecting on the degree to which Community Development Workers and housing professionals have worked in partnership and how their work can be mutually supportive of rural affordable housing provision.

The strategic housing role and individual elements of this, such as housing needs surveys, and the Community-Led Planning approach and associated roles (i.e. the Community Development Worker role) have developed independently from one another. However there has been a progressive realisation that there is mutual benefit in co-operation, but it should be noted that there has not yet been any real effort to formalise or regularise the process/relationship. The impetus for this section is therefore derived from the preceding sections and from a perceived need to ensure that those involved in Community-Led Planning and those focussed on housing delivery work together where possible, at the 'right' times and in the 'right' way – a rather nuanced challenge. Furthermore it is important that such partnership working leads onto and develops later action, for example; Affordable Housing site identification, negotiation with landowners, liaison with Planners and others, including Registered Social Landlords and the maintenance of community support.

Our deliberations on this section have involved drawing on the experience of the team (including an experienced rural researcher, senior Rural Housing Enabler and senior Community Development Worker) to construct a suggested enhanced process. Again, we have used the Community-Led Planning toolkit around which to hang the analysis.

5.1 General

There are a number of key messages or contextual factors that need to be briefly rehearsed in the light of the following approach. Firstly the relationship between the Community Development Worker (CDW) and Rural Housing Enabler appears key, yet the roles and objectives of the two are quite different. The role of the CDW is primarily to encourage the community to think holistically about the needs and preferences of the community and work to help empower them and enable their own voice to emerge. They are interested in maintaining the spirit of what Community-Led Planning is in terms of understanding the needs of everybody in the community. The Housing Enabler has a more discrete role and this is specific to identifying and addressing local affordable housing needs. As such the Rural Housing Enabler is an advocate for affordable housing, and while working with communities the Housing Enabler can often faces significant opposition from the community. By identifying the needs of the community via the Community-Led Planning process it may be possible to help reduce some of this opposition and overcome initial barriers to the delivery of affordable housing – an aspiration in which CLP appears to be successful in many areas and based on what we have found thus far.



5.2 Issues with the Community Development / Housing Relationship at present

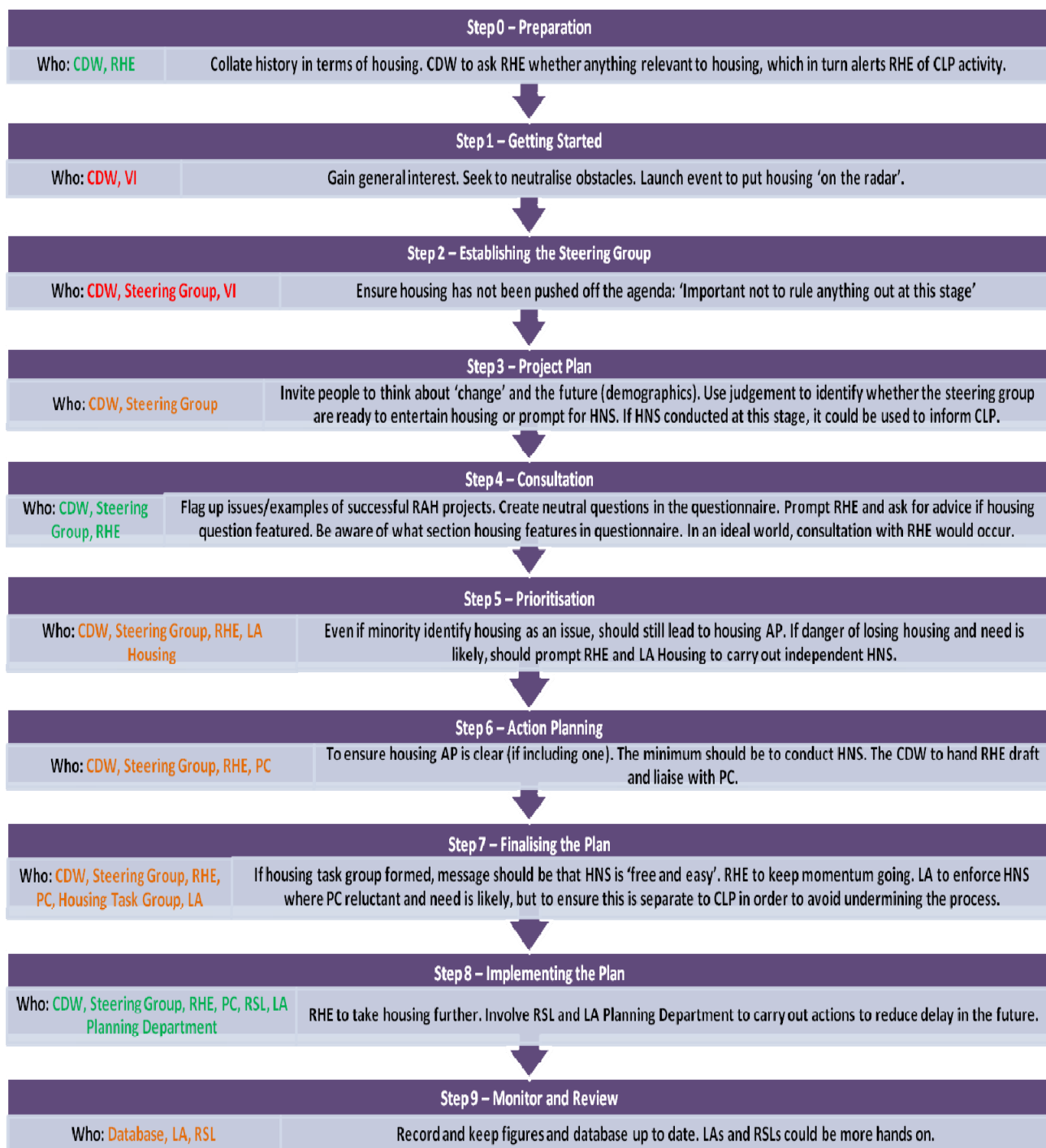
Effectively the Community Development Workers are suggesting that there could be a ‘better’ or more structured relationship. There is a need to ensure that there are resources/time available and that this is feasible. This is probably an idealised ‘best way to get things done’ that carries efficiency savings as well as costs. Equally there is a perception that mainstreaming of funding and other factors such as the need for regular Housing Needs Surveys may in ‘pull Community Development Worker and Rural Housing Enablers apart’. This may damage instances where partnership working has already developed i.e. where these professionals have worked together in the same organisation (i.e. the Rural Community Councils). For example, some Rural Housing Enablers have already been mainstreamed (moved ‘in-house’) and are employed by the Local Authority and here liaison and close partnership becomes even more important. There are other examples where existing partnerships with a focus on housing have been reasonably successful in getting larger sites or easier sites to come forward (e.g. Hampshire; Oxfordshire) however they may well struggle to deliver as ‘harder to convince’ communities will need bottom-up and Community-Led Planning processes to develop understanding and awareness of the issue and of local need. It came up in almost all of the Development Worker interviews and the housing interviews that a degree of independence from Local Authorities was a key to both the success of Community-Led Planning and possibly in terms of the Housing Enabler role – some disagreed with this arguing that Housing Needs Surveys could be done effectively by Local Authorities. However, it is still true that many communities view councils with some suspicion when topics such as housing are being discussed.

