



Action in rural Sussex has been operating a housing enabling service for over 25 years, helping to deliver many affordable housing schemes to meet local needs.

Experience has shown, that continuous technical advice and support from locally-based expert advisers, is the key to helping communities navigate the many obstacles to ensure delivery of successful housing projects.

We provide two specialist services – **The Sussex Community Housing Hub** and a **Rural Housing Enabling Service**

The Sussex Community Housing Hub

A 'one stop shop' enabling service which provides technical advice and support to community-led housing groups across East and West Sussex.

Community-led housing is developed and managed by local people in order to maximise community benefits. It can add value by:

- Being locally-controlled / democratically accountable
- Being flexible to meet local priorities
- Creating community support
- Providing locally affordable homes
- Delivering actions from community / neighbourhood plans
- Encouraging good design and layout of any schemes
- Closer community & landowner involvement
- Generating re-investment for the community
- Enabling the long term stewardship of community assets

Various models exist:

- **Community Land Trusts**
- **Co-Operative Housing**
- **Co-Housing**
- **Self Build**

We can provide you with:

- Solutions to meet local housing need – maximising community benefit
- Expertise, skills and experience – everything to help delivery
- A long track record of successfully delivering community led projects
- Independent technical advice, support and information
- Extensive networks locally and nationally – informing best practice

The Hub is supported by Local Authorities across Sussex and the Community Housing Fund allocated to them in 2017.

Rural Housing Enabling Service

Provides expert support and independent advice to Parish Councils and rural communities on the provision of affordable housing for local people.

There is a chronic shortage of affordable housing in rural England and Sussex is certainly no exception to this, with properties in many areas costing well in excess of the average county income.

These trends can make rural areas unaffordable for those in occupations such as nurses, teachers and farm workers. The in-migration of affluent commuters and retirees may create an imbalance in rural communities as young people, families and those on low incomes cannot afford inflated house prices.

Key services and facilities including pubs, shops and schools may struggle to remain viable as the needs of the population change. Similarly, communities may lose their vibrancy as they become dormitories for those working elsewhere, lead to the breakdown of social and family networks as people cannot afford to live locally and traditional activities such as sports teams struggle for participants.

Our enabling service has helped to deliver hundreds of homes for local people across rural parts of East and West Sussex, focused on a standardised 10 step process: [10 Step Guide to Developing Affordable Housing](#)

Housing schemes may be delivered through a variety of means, including via an Exception Site, which – crucially – allows for small schemes of affordable housing (through shared ownership or rental models) to be delivered for those with a local connection to the village in perpetuity.

We have successfully worked in partnership with a range of housing providers – specialist housing associations and establishing new local Community Land Trusts.

Our Role

The key functions of our Rural Housing Enabling Service are to:

- Help you meet the needs of those people who would not be able to afford accommodation on the open market;
- Act as an “honest broker” to facilitate the often lengthy and complex process of developing affordable and mixed development housing schemes in rural areas to promote sustainable communities;
- Work closely with village communities, Parish Councils, District Councils, Community Land Trusts, Housing Associations, landowners and anyone else involved in the process of providing local needs housing;
- Identify local affordable housing needs through Housing Needs Surveys;
- Assess broader housing needs within rural communities such the need for older people to downsize to smaller properties as well as a range of intermediate market needs;
- Undertake site identification and appraisals;
- Carry out research and policy analysis on rural housing issues.

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