

Do you want to know more?

Contact our Rural Housing Enablement Project Officer Paul Keats for more information using the details below.



www.supportstaffordshire.org.uk

07736 627914

paul.keats@supportstaffordshire.org.uk



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Midlands Rural Housing



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AFFORDABLE RURAL HOUSING

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Midlands Rural Housing



Rural Housing Crisis

There is a pressing issue concerning the lack of affordable housing in rural regions.

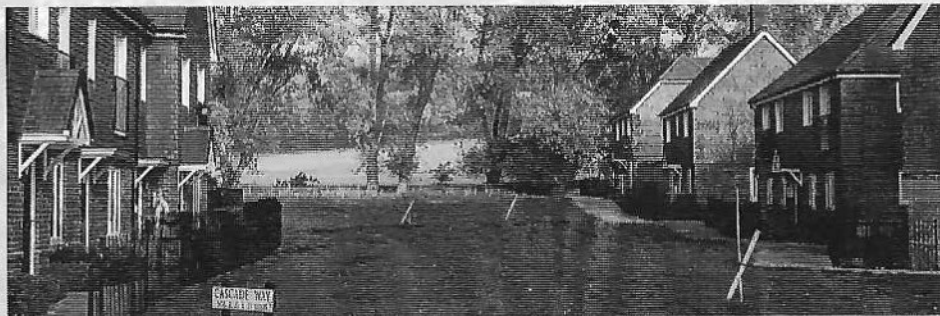
In urban areas, 17% of development is classified as affordable, whereas in villages, it's only 9%. This disparity is impeding economic progress in rural locations and eroding the social cohesion of numerous communities.



A Solution?

Rural villages have the **potential to undergo a transformation through small-scale projects** featuring well-designed, cost-effective rental housing **exclusively accessible to individuals with local ties**. This enables residents to choose their living location based on proximity to family, work, or their community roots.

These initiatives offer more than just housing for local residents. They stimulate the local economy by **supplying vital workers** for schools, care facilities, and businesses in rural areas such as shops, pubs, farms, and tourist spots.



What is a Rural Exception Site?

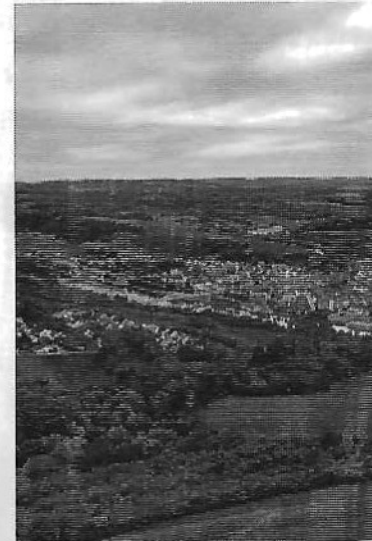
Rural Exception Sites seek to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection.

For many villages, **rural exception sites are the only form of residential development allowed** under local planning rules to meet the needs of local residents. Some villages have produced a Neighbourhood Plan and identified suitable sites. Others may not have considered what their local housing needs are. Either way, our Rural Housing Enablement team can help.

What is a Rural Housing Enabler?

They provide **independent support and advice** to help rural communities consider the local need for affordable housing and they work with landowners, housebuilders, planners and communities to bring about suitable schemes.

What does the Scheme Provide?



- Expert and unbiased advice and guidance
- Identifying housing needs
- Finding suitable sites
- Hosting briefing events for Landowners, Parish Councils, and Community Groups
- Technical planning assistance
- Available to organise community consultations
- Newsletters, articles and case studies from Staffordshire and across England

Venue: Gayton Village Hall.

Date: 05/03/25

Notes:

Presentation 1 - Rural Housing Enablement (Paul Keats -Project Officer)

The aim is to help boost the supply of affordable homes that meet local needs

In rural areas:

- ❖ House prices have significantly increased
- ❖ There are 300 000 on housing waiting lists
- ❖ Homeless cases have increased by 40%
- ❖ Next generation unable to afford to stay in their rural area
- ❖ Older people have houses not fit for purpose and are unable to find suitable accommodation
- ❖ Some rural housing requires significant renovation and this is too costly

Q. Have we acquired data to be well informed about the needs of our parish?

Q. When did we last complete a Housing Needs Survey?

If it is 5 years out of date, we can be supported by a Rural Housing Enabler because our population is under 3000. They will support the creation of questions, that are relevant regarding housing, produce the questionnaire and analyse it. This is approximately a 10-week process. We would have to sort the publicity and encourage residents to respond.

