

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

1. The P&T Committee invited the RNPSG to consider again the policy in the RNP covering “affordable dwellings”, with a view to seeing whether existing draft policy below “to **provide more affordable housing for families, first-time buyers and properties for "downsizers", could be strengthened.**

2. The RNPSG considered the more robust policy adopted by referendum for Cornwall’s St Ives area. Similar policies have been adopted in other parts of Cornwall.

St Ives

3. Because of the perceived adverse impact upon the local Cornish housing market by the continued uncontrolled growth of dwellings used for holiday accommodation (as second or holiday homes), St Ives adopted a policy for new open market housing, excluding replacement dwellings, which supports a restriction to ensure its occupancy as a Principal Residence. Sufficient guarantee must be provided of such occupancy restriction through the imposition of a planning condition or legal agreement. New unrestricted second homes will not be supported at any time. Principal Residences are defined as those occupied as the residents’ sole or main residence, where the residents spend the majority of their time when not working away from home. The condition or obligation on new open market homes will require that they are occupied only as the primary (principal) residence of those persons entitled to occupy them. Occupiers of homes with a Principal Residence condition will be required to keep proof that they are meeting the obligation or condition, and be obliged to provide this proof if/when Cornwall Council requests this information. Proof of Principal Residence is via verifiable evidence which could include, for example (but not limited to) residents being registered on the local electoral register and being registered for and attending local services (such as healthcare, schools etc).

4. The justification for the policy was to better meet the housing needs of local people, by bringing greater balance and mixture to the local housing market and creating new opportunities for people to live and work in St Ives. This policy covers new housing which has to be used as the principal residence of the household living in it, but does not have the price controls that affordable housing does, or **any local connection requirement.** St Ives and Carbis Bay are in the top five settlements in Cornwall with the highest proportions of second homes and holiday lets. In 2011, 25% dwellings in the NDP area were not occupied by a resident household - a 67% increase from 2001. Over this same period, housing stock in the NDP grew by 684 or 16%, but the resident population grew by only 270 or 2.4% and the number of resident households grew by less than 6%. The growth in housing stock in the NDP area between 2001 and 2011 was double the average across England. The socio-economic effects of such a high proportion of holiday properties are being felt by the local community.

5. ***A Penzance architectural firm subsequently challenged Cornwall Council's decision to allow the referendum on the policy to go ahead. The High Court has ruled that the vote, which said new homes should be occupied as "principal residences", was lawful. Therefore St Ives will keep its ban on new-build second homes.***

Does this have Application to Rye?

6. Although many may see this policy as desirable, solid evidence is required to justify the policy. ¹

7. In Rye it is calculated that there are some 200 second homes/buy to let homes; this of a total stock of around 2500. This represents some 8%. In St Ives the figures are acute (25% non-residents). However, with the possibility of the Fast Rail link it is not to say that the numbers here will grow. What merit in taking 'a stitch in time' approach? But can it be justified on forecasts? Over the last two years the trend for second homes/buy to let has increased, but changes to the tax laws appear to be a factor in damping down this market. With the uncertainty of BREXIT and the global financial situation it is difficult to predict how the numbers will change in 10 or 20 years.

Recommendation

8. On the basis that evidence does not support the sort of policy adopted by St Ives because the numbers are not so acute, and in any case there is adequate provision in the existing RNP policy to cover affordable housing, it is recommended that the RNP policy remains as below.

RNP H2: Within the overall allocation of dwellings there is to be a mix to include:

- a) More affordable housing for families, first-time buyers and properties for "downsizers".
The former is to meet the scale set by the Rother DC Core Strategy. The allocation must give priority to individuals and their dependants who have lived continuously in Rye for at least the last five years. OR, those who have had previous periods of continuous residency in Rye and have close relatives living in the Parish OR work in the Parish; OR, have made a genuine contribution to community life in the Parish, for example as a volunteer.
- b) Proposals for new residential development that maximise the delivery of affordable housing and provide for the size, type and tenure of homes to meet local needs will be supported, provided that they comply with other relevant policies. The layout and design of affordable housing will be appropriately integrated into each development so affordable housing is indistinguishable from the equivalent market housing. Affordable housing should be spread carefully through the development, not isolated in specific blocks.
- c) Dwellings suitable for elderly occupants to a percentage of 10% of the total.
- d) The achievement of the mix of unit sizes will be monitored and subject to an annual monitoring report by Rye TC.

¹ The Rye News article (with comments) is helpful, see: <http://www.ryenews.org.uk/opinions/home-from-home>