

Single Plot Exception Sites

Background

The Parish Council occasionally receives requests in relation to Single Plot Exception Sites, (usually in the form of a request for proof of strong local connection) This document explains how the process works.

Shropshire Council Single Plot Exception Site Policy

Shropshire Council operate a 'self help' scheme enabling qualifying people to build their own affordable home on single plot exception sites.

These sites are granted planning permission as an exception to normal planning policies in order to meet a local need for affordable housing. In its broadest sense, this includes the provision of affordable housing for people with a strong local connection to a specific area (eg a parish or group of parishes) who are unable to afford or secure open market housing in that area.

Exception site policies can be used to assist local people such as these before meeting the general housing needs of the wider community of Shropshire. The scheme encourages those with resources (both land and finance) to invest them in the stock of rural affordable housing to the benefit of the local community in the long term.

In overview, this provides a solution for those people in rural communities whose needs aren't met by the market, and yet may also not be a priority for the more mainstream (and publicly funded) affordable tenures developed by registered providers. When the first occupier no longer has need for the dwelling, they will transfer it at the appropriate affordable value to another local person in need with minimum intervention from the Planning Authority (PA). Thus, the 'community benefit' of providing the affordable dwelling in the first place is itself recycled.

The future resale value of the affordable home is fixed in perpetuity below open market value (normally 60% of market value) to ensure that it remains affordable for subsequent occupiers. The valuation is based on the dwelling itself, and therefore disregards the potential additional gain from any garaging or other incidental buildings constructed within the curtilage. Purchasers of the property in the future must also meet the local needs criteria below.

Local needs criteria

To qualify for this scheme, applicants must:

- Be in housing need
- Be unable to access a suitable home currently available on the open market in the parish (or within 5km of the site)
- Live locally
- Have strong local connections to the parish (see below)

Applicants will normally be the prospective occupiers of the proposed affordable dwelling, and speculative development of this tenure is not permitted.

As a requirement of the section 106 legal agreement, the property can't change hands without our written consent from the PA. This will only be given if the PA is satisfied that the new purchaser is paying the prevailing 'affordable' price, and meets the local needs or cascade criteria as defined in the section 106 legal agreement.

Inheritance of the property by family members is permitted, and they may occupy the dwelling providing that they meet the local needs criteria, or otherwise let or sell it in accordance with the provisions of the s106 agreement.

Strong Local Connection

It is necessary for prospective occupiers to demonstrate strong local connections to the area where the settlement in question lies. This will require them to satisfy at least two of the following criteria for at least one of the adult members of the household:

- Their parents were permanently resident in the local area at the time of the applicant's birth
- They were in permanent residence in the local area for any period of five years as a child attending a local school (or who for special reasons attended a school outside of the local area but would have been expected to attend a local school but for those special reasons)
- They are currently lawfully resident in the local area and have lived there for at least the previous three years (five years in the case of applicants seeking to utilise the 'build your own' single plot scheme)
- They don't currently live in the local area but have previously lived there at some point for 15 continuous years as an adult
- They are currently employed or routinely carry out self-employed work within either the local area or 5km of the site
- They have a confirmed written offer of permanent work within either the local area or 5km of the site
- They can demonstrate active community involvement in the local area sustained for at least the previous two years, or are determined by the parish council as having some other form of strong connection with the local community and/or its hinterland
- Their parents currently live in the local area, or another close family member who provides or requires a substantial degree of support currently lives in the local area
- If over 55, they have a close family member currently living in the local area

As part of the qualification process, the Planning Authority asks the Parish Council to formally confirm the applicant's 'strong local connection' to the area in writing. This requires the applicant to contact the Parish Council and provide proof of their eligibility.

It is good practice to invite the applicant to attend a Council meeting to explain their connection. However, if necessary, the process can be delegated to the Parish Clerk.