The Housing Needs Survey in conjunction with a housing data analysis report for the parish (from our Local Authority) can be used as a tool for our continued local planning.

Rural housing enablement is focused on small developments of approximately 10 homes and is community led (houses for local people).

Presentation 2 – Neighbourhood Plans (Hannah Barter)

Parish Council must consider itself as a **'plan making body'** and should be having confidential dialogue with Staffordshire.

The neighbourhood plan creates certainty. It must be live and evolving to take on board unexpected changes.

The plan must demonstrate growth. **Have we got a growth strategy?**

At the referendum we only need 50% of the actual voters to say yes. Typically, there is only a 13% to 20% turnout.

Linking to presentation 1. **Have we completed a Housing Needs Survey?** This is a must alongside a housing needs assessment from the local authority.

Presentation 3 – Developing Societal Resilience (Michelle Cliff – Senior Development Officer)

Purpose – To plan for, respond to and recover from an emergency together.

Local resilience forums (LRFs) are multi-agency partnerships made up of representatives from local public services, including the emergency services, local authorities, the NHS, the Environment Agency and others. These agencies are known as Category 1 Responders.

LRFs are supported by organisations, known as Category 2 responders, such as the Highways Agency and public utility companies. LRFs also work with other partners in the military and voluntary sectors who provide a valuable contribution to LRF work in emergency preparedness.

The LRFs aim to plan and prepare for localised incidents and catastrophic emergencies. They work to identify potential risks and produce emergency plans to either prevent or mitigate the impact of any incident on their local communities.

The parish council plays a role in emergency planning and community safety not least because they understand local needs.

There are growing risks from e.g. floods, utility surges, terrorist attacks, war (leading to migration)

Q – Do we keep people safe in this parish?

Firstly, we must take responsibility for personal resilience and then consider community resilience.

Q – How do we support the most vulnerable in our neighbourhood if there is an emergency?

There is a guide to **Rural Community Resilience** which can be downloaded

Q – Does the parish have a local emergency plan? –

There are templates on the government website (Stafford Borough Council have a plan)

Do we have a network of potentially supportive groups? (Young Farmers, Village Hall, WI etc) that can be part of the plan. Can we utilise key people with relevant skills and knowledge?

Do we know the more vulnerable in the parish? Who will check on them?

Communities are first on the scene and last on the scene.

Presentation 4 – Health and Well-being (Andy Wheeler SPCA)

Q Do we have a focus on health and well-being in the parish?

There is a '**How to Guide**' that can spark ideas and has links to resources and a **toolkit** (both on the SPCA site)

The focus is on prevention. The guide has 6 themes.

- ❖ Community engagement and consultation (do we get views and feedback from the community)
- ❖ Social isolation and community activities (e.g. coffee mornings, summer fair)
- ❖ Physical activities (e.g. walking events, fitness classes gardening groups, local village run.
- ❖ Healthy lifestyles (e.g. offer free health check sessions, foodbank)
- ❖ Positive mental health -this theme is also supported by all the others (e.g. men shed, community choir)
- ❖ Healthy places (e.g. green spaces)

Q Is health and well-being included in the neighbourhood plan?

Some specific ways Parish and town councils contribute to emergency planning and community safety:

- Identify vulnerable individuals — Parish and town councils often know the elderly, disabled, or isolated individuals in the community who may need extra support in an emergency.
- Support communication — Parish and town councils can ensure that information flows effectively between the local community, emergency services, and others by maintaining local noticeboards, websites, and social media platforms.
- Assist emergency services — By providing information about local geography, infrastructure, and the whereabouts of critical resources or people, parish and town councils can help emergency services respond more effectively.
- Roles and responsibilities — Identifying key individuals (including councillors and volunteers) who will take specific actions during an emergency.
- Local resources — Cataloging available resources, such as buildings that could serve as shelters (e.g. village halls), vehicles, or equipment that might be useful in a crisis.
- Evacuation routes and assembly points — Establishing safe locations for community members to gather in case of evacuation.
- Coordination of community volunteers — For instance, organising a flood warden scheme or neighbourhood watch groups to support local safety and readiness.
- Training and awareness — Providing or facilitating training for local volunteers on first aid, emergency response, or communication during crises.
- Supporting vulnerable residents — Ensuring that vulnerable residents receive essential supplies, welfare checks, and assistance during emergencies (e.g. snowstorms or heat waves).
- Participate in local resilience forums — Multi-agency partnerships between local authorities, emergency services, health services, and the voluntary sector that help coordinate emergency responses.
- Fire safety awareness: Encouraging households to install and maintain smoke alarms, educating the public on fire safety in homes and public spaces, and running workshops.
- Personal and home security — Partnering with police or other local organisations to promote neighbourhood watch schemes or crime prevention advice.
- Flood prevention and awareness: Working with principal authorities to support flood defences, planning decisions that mitigate flood risk or distributing information about flood preparedness and the importance of signing up for flood alerts.
- Green infrastructure — Promoting tree planting, improved drainage, or other environmental measures to reduce local climate risks.