The timeline below shows in brief how the process could include housing actions and reminders for the community through the CLP process. As the work has progressed this has become more and more nuanced a process, however we see that there are some clear possibilities for getting housing ‘on the agenda’ with local communities. Below we have drawn up a timeline of the Community-Led Planning toolkit stages and a commentary on how and where housing might usefully come up in the various stages.

5.3 The enhanced timeline

We now discuss the way in which housing may be introduced or pursued through the Community-Led Planning process, bearing in mind the cautions outlined above regarding the need for Community Development Workers to shape their behaviour to the prevailing situation or context. This analysis has been structured to follow the Community-Led Planning toolkit 9-stage process, with our addition of the preparatory ‘stage 0’. The commentary represents an effort to identify and suggest ways of maintaining housing as a legitimate and live issue for communities and is also expressed in shorthand via the timeline diagram in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Enhanced Community-Led Planning Toolkit Timeline: Community-Led Planning and the Housing Issue



Key: **Red** = care needed. **Amber** = context dependent. **Green** = definite yes.

VI = Vested Interest - those actors who are strongly pro or anti-development / housing in the community.

The ‘Who’ category on the left hand side in Figure 5 is indicative only, but shows who may be best placed to instigate or pursue the issue through the stage in question, or who is otherwise likely to be involved. Below we expand our thinking expressed in Figure 5 stage by stage.



5.3.1 Stage '0' – 'Preparation' GREEN

The recognition of this preparatory stage is necessary here and is aimed more at the professionals involved in housing and Community-Led Planning. The idea of the preparatory stage is where topics such as housing would be discussed (i.e. between the housing function and the Development Worker) and this found some favour amongst interviewees. This is the step where organising to approach the community regarding CLP should ideally be mapped out and researched; bearing in mind each community is different and will have a history in terms of housing, Housing Need Surveys and other relevant occurrences (e.g. attempts to develop in the area). Both the Housing Enabler and Development Worker need to be aware when a new Community-Led Planning opportunity may be coming up or when a 'refresh'¹⁵ to an existing Community-Led Plan is likely to begin. The main actions here are to understand the existing data and 'intelligence'. This will inform the approach that the Development Worker takes overall and towards housing specifically.

There are some obvious resource implications here and while this is an ideal it is noted that some research may need to be done by the various actors to develop an appropriate strategy for that particular community at the beginning of the Community-Led Planning process. The main action here is on the Development Worker to ask the Rural Housing Enabler and others whether there is anything relevant in terms of housing (and which in turn alerts the Housing Enabler of imminent Community-Led Planning activity).

5.3.2 Stage 1 – 'Getting started' RED

The prime objective on the part of the Development Worker is general engagement with the process and to listen as much as instruct communities. This step is a stage where formulating general interest, rather than specific topics, is important. It is important not to emphasise housing at this stage, as those with a vested interest (VI), either for or against development, could potentially hinder or undermine the Community-Led Planning process. This is where Development Worker will identify most of the obstacles. If some voices start talking negatively about housing – the CDW should seek to play down or neutralise those obstacles, perhaps by referring communities to the RHE.

Launch events should put Housing 'on the radar' and it is important that Community Development Workers are able to explain that housing need may be present. The message here is that it is unlikely that any one section of the community will appreciate housing need without a Housing Needs Survey being done.

5.3.3 Stage 2 – 'Establishing the steering group' RED

Housing is one of many issues raised within the directions to communities provided by the Community-Led Planning toolkit. The Community Development Worker will most likely plant some seeds about specific topics that might be considered or raised through the process. The Development Worker might also raise the possibility of a Rural Housing Enabler visit or talk in stage 3 or 4 or to meet with the relevant local authority officer (e.g. housing or planning). One aspect here is to try and emphasise the issue of housing *need* rather than development *per se* and to put it back to the CLP

15. This is where a community will revisit their plan and effectively redo or update it after a period of say five years. Further work to look at this stage of CLP will need to be conducted in the near future.



steering group to reflect on. In particular to ensure that they are faced with the key question of: how do they know that there is no housing need? This is part of the questioning approach, rather than imposing issues or attempting to ‘tell’ them to include such topics. The overall message may be that ‘Housing isn’t a negative if it is a benefit to your community’.

