

RoWToP
Ross-on-Wye Town Plan

Report on Meeting with Richard Gabb, Head of Strategic Housing.

Also present:

Jane Thomas, Housing Needs & Development Manager

Hayley Crane, Development Officer for Ross Area

Meeting Date: 04/02/08 at 10:00 a.m.

Met By: Brian Atherton, following email consultations with the Chairman and the other members of the Stage 2 sub-group, Rob Brain, Dai Harries and Denis Claringbull.

- 1. Strategic Housing works with the various Developers/Housing Associations, to provide affordable homes. The department also has associated affordable housing products to offer such as Mortgage Rescue.**
- 2. Homes For Rent**
 - a. A list of available properties (with appropriate descriptions, often including a photograph) is published weekly to those on a Housing Register through means such as the internet, the libraries, etc.
 - b. Currently Herefordshire has 5,317 on the Register of whom 621 are in Ross.
 - c. It should be noted that the Register includes those who have enquired but do not have an urgent need, so a range of needs will be present.
 - d. The Register is for homes available for rent or shared ownership held by partner RSLs in the county.
- 3. Homes for Purchase**
 - a. "Affordable Homes" are defined in Supplementary Planning Guidance, but broadly those for sale would be either 3.25 or 3.75 median gross earnings.
 - b. In Herefordshire, median earnings are about £20,000 and so an affordable home is one priced from £80,396 subject to bedroom numbers and assumptions on deposits available.
 - c. The "average price" of a house in Herefordshire is about £200,000. Clearly, an affordable home requires special conditions for its provision. At the moment, the favoured approach is to require a proportion (roughly $\frac{1}{3}$) of any housing development to be affordable (35% subject to set site thresholds).
 - d. Under existing plans, in 2003 it was identified that 190 affordable homes should be built by May 2008. To date, 38 have been built and a further 112 may be built in the next 12 months, if current negotiations are completed in time.
 - e. The UDP has not delivered as planned and is unlikely to. All eyes are now on the LDF, which is expected to include a requirement for a minimum of 16,600 new houses in Herefordshire by 2026 and an associated planning policy that will deliver the land and the associated support services and infrastructure.
- 4. How Can the Town Plan Contribute?**
 - a. The single biggest short-term problem is to identify suitable existing premises (e.g. empty accommodation over shops) for rent and suitable land for new development focussing on previously developed land. This could form a useful input to the Local Development Framework (LDF). Perhaps the Town Plan could include a project aimed at searching out this information.

