

CRC CONFERENCE - ARHC ONE YEAR ON, 14 June 2007

Notes on how CPRE has responded and general observations on progress

Introduction:

- **Although I served on the Commission in an independent capacity, delighted that CPRE was able to warmly welcome its report. We were particularly supportive of its focus on subsidised, affordable housing to meet needs of those unable to access open market, as opposed to market housing affordability; and, crucially, its emphasis on meeting these needs through a plan-led system – which is able to reconcile provision of affordable homes without damaging the environment.**
- **That is why we were particularly pleased to see the publication of PPS3 in December last year with its emphasis on lower site thresholds, higher proportions of affordable housing on mixed housing sites, and on allocating sites solely and specifically for affordable housing in rural areas.**

What CPRE has done:

- **CPRE has been actively campaigning on this issue since the report was published – promoted through our branches adoption of new measures in PPS3 by LPAs; and specific rural housing issues raised by our RGs at debates into RSS, including most recently at EIP into draft SW RSS. Pleased that a number of our branches have led practical initiatives to address the issue themselves – green building awards in Norfolk, featuring the first, earth-sheltered social housing scheme; design competition for an affordable housing scheme in Elmswell in Suffolk – model in the exhibition, being built now.**
- **Nationally, we were very pleased to be able to link up in July last year with the NHF to produce an ARH Charter with seven steps to increase**

affordable housing supply in rural areas to keep pressure on the Government.

- **We are also taking steps to work with RCC and parish councils to promote ways of minimising environmental footprint of rural communities – one of ARHC’s specific recommendations. Indeed, one of my colleagues is today leading a workshop on low carbon settlements at ACREs rural life conference and we hope to launch an initiative on this later in the year.**

Progress

- **While there is some evidence of significant increases in affordable housing completions in a number of regions last year – but provision is still way below the overall levels required, and it is not clear how much of the increase in provision has been secured for rural communities. And there are serious and urgent questions about the extent to which emerging RSSs pay adequate attention to rural housing needs.**
- **Very pleased to see the establishment of the RHAG under the auspices of the Housing Corporation to advise on delivery, but we do want to make sure that this group really does add value in terms of promoting practical and innovative solutions such as CLTs, making scarce resources go further, and ensuring that the new body CE, to be formed as a result of the merger between the HC and EP, has a strong rural remit.**
- **Since ARHC report affordable housing has continued to rise up the political agenda. That is in part why we are hopeful that the outcome of the CSR later this year should see a significant increase in the funding available for affordable housing overall. Our collective job is to ensure that a fair share of this is directed specifically to meet rural needs.**

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13/06/07