The overall objective for the Community Development Worker here should be to make sure housing hasn’t been pushed off any agendas (yet). The message overall is that the steering group should not be ruling anything out at this stage.

5.3.4 Stage 3 – ‘Project Planning’ **AMBER**

At this stage the community, through the Community-Led Planning steering group, are thinking about what and how to design and pursue the Plan and the necessary consultation elements (i.e. stage ‘4’). This is an important ‘framing’ period when opportunities to ensure that the community are aware of wider issues and demands on society are highlighted, for example the wider *Sustainable Communities* agenda.

This period could include a prompt from the Community Development Worker to invite people to think about the implications of ‘change’. The phraseology used should bring people to the table to think through for themselves how change will lead to the need for different things. For example; population/demographics and in directing people to think about the future of their own area. This can spark-off a debate on housing and encourage a positive approach, or recognition of ‘more information needed’. There is an argument here that the Community Development Worker should be more aware of the relative magnitude of issues; given the focus here, this might mean ensuring that affordable housing is not swept into the larger ‘Development & Planning’ category, and is treated as a separate community issue.

The way that communities are encouraged to use a thematised approach when consulting or producing their plan may not always help to bring housing out into the open. It often does not fit any of the typical themes used to structure the Community-Led Plan (for example: ‘environment’, ‘economy’ labels). This is because housing could fall under any or all of the themes; there may be a need to think about how to ensure housing is not pushed out of the themes; ‘housing needs to find a home’.

The Development Worker should use his/her judgement at this stage about whether or not the CLP steering group is ready to entertain housing as a category, or simply to prompt for a Housing Needs Survey. This latter option has the benefit of taking a ‘hot’ issue out of the Community-Led Planning process. What emerged from our deliberations is that the questions and utility of housing related findings from a Community-Led Plan consultation may be questionable and then require a full Housing Needs Survey anyway - so this begs the question of ‘why do it’? Instead the option of using a single question in a CLP survey appears attractive; for example, either: ‘do you know if there is a housing need or not?’ Or, ‘shall we ask for a Housing Needs Survey to be done as part of our actions from the Community-Led Plan?’ become relevant (and which then leads into stages 6 & 7) – also, see stage 4 below.

If a Housing Needs Survey is carried out at this stage it could inform the Community-Led Plan and CLP group. However we feel that, on balance, this should not be incorporated due to the sensitivity of the questions in the Housing Need Survey. People may be reluctant to answer if such a topic is incorporated into the CLP questionnaire. The Needs Survey will identify if there is a need



authoritatively. This will also take a possibly contentious question away from the Community-Led Plan questionnaire at stage '4'.

5.3.5 Stage 4 – 'Consultation' GREEN

This stage may involve a range of techniques (not only questionnaires). As such there are numerous opportunities to bring in housing as an issue or to flag up issues and examples of successful affordable housing projects here.

Questionnaire design is important, as in the past some communities have not been so good at constructing neutral questions or understanding the need for balanced questions. One role for the Community Development Worker is to check this. In terms of housing specifically, if communities do want housing questions in their survey they should be prompted to seek advice from the Rural Housing Enabler, to check the content given the detail of the questions needs to be considered carefully. Ideally a close conversation between the Housing professionals and the Community-Led Planning participants about question(naire) design is needed (see Parker 2008). The positioning of questions in the CLP survey can also affect answers, so it should be made sure that the difference between *development* and *affordable housing* is clear. For example, if housing appears under the environment section it may provoke an unnecessarily negative response by CLP participants.

It appears that Housing Enablers or others with a specific housing focus could, in an ideal world, be more involved here. There is an apparent need to review and reflect on where housing could be featured in the range of techniques available during consultation. It is possible that Rural Housing Enablers do not do as much consultation that they could (and in partnership with the Community Development Workers).

The message here is that housing may be '*Too big an issue to leave in, but too big an issue to leave out*' meaning that it may be too complex and important overall and the Community-Led Planning process – particularly stage '4' - cannot scope out the need adequately, but that housing needs to be endorsed as an issue, or promoted as something to be pursued in some way i.e. through a full Housing Needs Survey.

5.3.6 Stage 5 – 'Prioritisation' AMBER

This is where steering groups and the wider community look at the data and the views gathered during the previous stage and try to pull together the draft of the Community-Led Plan and move towards the CLP Action Plan (in stage 6). This is where some contentious, or apparently minority, issues could get pushed aside and there could be a possible danger in eliding the representation of housing need, or to avoid further housing action being pursued in some communities.

The message should be that for some issues and groups: even if a small proportion of the community are identifying housing as an issue, it should still lead to an action on housing. This may simply translate as: 'establish need' and a small amount of need is still significant. If there is a danger that housing will be lost, there has to be a communication between Development Worker or Housing Enabler to raise this. Furthermore there may be a need in that community but it is sensitive issue. If housing is pushed off the agenda and does not go forward to Stage '6' (but there was some indication



of need), then this can be flagged to the Rural Housing Enabler / Local Authority Housing department to prompt a later independent Housing Needs Survey anyway.

5.3.7 Stage 6 – ‘Action Planning’ **AMBER**

This stage should not require too much extra attention, however if the Action Plan includes housing, then this needs to be conveyed with clear and actionable points. There were numerous types of action points in the database (discussed above). We aggregated these into five types. Our view is still that this should relate to Housing Needs Surveys in the main but may also involve other actions such as ‘talk to local landowners’, ‘discuss planning constraints’. Of course these will depend on the mood and attitude of the community. The minimum should be ‘conduct a Housing Need Survey’ (unless this has been actioned even earlier, and possibly outwith, the Community-Led Planning process, see 4.2.9 and 4.3.8).

