

# Affordable rural housing Barcombe – a success story

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**Above:** Leighton Rowe, Lewes District Council, Alex McGillivray, Barcombe Parish Council and Tom Warder, AirS Rural Housing Enabler at Dean's Meadow

**Barcombe Parish Council (BPC) has a long standing policy of seeking affordable housing for local people which has produced schemes for both younger and older people. A housing needs survey in 2003 confirmed that a need had again arisen. Not until 2006 was a solution found through a pilot project offered by CHASE Consultants and aimed at developing methodology to help identify suitable rural sites for affordable housing.**

A working group of representatives from CHASE, Action in rural Sussex (AirS), Lewes District Council (LDC) and BPC, the supporting partners, was established to further the project. The Working Group identified and then appraised a number of sites near the Village that might qualify under the local Exception Site Planning Policy and approached owners. As a result, land adjacent to the six existing affordable houses for younger people was offered for sale and Hastoe Housing Association took on the project. A second housing needs survey by AirS in 2007 revealed 25 households in need of accommodation, half being single people.

Hastoe designed a mixed scheme of twelve flats and houses, with ten for rent and two for shared ownership, which received planning approval in early 2008 subject to Section 106 occupancy conditions. Legal and administrative matters took another year and building work started in May 2009 with completion a year later. BPC supplied wording for the Section 106 occupancy conditions.

We carried out two public consultations in 2007; one in July to publicise the project and possible sites and the second in October to present the final site and development plans. Overall, the public found favour with the scheme.

The discontinuation of the Working Group from 2008 led to partners no longer communicating as a body. Unbeknown to us, not only had staff changes occurred within LDC, but the District Council had also adopted the new Choice Based Lettings (CBL) system and subsequently a new Housing Policy. There were fears locally that non-Barcombe applicants would benefit from the scheme and it had to be established that Section 106 conditions did supersede CBL criteria. In

support, Hastoe produced an allocation scheme and also agreed to consult BPC on nominees.

The vacancies were advertised in *Homemove* in January 2010 and shortly afterwards BPC received the nominee list. Happily all fulfilled the local connections criteria, but unfortunately the local demand for small dwellings exceeds the supply designed into the scheme.

**Alex MacGillivray  
Chairman Barcombe  
Parish Council**

## AirS commentary



The provision of 12 affordable homes for local people, in perpetuity, in Barcombe is great news for the Village and well done Barcombe Parish Council, and particularly those who formed the Housing Sub Group for seeing this project through and making it happen! In the last edition of this newsletter I quoted a local resident from Barcombe who was imploring the Parish Council to listen "...we want this village to grow for us and future generations". They have not only listened, but taken action to address the needs of

their community which is of course what being a Parish Councillor is all about.

As Alex describes, providing local needs housing in villages is not always an easy process and there have been some challenges along the way. Overcoming these has required co-operation and leadership as well as a commitment by all the parties involved to making the project work. Hopefully this will provide inspiration for other parishes looking to sustain their communities.

**Tom Warder, Rural  
Housing Enabler, AirS**

*Also see West Sussex Rural Forum affordable rural housing, p13*