

5th January 2026.

Response to Bilbrough Parish Council, following Rural Housing Enabler Red Line
Community Engagement event, held 4 November 2025.

Following our community engagement event on 4 November in Bilbrough, we received numerous comments regarding the potential development of a Rural Exception Site in Bilbrough.

The purpose of the event was to provide early-stage information to the community following a housing need survey which had been undertaken the previous year, by a Rural Housing Enabler.

The role of a Rural housing Enabler is to work with local communities in rural locations, to identify need and bring forward small developments of 100% affordable housing schemes to sustain rural communities. Whilst development can take place on the edge of larger urban conurbations, this does not support rural villages and the communities and services within them, for example schools, shops and pubs. Rural Exceptions Sites are sites which would not ordinarily obtain planning for market housing, but exception may be provided if there is an identified affordable local need. The homes delivered on such a site would be affordable in perpetuity and priority for allocation is given to those in the local area. This is secured via a legal 106 agreement during the planning process. Given the exception to policy and the fact that only affordable housing is permitted on site, the value of the land is limited to a value which is above agricultural value but significantly lower than would be achieved for market housing. Land for rural exception sites is often hard to secure, for this reason.

The Rural Housing Enablers work with communities, landowners and Housing Associations to facilitate the process of bringing forward development. Whilst the Council does have an internal development team, this scheme specifically is not a council development and involves a private arrangement between the landowner and the Housing Association. With this in mind, no information will be given to local residents regarding private details of conversations between the landowner and the Housing Association, and the Rural Housing Enabler team would not have information relating to the value of the land and any private negotiations between the landowner and Housing Association.

Having reviewed all comments received following the event, they can be grouped into 3 areas which I will address collectively, rather than individual responses to each query. These themes were Planning, Highways and Housing Need.

Planning:

Many of the responses received were concerned with the current infrastructure of the village, the location of the site, lack of street lighting and the impact of building on greenbelt land. Whilst feedback was welcomed and indeed invited, this was not a planning consultation, therefore we did not provide a deadline for submission of comments. This in turn seems to have created some uncertainty and ambiguity and we apologise for that.

The event is held to gain early insight into the thoughts of the community around the principle of developing a scheme. We have noted all comments, anonymised these and made the Housing Association aware of any concerns, however I must reiterate that all planning concerns will be considered as part of a planning application which has not yet been submitted (and is not due to be submitted imminently). The early insight does however allow both the landowner and Housing Association opportunity to consider and potentially address or mitigate any concerns during the development and design process – ahead of an application being submitted. As this would be an exception site, it is important that a developer can demonstrate that any benefit to providing housing on such a site, would outweigh any harm.

As you will be aware a Parish Council is a statutory consultee for planning applications and will be notified as and when a submission is made. Further engagement events, including details of full plans etc would be brought to the community and Parish Council, ahead of submission to planning. The benefit of working with the rural housing enablers is that we are able to work with a community, to keep you updated throughout the process, unlike a market site where the community are unlikely to hear about the application, prior to submission.

Several comments also asked how the land was brought forward. The housing need survey included a question around any available land. 2 pieces of land were brought forward, one in Newton Kyme and one in Bilbrough. When land is brought forward our team undertake a site assessment and speak to internal colleagues around the principle of development on such a site (this includes both planning and highways). Following conversations with planning, the site at Newton Kyme was deemed undeliverable, however the site in Bilbrough was considered in principle, suitable for development for a Rural Exception site, subject to relevant surveys and full planning application.

Highways:

Similar to the planning comments, many of the responses included concerns over the situation of the site on a narrow lane, overall traffic concerns around the village and suitability of further housing contributing to increased traffic levels.

North Yorkshire Highway team are a statutory consultee for any planning applications and therefore, at the point of application would investigate any impact on highways.

Again, comments and concerns gathered have been anonymised and fed back to the Housing Association for their information.