Health and Wellbeing How To Guide for Town and Parish Councils (February 2025)

Advisory Notes:

This guide is to be used when considering positive changes to your locality in terms of health and wellbeing.

Health is impacted not only by our behaviours but by the environment around us. The wider determinants of health are a diverse range of social, economic and environmental factors which influence people’s mental and physical health. This includes where we live, the local environment, our education, work and social groups. Often these factors are outside of an individual’s control yet directly impact on health.

By focusing on Health and Wellbeing, Town and Parish Councils (T/PC) can play a role in impacting factors which influence the health outcomes of individuals.

This guide shares just some of the many themes and initiatives T/PC can consider to positively impact the health and wellbeing of residents.

*All resources mentioned within this document are available via the online **Health & Wellbeing Toolkit**, to be used in conjunction with this guide.*
 Health & Wellbeing Toolkit - Staffordshire Parish Councils Association (spcaonline.org.uk)

Theme: Community Engagement & Consultation				
What: Theme description	Why: Reasons for theme focus	How: Actions to take to make positive changes	When: Time considerations	Resources & Partners: links to relevant resources and key agencies
Consulting with local constituents	A better understanding of community’s needs and health demographics to tailor specific work towards. A community centred approach is shown to be beneficial.	Engage with your community via ah-hoc interactions, formal consultation and speaking with groups and local organisations. Observe your environment, understand how it is used, how people move about. Identify your community assets, these could be local facilities, key leaders within your area, public sector services and community groups. Research your demographics and local health data.	It would be of benefit to consult prior to undertaking any significant initiative. Consultation can also be an effective way to sign up potential volunteers.	Within the Partner Organisation and Resources section on the online H&W toolkit , you will find links to source demographic and health information about your area. You may also find useful health information via your local district council website. A plethora of different consultation guides are available online. For a useful document search online for ‘an easy guide to community consultation Yorkshire Community First.’ Another example is Biddulph’s annual approach to community consultation via a ‘tea with the town council’, which can be found here .

Theme: Social Isolation and Community Activity

What:	Why:	How:	When:	Resources & Partners:
<p>T/PC can reduce isolation by increasing opportunity for communities to come together.</p>	<p>Social Isolation and loneliness can have a significant negative impact on an individual's mental and physical wellbeing.</p> <p>People often identify with a sense of place, whether that is a location, area or local asset.</p> <p>Social connectedness is important for positive wellbeing.</p>	<p>Community events: Annual events can bring communities together. Provide areas with a sense of identity and increase opportunities to socialise and meet fellow neighbours. Some examples are seasonal events such as summer fun days, a Christmas light switch or local themed events like a village walk or town running race.</p>	<p>Annual</p>	<p>Events can be quite resource intensive, both in time and financially. However, many T/PC organise regular events such as summer festivals and a Christmas light switch on, among a plethora of other activities. You may need to seek grant funding to pay for an event and recruit volunteers to support with organisation and planning aspects. It would be helpful to have an 'events committee' to solely focus on events planning for the T/PC.</p> <p>You will need to engage with a number of partners when putting on a community event, such as the local district council, businesses, local landowners, schools and other community establishments.</p>
		<p>Open community activities: Activities (e.g. a regular 'coffee & chat') provide non-prescribed opportunities for people to come together in a no/ low-cost environment without the need to be part of a specific group or club.</p>	<p>Weekly/ monthly</p>	<p>You will need volunteers/ staff committed to supporting a regular session. You may need funding to help with refreshments, room hire and staff costs, which could be sourced from an annual small grant.</p> <p>Local partner organisations may be able to help, such as local businesses with donating refreshments or voluntary sector organisations wanting a 'captive audience' to highlight their services.</p> <p>See the case studies section on the SPCA website for positive examples of this type of provision. Local Case Studies - Staffordshire Parish Councils Association (spcaonline.org.uk)</p>

