

Building **sustainable,**
thriving, and **inclusive**
rural communities where
everyone is welcome



A vision presented by
Thakeham and Plunkett UK



THAKEHAM



Plunkett UK



To build **sustainable, thriving, and inclusive** rural communities where everyone is welcome Thakeham and Plunkett UK are calling for:

1

Community-owned businesses and social enterprises to be recognised in local plans, as a way of promoting inclusivity and integration alongside new development.

2

An ‘infrastructure led’ approach to development to be enshrined in the core principles of planning for new communities.

3

A more strategic approach to developing fluidity in the housing market, through the provision of a range of homes, appropriate for people at different stages of life.

Introduction

We are living through a housing crisis with an estimated shortage of over four million homes in the UK, according to a 2023 report by the Centre for Cities. The situation is exacerbated in rural areas (places with a population of less than 10,000 people) where the pace of house building is slower and often on a smaller scale. As a result, demand exceeds supply and prices rise beyond the means of many local people, having a damaging impact on rural communities as well as the social mobility potential of those stuck in accommodation which doesn't provide for their aspirations.

The basic principle of housing – an immutable belief that all citizens have the right to a roof over their head, a place to call home – is at the core of society. Whatever the tenure, whether it be owned or rented, having a home which is safe and secure is the bedrock of stability for individuals and families alike. Safety and security are, of course, vital to the effectiveness of housing, but the suitability of that home – its ability to meet the needs of those who live there, for as long as they choose to live there – is vital.

Social mobility hinges on the ability of people to move within their community. It responds to a person's aspirations by providing timely opportunities for the specific period of that person's life. With an ageing population, especially in rural areas, the type of housing and facilities needed by communities evolve through time.

As residents of an area age, they often rely on local facilities to maintain their independence. However, this process is a two-way street because in an ageing community the demand for other services, such as village schools, falls. This can then affect planning decisions, with some new development seen as less sustainable in these smaller rural towns, villages and hamlets. The result is fewer homes being built, fewer opportunities for younger residents to leave home or to start a family, driving up house prices even more, and the cycle repeats.

The rewards for prioritising the delivery of suitable accommodation, tailored to the needs of a specific community, are significant. Specifically, the consideration of the needs of our ageing rural population, in particular related to the provision of smaller often single storey accommodation, not only creates an ability for people to downsize independently in the communities they call home,

but also plays an invaluable role in freeing up larger homes for young families to move into the community, promoting diversity and inclusivity.

Those who do want to build new homes in the countryside must consider how they can complement a landscape that some want to protect at all costs.

Creating a vision between Plunkett and Thakeham was a straightforward task thanks to the synergy and shared values that exist between our organisations. For Thakeham, home building has always been about more than bricks and mortar – it's about creating communities. Places where people work, live and play, nurturing a strong social fabric while integrating new and existing residents. For Plunkett, a national charity that supports the creation of community-owned businesses, this point is critical. Plunkett champions the community business model as a means of creating innovative, inclusive and impactful spaces which safeguard valued services, create opportunities for employment, volunteering and training, and support the local economy. Plunkett traditionally works with communities in a reactive way to save or re-establish services which have been lost, but working alongside Thakeham has demonstrated the value of a proactive approach which integrates the creation of community-owned business into new house building.

Communities need more than just homes, and our proposal to use the community-owned business model alongside new development is a powerful way of supporting a new generation of rural housing. The businesses must be the right fit to survive, so a whole community approach is needed to think about what is appropriate in different settings.

This paper makes the case for an honest conversation about how we can deliver new communities where everyone feels welcome. A one-size fits all approach to delivering suitable housing for a nation with specific and localised needs, has been proven to be ineffective. A crisis of this scale requires innovative thinking to redesign the way we deliver for communities, creating strong ties between residents, their homes, their local facilities, and their neighbours.

1

What makes a sustainable, thriving, and inclusive rural community?

The "heart of the community" is a phrase often used when describing the pubs, shops, village halls, churches, schools and other businesses that form rural communities up and down the country. These types of assets contribute to a more inclusive and cohesive community, by providing services, jobs and social opportunities on people's doorsteps.

The reality for many rural communities, however, is a completely different picture with business closures and service withdrawals meaning that many villages and market towns now face a cycle of dormancy – leaving residents isolated and disconnected from their neighbours and the place they call home.

The challenge of maintaining a connected community cannot be resolved by simply keeping every business, village hall or school open, however. There needs to be a diverse local population that will use the facilities, take up the employment opportunities and be motivated by volunteering opportunities.

