

Rural Housing Sub Group Meeting 26th May 2010

The Group met on 26th May. The main items considered were:

Village Greens

The National Housing Federation is gathering examples of where there are applications for village greens on sites that have been earmarked for affordable housing. It can delay a start by up to 2 years and is beginning to cause problems in some areas.

SCDC 1+2

Suffolk Coastal District Council has published new draft planning guidance that will help the development of land for affordable housing where there is no social housing grant. In the guidance it will allow one house for open market sale for every two affordable units. However, the sub group is concerned about the wording and will contact the Head of Planning at SCDC to welcome the initiative but ask for clarification on the wording.

Govt programme / cuts

The meeting followed on the day after the Queens speech and therefore there was still a lot of information to digest. Members considered the Programme for Government document that outlined several issues relating to housing. It is unclear at this stage how the commitment to affordable housing made by the Prime Minister can be matched by a cut in funding for the Homes and Communities Agency. Several HCA projects that had not started were stopped on 25 May, these include any 'Kickstart' projects that were not already started (Kickstart relates to brownfield sites).

The Programme for Government document sets out a commitment to local trusts developing housing. This is very similar to community land trusts. The Sub Group is concerned that in many places there will not be people with sufficient enthusiasm or expertise to develop and manage housing, so they will have to work in partnership with housing associations, effectively bringing in another layer of administration and that if the local trusts require grant funding they may not be able to access it. Martin Aust is a member of the rural housing associations working party and will raise the issue at a national level.

RHE update

Norfolk RCC no longer has a rural housing enabler. However, elsewhere the RHEs are proving effective in developing partnerships between parishes, housing associations and local authorities.

Chair

Graham Hedger resigned as chair due to changing work commitments and the new chair is Martin Aust from Flagship Housing