This is also where linkage to the Parish Council (PC) is important as a good or credible Needs Survey will require support from the Parish Council. Therefore it should be ensured that the Parish Council supports action points and takes some responsibility in pursuing the Actions. The Community Development Worker should make sure that the Housing Enabler sees the draft Action Plan and liaises with the Parish Council at this stage. If a Parish Council representative is on the Community-Led Planning steering group and gets a negative response from the Parish Council - then the question is open about how this may prevent housing coming forward as an issue. It may be that a Needs Survey is conducted in any case at a later time.

5.3.8 Stage 7 – ‘Finalising’ **AMBER**

If there is a Housing task group set up as part of the Community-Led Planning process then the message should be that the Housing Needs Survey is both ‘free’ (or low cost) and ‘easy’ to do. One aspect here is to actually ensure that Housing Needs Surveys *are* either free or low cost of course, and that they are quite straightforward - otherwise unnecessary blockages can occur. This leads to a clear message about how or what you do to get the Needs Survey carried out. It is important for the Community Development Worker to have handed on the knowledge of the readiness to go forward or the relevant Action Point to the Rural Housing Enabler so that momentum is kept going, or otherwise inform the Local Authority if progress is unlikely for some reason.

The Local Authority can enforce the Needs Survey where a Parish Council is reluctant to do so and where a need is likely, or no survey has been done for some time. This is one of the first stages where the Local Authority should be more overtly involved (unless the RHE is a Local Authority employee) – i.e. if a Housing Needs Survey is being resisted. However it is important that it is clearly conducted outside of the Community-Led Planning process in this situation. Otherwise where the community or some sections of the community are overtly opposed to housing then the CLP process may be blamed or undermined.



5.3.9 Stage 8 – ‘Implementation’ GREEN

The onus tends to be put on the Rural Housing Enabler and the local authority to take housing action further here. The Enabler often has a lead role in terms of Community-Led Planning related actions pertaining to housing and will liaise with Parish Councils where action has been created for a Housing Needs Survey to be carried out. The involvement of the Registered Social Landlord and the Local Authority planning department could be useful, so that wasted effort is avoided when it comes to later stages in the Rural Affordable Housing process; such as site identification and planning application discussions.

The range of possible Action Plan points that relate to housing need should be kept in mind, as some may involve Rural Housing Enablers and in others the Development Worker and the Parish Council. In terms of housing the Community-Led Planning process starts to withdraw from the proceedings at this point as the Parish Council and other actors should take ownership of the formal process.

5.3.10 Stage 9 – ‘Monitoring and Evaluation’ AMBER

The sometimes weak or *ad hoc* connection between the housing function and the CDW/CLP process is a flaw. There is a perceived general need to keep figures and data up to date in Community-Led Planning. Housing actions and progress on targets can sometimes get left behind and it is felt that there could be a more hands-on role for Local Authorities and others, and for Registered Social Landlords to be more involved in this element of data capture. The Community-Led Planning database also needs to be up to date so that efforts can be directed efficiently and positive outcomes understood. The last point to be made here is that if community support has been developed for housing then this needs to be maintained at this stage and then on into the next cycle of Community-Led Planning, so that knowledge and understanding is passed on as well as the ‘hard’ data already mentioned.

We now summarise and reflect below on our conclusions and recommendations derived from this work.



6. Reflection and Conclusions

The results of this project demonstrate, in respect of housing delivery, that there are obvious benefits and results already emerging from Community-Led Planning. In particular this can be seen in relation to developing awareness of the need, and in terms of assisting in the delivery of, Rural Affordable Housing across the South East and more widely across England. More concretely there are many clear actions emerging from Community-Led Plans relating to affordable housing. However Community-Led Planning is not designed to focus on single issues and moreover it is expressly intended that communities self-identify issues relevant to that community. In this light it is impressive that affordable housing already features so widely in Community-Led Plan action plans.

As such there is clear evidence of emergent good practices already and organic partnership working between Community-Led Planning participants and those concerned with the delivery of rural affordable housing (see also the National Case Study annex) but more could be done. This work has revealed that there is potential for more housing awareness and action to be promoted via Community-Led Planning and through even closer working between Development Workers, Parish Councils and those professionals with a remit to fulfil the strategic housing function at the local authority level.

We also find that by reflecting on the Community-Led Planning toolkit timeline there is scope for housing to be promoted during this process and that, at a minimum, a Housing Needs Survey action plan point should emerge from the process in the vast majority of cases. We also think that this can be achieved without destabilising the Community-Led Planning process overall. The key is to closer partnership working, access to good information and preparation early on in the CLP process.

We have summarised our main conclusions as below:

- Community-Led Plans already appear to play a role in *developing awareness* and prompting action for affordable housing in many communities and *in breaking down initial barriers*, within communities and Parish Councils, towards affordable housing.
- Many areas in the South East region do highlight affordable housing as a possible topic area for Community-Led Planning groups and communities to consider. Largely this occurs in a general or unstructured way and early on in the Community-Led Planning process.
- The ancillary role for housing through Community-Led Planning may be improved and there are clear areas where practice can be refined. Largely this may be done through developing early awareness and understanding of context, as well as routinising, or semi-formalising, contact and interaction between Community Development Workers and those tasked with the housing delivery function (and in particular the RHEs).
- If Community Development Workers are asked to do more preparation on such issues and to develop their wider working practices, there may need to be some extra resource directed here or at the very least, closer cooperation and mutual understanding between all the parties involved in Community-Led Planning and the housing function.
- It was also clear that many that Community Development Workers are wary of highlighting one issue (i.e. housing) above others and in their view risking the integrity of the Community-Led Planning process. However we do feel that if handled carefully there is clear scope to at least get communities to agree to Housing Needs Surveys through the CLP process.