The rural population is being let down by a traditional housing model that is broken. Historically, young people occupied a one-bedroom flat, moving to a two-bedroom house to start a family, then a four or five bedroom house as their family grew, before downsizing in later life. A chronic undersupply of housing, and crucially the right sort of housing, has left people trapped in unsuitable accommodation, unable to move up and down the ladder.

We are feeling the effects of this undersupply today. Not only in terms of the social impact, with the mental health of citizens in the UK impacted directly by their decreased agency or control over where they live, when they start a family, or what that family looks like, but also in real economic terms as decreased social mobility impacts economic growth nationally, and regionally in areas where the average time a person spends in one form of accommodation sit above the already high national average.

To create a diverse community, you need to build the right homes, in the right places, at the right price.

At present, we have a 'one-size fits all' approach to addressing housing needs in rural areas, something which is neither appropriate nor sustainable. There is a risk that without genuine community involvement, what is delivered are developments with no appropriate infrastructure, and no sense of community (or belonging), where people are left socially isolated and wholly dependent on private transport.

For a community to be sustainable, thriving and inclusive, you need a mix of people living locally who also have an interest and the means to get involved with what the community has to offer.

We believe that the following questions can help establish how this could be done:

- What if every community could be encouraged to support the development of the houses and single storey dwellings needed in their area?
- What if developers could be empowered to go beyond their statutory requirements, in terms of delivering infrastructure and assets in a way that creates a community and fosters inclusivity amongst new and existing residents?
- What if communities could be encouraged to invest in their local area through community ownership of assets, services and land?
- What if existing and established businesses and community facilities could be more ambitiously supported to diversify their offering to meet the needs of new residents?
- What if blue and green infrastructure was incorporated into all new developments?
- What if all new developments could proactively address carbon reduction and net zero living?

"We need new development, regardless of size, to empower local people to feel connected with and motivated to contribute to their community in the long term.

The community-owned business model could be a transformative resource in this regard, with residents responsible for running services or businesses on behalf of their community, for their community and with their community."

James Alcock, Chief Executive of Plunkett UK

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Barriers to successful community creation

To build sustainable, thriving and inclusive communities requires ambition, but also a healthy amount of realism. As with any major undertaking, significant barriers exist. Furthermore, in existing rural communities, understanding these challenges is important in terms of integrating what is already in situ with any new developments in the future.

In terms of delivering the kind of communities that this paper aspires to, we believe that the following need to be considered:

An ageing rural population

England's population continues to age. According to the Office for National Statistics, 2021 Census, data showed that local authorities with the highest proportions of older residents tended to be either (or both) rural and coastal areas. Whilst it is good news that people are living longer, an ageing population creates unique challenges in terms of the type of housing and facilities that communities need.

As well as an ageing population, the number of years people spend in their property has risen rapidly across all tenure types. In the 1980s, people moved home on average every eight years – being able to ascend and descend the housing ladder as their personal and family situations evolved. Now, in the 2020s, the average length of occupancy is over twenty years as people are forced to stay in their current homes for longer, unable to respond to changes in personal circumstances with a housing market which has failed to deliver the type and, crucially, the number of homes needed.

In housing terms, according to the 2019 ONS report 'Milestones: journeying into adulthood', if we take the age of 23 as when a person, on average, moves out of the parental home, and deduct this from the average life expectancy – the number of years people occupy their own home has increased by 22% for males, and 14% for females since the mid-1970s.

Urban flight

At the other end of the housing spectrum, younger people are leaving rural areas due to a range of factors. Just two in five young people (43%) in rural areas anticipate staying in their area within the next five years, according to research published by the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) in 2021. What is more, CPRE's 'Outpriced and overlooked' report states that 72% of young people living in rural areas say affordable housing is their top concern and 84% of those who want to leave say it is a key factor in making their decision.

The type of housing provided locally needs to offer opportunities for downsizing, as well as upsizing – allowing for more dynamic social mobility opportunities and catering for aspiration. People need choice and the potential of existing family housing stock must be realised, alongside new builds.

Opportunities

To tackle urban flight, people need the opportunities – not just the houses – which match their aspirations. These include access to employment, to training and education, and viable and attractive ways of socialising. All age groups need good access to healthcare and benefit from the opportunity to engage with others in local social settings. A community needs to be connected.

Housing developments of all sizes need to consider how residents will be connected as part of the engagement, consultation and design phases for any new development.

