

RURAL HOUSING MODELS: CENARTH, WALES

Homes completed:
December 2019

Accessing Land

A parcel of land bordering on a private estate within the village became available and the housing association took the opportunity to purchase it for the development.

Community Engagement

As well as facilitating partnership working on the project, the Rural Housing Enabler also worked with the local community councils to develop a local lettings policy and to encourage participation with the Welsh Government's rent-to-own scheme.

Open events were held in the leisure complex within the village to ensure that locals would be able to see and view the plans for the development and all interested parties were asked to register on the Ceredigion Housing Options website. Social media and local press were used to publicise the project throughout its development.



Housing to support Welsh-speaking areas

The historic village of Cenarth in the south west of Wales has a population of around 1,000 people and is a Welsh language stronghold. Ensuring local people had the opportunity to continue to live in the area - and purchase property with the support of Welsh Government funded schemes - was the catalyst for the development of a mixed tenure estate of social letting and rent-to-own properties by Tai Ceredigion Housing Association and Beulah Community Council.

Housing Need

Data from Ceredigion County Council Housing Options (Register), along with a housing needs analysis for the local Beulah council ward and open events with the local community, all pointed towards a need for housing in the area. The need for local people to remain in this Welsh language stronghold was identified as key.

Partnership Working

The role of a Rural Housing Enabler (RHE) was crucial to this development. The RHE based at Tai Ceredigion Housing Assoc

worked with the local community, the two community councils in the area, the local authority and local councillors from the outset, identifying the need for the new housing, holding open events and publicising the opportunity for local housing in a Welsh language speaking area.

The potential mixed tenure opportunities were also identified through collaboration between stakeholders and individuals within the community.

Tai Ceredigion Housing Association merged with Mid Wales Housing Association in 2020 to form Barcud:

www.barcud.cymru



Designing the Homes

The rent-to-own and the social rented homes were all built to the same high standard, following criteria set out in the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS).

This was developed by the Welsh Government to provide a common target standard for the condition of all housing in Wales.

The WHQS states that all households should have the opportunity to live in good quality homes that are in a good state of repair, safe and secure, adequately heated, fuel efficient and well insulated, contain up-to-date kitchens and bathrooms, are well-managed, located in attractive and safe environments, and, as far as possible, suit the specific requirements of the household.

In addition, the homes were also built to meet other design quality guidelines and environmental regulations such as the Lifetime Homes standard, accessible housing requirements, and the official police security initiative Secured by Design.

All these requirements were sent to the project architects who incorporated them in to the designs.

The Homes

A mix of two, three and four bedroom properties, as well as an adapted bungalow, were developed as part of the affordable rental element of the project. Two three-brent-to-own homes were also built.

Keeping the Homes Affordable

The homes are rented to tenants by the Barcud Cyf. Housing Association in line with housing association policies and Welsh Government legislation designed to ensure that they are affordable.

The Welsh Government rent benchmarking system aims to make sure those tenants in an area pay a similar rent for similar types of homes and that rent increases are fair.

Barcud is a not-for-profit organisation meaning that proceeds are fed back into the communities and developments in which it operates.

Two of the properties will be sold through the Welsh Government's rent-to-own scheme.

Funding

The development was financed through a mix of grant funding and commercial lending through RSL Finance.

Accessing Expertise

As a housing association Tai Ceredigion had its own experienced development team used to working on projects of this type and was able to draw on its existing property management, maintenance, marketing and finance functions to access most of the expertise required. The Rural Housing Enabler's expertise and local connections were also invaluable to the development of the project.

Building the Homes

Due to limited availability within the area, a construction company from the next county that specialises in larger projects was awarded the contract. TRJ from Llanelli is an industry leader in building in house pods with low carbon attributes and used local sub-contractors where possible. This included a local company based less than five miles from site to fit the air source heat pumps.

Delivering Rural Housing in Wales

Rural Housing Enablers work with rural communities to identify local need for affordable homes and then work with the local community to find a suitable opportunity to develop. They also work extensively with local councillors and their efforts mean that the voices of local people are heard when it comes to housing and the opportunity to stay in their local area.

Housing schemes can be provided through a variety of ways - through housing associations, land trusts and co-operative ventures or by self-build or private developers - and using different ways of planning such as Rural Exception Sites and One Planet developments.

Development in rural areas is strictly controlled by planning policy, which can be different in each local authority area. There can be exceptions to the planning rules, as it is recognised there is a need to keep local people in their communities.

This case study was produced for the 2021 Rural Housing Summit from Rural Housing Scotland with support from UN-Habitat and sponsored by Ecology Building Society.