

Rural Affordable Housing in Cambridgeshire

We'll help you deliver the affordable homes local people need.



What is rural affordable housing?

The rural affordable housing that Cambridgeshire ACRE helps deliver is normally built on 'rural exception sites'. These are sites outside the village development boundary on land that would not normally be available for open market housing. The schemes are small and in keeping with the size, scale and character of the village.

The resulting homes are made available for social rent^a, affordable rent^b or shared ownership^c. Very occasionally, a small number of open market homes may be permitted to make the scheme financially viable. The homes are provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices.

Rural affordable housing is a valuable community asset, bringing forward the affordable homes that local people need. The homes have a local connection criteria, meaning that they are for people who live, work or have family connections to the parish. The homes will also stay affordable in perpetuity and will not become open market homes in the future.

^a Low cost rent set by a government formula.

^b Rent set at up to 80% of market rent.

^c Where you buy a share of between 10% – 80% of a property and pay rent on the remaining share.



Our offer of support

Cambridgeshire ACRE can support your parish council to bring forward a small rural affordable housing development that is right for your community.

Our experienced Rural Housing Enablers will work with you throughout the development process.

These are the ways we will support you:



By explaining rural housing and the rural affordable housing process

It is important that you understand how this could work in your parish. We will visit you to talk about this and answer any questions you might have about rural exception sites, housing tenures, local connections and allocations policies.



By undertaking a housing needs survey

We will establish the demand for affordable housing in your parish by carrying out an independent housing needs survey and report back to you on the results.



By bringing the right delivery partners together

We will facilitate conversations and partnership working between you and your local authority, potential housing association partners and potential landowners.



By identifying potential sites for affordable housing development

We will help organise and facilitate parish walks to identify potential land for development and can also support you through the process of issuing a call for land.



By working with you and your local community

We will work closely with you throughout the entire process by attending meetings, presenting findings and supporting engagement with your wider community.



From first conversation to new homes

Our rural housing enabler provides free dedicated support to parish councils that are interested in embarking on a rural affordable housing development. This offer of support is available to any parish council in Cambridgeshire. Support is available by phone or email and we will also visit you in person. This is what we do at each stage:

Initial engagement

- Visit to the parish council.
- Explain process and answer questions.
- Gain agreement to proceed with initial site finding and potential housing needs survey.

Establish need and confirm site

- Carry out parish-wide housing needs survey (sponsored by housing association).
- Present results to parish council and discuss implications.
- Work with parish council and housing association to confirm appropriate site for development.
- Support further discussions and consultation over plans for site.

Allocating homes

- Confirm local connection criteria to parish council.
- Remind the community of the need to apply to the housing register if they wish to apply to live in the homes.

Identify potential sites

- Use site-finding software to identify potential sites.
- Work with the parish council to assess suitability of sites.
- Engage housing association to support site analysis and discussion with landowners.

Planning and build

- The housing association applies for planning permission and a grant to fund the development.
- Support discussions with parish council if any issues raised during the planning process.
- On site development starts.
- Support the parish council to keep the community engaged.

About Cambridgeshire ACRE

Cambridgeshire ACRE is an independent charity and part of the national ACRE Network.

Our vision is of rural communities where people flourish, connections grow and places thrive. We provide advice, support and practical expertise to help rural communities identify local needs, seize opportunities and turn ideas into action.

Through our leadership of the Cambridgeshire Rural Affordable Housing Partnership, we help communities bring forward affordable homes for local people. The Partnership brings together Cambridgeshire's four district councils and housing associations committed to delivering affordable housing in rural communities.

We act as an impartial broker, working with parish councils, local authorities, housing associations and landowners to understand local housing need and identify appropriate opportunities for development. Our role helps ensure that new affordable housing responds to genuine local need while respecting the character of rural communities.

In 2025/26, our Housing Needs Surveys identified a need for **175 affordable homes** across eight rural communities. During the same year, **53 new affordable** homes were completed through schemes supported by the Partnership, helping local people stay close to family, friends, work and the communities they call home.



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How do I find out more?

Could your community benefit from more affordable homes? Talk to our Rural Housing Enablers to find out what the need might be and how we can help.

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Keep up to date on Cambridgeshire ACRE's work by visiting our website www.cambsacre.org.uk or find us on social media by searching for [@cambsacre](https://www.instagram.com/cambsacre)