Theme: Physical Activity				
What:	Why:	How:	When:	Resources & Partners:
<p>Increasing opportunities for people to be physically activity.</p> <p>This section covers bespoke opportunities for physical activity.</p> <p>Physical activity is also covered under the 'Healthy Places' theme.</p>	<p>Physical activity is important for our health, weight management, and can be a fantastic way to socialise.</p>	<p>Walking – Walking is one of the most accessible forms of physical activity. Walking routes can be promoted within your local area or guided walks led by volunteers can also work as a way of bringing people together.</p>	<p>All year round</p>	<p>Together Active Staffordshire – www.togetheractive.org A key consultee if planning a potential new physical activity provision.</p> <p>The Ramblers www.ramblers.org.uk can deliver walk leader training for staff/ volunteers. They also host walks across the county throughout the year.</p> <p>As an example, Biddulph TC have developed some short urban walking routes to encourage people to be more active: www.biddulph.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/St-Lawrences-Church-Walk.pdf</p> <p>A similar example in Eccleshall, who have produced a plethora of local walks, even a 'bench to bench' walk. Footpaths and walks – Eccleshall Parish Council</p>
		<p>Activity/ Fitness Classes – These come in a range of different themes aimed at a variety of audiences. If you have spare slots within your community centre or hall, try advertising within your local community for instructors or speak to your nearest leisure centre, who may have an overspill of sessions.</p> <p>The above also applies to open spaces. Bootcamp style classes are popular within local parks and open spaces, again this relies on a local qualified instructor delivering a session.</p>	<p>All year round</p>	<p>Have a look at the Hednesford Town Council weekly timetable as an example of the variety of activities on offer.</p> <p>What's On at PGCC – Hednesford Town Council</p>

		<p>Gardening Groups – Are there areas for planting, raised beds or additional open space. Many areas have gardening groups or ‘friends of’ groups who help manage and beautify an area. Opportunities to grow food locally and engage in gardening are associated with improved attitudes towards healthy eating, increased opportunities for social connection, improvements in mental health and increased opportunities for physical activity.</p>	All year round/seasonal	A list of gardening groups and community garden arrangements are available on Staffordshire Connects. Staffordshire Connects Listings in Gardening and conservation
		<p>Running – Running is an accessible, free physical activity. If your locality has a running club, it would be worth connecting with them to see if they organise any introductory sessions such as ‘Couch 2 5k’.</p> <p>ParkRun is an immensely popular free weekly 5k run, again often lead by a local running club supported by the local landowner; another initiative to explore.</p>	All year round	Over one thousand free weekly 5k runs taking place across the UK. parkrun start your own event
Theme: Healthy Lifestyles				
What:	Why:	How:	When:	Resources & Partners:
Initiatives to promote healthy lifestyles focusing on weight management and access to nutritious food.	Provision of and access to healthier and affordable food can be effective in helping people choose healthier diets and maintain a healthy weight. Excess weight	<p>Adult Weight Management Service – ‘Everyone Health’ run weight management sessions in communities across Staffordshire and would be keen to explore delivery in different areas of the county.</p>	All year round	Everyone Health Staffordshire - Weight Management - Everyone Health Staffordshire
		Weight Management Groups – If you host a community centre it is likely a weight loss	All year round	Slimming World and Weigh Watchers are two main providers of local slimming clubs.

	can increase the risk of developing conditions such as diabetes and heart disease.	club may be interested in regular room rental. These groups are a popular way to create local opportunities for weight loss.		
		Environmental Issues – The environments we live in have a direct impact on our health. Access to healthy foods and increasing opportunities for healthier choices can lead to healthier lifestyles. This can be achieved through initiatives like allotments, food share schemes, having local stores that stock healthy options and by avoiding an overpopulation of fast-food outlets.	All year round	Please see the Healthy Places theme below for further information and resources.
		Foodbank/ Foodshare Schemes Foodbank schemes can work well in local communities and help ensure healthy foods go to those in need. A number of local councils, religious groups and community organisations deliver such initiatives. It can be resource heavy and will need volunteers or staff to manage its coordination. It can be a great way to engage with your community and schemes look different in certain areas. Some schemes also offer a weekly light meal and a chance to socialise.	All year round/ seasonal	FareShare is one of the UK largest food redistribution organisations - www.fareshare.org.uk/ Trussell is a leading anti-poverty charity and a community of foodbanks across the county - www.trussell.org.uk Use Staffordshire Connects to find your nearest foodbank Staffordshire Connects Listings in Food Support
Theme: Positive Mental Health				
What:	Why:	How:	When:	Resources & Partners:
Although all mentioned initiatives will impact wellbeing,	Positive mental health is critical to our overall wellbeing and impacts all aspects of life.	Men's Sheds encourage people to come together to mend, make, repair and repurpose, supporting projects in their local communities. They help improve wellbeing,	All year round	Home Men's Sheds Association UKMSA (menssheds.org.uk) Two local shed examples