The Rural Housing team cannot make further comment on either Highways or planning, as this would need to be done by the relevant teams during the planning consultation process, should a planning application be submitted.

Housing Needs Information.

Many of the feedback forms had concerns around how the housing need survey was undertaken, the process involved and the grouping of the parishes.

In order to bring forward affordable housing on a Rural Exception Site, a local need has to be established. We have several methods for identifying need and a housing need survey provides one part of the larger body of evidence. The evidence consists of:

Strategic housing evidence- A strategic Market Assessment or Housing and Economic Development Assessment. Used for the purposes of developing a local plan and informing policy.

Choice Based Lettings Data: The register of people in housing need across North Yorkshire, based on local areas. This is also the register used for allocating affordable rental properties, managed by Housing Associations.

Secondary data: A source of information derived from Census data and local house prices/indicators. This information is used for planning consultations and can also be used to provide information in a Parish Profile. It provides an estimated annual housing need for a parish – for example in Bilbrough, this figure is 3 new affordable homes per annum.

A local Housing need survey – this information is additional information to evidence a local housing need in a specific parish or parishes where a Rural Exception Site could be developed. A housing need survey is ‘a snapshot in time’ and is therefore not used in isolation as evidence of housing need.

When carrying out a Housing Need Survey in a Parish with a small population, we very often carry out ‘cluster’ surveys. These comprise of a collection of neighbouring parishes. If a site is identified within any of these parishes, the homes developed would be offered to people with a local connection to any of the parishes within the survey.

Of the 16 returned surveys, half of the need came from the parishes including or adjoining Bilbrough, with the rest coming from short distance away in Newton Kyme. This evidence, along with our strategic housing evidence, CBL data and Secondary data indicate that a small development of homes in the area included in the survey, would be proportionate and satisfy the identified need.

We understand that there has been some concern over the number or location of some of the parishes included in the survey. We recently reviewed the way in which we carry out cluster surveys and, when these are undertaken, we ask the parishes involved whether they are happy to be included (via the Parish Council), or whether they can suggest more appropriate parishes, given their knowledge of the local area. I accept that this did not happen in the case of this cluster survey, however given that a housing need survey is only one part of the evidence, and that further evidence will be collected throughout the process, we do not believe that this fundamentally changes the potential for a small housing development in Bilbrough itself and that carrying out another full housing need survey would not be necessary.

We do however recognise that the process of development can be a protracted one, and it is important to continuously review the need, therefore at each community engagement event, we provide forms for residents in need to complete. All housing need identified, throughout the process will be collated and used to inform a planning application.

Following the completion of the report, the rural housing enablers attend a parish council meeting (of all included parishes) to report back the findings and request support to move forward with either finding a site, or if a site has already been identified as in this case, proceed to a red line event. This meeting, in Bilbrough, took place on 8 July 2025, as documented in the Parish Council minutes.

The housing need survey itself is produced in a format that is recognised nationally by the Rural Housing Enabler Network.

When the survey report is being compiled, we will look at the answers provided in order to consider whether the responder is answering in terms of *need*, rather than *want* – for example, if a couple have responded to say they would like a 3 bed house, the report would include them as ‘In housing need’ but only class the need as 1 or 2 bed, as this is the size they would be allocated through HomeChoice. Similarly, if a responder says they are in housing need, but their deposit or salary takes them over the Home Choice eligibility threshold (£60,000), or we calculate that they would be able to buy on the open market, then they would not be reported as being in housing ‘need’. We are therefore confident that, at the time the responses were received the need figures are correct.

If a housing development went ahead in Bilbrough, the properties would be held as affordable in perpetuity for local people. This means:

- Housing would be available to those with a local connection as a priority.
- Housing will remain affordable, meaning on shared ownership properties that owners could not staircase out to 100% and sell on to the open market.

- Any rental properties would not be eligible to Right to Acquire meaning they could not be bought by the tenant and sold on the open market.

The above conditions would be secured via a 106 agreement, during the planning process.