This connection should include good broadband and mobile connectivity, which in some rural areas still requires significant investment. But this point is crucial – without it, a diverse workforce and educational access will be much harder to sustain.

“People are occupying their homes for longer than ever before, often unable to respond to changes in circumstances. The provision of accommodation, in particular bungalows for older people, not only creates an ability for them to downsize in the communities they call home, but also plays an invaluable role in freeing up larger homes for young families, ensuring sustainable, vibrant and diverse communities for the long-term.”

Rob Boughton, Chief Executive Officer, Thakeham



Community involvement is key

Good practice and meaningful consultation can help eliminate these barriers, and there are fantastic examples of house builders leading the way to overcome them. Thakeham is committed to delivering positive social and environmental impact in the communities they create, and a network of registered affordable housing providers are helping to integrate residents in communities where their schemes exist. A growing network of community-led housing projects and land trusts also points to an increased interest in involving residents to deliver the homes needed locally.

Understanding what is available in the area and how residents will be connected, and what capacity already exists locally, helps quantify what is missing. It starts by asking a range of questions, answerable only by members of that specific community, about what their area is crying out for. How many pupil spaces are available at local schools? Are there enough open spaces to promote active, healthy opportunities for recreation and exercise, and support good mental health? Do local public transport routes operate at regular times? Are they able to connect people with the essential services at the times when they are needed?

Meaningful consultation such as this helps to garner support for planned development. New housing developments for many years have been centered around properties for first time buyers - encouraged by Government policy - meanwhile policies encouraging density have led to accommodation for older people being seen often solely through the lens of sheltered apartments.

This type of accommodation is, of course, welcome and necessary for some residents, however many residents, whose children have left home should be offered the opportunity to downsize from the 'family home' and have access to property that has independent space such as a garden, driveway and potentially a garage too.

The 'Defining and Measuring Rural Wellbeing' report, commissioned by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and published in 2023, includes several useful insights on how to improve wellbeing in rural communities and recognises the importance of having infrastructure and connectivity in place.

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"A strong community is a universal driver of wellbeing... This includes both geographic and social communities, combining social capital, sense of belonging, participation and having power and influence over our own lives."

Defining and Measuring Rural Wellbeing, Centre for Thriving Places, 2023

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In the context of development, the timeliness of the provision of new infrastructure, or upgrades to existing amenities adds pressure onto already overstretched local services. This can create both issues in availability of services during phased construction and initial resistance to additional development being approved.

Whether infrastructure will be adopted by the local authority or left in long-term private ownership presents a further barrier when canvassing local support. The perception of a community being left to pay for infrastructure through service charges, or new residents paying for facilities that are not exclusive to them can create divisions. Transparency is important and must be addressed in the engagement and consultation phases.

The cost of housing

Rural living has become highly aspirational for many, particularly since the pandemic and the growth of remote or hybrid employment opportunities. Also, an increase in the number of holiday and short-term lets has increased prices simply through the very nature of ‘supply and demand’. For many, living in these places has unfortunately become completely unaffordable.

Encouraging residents to downsize efficiently, but keeping them in their community and helping them to become advocates for new housing developments, can streamline the delivery of additional two, three, and four bedroom accommodation, helping to create multi-generational communities with the suitable accommodation required for residents at each stage of their life.

Greater supply means more affordable options, both in terms of new-build homes and those vacated by older residents looking to downsize.



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As was written by Margaret Clark CBE, President of ACRE and Chair of the Rural Coalition in a blog for Rural Housing Week 2023.

“The problem is that many people providing local services and jobs are unable to ‘choose’ to live locally near to their jobs, their family and social networks. They cannot afford to do so. Rural wages are lower than average; latest figures show that even the price of lower end rural homes are over nine times that of those on lower end earnings. A whole range of people, such as teachers, carers, those working on the land, in shops, pubs, hotels and many other local businesses, are finding themselves priced out of the countryside, exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis.”

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Each local authority is responsible for identifying their affordable housing requirements. Due to significant economic variances across individual authority areas, we see a variety of requirements ranging from 20 - 45%.

Research from University College London (UCL) and English Rural has highlighted how local authorities are currently under-utilising Rural Exception Sites (RES) as a way of addressing the shortage of affordable homes in some rural areas. The 2023 ‘Land, Landowners and the Delivery of Affordable Homes in Rural Areas’ report contains a number of recommendations which are relevant alongside this paper, particularly related to there being a greater awareness of RES policy at a community level.

