

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND  
REGIONAL HOUSING BOARD**

Date: 15 May 2008

Subject: **Taylor Review of Rural Affordable Housing and the Economy:  
RHB response**

Report of: Director of Development  
South East England Regional Assembly

**Recommendation:**

That the Board note the contents of this report.

**Purpose of the Report :**

This report is to update the Regional Housing Board (RHB) on the response to the Taylor Review of Rural Affordable Housing and the Economy.

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 Matthew Taylor MP for Truro and St Austell, has been commissioned by the Prime Minister to conduct a review of how land use and planning can better support rural business and deliver affordable housing. Many rural communities are faced by a combination of higher than average house prices and lower than average local wages. This can create challenges for individual families, the local economy and the wider sustainability of the community.
- 1.2 In particular, the following issues are being looked at:
- The identification and release of appropriate land for local economic development and affordable rural housing provision, working in conjunction with local government, parish councils and land owners
  - Investigating the potential for increasing the provision of live/work space within rural communities
  - Assessing the local implementation of new planning rules on rural housing following the recommendations of the Affordable Rural Housing Commission.
- 1.3 While the review has been in progress, a national target was announced for Housing Corporation investment in 10,300 rural affordable homes by 2011 in settlements below the 3,000 population threshold. Although no regional targets have been set to date, the national target implies a significantly higher target than the 500 homes per year recommended by RHB based on research and consultation.

## **2. Response to the Review**

- 2.1 The RHB Chairman approved an RHB response to the Review team's call for evidence about how planning and land use could better support rural business and the provision of new affordable homes. The response was submitted on 17 March 2008.
- 2.2 The submission stressed that issues relating to funding and implementation of the planning system apply to the region as a whole, not solely to rural areas and that local authorities need the resources and flexibility to develop planning policies suited to their local circumstances rather than further, prescriptive Government guidance.
- 2.3 Other points in the Board's submission include:
- Evidence of barriers to the delivery of affordable housing and the action being taken by the Board to tackle these
  - The importance of community involvement for the success of rural affordable housing schemes
  - The risks to delivery associated with the loss of Government funding for rural housing enablers
  - The unrealistic timescale set to achieve the new national target for delivery in small villages

- The national target ignores the role of larger rural settlements for which the Board recommended a separate target.
- 2.4 At the request of the Review team, the Regional Assembly subsequently supplied additional information relating to funding, the RHB's recommended targets for public investment in affordable housing and research into rural affordable housing need.
- 2.5 The RHB Chairman and the Housing Corporation Field Director, South East took part in Matthew Taylor's fact-finding visit to the region on 21 April.
- 2.6 Matthew Taylor will report around July 2008 to the Minister of State for Housing and the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

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