

# Devon Strategic Housing Group



## Newsletter

September 2006

**Welcome to the September edition of the DSHG Newsletter.** There has been a lot of activity over the summer and as memories of summer holidays fade it looks as if we have a busy autumn ahead.

Look out for our new website [www.dshg.org.uk](http://www.dshg.org.uk) which we hope will be a useful communication tool which tells you about our work, the latest news and events across Devon, the members of the partnership, it will celebrate successes and

provides a means of getting in touch with ideas and questions.

For more details on any of the articles please contact either Katy Shorten our Homelessness Coordinator [katy.shorten@plymouth.gov.uk](mailto:katy.shorten@plymouth.gov.uk) or Mary Ridgway our Affordable Housing Coordinator [mary.ridgway@southhams.gov.uk](mailto:mary.ridgway@southhams.gov.uk)

**Simon Sherbersky**

*Chair of Devon Strategic Housing Group*

## Affordable Housing News Round Up: Bringing Housing and Planning Closer

Over the last year we have been hearing a lot about the need for Planning Officers and Housing Officers to work together to improve the delivery of affordable housing but what is actually happening on the ground?

When the Regional Assembly take on the secretariat responsibility for the SW Regional Housing Board in September the proposed merger of the Regional Housing Board and the Regional Planning Board will be high on their agenda.

In Devon we have already started to work together more as shown by;

- a joint seminar on PPS3 in February
- by strengthening links between DSHG and the Devon Planning Officer Group
- the Operational Group working on the Affordable Housing theme for the Local Area Agreement includes both Planning and Housing Staff as well as Housing and Planning actions.
- the Master Class will bring together Senior Housing and Senior Planning staff in an innovative programme aimed at strengthening our knowledge base, informing negotiations, sharing good practice and building good working relationships.

We are interested in how we can improve this further and DSHG recently gave a presentation at an event in Taunton hosted by the Housing Corporation looking at how investment in housing can be improved by better joint working between housing and planning.

Recently Mary also attended a Creating Excellence event run in Swindon where all the Housing and Planning staff for Swindon were brought together to look at s106 agreements, planning tariffs and the experience of other towns in managing growth. We would welcome such an initiative in Devon and are lobbying for this to be repeated in the Plymouth sub-region.

Locally South Hams have responded by setting up a multi-disciplinary, virtual, affordable housing team. Four new members of Staff make up this team, Verena Womersley joins as an Enabler Officer and moves from Devon and Cornwall HA's Development Team, Steve Forsey moves from Torbay BC as a Valuer and Rachel Brand is joining South Hams from Cumbria where she has been actively involved in their innovative planning strategy. Liam Reading joins the team from Horsham BC as the new Strategic Enabling Manager and Debbie Holloway provides the vital continuity, local knowledge and 11 years of experience for the new team.

In Exeter, the Planning, Legal and Housing teams are co-located which improves day to day joint working.

Let us know what your local Authority is doing to strengthen the Housing - Planning relationship or ways in which you think DSHG could promote and support more joint working.

## Affordable Housing *and the Devon Local Area Agreement*

The main actions for LAA Action Plan for Affordable Housing has been agreed and an 'Operational Group' lead by DSHG has been set up to take forward the work. The Group includes Mary Ridgway (DSHG), Sue Southwell (RHE), Ron Mayers (Exeter City) Matt Dickens (Planner/East Devon), Phil Markham (Planner Dartmoor National Park), Catherine Simmonds (Mid Devon DC), Heather Hillman (Devon County) and Pauline Warner (Devon County). We are now discussing possible funding. Consultation on the Action Plan is taking place by members of the group taking back the proposal to their organisations and partnerships for comment.

The main actions are:

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Reviewing sustainability criteria used to identify priority settlements for investment in new affordable rural housing in Devon.

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Developing a Devon Rural Housing Evidence Base as a tool for lobbying and informing strategies.