- The success in approaching housing depends on *how* it is raised, as much as when. However it emerges that Community Development Workers do not really ‘push’ housing given their concerns about the integrity of the Community-Led Planning process overall.
- The environment in which the professionals and communities are working are often complex and sometimes fragile. Those advising communities during the Community-Led Planning process have to be adept at seeing opportunities (e.g. for housing) and simultaneously maintaining harmony and the overall integrity of CLP where possible.
- The wider point connected to the above relates to the need to recognise the need for close cooperation but also for reflective distance to be maintained when working with communities on CLP – it is the development of knowledge and understanding and then the community ‘ownership’ of issues where the value really lies for those trying to deliver more Rural Affordable Housing.
- Our reflection is that the quality and refinement of housing related questions in Community-Led Planning questionnaires really needs to be looked at carefully. Our suggestion involves abandoning the inclusion of often poorly constructed and a limited range of housing questions in CLP surveys, in favour of a simple single question on the awareness of need for housing locally.
- In terms of whether housing needs should be introduced earlier, we feel this has to be considered on a case by case basis. In some instances the Housing Needs Survey could be introduced very early on; depending on the overall attitude toward housing in the community at the outset.
- There is scope to remind Community-Led Planning groups about housing throughout the planning process and at the minimum to include at least one question in the consultation phase which might simply be: ‘are you aware of housing need in the community?’. This would then usually trigger an action point to commission a Housing Needs Survey.
- Our consideration is that even a small number of people within a community indicating housing need should be enough to prompt an action plan point, or other trigger for a Housing Needs Survey. The issue is not one that hinges on the *quantity* of need. This conclusion is reinforced by earlier research into the methodologies and inclusivity of CLP (see Parker, 2008).
- It has also become clear in undertaking this work that a more refined and extensive picture of actual practice and potentials for Community-Led Planning in helping to deliver rural affordable (and indeed other housing) should be carried out. This should look nationally at the different stages and elements where communities may be enrolled into the process of acknowledging need and then pursuing sites, negotiating planning permission and the construction of such housing.
- Future research might also usefully talk to a sample of Parish Councils to discover whether Community-Led Plans did not have a Housing Needs Survey as an action point because the Parish Council have used another avenue or already done a Survey in the recent past. There is a long understood issue here about the danger of ‘over-consulting’ communities to be recalled here.
- The relationship and communications between Community Development Workers and housing delivery agents should be established in such a way that housing issues or concerns can be referred on, typically to Rural Housing Enablers, in all cases. Work to devise this should be developed jointly by the relevant bodies.



- The role of local authorities also needs further consideration, given the concerns expressed about how communities feel about ‘top-down’ agendas being pressed upon them. In short it is important that where possible ‘neutral’ intermediaries develop communities and then trigger the timing and form of the direct involvement of the Local Authority housing delivery function as part of a partnership-based approach.

Overall this research has concluded that Community-Led Planning is already helping to develop awareness of housing need. However, given the separate and holistic nature of the Community-Led Planning process, and the narrower scope and often sensitive nature of delivering rural housing, there are, understandably, areas which can be worked on to maximize possibilities for Rural Affordable Housing. Some attention should be paid to ensuring that communities and development workers are well informed about strategic issues, and specific need. This is very important early on in the Community-Led Planning stages and then equally so in an ongoing fashion during the Community-Led Planning process. This in our view is important in order to help maximize positive conditions for the delivery of rural affordable housing and the further development of both an enhanced and ‘responsible’ Community-Led Planning.

The timeline analysis shows how the process and the conditions for the discussion of housing will differ from community to community. There is a need to understand this widely and for all the actors with an interest in both Community-Led Planning and the housing agenda to be aware of existing practice and to see the community development worker as the agent who has developed understanding with the community and can signal to local authorities and others how and when to pursue housing in that community. In order for this to work the Community Development Workers will need support and information about the background and legacy of past housing development and easy access to data that may positively influence the Community-Led Planning groups and Parish Councils.



Annex

Example Case Studies: CLP and Rural Affordable Housing Schemes in England.

The brief examples detailed below highlight how Community-Led Planning (CLP) has been instrumental in assisting in the process of delivering Rural Affordable Housing across rural England. The examples show the potentials of Community-Led Planning in developing awareness and understanding of housing need and how this can act as a lever for the strategic housing function to deliver affordable housing more effectively. Most of the examples and those involved claim that the work on CLP, prior to the instigation of the housing schemes shown, has helped by either speeding up schemes, or acting to generate support and momentum, or otherwise to mollify communities who may otherwise be suspicious of new housing development. Key contacts for the examples are provided at the end of each summary.

Example 1: Fenny Compton, Warwickshire

The example summarised here is of a housing project in Fenny Compton which is located in Stratford-upon-Avon District in Warwickshire. The parish has a population of 800. The Community-Led Plan was published in 2008 with a housing action point to carry out a Housing Needs Survey and to investigate options to meet identified housing needs. The CLP process helped with getting the development initiated because the Parish Council and the community were aware from the Plan that there was support throughout the village for affordable housing. This led to the scheme coming forward with the Community-Led Plan seen as being ‘as effective as it needed to be’ and leading to a quicker process for affordable housing to be provided. This, overall, shows a good example of how quickly such developments can be carried through when there is community support and when other conditions are right (e.g. sites, funding availability).

