

Affordable Housing in Rural Areas

Q1. What is *affordable housing*?

- **Affordable housing is defined in Annex 2: Glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework ([link here](#)).**
- Affordable housing, previously known as social housing, is provided to eligible households, i.e. those who cannot afford to meet their housing needs in the private market.
- Affordable housing can be for rent i.e. social rent or affordable rent, which are lower than market rents and available for future lettings. It may also include shared ownership and some other types of home ownership at a price below market levels.
- Affordable housing is owned and managed by councils or registered providers (usually a housing association) and should remain at an affordable price for future eligible households.
- Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. To be able to apply you must be registered with the Council's HomeChoice Housing Register.
- Low-cost housing is not the same as affordable housing if the sale price is its open market value and it is not restricted to eligible households in housing need.

Q2. How is affordable housing provided in rural areas in South Gloucestershire?

- Section 106 agreements – a legal agreement attached to a residential planning permission which sets out the percentage and type of affordable housing on sites over a certain size (see below for further explanation under Q3).
- A rural affordable housing exception site scheme (see below further explanation under Q4- Q8).
- Sites allocated through Neighbourhood Planning or the Council's planning policy, such as the current Policies, Sites and Places Development Plan Document).

Q.3 How and what type of affordable housing is secured through the planning process?

- The council requires 35% affordable housing on those planning applications submitted for market housing which trigger the rural affordable housing threshold of 5 units or more or on land of 0.20 hectares or more. Appropriate affordable housing unit mix and house type will be based primarily on evidence from the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA).
- Normally the affordable housing will meet a district wide need, although priority may be given to people with a local connection to the parish where appropriate.

Q.4 What is a Rural Affordable Housing Exception Site?

- Generally small sites used for *affordable housing* ‘in perpetuity’ where housing would not normally be permitted.
- Rural exception sites can be developed only if there is a unmet local need for affordable housing which has been demonstrated by housing needs survey.
- Rural exception sites seek to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection i.e. people with a local connection to a particular parish.
- *Small* numbers of market homes may be allowed, at the local authority’s discretion, to make a scheme economically viable.

Q.5 What is a Housing Needs Survey?

- Proposals for rural exception sites must be supported by a local housing needs survey undertaken within the previous five years. The survey must demonstrate that there is a genuine local need for affordable housing for people who have a local connection with the parish.
- A survey questionnaire would be delivered to every household in the parish to determine the amount and type of affordable housing needed in the parish.
- Advice on the preparation and analysis of housing needs surveys can be obtained from the Council’s Strategic Housing Enabling Team.

Q.6 How much market housing can be included in a rural affordable housing exception site?

- Where satisfactorily proven a small element of market housing will be allowed to help facilitate the delivery of an affordable housing exception site scheme where sufficient public subsidy is not available.
- Such proposals must be supported by a viability assessment which demonstrates that the proposed number of market dwellings is necessary for the successful delivery of the development and is based on reasonable land values as an exception site.
- The council will only allow the minimum number of market homes required to deliver the scheme and the dominant tenure will be expected to be affordable housing.

Q.7 How much should a landowner expect to be paid for a rural exception site, what is considered a reasonable land value?

- As a guide the council expects exception site land values to be marginally above agricultural values and considers that individual plots should attract approximately £10,000 land value.

Q.8 What are the issues to have regard for when considering a site for a rural affordable housing exception scheme?

- All potential sites in or bordering a village should be considered in order to identify the most appropriate, sustainable and deliverable site.
- Due to site constraints or planning considerations there be fewer homes built than would meet the total need identified by the housing need survey.
- The willingness of landowners to provide a site on acceptable terms and development costs will be a key factor in deciding if a site is feasible and deliverable.

Q9. What is /Custom Build?

- The Government supports the principle of people building their own home and this is known as custom build or self-build.
- Custom build can take many forms depending on the level of involvement of the occupier, from full hands-on construction to commissioning a builder.
- The Council is developing its policy on custom build through the Policies, Sites and Places DPD.
- Custom build housing can be affordable housing if it meets the definitions above in Q1 or it can be privately owned, market housing even though it may be cheaper than houses bought 'off the shelf'.

Useful Contacts

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Relevant Affordable Housing Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework ([link here](#))

Policy CS18 Affordable Housing, Adopted Core Strategy December 2013. ([link here](#)).

Policy CS19 Rural Housing Exception Sites, Adopted Core Strategy December 2013. ([link here](#))

Affordable Housing and Extra Care Housing Supplementary Planning Document May 2014 ([link here](#))