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Supporting a range of measures to help increase Land Supply through public agencies, private landowners and by enabling community initiatives through community land trusts.

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Developing an evidence base and appropriate housing strategies for key workers in Devon.

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To secure resources needed to take forward the cross cutting affordable, housing theme within the LAA, deliver the actions identified in the Devon Community Strategy and to ensure greater consistency between the LAA and Community Strategy in future years.

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Contact Mary if you would like a copy of the Action Plan. It will be made available as a download from the website.

## Housing Market Assessments

The Plymouth and Exeter/Torbay Housing Market Assessments are making good progress.

In Plymouth David Coultie Associates have carried out a Housing Needs Survey which will help inform their Local Development Framework Core Strategies as well as feeding into the HMA work. In South Hams the level of need has doubled since the last survey with a need for 600 affordable homes per year identified. The work in Plymouth is being project managed by Jayne Olney of Plymouth City Council

For the Exeter and Torbay HMAs Pauline Warner has taken on the role as project manager. The steering group has agreed a project brief and following expressions of interest from potential contractors selected ORS for a negotiated tender. It is hoped work will begin in September and report early in 2007.

In the 'Polycentric North' North Devon, Torridge, North Somerset and North Cornwall have agreed in principle to take HMA work forward and are discussing the best way of approaching the task.

The Regional Assembly has recently recruited a member of staff to specialise in housing work and she is proposing to coordinate meetings between HMA project managers to share experience. DSHG is interested in sharing best practice on this work with its membership and will continue to update on progress.

## Improving Design

### Rural Housing Design **Competition**

DSHG and Devon Rural Housing Partnership have teamed up to run a design competition for rural housing. The scheme must be already built or on site and less than 4 years old. The principles identified by the Princes Foundation in their publication 'Creating a Sense of Place' will be used to assess entries. There will be a small cash prize of £500 for community development or environmental improvements for the scheme.

**Deadline for closing is 21 September 2006. Contact either Mary or Sue Hitchcock on [susan@devonrcc.org.uk](mailto:susan@devonrcc.org.uk) for more an application pack.**

The New Local Development Framework Process under Examination

## South Hams: Examination In Public

The first Devon Core Strategy for the new Local Development Frameworks came under the scrutiny of the Planning Inspectorate in July with the results due in October. The Affordable Housing day attracted a lot of attention with a stimulating debate which captured all the key issues and tensions in trying to deliver more affordable housing. It was a fascinating day with both Developers and Local Authority perspectives on targets for affordable housing and their impact on delivery, the robustness of viability assessment and the urgent need for action given the severity of the problem. There was also a useful debate about what level of detail is needed in the core strategy to guide providers of affordable housing for example on threshold levels.



## *Interested in Gypsy and Traveller Issues?*

At the start of 2006 a Devon wide Gypsy and Traveller Housing Needs Survey was jointly commissioned by Devon's Local Authorities from the University of Plymouth. The research began in March 2006 using a variety of research techniques including roadside interviews, focus groups for young people and training interviewers from the Gypsy and Traveller community. The research has followed closely the DCLG Code of Good Practice and is being project managed by Katie Pratt the Plymouth Gypsy and Traveller Officer. The results and recommendations should be out towards the end of 2006 and will help inform Local Authority's policies and strategies in meeting the needs of this group. It will also help inform any bids to the Regional Housing Board for capital funding for any Gypsy and Traveller sites grant. Although DSHG has flagged up the urgent need for revenue funding for the management of Gypsy and Traveller sites

How Can Housing Associations and Local Authorities Work Together to Improve the Delivery of Affordable Housing



On the 21 July 2006 DSHG hosted a successful seminar at Exeter's Civic Centre for Devon's Housing Enabling Officers and Senior Housing Association Development Staff to look at how they can work together better to improve the delivery of affordable housing. Senior Development staff from nearly every developing association were present. The day started with a challenging perspective of the current process from Julie Barnet of Tamar Housing and from Juliette Jackson of Plymouth City. The workshop debates were vigorous with a number of practical actions being identified. Look out for the feedback from the day on the DSHG website.