<p>this theme looks at those specifically aimed at addressing mental health.</p> <p>Physical activity – To note - the initiatives mention within the earlier sections will have an impact on mental health.</p>		<p>reducing loneliness and combat social isolation. Often 'Sheds' are led by separate volunteer groups supported by T/PC.</p>		<p>Gateway SHED in Leek - Gateway Shed, Leek Facebook</p> <p>Rochester and District Men's Shed - Rochester Men's Shed Rochester VIC Facebook</p>
	<p>Dementia-friendly communities are vital in helping people live well with dementia and remain a part of their community.</p>	<p>Dementia friendly parish/town/village - A dementia-friendly community is a town, parish or village where people with dementia are understood, respected and supported. Led by the Alzheimer's society.</p>	<p>All year round</p>	<p>What is a dementia-friendly community? Alzheimer's Society (alzheimers.org.uk)</p>
		<p>Choirs – Community choirs not only provide an opportunity for singing enthusiasts to come together, they can also help improve mental health and reduce social isolation.</p>	<p>All year round</p>	<p>Fulford community choir is a good example, they also highlight the wellbeing benefits of singing in a group Home - Fulford Community Choir - Staffordshire</p>
<p>Theme: Healthy Places</p>				
<p>What:</p> <p>Having an environment that lends itself to positive healthy lifestyles</p>	<p>Why:</p> <p>It is evident that health is impacted not only by individuals' behaviour but by the environment around us. Having a 'healthy place' increases the likelihood of healthier communities.</p> <p>There is a very significant and strong body of evidence linking</p>	<p>How:</p> <p>There is a varying degree of items that can be initiated within this theme, here are just a few to consider.</p> <p>Parks and open spaces. T/PC often manage parks and recreational grounds within their local area. There are some notable examples of improvements to these areas due to work by the T/PC which increases their accessibility and use.</p> <p>Prior to any work you should consult with the local community on their usage and what they would like to see from their green space, whether play equipment, sports and games</p>	<p>When:</p> <p>N/A</p>	<p>Resources & Partners:</p> <p>NHS Healthy towns resource - NHS England » Healthy New Towns</p> <p>NALC information included on toolkit - Health and wellbeing case studies</p> <p>Sport England Active Design information including the active design checklist - Active Design Sport England</p> <p>See 'Neighbourhood Planning & Health' within the resources section on the health and wellbeing webpage for a useful guide thanks to Norfolk County Council on health in neighbourhood plans.</p>

contact and exposure to the natural environment with improved health and wellbeing.	<p>areas, trim trails, trees and planting, skate park, picnic areas...</p> <p>An inviting green space should increase its use.</p> <p>Green spaces and trees also positively impact the environment and can help with flood management.</p>		
	<p>Pedestrianisation and active travel How easy is it to actively travel within your local area? Often much of the existing built environment is out of a T/PC control, however areas with future development or changes should champion active travel within their plans, trying to make it easier to walk or cycle rather than having to use a car. Improving neighbourhood walkability with infrastructure designed to promote walking and other active travel methods is associated with numerous positive health outcomes. Active travel can support people to stay well by making physical activity part of everyday life.</p>	<p>During neighbourhood planning stages/ all year round</p>	<p>Again, reviewing the health in neighbourhood plans guide as previously mentioned (available via the 'Neighbourhood Planning & Health' section under Resources on the H&W page) will be of help with this theme.</p>
	<p>Reducing exposure to pollution The above also contributes to improved air quality which has shown to have a positive impact on health.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	

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For further information regarding this guide please contact the SPCA Health and Wellbeing Project Officer via - andy.wheeler@staffordshire.gov.uk