A further barrier that can arise, in those areas where affordable properties are built, is the location within a new development. There are numerous examples across the country, where affordable housing is all grouped together in a corner, away from market housing, creating a barrier to equality within a development from the beginning. There is a genuine need to integrate tenure blind affordable housing, to foster a connectedness between residents.

Planning – national & local

Whilst it is the national planning policy framework that dictates how the Government intends to address housing need across the country, it is the Local Plans – compiled by local authorities – that are the most important when considering how and where to deliver sustainable, thriving and inclusive communities.

Definitive national policy and guidance must be in place to specify how local plan-making should be undertaken. There have been numerous attempts to reform the planning system since 2020, none of which has come into effect. This has resulted in many local authorities pausing their plan-making process due to uncertainty and the risk of progressing plans that will subsequently be out-of-date following national policy change. Strong, definitive national guidance is needed for local authorities to proceed with Local Plans.

A direct impact of uncertainty at national level is that if a local authority does not have an up-to-date Local Plan in place, they become susceptible to speculative planning applications. This poses risks to all communities that the right type of development may be built in the wrong location.

With certainty of policy, local authorities can plan for appropriate needs within all communities through a well-consulted local plan-making process.



Housing Tenure

In their 'The State of Our Social Fabric' 2020 report, UK Onward identified a need for secure housing tenure to strengthen social fabric in a place. They state:

"The growth of the private rented sector has contributed to declining social fabric. Just over 56% of people in social housing and 66% of homeowners feel that they belong to their area, compared to just 47% of private renters. In the areas with the strongest social fabric, stable tenures (owner occupied and social rent) have increased since 2001, while in the areas with the weakest social fabric, they have fallen by 8%."

To overcome the barriers associated with housing tenure there must be an appropriate mixing of housing types. Best practice also suggests that a tenure blind approach to housing design, where private rented, affordable rented, social housing, shared ownership and private ownership exist side by side will support social cohesion and reduce perceived divides in new communities.

A further opportunity to support the creation of more diverse communities – and which could potentially release under-occupied existing stock – is a commitment from developers to build accommodation specifically for older people.

This would encourage downsizing and free up vital existing housing stock. It could foster support for new developments which alongside providing new family-sized homes, have an attractive offer of suitable single storey accommodation for those wanting to downsize whilst remaining part of their community.



Neighbourhood plans

Neighbourhood plans are currently the recognised tool for a community's voice to be represented in the planning process. They offer an opportunity for communities to contribute to and shape the planning conversation in their area.

However, whilst the lifespan of a Neighbourhood Plan document is five years, if a Local Plan is out of date the current policy is that Neighbourhood Plans over two years old are no longer afforded any protection against speculative housing applications. Some therefore question the time, cost and effort required to make a Neighbourhood Plan and seek its adoption, which can be a barrier for some communities looking at this as a viable way of presenting a view on housing need.

It has been over a decade since Neighbourhood Plans were introduced and take up has been relatively good in rural areas. There are over 3000 known neighbourhood plan areas formally designated at the end of 2022, of which just under half have a formally adopted Plan. However, if there is no capacity, or appetite within the community to commit the time and resource required to develop such a formal document then their efficacy as a tool is in question.

The approach to delivering rural housing across multiple communities at once, in relation to Local Plans is a very top-down view. Given the highlighted barriers to creating a Neighbourhood Plan there needs to be a simpler way to empower communities to propose how and where development could be appropriately locally sited. Simpler community-led plans and more local housing needs surveys could help to articulate community needs.

Finally, the parish and town council network also play an important role in the application of housing policy in their communities. Their involvement has greatest effect in places where the council is truly representative of the community they are elected to serve. Without such representation there is a risk that the assessment of local needs may be restricted or lack nuance due to unconscious (or conscious) bias.

"We need a bold vision for future rural housing. Residents need to be empowered through a vision to build sustainable, thriving and inclusive communities where everyone is welcome and given opportunity to proactively contribute to the design of such development and the infrastructure needed. Such empowerment would also enable communities to work proactively with developers and councillors, from an early stage through to delivery assurance, rather than combatively. A commitment to listening to and considering the widest range of views in any consultation is paramount, but the housing crisis also requires society to think differently about how and where housing is built in future."

Rob Boughton, Chief Executive Officer, Thakeham

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Identifying the local need and hearing the community voice



Listening to the voice of residents is critical in taking progressive action in communities. In the case of house building, it is even more important that local needs are considered in relation to the type of housing, tenure and affordability of the properties being built, as well as the infrastructure and services needed to connect the community. Residents need to feel empowered and genuinely engaged with a conversation about the community's needs.

