

Using the “Planning Exceptions Policy” for Rural Housing Schemes – Presentation by Hastoe Housing Association and the Council’s Director of Housing

1. Within its Housing Strategy and Local Plan, the District Council has recognised the need for small affordable housing schemes to be provided in rural areas, to meet the local housing needs of people living or working in a village (or surrounding area), or people with a local connection (perhaps a former long-standing resident).
2. The Local Plan allows such development in rural areas, on land that would not normally receive planning permission for residential housing (e.g. Green Belt land), and allows the granting of planning permission as an exception to the District Council’s normal planning policies. Sites still need to be suitable for housing in other respects, and need to be either within the villager envelope or just outside. All of the properties need to be provided as affordable housing in perpetuity (either for rent and/or shared ownership). Because the site can only be developed for housing as an affordable scheme to meet a local need, the land value is much lower than for normal housing developments.
3. There have been three successful schemes developed in the Epping Forest District to date under this policy (in Willingale, Fyfield and Matching Tye), and a further two are in the pre-development stage.
4. For a rural housing scheme to come to fruition, it needs the support and co-operation of the Parish Council, the District Council, the Housing Corporation and a housing association. There are a number of steps that need to be taken - that are not required for larger urban developments - including the undertaking of a village housing needs survey.
5. Hastoe Housing Association is the Council’s “Preferred Housing Association Partner” to undertake such rural schemes in the District, and has successfully completed the most recent two rural schemes, and is currently working on a further two.
6. The District Council’s Director of Housing, Alan Hall, and two representatives from Hastoe Housing Association, John Lefever and Ulrike Maccariello, will be in attendance at the meeting to explain how parish councils can work with the District Council and Hastoe HA to bring an affordable housing scheme to fruition for local people in their village.
7. Alan Hall will explain the Council’s role, including the relevant planning and housing policies and how applicants are selected. John Lefever and Ulrike Maccariello will explain the housing association’s role, including: site identification, site values, funding arrangements, undertaking the village survey, the development process and the role of the parish council.