The on-site development work for the scheme began in March 2010 with completion due in February 2011, with a total of 12 units involved. The tenure structure is for two local market properties and ten Housing Association rented properties. The sizes and breakdown are: two 2-bedroom bungalows (market), and seven 2-bedroom houses (Social Rented) and three 3-bedroom houses (Social Rented).

The development was funded by the HCA with top-up funding from the District Council. The actors involved in the partnership to bring the development forward were the Parish Council, Stratford District Council, Warwickshire County Council and the county level rural housing enabler, Warwickshire Rural Housing Association, East Midlands Housing Association, and the contractor Whiterock Homes.

The various stakeholders involved worked together on the project at different stages. The process was that Parish Council support, via the CLP, led to a Housing Needs Survey being carried out, then a public consultation event was held to identify suitable sites. There was regular contact between partners throughout the process. The Local Authority role during the process was very supportive of rural affordable housing, and they were involved through their planners and by making the top-up funding available.



The site was identified via a community drop-in event on a Saturday in the village hall, where residents were invited to come along. The centrepiece was a large map of the village and people were asked to highlight possible sites as well as sites that they felt were not acceptable and based on the locations identified. These were then investigated. Comments on the sites were solicited from the local planners and the County Highways department. Then landowners were approached and the Parish Council agreed to a scheme on one of the shortlisted sites. The housing association developed plans for the site and held a public consultation event, which then led to the planning application.

The planning conditions attached through the s106 agreement includes a local connection criteria and that the units must remain as affordable housing in perpetuity. In terms of the local market properties, the s106 sets out the resale procedure such that the properties are initially only offered to people with that local connection.

The lesson from this case is that the commitment from the Parish Council and others to help drive the process was important. Secondly the speed of the process was due to the fortuitous timing of applying for HCA funding and the implementation once funding was received.

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Example 2: Long Whatton and Diseworth, Leicestershire

This example is derived from Long Whatton and Diseworth, located within North West Leicestershire District. There are two linked development sites produced here, reflecting the 2 villages in one parish which were involved in this case. These are Long Whatton (pop. = 941) and Diseworth (pop. = 626) with a combined population of around 1500 people living in the parish. The villages cooperate well together generally, although local rivalries are still alive and well.

The build began early in Spring 2010 with the foundations being laid in April 2010 and the project is due for completion in November 2010. The total number of units to be provided is fifteen, with six houses in Diseworth and nine in Long Whatton. The types of tenure will be 20% shared ownership and 80% social rented. These are all either 2 or 3-bedroomed properties with a planning condition attached to the units that they be for local people in perpetuity. Funding was derived from the HCA for the development.

The Community-Led Plan was published in late 2008 and led to this housing project being initiated. It was felt that the goodwill that had been developed by CLP assisted 'throughout' the process of assembling the Scheme and the link was said to be very strong between Community-Led Planning and the delivery of the housing scheme. The role that Community-Led Planning played in this housing scheme was initially when the CLP consultation questionnaire included the question: 'do you think that there is a need for affordable housing in the village?' - the findings and the process used has helped to develop and then maintain 'strong positive support' from the community.

The Community-Led Planning group and the community development worker from Leicestershire and Rutland Rural Community Council initiated the project via the CLP. Thereafter the Rural Housing Enabler worked with North West Leicestershire District Council and the Parish Council to conduct the housing needs survey. There was a protocol devised to ensure that joint working operated effectively. This means that the Rural Housing Enabler always accompanies a member of Local Authority housing staff to explain to the community how affordable housing works. A sub group was also formed to



ensure everything was coordinated and done smoothly for the needs survey, the written report and to get Parish Council acceptance. The Rural Housing Enabler found possible sites and worked with the sub group, which involved a local planner and the Housing Association to look for sites outside the village boundary. The LA also provided support for making the grant application to the HCA and in terms of the overall planning support. In total 10 sites were identified initially and the planners prioritised and narrowed them down to those most acceptable in planning terms. When this point was reached the village hall was hired for a community event and the plans were presented to the community. Once the preferred site was identified the whole project was passed on to the Waterloo housing group for the final stages. It was felt that this case demonstrates how Community- Led Planning can ‘open the door to affordable housing’.

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Example 3: Hungerford, Berkshire

Hungerford is a small market town with a population of c5,500 (approx. 2,450 households) located in the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Berkshire. Despite its size, Hungerford is designated ‘rural’ by map and as such is eligible for Exception Site housing, under SI No. 1307 (1999).

The development was HCA Grant funded and will provide 16 units; all of which will be for social rent. The unit sizes are mixed, with two 2-bedroom Flats, four 3-bedroom houses and ten 2-bedroom houses. Planning permission was granted in March 2010 with site work due to commence in June 2010 and with a completion date of March 2011.

The key actors involved here were Hungerford 2010 (the Community-Led Planning group), Hungerford Town Council, the Rural Housing Enabler, Testway Housing Association and West Berkshire Council. Initially, the local Community-Led Planning development worker introduced the RHE to the community group at their Community-Led Plan launch event in 2008. Housing had already been identified as an issue (and featured as part of the consultation (stage 4) in the CLP process) and the launch event was held only 1 month after the RHE project began in Berkshire. A series of actions to identify affordable housing to meet local needs were identified in the Action Plan. Shortly thereafter the RHE began working with the Town Council to conduct a local Housing Needs Survey and then to identify possible sites for affordable housing.