As part of the Unleashing Rural Opportunity policy announcements, made by the Government in June 2023, significant funding has been made available to boost the capacity of Rural Housing Enablers. This will be a critical piece of action to support the creation of more affordable homes in the countryside. However, the work of this network alone will not solve the housing crisis. We need a whole sector approach to deliver the right homes in the right places for rural areas, supported by infrastructure and services that enhance the social fabric of the area.

It is important that multiple methods are deployed when seeking engagement with a community. People have different backgrounds, cultures, ages, cognitive abilities and family situations – it is simply not possible to engage with everyone in the same way.

Community engagement should also be an ongoing process that enables relationships to build and strengthen over time. Establishing a level of trust at the earliest point possible, will be the foundation for a stronger social fabric longer term. A piece of 2020 research* by UK Onward, into understanding community strength highlights the importance of relationships and fostering a sense of pride and belonging – both elements of building trust and connectedness throughout the process of engagement.

** Key indicators for the state of social fabric (see page 11)*

House builders and registered affordable housing providers already deploy an array of techniques to engage with communities, but could more be done in relation to planning policy to strengthen the engagement process? Without change, new development will continue to be one of the most hotly debated topics for generations to come.

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Repairing our Social Fabric: Towards a new understanding of community strength, UK Onward, 2020

Key indicators for the state of social fabric:

- 1. Relationships "membership of formal groups", examples "volunteering", "participation at voluntary-run assets, like a community library"*
 - 2. Physical infrastructure "visible buildings, transportation, spaces and local businesses". Examples: "libraries, green spaces, playgrounds, youth centres, broadband"*
 - 3. Civic Institutions "health of democracy and governance at both the local and the national level in the community". For example, people should feel "trust and satisfaction" with "public institutions". Example indicators are "locally provided services, local influence of local and national decision-making".*
 - 4. Economic value "tangible assets which hold a monetary and/or economic value". Examples: "housing, industry", "type of employment, skills and training".*
 - 5. Cultural behaviours "personal wellbeing and cultural attitudes on everyday life". Examples: "life satisfaction", "health, education, social trust, drugs, alcohol and smoking"*
 - 6. Pride and belonging "identification with, and feeling of belonging to,*
 - 7. a neighbourhood area". Examples: "prevalence of social isolation", "diversity of the community", "neighbourhood safety", "trust between neighbours", "settledness".*
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Enhancing social value and community creation



The community-owned business model promoted by Plunkett is founded on the principles of inclusive, open and democratic ownership and control. It is a form of business which creates opportunities for anyone to get involved and support the operation of the business which exists for the benefit of a local area. In the context of a new development, it can be an effective mechanism to foster local integration, provide avenues for social mobility, and proactively facilitate a community's creation.

In 2021, research* from The Centre for Social Justice argued that there are three 'pillars' of community that people look for, which are prioritised according to a "hierarchy of need".

3 'pillars' of community:

- "a sense of security"
- "human connections"
- "a feeling of belonging"

* *Pillars of Community: Why communities matter and what matters to them*, Centre for Social Justice, 2021

These pillars echo Plunkett and Thakeham's vision for building communities. A strong social fabric comes from stability, social interaction, genuine opportunities for personal and financial growth, and people taking ownership of the place in which they live.



Plunkett and Thakeham work together because delivering social value and social mobility are intrinsic to our organisations. At Thakeham, established business practices exist to maximise the wellbeing and opportunities that developments can offer. That includes the wellbeing of those who build them, live in them and the communities around them.

Thakeham's passion for making a positive impact on people's lives is set out in these four key focus areas:

- **Building Local Communities** via excellent placemaking that creates interconnected communities that challenge issues of loneliness and promote healthy living, and via their long-term charity partnerships.
- **Building Future Generations** via school engagement programmes, including an industry leading holistic ecology programme 'Eddie & Ellie's Wild Adventures' for primary age pupils, and providing inspiring careers support to secondary age pupils through their Cornerstone Employer status with The Careers Enterprise.
- **Building a Stronger Industry** with support for small and medium size enterprises and upskilling local workers, supporting apprenticeships, and actively contributing to the diversification and upskilling of the construction sector.
- **Building Sustainable Places** by tackling issues of climate change, biodiversity loss and societal disconnects via their ambitious Sustainability Strategy.

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A model to build sustainable, thriving and inclusive rural communities

Society needs a range of homes, of varying size and type, to meet individual and community need. To thrive, a community needs to have multiple generations living locally, with fluidity which allows for people to move as their life circumstances change.

