

## Watchet, Williton & Quantock Vale Area Panel

### Introduction to the Development Enabling team and what we do

#### Team of 5

1. Jo Humble: Lead Specialist – Place
2. Sue Southwell: Development Enabler – focusing on Exmoor and rural communities
3. Gordon Dwyer: Development Enabler – focusing on Employment sites and the Garden Town
4. Katie Furner: Development Enabler – focusing on Urban sites and Heritage project support
5. Monika Mardon: Case Manager – providing admin support, monitoring, compiling reports

#### Main tasks

- Establishing effective working relationships with housing delivery partners e.g. housing associations, the council own build programme and private developers
- Seek and identify new development opportunities to work in partnership to bring forward housing /employment schemes
- Ensure there is a joined up response to developers from within the council e.g. from Planning Officers, Locality Champions etc
- Ensure that decisions are made on up to date data e.g. on the current housing and financial markets and how they will affect housing delivery. How changes in housing legislation and policy will affect our delivery partners.
- Support a range of development projects in the area which will deliver affordable housing opportunities.
- Consultee for S.106 agreements on affordable housing and park and open space.
- Support on-site delivery and a range of development projects
- Provide input to emerging strategies in relation to housing

#### What is affordable housing?

The most usual types of affordable housing in Somerset West and Taunton are:

**Affordable Housing for rent** is where you pay a percentage of market rent to a housing association or similar organisation. There are currently two key different rent regimes where the amount paid for a similar sized home may vary.

- Social rent: Rent levels are set using a formula based on local incomes and local house prices. This is usually at about 50-60% of open market rent levels. This level of rent is strongly supported by Somerset West and Taunton councillors as being affordable for people on low incomes.
- Affordable rent: rent levels are set at 80% of open market rent levels. Housing associations in Somerset West and Taunton can only receive government grant if they commit to charging this level of rent.

**Low Cost / Discounted Open Market Housing** is housing provided at a discount to the full market value. The discount is tied to a Section 106 agreement and held in perpetuity. The buyer owns the whole of the property, there is no third party.

**Shared Ownership schemes** are provided through housing associations. The occupier buys a share of their home and pays rent on the remaining share, with the option to increase the percentage of their share over time. Sometimes in rural areas the occupier is unable to buy more than 80% of the value of the property.

### **What is a S106 and what does it cover?**

The Development Enabler Specialists are consultees for the sections of a S.106 Agreement that deal with Affordable Housing and Play and Open Space provision in line with the permitted planning application. .

Through our consultee comments the Development Enabler Specialists can feed into the planning process to ensure that the affordable housing is of a high quality and that the homes go to households most in need of affordable housing, and the rents or prices are affordable, and remain so in the future.

We also ensure that the community benefits of Section 106 contributions for open space are maximised. There are policy requirements in the Local Plans which are made explicit and enforced through the S.106.

### **Outreach**

Planning is underway on how to bring together the benefits of TDBC Affordable Housing Open Day and WSDC Housing Fair. The main event is provisionally booked for the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2020 at the County Cricket Ground.

We are planning to do a small number of road shows across the Somerset West and Taunton area in order to reach people who can't travel into Taunton for the main event. These will be hosted in Minehead, Dulverton and Wellington.