

Proposed Affordable Housing in North Nibley

As indicated in December 2019 OTE the Parish Council has sought information and clarification on the proposed affordable housing, to inform parishioners. Parish Councillors met with Pippa Stroud, the District Council Housing Strategy manager, responsible for affordable housing sites across Stroud District.

Based on the Housing Needs Study the affordable housing is likely to comprise a mixture of housing for social rent, available at least 20% below local market rates; and shared ownership where qualifying people can part own the property, with the remainder being retained by the Housing Association, with rent paid for that proportion. The final mix will be negotiated as part of the planning process.

How do local people apply for Affordable Housing?

In order to qualify local people must first register with “Gloucestershire Homeseeker Plus” <https://www.homeseekerplus.co.uk/choice/> for affordable rent; and “Help to Buy south” <http://www.helptobuysouth.co.uk> for shared ownership properties.

In order to apply for completed properties interested parties should do this at the earliest opportunity.

Further advice can be obtained from Stroud District Housing Department (email housing.advice@stroud.gov.uk).

How are affordable housing properties controlled & managed?

Affordable housing is normally owned and managed by a Stroud DC approved housing association. The planning agreement approved by Stroud Planning will ensure that the developer enters into a contract with a Housing Association **before** any construction starts to ensure that the affordable housing is delivered in a timely manner.

Strict controls over the allocation, occupancy and management of the affordable housing are imposed through a legally binding Section106 Planning Agreement secured on the land. This will ensure that first priority will be given to people who have a strong local connection, either living in the Parish; or have family living in the Parish; or are working in the Parish.

In the unlikely event that all affordable housing units are not taken up by first priority people, any remaining units will be offered to people in adjoining parishes (such as Stinchcombe and Alkington); and finally to people with a connection to Stroud District as a whole.

The same process will apply whenever properties become vacant in the future.

This reinforces the importance of local people registering sooner, rather than later.

The Planning Agreement also ensures that housing will be kept in perpetuity for affordable purposes, currently with no “right to buy”. The Agreement also ensures that all affordable housing units have to be completed and transferred to its Housing Association in step with the development of the open market properties.

What is the Planning Process?

Any affordable housing scheme has to be considered by Stroud as the local planning authority, taking into account Local Plan Delivery Policy HC4. This allows for rural exception sites to be brought forward for affordable housing purposes. Such sites can include some market housing to allow for cross-subsidy to help fund the affordable housing provision. In such cases the need for cross-subsidy will be independently assessed by the District Valuer, who will advise Stroud DC on such matters.

In the event that a planning application is submitted for such a scheme, parishioners will be given every opportunity to make comments and representations to both the Parish Council and/or directly to Stroud DC before any decision is reached by Stroud DC.

The final decision on the Application rests with Stroud District Council as the local planning authority.

This Article has been written by North Nibley Parish Council, to inform parishioners how affordable housing works. Parishioners are encouraged to share this information with relatives who may be eligible.