The Local Authority was initially involved indirectly through the adoption of the Community-Led Plan. It soon became evident that the most acceptable site was a Local Authority owned piece of land. Both the Strategic Housing and Planning Authority were very helpful in working through the planning process and in the sale of the land. In terms of identifying the land, initially the RHE worked with a Town (Parish level) Council Task Group, then later on with a representative from Testway Housing Association and in close liaison with both the Planning Policy and Development Control sections of West Berkshire Council.

The Community-Led Plan specifically identified a desire to encourage housing to meet the needs of local people. The scheme is an exception site with the condition that all the homes must be allocated to people with a local connection to Hungerford and they must be affordable in perpetuity as part of the planning conditions. The Community-Led Planning process helped because certain barriers had already been overcome during the process and there was a recognition that the 2010 Plan had



identified awareness of a need for affordable housing. The separate and specific housing consultation was held at the Implementation stage (8) in November 2008. This was a very positive and well attended event with very few dissenters; the concerns raised were mainly from neighbours of the proposed site and as a result the housing association was able to work closely with those residents to ensure that the design addressed their concerns. Subsequently the housing association was able to go directly to the Local Authority with a planning application. There was a strong link between CLP and the delivery of the housing scheme, but in this case it was also due to the will of the Town Council. It was claimed that had the RHE been in post during the CLP process it is likely the project would have begun even earlier.

Community-Led Planning was seen as the ‘touch paper’ that started the whole project - it gave the Town Council a mandate to take a housing action forward that was widely accepted by the general population. The Town Council were very proactive then in following through with the housing needs survey and site appraisals, as well as giving full support to the public event and finally their support for the planning application. Hungerford had done considerable community consulting during the development of the CLP and therefore the housing scheme plans were not a surprise to the community. The scheme went through with general acceptance that it was fulfilling a genuine need.

Overall the genuine partnership that took place between the Hungerford CLP Group and the Town (Parish level) Council make this case interesting. The District Authority, the RHE and the housing association in partnership also drove this scheme forward. They ensured that objections were met early on and that the transfer of the land from West Berkshire to the housing association went as smoothly as possible. It was important that the housing association recognised that it had to work closely with the community to get the scheme right.

The lessons can be learnt from this case are that building links within the community through Community-Led Planning; ‘goes a long way to breaking down barriers to housing generally and the identification of local housing shortages within a CLP appears to provide a mandate for future actions’. These are transferable lessons as this was the first scheme brought forward in West Berkshire by the Rural Housing Enabler. There are schemes that have been in the pipeline longer where there is no CLP and they have been much more difficult to bring forward because there is little prior community development.

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Example 4: Wickham Market, Suffolk

The scheme highlighted here is located in Wickham Market, Suffolk. This is located within the Suffolk Coastal District Council area. The parish has a population of 2,200 and there had been a housing need which was generally recognised for some time. The village has retained a range of services and went through a market towns healthcheck process (a form of CLP) in the Summer of 2003 and the resultant Housing Needs Survey was carried out in September 2004 with a 44% return rate.

The Healthcheck had already resulted in some new facilities being added in the village, for example the community resource centre which is also a library was recently provided. The affordable housing development was completed in Autumn 2009 by the Flagship Housing Group and provided 16 units all for the social rented sector. The Community-Led Planning process helped with the housing



development as the community had been involved and knew that such a scheme would be likely. There was nearly an 80% return on the CLP consultations.

The Parish Council, District Council, housing enabling team and Flagship housing were all involved in this scheme and worked together to a set format or process that the housing enablers had developed. Following the CLP the Parish Council set up a working group and had regular meetings with the District Council and the Housing Association who identified the site. Initially there was a 'parish walk about' - which is a usual approach used by the RHE, and the local area map was used in discussion with all partners. Through this possible sites were identified. The group then worked with the local planners and prioritised the ones that would be preferable from their perspective. Consultation with the community was then carried out with outline plans put in the new resource centre.

From this process one site was chosen as an exception site. This was quite a big plot, and all the units needed could go on that land. There were no objections from the highways authority people to this. The District Council drew up a s106 with appropriate conditions, including a local connection condition (i.e. that the homes would be for local occupation).

Community-Led Planning has helped with the delivery of this housing scheme and the general attitude of the community generally towards affordable housing. It was said that the housing scheme was strongly linked to the CLP process, given that affordable housing was identified as needed in the plan, with the Housing Needs Survey carried out from that momentum. Once the need for housing was identified the process went forward, and the Parish Council agreed to go ahead with progressing a scheme.

This example is interesting because it is the largest affordable housing scheme on one site in Suffolk and yet it has been accepted by the village. The housing is already helping young people stay in this key service centre. The lessons to be drawn from this case are that if a parish is doing a CLP and if they know housing is an issue they should do the HNS in parallel to help speed the process up.

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Example 5: Slaley, Northumberland

Slaley is a small village with a population of 705 just south of Hexham, located in the Tynedale District Council area. The picturesque landscape and easy commuting distance to Newcastle, has combined to add extra pressure on local housing. This example was generated directly from a Community-Led Plan. The Plan was adopted in early 2004 and a Housing Needs Survey followed in June 2004, as part of the community's aspiration to ensure affordable housing for local people in perpetuity.

The Community worked with the County Council based Rural Housing Enabler to develop seven 2 and 3-bedroomed high quality affordable homes in the village. Work began on site in December 2006 and the homes were completed in mid-2008. The tenures were five low-cost rented units, one 3-bedroom home and one 2-bedroom bungalows for sale under a shared ownership scheme. These units were developed by the Two Castles Housing Association as part of the wider Spirit Partnership, which



is a collaboration of six housing associations. The Housing Corporation awarded £470,799 to the Spirit partnership towards the total project costs.

