

Quality Standards

HARAH requires that Hyde Housing Association meets specific high standards in

- the quality of design, construction, and energy efficiency of the homes
- the management and maintenance of the rural homes once built
- community involvement

Frequently Asked Questions and the Ten Point Guide

Affordable rural housing schemes can have a big impact on local communities. There are many issues to be considered in this process. **HARAH** has compiled a list of frequently asked questions and a ten point guide to accompany this leaflet.

The Future

Whilst continuing to monitor and progress the affordable rural housing schemes, **HARAH** is now looking at new ways to release land and funding to deliver more affordable housing to local people in Hampshire, where Parishes have to date not been able to find a solution to this problem.



Who do we contact?

The main points of contact for Parish Councils are the Rural Housing Enablers:

John Lancaster - Test Valley & Basingstoke and Deane
01962 857363 John.Lancaster@action.hants.org.uk

Debbie Rhodes - Winchester & New Forest
01962 857362 Debbie.Rhodes@action.hants.org.uk

Julie Eden - East Hampshire & Hart
01962 857361 Julie.Eden@action.hants.org.uk

Community Action Hampshire
Beaconsfield House
Winchester
01962 854971

HARAH

Hampshire Alliance for Rural Affordable Housing



What is HARAH?

The Hampshire Alliance for Rural Affordable Housing was formed in 2005 to address the need for affordable housing in the villages of Hampshire.

The founding members of the Alliance are the Rural Housing Enablers (RHE), the Housing Corporation and the six rural local authorities in Hampshire:

- Basingstoke & Deane
- East Hampshire
- Hart
- New Forest
- Test Valley
- Winchester

The Local Authorities have a strategic housing responsibility to meet housing needs, and oversee the allocation of affordable housing.

The Rural Housing Enablers are independent agents who work with Parish Councils and local communities to facilitate the provision of affordable housing. The Housing Corporation is the government body that provides funding for affordable housing and monitors Housing Associations.

All partners of HARAH signed a 'Memorandum of Understanding', agreeing to work together to increase the provision and quality of rural affordable housing.

What is different about HARAH?

HARAH was set up to make a difference to the provision of affordable housing in the villages of Hampshire. Many villages have the experience of local people being unable to afford to live in the places where they were brought up, work or have strong family connections. Whilst many successful rural housing schemes have been built in Hampshire villages, these have often taken a long time to provide, due to the difficulties of finding sites, land negotiations, obtaining funding and planning etc.

The impact of this is that many rural villages have lost members of their community as they have had to find housing elsewhere.

HARAH was formed to help make the provision of rural affordable housing more efficient, provide housing of consistent high quality and increase the availability of funding to provide more affordable homes to local people in a shorter timescale.

Hyde Housing Association

The founding members of HARAH undertook a comprehensive selection process to commission an affordable housing provider to develop rural housing schemes throughout Hampshire. This process involved meeting a number of criteria such as quality standards, affordability, and the ability to obtain grant funding and forward fund schemes where necessary.

More than 10 Housing Associations and consortia of Housing Associations put forward their proposals to be selected as the HARAH partner. Hyde Housing Association was selected because they most satisfactorily met these criteria. Hyde has a dedicated development officer specifically for HARAH rural schemes.

Parish Housing Needs Surveys

The RHEs work with Parish Councils to undertake a survey of the whole Parish to establish the unique needs of each rural community. A standard questionnaire is used that is approved by DEFRA and the Housing Corporation, in order to ensure the robust validity of the results. This is important for both obtaining the planning consent and the funding for rural schemes. The village housing needs survey will indicate the amount and type of affordable housing that is required in each village.

Exceptions sites

One of the aims of HARAH is to have a consistent approach to exception site land values and to ensure that rural housing schemes are viable and affordable. The planning consent gained on these sites restricts their use to local people in housing need.

Affordability

The rents charged on affordable rented homes are capped according to the Housing Corporation's rent policy; the cost of shared ownership housing can vary greatly dependant on who is the provider. One of the HARAH criteria, that Hyde Housing Association has to meet on rural schemes, is to ensure that the sale prices and residual rents are affordable to local people, reflecting the information from the village needs survey.

Grant Funding

In order to provide affordable rented housing, funding from the Housing Corporation is necessary. Only some Housing Associations meet the Housing Corporations criteria to obtain grant for affordable housing development.

HARAH working with Hyde have been very successful in obtaining grant funding from the Housing Corporation. For the 2006-8 National Affordable Housing Programme Hyde received £7.8M for 21 rural schemes which was 20% of the total Regional Housing Board funding allocation for rural housing in the South-East.

As part of the HARAH arrangement Hyde have agreed to use some of their resources to help fund schemes in advance until there is grant funding available.

