

**INFORMATION DAY  
HERNHILL  
9 APRIL 2019**



**What is today all about?**

Following the previous Information Day held in March last year, today is an opportunity for you to look at the revised layout and drawings for the small development of affordable homes for local people in Staple Street Hernhill. We are grateful to Hernhill Parish Council and the Hernhill Village Conservation Society for their input into the new designs. You will be able to discuss these plans with English Rural Housing Association and Councillors from the Parish Council. There is also an opportunity to make written comments about the plans and register an interest for one of the proposed homes, if you are looking for affordable housing in the village.

**Who is English Rural?**

English Rural Housing Association is a rural specialist Registered Social Landlord, and one of the country's leading developers of affordable housing in small villages. In Kent we currently own and manage local needs developments in 31 villages including five in the Swale Borough; Bredgar, Lower Halstow, Lynsted, Selling and Throwley.

In recent years Hernhill, like many rural communities, has continued to be affected by the lack of affordable housing. High property values force many local people, especially the young, to move away and this can threaten the future sustainability of the village. English Rural was invited by your Parish Council to work with them to progress this local needs housing project.

**Why are you proposing homes in Hernhill?**

The results of Parish Housing Needs Survey carried out in August 2015 by the Rural Housing Enabler from Action with Communities in Rural Kent indicated that there was a need for a development of six affordable houses for local people in Hernhill. The Parish Council agreed to act on these results and establish a project to provide local needs housing in the village.

**How was it decided where the homes should be built?**

The Rural Housing Enabler, working with the Parish Council, identified a possible eight sites in the Parish and comments were sought from planning officers at Swale Borough Council on their suitability. Some of these sites were not suitable in planning terms and for others the Landowners were not interested in selling any land. Eventually there were only two sites both suitable and available. English Rural carried out a development feasibility appraisal on both sites and from our preliminary investigations it was agreed that the most appropriate, available site is that adjacent to Forge Farm in Staple Street.

**How can I register an interest for one of the homes?**

English Rural is asking people, who have a local connection, a need for an affordable home and who are interested in applying for one of the proposed homes, to fill a registration of interest form. These forms are available at today's event or can be requested by telephoning 020 7820 7930 or emailing [info@englishrural.org.uk](mailto:info@englishrural.org.uk). Interested applicants looking for an affordable rented home will also need to register with Swale Borough Council –online <http://www.swale.gov.uk/housing-register/> or phone the Housing Options team on 01795 417622. If you have any difficulties in registering with Swale Borough Council, please contact English Rural.

The Rural Housing Enabler at Action with Communities in Rural Kent will shortly be carrying out a second stage housing needs survey – a questionnaire will be delivered to every household in the Parish and it is important that you also complete and return this form as well. The final property mix and tenure of the proposed development will be influenced by the housing need identified in this survey.

### **What sort of properties will be built?**

The current proposal is based on the need identified in the Housing Needs Survey and is for six affordable rented homes; 2 x one bedroom flats, 3 x two bedroom houses and 1 x three-bedroom house. However a second stage housing needs survey is planned for April to establish if this mix is still appropriate. This survey will also determine the tenure split between rented and shared ownership.

These homes will be for people who are unable to afford to buy in the Parish, who cannot find rented accommodation and who have a strong local connection to the village and the community. These homes can never be sold on the open market and they are reserved in perpetuity for local people. We pride ourselves on the design of our houses and can put you in touch with other villages where you can see examples of our work.

### **How are these properties paid for?**

In the past, Housing Associations have been able to build new homes with the help of government grants, plus their own borrowing. Since 2010, and following cuts in government spending, this model has changed somewhat and with new schemes Housing Associations are encouraged to find additional funds from their own resources, over and above the amount that could be generated from borrowing serviced by the rental income of the properties themselves.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) endeavours to help bridge this funding gap by encouraging the principle of cross-subsidy on what would normally be regarded as Rural Exceptions Sites. Paragraph 54 states that local authorities should consider allowing *“some market housing ..... where it will facilitate the provision of significant additional affordable housing to meet local needs”*.

In order to provide the necessary subsidy for the affordable homes on this development it is proposed that two 3-bedroom bungalows will be developed, for open market sale. Priority for purchasing one of these bungalows will be given to local people, particularly those wishing to downsize.

### **What is a “local connection”?**

A “local connection” according to Swale Borough Council is:-

1. Those persons in housing need who currently live in the Parish
2. Those persons in housing need that work within the Parish
3. Those persons in housing need who have resided within the Parish within the last 5 years and whose parents/grandparents still live there

### **What if there is no one in need - do you bring in people from further away?**

If a future vacancy occurs in one of the houses and no one from Hernhill, with the qualifying connection, is in need at that time, then applicants with similar connections to neighbouring Parishes will be considered. The names of these Parishes will be agreed with your Parish Council and will be specified in the planning agreement. However, it is very rare that we have to look for applicants from outside the Parish in which a development has been built.

### **What safeguards are there?**

Before planning permission is granted, we will enter into a legally enforceable planning agreement with the Local Authority to ensure that the affordable houses are allocated to local people and can never be sold on the open market.

### **Timescale:**

Following the outcome of the second stage housing needs survey, further highways, drainage and ecological surveys will be commissioned which are required to support a planning application.

For further information, please contact:

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