Initially there appeared to be no site available as the village is located in the North Peninnes Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and other infill sites had already been used. The process was very much pushed forward by the Parish Council. The CLP response proved that there was a need. It uncovered that teenagers wanted to be able to form their own household locally. The Parish Council worked with a local farmer to identify a piece of land that could possibly be used. The landowner recognised the importance of having affordable housing and because it would be for local people. As such it was agreed to release agricultural land for this purpose.

The planning conditions regarding local only occupation were requested by the Parish Council and the landowner. The two shared ownership properties remained empty for a period of time, largely due to mortgage companies not liking the s106 agreement conditions relating to ‘locals only’ occupation. A local district councillor was quoted as saying ‘We cannot underestimate the value of a project such as this which has come directly from the community, at grass roots level, through the Parish Council and the parish plan. We are extremely pleased to have been able to add support to the development, which is a testament to community drive and effective partnership working.’

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Example 6: Coniston, Cumbria

This scheme is located in Coniston, South Lakeland District Council, which is also in the Lake District National Park. The parish had a population of 1,717 in 2001.

Part of the local context is important here; a group of 17 parishes joined together to form the Upper Eden Community Plan project. This grouping has formulated its own affordable housing policy. The group came together to address a number of local issues raised by Community-Led Planning. In terms of housing specifically there is considerable sensitivity around the issue throughout the Upper Eden area. This especially concerns second home ownership and local people being unable to access housing property and young people leave due to the high cost of housing. This is seen to be exacerbated by the location in the National Park, where there are real limitations placed on development. This is an area which also experiences high levels of tourism pressure and a lot of housing is used as second homes or as holiday lets. The Community-Led Plan published in 2004 found that the housing issue was important in the community and South Lakeland District Council was commissioned to do a Housing Needs Survey which was completed in 2006, with a return rate of around 55%.

The process led to an affordable housing group being set up in the Parish. Shortly afterwards the Church indicated that they had land and buildings that may potentially be available for conversion. This property was the old village Reading Rooms, which had been endowed by a local family many years ago. The community had to check that this local family were happy for the buildings to be sold to Mitre Housing Association for conversion into affordable housing units. Given that the community supported the idea and that there was evidence of need the family agreed to this.

There were actually two housing schemes provoked in Coniston via the Community-Led Planning process. The first scheme in the converted Reading Rooms was a small one; comprising three units.

These were two 2-bed houses and a 1-bedroom flat. The tenure of the units are all for social rent. The view was that shared ownership was still linked to market prices and were likely to be too expensive for many potential occupiers. There was significant funding from the Homes and Communities Agency for the scheme, with some additional top-up funding by South Lakeland District Council to make sure it went forward.

The process of pursuing this scheme did help identify another second site and a larger scheme of 11 units is to be built imminently. This second site was identified by studying the parish map to look for potential sites. The sites that would clearly not work were filtered out at this stage and the remainder sites were prioritised using a ‘traffic light’ approach. Further consultation with the public was conducted through open meetings and young people were encouraged to come along to these events to specifically discuss the housing project and the shortlist of sites. The Housing Association then contacted landowners regarding the ‘green light’ sites in order to begin the process of negotiation over the land purchase. The Lake District National Park have a policy that new build housing or conversions in the Park should have conditions attached to keep them affordable for local people in perpetuity and this was applied to the scheme.

The consequent second development consists of a mix of 2 and 3-bedroom properties and a several bungalows. The development has also experienced some delay due to the prevailing economic climate, and was passed from Mipre housing association to Eden Housing to pursue the scheme. Extra funding was required from the HCA and South Lakeland District Council to get the figures to work and this project is now due to be finished in January 2011.

In this case the affordable housing group pushed things forward in partnership; the actors included the Parish Council, South Lakeland District Council, Lake District National Park (as planning authority), the Rural Community Council, Eden Housing Association and the Church. A strong link existed between the Community-Led Plan and the delivery of the housing scheme here, with people involved in Community-Led Planning leading to the affordable housing scheme. The Rural Community Council along with the local authorities have maintained input with the Housing Needs Survey and additionally the Rural Community Council had carried out a local ‘backcasting’ exercise – which looked to see what people would want in 10-20 years time and asked local people ‘what do we need to do now to ensure that it happens?’.

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Example 7: High Bickington, Devon

High Bickington is located within Torridge District Council in North Devon. The parish has a population of around 800. The community and the Parish Council, along with the High Bickington Community Property Trust (CPT) set up in 2000 have been early proponents of Community-Led Planning, which led to the ‘High Bickington Parish Plan 2003-2023.’ The plan included a desire to see affordable housing in the Parish. By November 2003 an outline planning application for housing and other uses was submitted and approved by the District Council, but it was referred to the Secretary of State for determination as it was a departure from the local plan, even though the Planning Inspector found it an “interesting model for community-led provision”. This application was eventually refused. Despite this setback, the Parish Council and the CPT worked in partnership with Devon County Council and Torridge District Council who were determined to meet the wishes of the community. More than 200 members of the community have become members of the CPT since this time, and



have contributed significant amounts of time to enable the scheme to go forward. Some have even provided financial support. This impetus and continued community support led to a new full planning application in August 2008, which was approved.

This example is somewhat different and significantly larger than the other examples and it centres not only on housing and not solely on affordable housing. The eventual scheme is delivering 16 affordable homes; nine for shared ownership and seven for social rent. Unlike other examples it was delivered alongside eighteen open market homes, plus five barn conversion homes, as well as workshops for local businesses, a primary school and community and sporting facilities. A Housing Corporation grant and private funding contributed to the overall project, along with a £850,000 contribution from Devon Council Council, which kick-started the development in December 2009. However the determination of the community using the CLP process and the momentum and wider buy-in from other actors was a significant part of the successful delivery of this project.

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