

Rural Services Partnership

The importance of affordable housing in rural communities

Stuart Davies

Director of Neighbourhood Services
Spectrum Housing Group

Why do we need affordable housing in rural communities?

- 13 Rural pubs shut every week
- 62 village schools closed between 2004 to 2008 projections continue to be for greater closure
- Since 2000 a fifth of rural post offices have gone
- Last year the Rural Shop Alliance projected 400 shops were likely to close
- Ageing rural population in 20 years time 60% more over 75s and 40% more 60 to 74 year old

Barriers that face young people who want to live in rural communities

- Right To Buy has seen affordable homes in rural communities reduce substantially
- Average first time buyer now are 37 and many cant buy without family support
- Average income in rural location is lower £20K
- Average house price are higher £40K more than in a city
- You need an income of £66K per annum to buy in the average rural location
- South West average incomes 13 X average rural house price
- South West prices are 116% greater than in year 2000

Implications of the planning & housing changes

Planning reform

- NPPF Presumption in favour of 'sustainable development' is to be applauded
- As is the New Homes Bonus
- Local Plans
 - include strategic priorities,
 - broad locations of growth,
 - some detail on quality and site specifics
 - It's a growth plan so it should be aspirational
 - justified and evidenced (housing numbers)

Implications of the planning changes

- Neighbourhood Plans (Parish level)
 - What's in it is up to you?
 - In line with NPPF & local plan
 - Development boundaries and locations
 - Infrastructure to be funded
 - Design Standards
 - Permitted development
 - Minimum level of growth but no maximum set

Practical problems and the chances of success

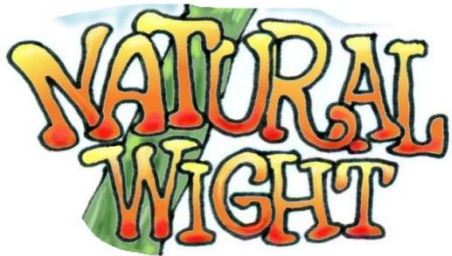
- What are we doing in the short term? Immediately dismantling Regional Spatial Strategies has led to a reduction in planning permissions
- Planning is partly the issue but finance is as big an issue
 - HAs constrained by potential welfare changes
 - Payment direct
 - 80% market rents in rural areas
- The will to deliver?
- Nobody has yet defined 'sustainable development'
- Could have a lawyers feeding frenzy

The part housing associations can play in delivering 'the Big Society'

- HAs' get the 'Big Society'
- We're in it for the long term
- We own rural shops
- We deliver apprenticeships
- We support credit unions
- We are 'in business for neighbourhoods'

Spectrum's own unique commitment includes

- Financial Inclusion measures such as Creating an oil purchasing consortium in North Dorset or
- Running incredible edible and 'Natural White' campaigns on the Isle of Wight



Incredible Edible
WIGHT

**Growing
spaces**