

# Rural & Village Housing Matters

Issue 1 May 2019

Housing for Sustainable  
Communities

GRHP consists of GRCC, local Housing Associations, and the rural Local Authorities of Gloucestershire. Together we work with local communities to identify unmet housing need in rural areas, promote opportunities for rural housing development, and share innovation and best practice.

**GRHP**   
Gloucestershire Rural Housing Partnership



## Henry Hook Close

Residents in Churcham have celebrated their first anniversary of moving into seven new affordable homes in their village.

Councillors identified a need for low-cost rental homes in the village of Churcham through their Housing Needs Assessment and worked closely with GRHP to plan the scheme.

**This was the first new housing to be built in the village for 50 years.**

One year on, the mixture of one, two and three-bedroom properties have settled comfortably into their surroundings. Residents, who came predominantly from the local area, have expressed their delight in their new homes and being able to remain living locally.

Catherine was born and brought up in the village. When the homes in Chapel Lane were

advertised she jumped at the chance to rent one of them.

“ I was desperate to stay here because of the children, the schools and my family but didn't know how I could afford it. Then these came up. I was so excited to finally be moving in, I was awake at four AM on the morning I collected the keys! ”  
- Catherine Leaver



Architect's drawing for North Cerney

## Rural, affordable homes in North Cerney

In 2013 the North Cerney and Bagendon Parish Councils decided they should take action to respond to a local need for affordable housing. By working in partnership with GRHP member Cirencester Housing a rural exception site was identified and purchased in 2016.

**Churnbridge Row** will consist of a mixture of 1 bedroom flats and 2 bedroom houses, 10 of which will be for affordable rent and two for shared ownership. The homes designed by Quattro Architects have been designed to enhance the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and have had input from the local community during consultation meetings.

Cirencester Housing is very proud to announce that building works started on 1 April 2019 with their chosen contractor J. Harper & Sons Ltd. It is anticipated that the homes will be ready for occupancy in January / February 2020.

## Minsterworth—a village on the up

In 2011 Minsterworth Parish Council, under Chair Richard Few, acted on its concerns that local people were being priced out of the village. Roger Blowey, a resident of some 40 years, said:

**“Accommodation costs meant many young people had to move away, mostly into Gloucester. Local residents have children and grandchildren that wanted to live here but just can’t afford to.”**

The Parish Council worked with Tewkesbury Borough Council and GRCC to identify the level of housing need in the village. A Housing Needs Survey confirmed a need for affordable housing for families, plus properties so older people could downsize. The Parish then helped identify suitable sites in the area, and a local family made land available adjacent to the village hall as a Rural Exception Site.

Rooftop Housing agreed to take on the development, engaging with the Parish Council and residents throughout the process. This had an unexpected positive effect, as Roger explains:

“There has been an effect on the village. People are coming together and using the village hall more. It really has galvanised local groups with coffee



*Princess Anne arriving at Ellis Bank Lane*

mornings and other activities. We hope that new residents across the village will participate and do their bit to contribute to our wonderful community.”

The development was completed and keys handed over to 14 delighted households in September 2018, and on 9 April 2019 HRH The Princess Royal visited Minsterworth for the Grand Opening of Ellis Bank Lane.

According to Roger, the Parish Council is left with just one regret:

**“We just wish that we had started the process 5 years earlier...”**

**7,525 households are seeking affordable housing in the 4 Gloucestershire rural local authorities!**

- ◆ 15% are aged 60 or over
- ◆ 10% of households are retired
- ◆ 60% of all households have either the applicant/partner or both in employment
- ◆ 13% have either the applicant or partner registered as disabled



# Gloucestershire Rural Housing Partnership—GRHP

We are a forum made up of organisations keen to take practical steps in moving the provision of affordable housing, for people in rural Gloucestershire, forwards.

GRHP has been in place for over 10 years and is hosted by the charity GRCC. Our members are local authorities and housing associations, which jointly fund GRCC's Rural Housing Enabler. The Rural Housing Enabler's main role is to inform, advise and give practical, independent support about affordable housing to local communities; focussing, in particular, on identifying housing needs within a locality and how to respond in order to meet those needs.

## GRHP's Local Authorities and Housing Associations

Cotswold District Council | Forest of Dean District Council | Stroud District Council | Tewkesbury Borough Council | Bromford | Cirencester Housing Association | Fortis Living | Gloucestershire Rural Housing Association | English Rural Housing Association | Gloucester City Homes | Rooftop Housing | Two Rivers Housing | Wyedean Housing Association

## Interview with Rural Housing Enabler Martin Hutchings



GRCC's Rural Housing Enabler, Martin Hutchings, plays a key role in working with communities to help them identify local housing needs.

*Q. Can you describe in one sentence what the role of Rural Housing Enabler (RHE) entails?*

Inform, inspire and advise local communities about what they can do to provide affordable housing to support people in their community.

*Q. How many years have you worked as GRCC's RHE?*

Longer than I care to remember—10 years!

*Q. Why is the Rural Housing Enabler such an important role?*

It helps bring together people in key organisations who can identify housing needs and then go on to deliver affordable housing, i.e. parish councillors, local authority officers and members, housing association land owners and house builders.

*Q. What do you think is the current greatest barrier to affordable rural housing development in Gloucestershire?*

Misconceptions about affordable housing, i.e. 'problem families' and 'slums of the future'.

*Q. What are the positive effects of a new affordable rural scheme on a village?*

The retention and attraction of young families who support local services and facilities, e.g. village school, shop, Post Office, football club, public transport. For a community to thrive it requires young blood.

*Q. What is your favourite rural scheme that you were involved with?*

The housing scheme at Uley, because not only were we able to provide seven new affordable homes for local people, but alongside the new homes we helped assemble land for the allotment society—a project that helped local people in more than one way!

*Q. How can people get involved in providing affordable housing in their village?*

Please phone me for a chat on 01452 528491 or email [martinh@grcc.org.uk](mailto:martinh@grcc.org.uk) and we will do our best to support you and your community to respond to the challenge.