

Rural housing consultation 2010 Summary of responses

The Rural Housing Steering Group was established early in 2010 to review the existing BDC publication, The Rural Housing Guide and to specifically look at the allocation of affordable homes in rural areas through local lettings policies. Members of the group included BDC members, the Chair of the Braintree Association of Local Councils, the RCCE Rural Housing Enabler and staff from BDC Housing and Democratic Services.

As part of the review process the group wanted to obtain views from local community leaders and agreed to develop and circulate a questionnaire to all parish councils and to District Councillors. The questionnaire was circulated at the beginning of June 2010 and the consultation period closed during September. Questionnaires were also sent to key organisations including Greenfield's Community Housing and all of the RSLs with rural schemes in the District.

Responses were received from the following:

- 1) Terling and Fairstead
- 2) Great Bardfield and Finchingfield
- 3) Gosfield
- 4) Rayne
- 5) Cllr John O'Reilly-Cicconi (BDC member and member of Gosfield PC)
- 6) Ridgewell
- 7) Earls Colne
- 8) Feering
- 9) Shalford
- 10) David Eversden (member of Shalford PC)
- 11) Foxearth and Liston
- 12) Mr Clay, resident of Belchamp Walter
- 13) Belchamp Walter Parish Council

We have summarised the comments and responses received in the following table. Questions 1, 3, 5, 7 and 9 of the form required a yes, no or not sure response. Questions 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10 then asked the responder to give further comments. The answers to questions 1, 3, 5, 7 and 9 can help provide an indication of the level of agreement and support with the proposals put forward. The comments surrounding this from questions 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10 have been included in the last column of the table.

There are some instances where the total number of responses differs between 13 and 11 as some stakeholders chose not to answer every question on the form.

Question number	Question	Number of responses in agreement	Number of responses in disagreement	Not sure	Additional comments made
1	<p>Do you think the revised wording for criteria for local connection is an improvement? <i>(Proposed changes: First level of priority: applicant lives in the village and has done so for a minimum period of 5 years (instead of 3 years) or applicant has previously lived in the Parish for no less than 5 years out of the immediately preceding 10-year period.)</i></p>	11	2 (Both cases showed a preference for priority to be given to people who have a minimum of 5 years residency in the village during the preceding 20 years).		<p>“What constitutes a family?”</p> <p>“Need to mention relatives - a person may need to move into an area to be near an elderly or disabled relative. Until there is a better supply of affordable rural housing, selection will always be a difficult compromise.”</p> <p>“Would add to point 1 “or is a member of a family of a person who has lived in the parish for a minimum period of 5 years” and remove that criteria from the latter part of point 3 in the proposed cascade.”</p> <p>“We have no strong views on 2 years but consider that former residents/children should have the right to return to their “home” village and be given every opportunity to do so.”</p>
3	Do you agree that people’s connection should take priority over housing need for schemes	11			“Need to identify and secure additional sites for rural housing and following build, need to ensure that they remain

	on rural exception sites?				within the control of the Housing Trust, to be resold at affordable prices to local people, rather than being sold onto private sector for profit.”
5	Do you agree that we should allow a spare bedroom on first letting to people with the strongest local connection?	10		1	<p>“Couples without children should be considered for under-occupancy – many do not wish to start a family until they are settled.”</p> <p>“Not sure as bias creeps into the decision process depending on age of applicants.”</p>
7	Do you think the process of checking local connection is appropriate as set out?	10		1	<p>“The Parish Council seems a good check as they usually have enough good connections and knowledge which a district or town council may not have.”</p> <p>“Always the parish council should be consulted on establishment of local connections prior to an formal offer of accommodation. A local connection should always come first!”</p> <p>“It is important to involve the parish council in these checks to ascertain validity of claims.”</p> <p>“May not be enough Councillors to routinely check. Ridgewell PC has not been asked in this respect.”</p>
9	Do you agree with the proposed procedure for registration and lettings?	10		1	“This seems a good proposal so that no one is missed but it must be clear who has local connections so that is

				<p>obvious who should be considered for the exception sites.”</p> <p>“It is desirable that we have an agreement acceptable to all councils and a common Section 106 Agreement right across the district (simply with a variation as to parish names and those of neighbouring parishes).”</p> <p>“Some connection should exist for notifying parish councils when a property becomes available for re-let. Adverts can then be placed in parish magazine or on parish website if applicable, for a person with local connection to apply.”</p> <p>“Access to a computer in some rural areas is not always possible. Involvement of parish council at an early stage in the application process, including the ability to canvass locally to determine if there is/are suitable applicants that the parish council can support in the application process.”</p> <p>“Some connection should exist for notifying parish councils of re-lets. So this can be advertised.”</p> <p>“Excellent proposal!”</p>
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