## DSHG's Response to the Draft Regional Spatial Strategy

One of the roles of DSHG is to response to consultation papers that have significant implications for Devon's affordable housing. A copy of the RSS response will be posted on the DSHG website or can be requested by email from Mary.

## Favourite Websites

[www.dshg.org.uk](http://www.dshg.org.uk)

DSHG has launched its new website

[www.dshg.org.uk](http://www.dshg.org.uk)

Contact Katy or Mary if you have ideas about how we can improve the website.

Don't forget other useful websites are

[www.learnandimprove.org](http://www.learnandimprove.org) run by the Devon Improvement programme and

[www.devonrcc.org.uk](http://www.devonrcc.org.uk) which tells you more about the work of the Rural Housing Enablers

## Homelessness

### **News Round Up:**

#### **Supported Lodgings for Homeless Young People**

The Joint commissioning Body of Devon Supporting People have agreed to fund the expansion of the Devon Youth Association Supported Lodgings scheme which has been promoted by DSHG. This will help provide sustainable and supported accommodation for homeless young people. The scheme will help to meet local and national targets on reducing homelessness and the use temporary accommodation, including the LPSA 2 target, which has the potential to bring in over £1 million in reward grant to Devon. Although the service currently only covers "new" Devon there is opportunities for Plymouth and Torbay to expand the scheme further.

#### **The Devon Inclusive Housing Project**

A sub regional bid between Plymouth, Exeter and Torbay has secured £300k for work to help improve the homelessness services we provide to Black and Minority Ethnic Groups (BME). A worker will be based in each area and it is hoped they will identify the housing needs of BME groups in Devon, build partnerships across organisations working with BME groups, help to prevent homelessness and reduce the use of temporary accommodation, increase the housing options for these groups through the private sector, raise the awareness of staff and the public about the needs of BME groups and how best to tackle those needs.

For more details about the proposed work contact Katy.

#### **Devon Supporting People Reinvestment**

Devon Supporting People are currently running a tender exercise for a new floating support service within the "homeless" sector. The evaluation of tenders is due to take place in September 2006.

#### **In the Pipeline**

##### **Things to look out for include...**

- UWE Certificate in Housing Options and Advice
- Devon Domestic Abuse Policy
- Regional Homelessness Strategy Conference on Homelessness.
- An updated training schedule from Devon and Cornwall training Network

#### **Homelessness Prevention in Devon**

The Devon Homelessness Managers Group (DHMG) have signed up to collecting consistent information about the types of homelessness prevention that they are doing. The first report (April-June 2006) has been released with some interesting information and it is exciting to see what interventions are working better for different client groups or in different areas across the county. The Homelessness Managers across Devon are finding it useful to compare their work, share information and good practice, and learn from each other.

If you want to know more about prevention work in your area please contact your Homelessness Manager or Katy.

#### **Housing Corporation's Tackling Homelessness Consultation**

The Housing Corporation has recently released a consultation document on how Housing Associations can work with Local Authorities to help prevent homelessness ([www.housingcorp.gov.uk/server/show/ConWebDoc.7470](http://www.housingcorp.gov.uk/server/show/ConWebDoc.7470)). The DHMG welcomed the consultation and have responded collectively to this document. The response can be found on the DSHG website.

#### **DSHG at the Shelter National Good Practice Conference**

Katy recently ran a "cross boundary working" workshop at Shelter's National Good Practice Conference on Homelessness Strategies. Cross boundary working was a key theme for the future running throughout the whole conference and it is great to see the head start that Devon has with the established DSHG.

#### **And Finally...**

##### **Movers and Shakers**

Congratulations to Graham Davey who moves from Mid Devon DC to Teignbridge DC. Warm welcome also to Paul Eells new Housing Advice and Homeless Manager at South Hams. ■