



Information on **Exception Sites**

For small defined rural settlements with fewer than 3,000 residents local planning authorities may grant planning permission in certain circumstances for affordable housing on land that would not normally be used for housing because, for example, it is subject to policies of restraint. This is known as a rural exception site policy. Each local planning authority will have its own planning policy on rural exception sites and therefore you will need to contact the planning department of the relevant local authority to ask for further information.



Most rural exception site policies will, in general, allow local authorities to grant planning permission for affordable housing on small sites within or adjoining small rural defined settlements, which would not otherwise be released for housing, in order to meet local rural housing need where:

- The local authority is satisfied that there is a clearly evidenced local need, which cannot be readily met elsewhere, for the number and type of housing proposed: and
- The site is accessible to a range of local services, such as a shop, healthcare facilities, a school and public transport: and
- Appropriate legal agreements are entered into with the local authority to ensure that all houses will remain available as affordable housing for local need, in perpetuity.

Parish Pack - **Information on Exception Sites** *continued*

When a local housing need has been identified the Rural Housing Enabler will work with the parish council, housing association, local authority planners and enablers to help identify all sites in the vicinity that have potential for development of affordable housing.

The housing association who will own and manage the homes will negotiate with the landowner to purchase the site and while the value is greater than that of agricultural land it is significantly less than if unrestricted planning permission was allowed and therefore available at open market rates.

Other factors are taken into consideration by the planners when looking at any application for development on an exception site. These may include:

- **The sites proximity to village centre and local services**
- **The existence of overhead or underground electricity or other utility services across the site**
- **Site access/visibility onto the road**
- **If the site sits within a flood zone**
- **Existing rights of way/footpaths across**

(Please note that this is not an exhaustive list. Every site will have specific local factors that will need to be taken into account)

It is important that any parish council considering an affordable housing scheme for their village should not seek to identify the site first. The need for affordable housing should be the starting point to ensure that the project is community led. This is done by carrying out a Housing Needs Survey and the Rural Housing Enabler can do this with the help of the parish council.



Any homes developed on exception sites are subject to a legally binding agreement known as a Section 106 agreement which includes a cascade of priority setting out the local connection criteria. There is no Right to Buy on the rented properties and shared ownership homes have a maximum 80% purchase level with the housing association retaining at least 20% ownership. These measures ensure that the homes will remain affordable in perpetuity for local people.