To thrive, those communities need:



Access to a range of housing.

A community needs to have a range of residential properties, of varying size and type to meet local need that are available for rent and for purchase. This should include an increased provision of single storey dwellings for people looking to downsize. The homes must not only consider the current population, but also how to cater for and attract the next generation of residents too. To thrive, a community needs to have multiple generations living locally.



Access to affordable housing.

The sustainability of a rural community also depends on the availability of homes that people can afford. The measure of 'affordability' needs to be commensurate with local employment opportunities, which in rural areas often includes lower paid roles.



Both new developments and integrated housing based on local priorities and need.

For some communities housing need will be met through smaller scale, integrated development. Planning policy should encourage communities to accept some form of development as a way of ensuring a diverse population, which will in turn support a wider range of community assets and facilities.

In some rural settings there will be a need to look at appropriate development on some greenbelt sites, and a case could be made that the prioritisation of local need and the provision of community facilities should be supported as exceptions in these places.



Development which listens to the voice of the local community.

Policies related to Neighbourhood Plans should be simplified and funding (from the Government) increased to encourage greater take-up and engagement with this tool.

The voice of residents should be utilised to inform housing volume, tenure and design. Furthermore, Neighbourhood Plans should be afforded the same protections of a Local Plan in terms of their lifespan being consistently five years, even in authority areas where the Local Plan is out of date.

The community voice will be critical when assessing what assets exist locally, and what could foster further inclusivity in future.

Whilst this paper makes the case for more community-owned businesses alongside new housing, there is not a monopoly and other businesses, buildings and organisations will play a critical role.





Appropriate infrastructure being available.

Communities need to be connected, both in terms of transport and digital communications. Improvements to existing infrastructure, or the building of new facilities such as schools, doctors' surgeries etc. must be progressed in line with the integration of new residents moving into a community and in line with the needs of the existing community also.



Developments actively contributing to Net Zero targets.

From 2025, every Thakeham home will be zero carbon in lifetime operation. This means that the amount of carbon emissions associated with the building's operational/regulated energy on an annual basis is zero or negative.

Thakeham's sector leadership in this area should be the standard for all future developments.

Furthermore, communities should also consider how to support carbon neutral living through the provision of local services that are accessible via cycling or walking, or through connecting other service centres via public transport.

The delivery of blue and green infrastructure should also be encouraged on all new developments in future.



Utilise the third sector to support integration.

The voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector is well placed to support the integration of new developments, services and residents. Both locally based and national organisations should be engaged in the planning process to plan for and deliver housing and infrastructure in rural areas.

This could relate to improving existing assets to cater for an increased population, or delivering new assets, facilities and services as part of a development. Furthermore, Local Plans should actively consider how community-owned business and social enterprises could benefit a place in the context of new development.



Local employment, volunteering, training and education opportunities.

To make the countryside accessible to everyone there needs to be a diverse range of employment and training opportunities available.



To build sustainable, thriving, and inclusive rural communities where everyone is welcome Thakeham and Plunkett are calling for:

1. Community-owned businesses and social enterprises to be recognised in local plans, as a way of promoting inclusivity and integration alongside new development.

2. An 'infrastructure led' approach to develop to be enshrined in the core principles of planning for new communities.

3. A more strategic approach to developing fluidity in the housing market, through the provision of a range of homes, appropriate for people at different stages of life.

Thakeham UK and Plunkett's partnership

Thakeham commissioned Plunkett to develop a partnership methodology to establish community-owned businesses at the heart of its developments.

Thakeham has long recognised the importance of creating cohesive communities and, as well as the importance of investing in services and assets, sees community business as a vital mechanism to achieve its ambition of creating sustainable, resilient and inclusive communities.

The community business model will be used to create community hubs that could include retail, cafés, meeting rooms, co-working facilities, allotments and accessible green spaces, amongst others.

Plunkett has over 100 years of experience in supporting and establishing community businesses across the UK. A long-term survival rate of 95% proves that this is a resilient business model to provide and retain vital local services that bring a community together.



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Thakeham is a placemaker committed to people, communities and creating amazing places to live. With an industry-leading focus on biodiversity and zero carbon, alongside its infrastructure-led approach, Thakeham is widely accepted as being at the forefront of community creation in the UK.

Plunkett UK is a national charity with a vision for resilient, thriving and inclusive rural communities UK-wide. To achieve this, they support people in rural areas to set up and run a wide range of businesses that are genuinely owned by local communities, whereby members have equal and democratic control.