

## Rural Housing Advisory Group

13 July 2010

### Birmingham Botanical Gardens

**Chair:** Candy Atherton (CA) Homes and Communities Agency

**Members present:**

Tim Adey (TA)	Defra
Sylvia Brown OBE (SB)	Action for Communities in Rural England
Sue Chalkley FCIH (SC)	Hastoe Group
Fenella Collins (FC)	Country Land and Business Association
Helen George (HG)	Improvement and Development Agency
Catherine Grannum (CG)	Tenants Services Authority
Stephen Hall (SH)	Defra
Helen Kelly (HK)	Department for Communities and Local Government
Arlene Kersley (AK)	Community Council of Berkshire
Colin Molton (CM)	Homes and Communities Agency
Graham Russell (GR)	Commission for Rural Communities
Neil Sinden (NS)	Campaign for the Protection of Rural England
Nigel Stone (NSt)	Association of National Park Authorities
Cameron Watt (CW)	National Housing Federation

**Guest Speaker:**

Nicola Marshall (NM) Homes and Communities Agency

**In attendance from the Homes and Communities Agency:** Matthew Dodd (MD), Susan Fallon (SF), Paul Abey (PA).

**Apologies:**

Richard Capie (RC)	Chartered Institute of Housing
Stephen Parsons (SP)	Regional Rural Affairs Forum Chairs
James Hulme (JH)	The Prince's Foundation for the Built Environment

Item	Discussion	Action
1. Minutes of the last meeting	The minutes were accepted, there were no matters arising.	
2. National Affordable Housing Programme Update	THE FIGURES DISTRIBUTED ARE NOT OFFICIAL STATISTICS AND ARE FOR ILLUSTRATION PURPOSES ONLY. The internal national target for completions in settlements of less than 3,000 for 2009/2010 has been exceeded. This change in figure is due to the South East manually cleansing their data in the Investment Management System. CM gave a budget update and said the HCA is now talking to partners about	

	<p>funds available. The key issue for the HCA is now the Spending Review (SR) due to be announced in October 2010. The Group asked the HCA if this period of delay has had a disproportionate effect on rural delivery. CM replied that it would be important for partners to make their views known as to the role of affordable housing in sustaining rural communities and to focus on mixed use rural regeneration. SC agreed that individual organisations need to be strong advocates for rural in the development of the SR.</p> <p>The question was raised as to whether there was less interest in rural housing under the new government? TA replied definitely not; all the Defra ministers have rural constituencies and they are committed to rural affairs, including housing, in fact Defra Ministers' two main priorities are broadband and housing. FC reminded Defra that rural employment should not be forgotten. TA replied that it is not forgotten, but broadband and housing remained the two main priorities. SC put forward the premise that in rural areas there is a greater dependency on public sector jobs and therefore rural employment could be disproportionately affected. CW suggested that success in Local Housing Trusts (since announced as Community Right to Build(CRtB)) could bridge the gap. CM added that CRtB would be initially tested more in rural areas.</p>	
<p>3. HCA West Midlands Rural Update</p>	<p>Nicola Marshall, Head of Housing in the West Midlands provided an update on rural delivery in the area. She gave details on a programme to identify rural public sector land in the area.</p> <p>SB asked NM to what extent the community is involved in the HCA WM planning. NM replied that in the past they have relied on the Local Authorities for this but are aware that in the future they may have to dig deeper and the HCA needs to understand communities better. They do already work with Registered Providers and Housing Enablers who are close to the communities they work in.</p> <p>As part of her presentation NM used extensive maps showing housing need in the area; the Chair asked if these maps are used in discussions with Local Authorities. NM replied that they are and that the HCA provides regular updates to the maps, however the evidence provided by the HCA can be overridden by what Local Authorities want to prioritise and the HCA must follow the wishes of the Local Authority. AK asked if these spatial intelligence maps are available across the country; the HCA replied that they are and for example in the South West a pack with this data is produced for each Local Authority and can be updated when needed.</p> <p>The question was raised could such spatial intelligence maps be available online; the HCA said it would be looked into.</p> <p>NS asked about retro-fit activities in the area. NM replied that the team are packaging schemes together, they need a programme of 10,000+ units to make it cost effective and this requires working across Local Authority boundaries. NS asked would rural be forgotten because of the scale needed? NM stated that rural can get forgotten and it is an important part of a rural champion's role to ensure this does not happen.</p> <p>GR asked NM about how the HCA in the WM tackles older persons issues in rural areas. NM responded that the HCA is an organisation that is guided by the priorities of Local Authorities, so where they have identified older persons then the HCA will work with them to identify solutions.</p>	<p>Matt Dodd</p>

4. Business Plan	<p>CM raised the need to update the Business Plan and the language used within it so as to remain relevant to the new government's agenda. HK stated that community focus and CRtB are crucial to the agenda of the new government and need to be included in the Group's Business Plan. The Chair agreed but also explained that those with concerns (for example over scale of delivery as raised by CW) by the emphasis on CRtB from the new Government need to be able to raise them. SB highlighted the Rural Coalition report which raises its concerns with CRtB and will be launched on 16 August 2010. AK voiced support for the government's focus on communities and sees it as an opportunity.</p> <p>SC raised concern over the loss of the Commission for Rural Communities and Rural Advocate She added that it makes the Advisory Group even more important as a vehicle to raise rural issues.</p> <p>CW asked if there is any risk to the Advisory Group. The Chair explained that the Group exists inside and outside the HCA structures and will continue to do so, reporting directly to Ministers. MD said he would work with HK and determine how that is facilitated.</p> <p>The Chair asked members to volunteer for the new CRtB work stream. SB advised the Group that the work stream must be Housing 'Plus', communities might opt in for a scheme because of the 'plus'. SC also added that the work stream should revisit incentivising landowners and open market housing on exception sites. MD to send round ideas.</p> <p>The next meeting will have a focus on this area of work.</p>	<p>Matt Dodd All</p> <p>Matt Dodd</p>
5. Community Led Development	<p>Update on the HCA Community Led Development Working Group: CM updated the Group explaining the working group is addressing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CLTS and CRtB</li> <li>• Availability of finance and constraints on finance</li> <li>• Mutual's and co-ops</li> <li>• Public sector land initiative.</li> </ul> <p>SB raised the issue of planning gain and a proportion being paid directly to the community. She emphasised that it is a crucial element of the finance package. HK informed the Group that the government's plans are that it will be paid to Local Authorities. GR raised the problem that each community led development is handcrafted and more 'off the shelf' solutions need to be found. CM replied that the HCA working group is working towards 'generic' CLT assistance. CW asked how much of the housing in CRtBs will be affordable units, emphasising that affordable units and vulnerable people are the remit of the Advisory Group. HK replied that the proportion of affordable versus market housing is a decision that can be taken by each community. SC asked that the Group looked at a cost benefit analysis of CLTs, including the cost of educating communities to be able to deliver community led development.</p>	<p>Matt Dodd</p>
6. Other Business	<p>The Group was informed of Colin Molton's departure from the HCA, but since then Colin has decided to stay with the HCA and will remain the Director with the rural brief.</p>	
7. Next Meeting	<p>Thursday 7 October 2.30 -5.30</p>	