

Rural Affordable Housing Case Study



Development:	School Court
Where:	Kirdford , West Sussex
No. of units provided:	16
Tenure:	Rented; 2x2 bed bungalows 5x1 bed flats 4x2 bed flats Shared ownership; 5x 2bed houses

Background:

The story begins five years ago in 2001 when Kirdford School closed. The parish council, given the promise of a say in how the land was used, decided then that the whole village needed a say. Over the next five years, it worked closely with West Sussex County Council, Action in rural Sussex (AirS) Chichester District Council and Hastoe Housing Association and the community at large to give the village something to be proud of.

The Kirdford Action Plan Group was formed encompassing all village organisations. Trevor Cherrett of Action in rural Sussex provided the professional guidance at this point. In May 2002 a Village Drop-In Weekend was held at the village hall. Everyone was invited to contribute their ideas about how the site should be used. Many meetings followed throughout the summer and feasibility studies and a housing needs survey were undertaken. Clare Gardiner of WSCC took over as facilitator at this stage and after many 'heated' meetings it was agreed that the site should be used for low cost rented accommodation and shared ownership housing for local people.

In 2003 Hastoe Housing Association was awarded the contract. Hastoe held a 'Come and See' event in March 2004 - amendments were then made to the plans. Planning permission was finally granted in February 2005. Funding was secured and the school playing field was given to the Parish as open space. Behind the scenes Chichester District Council ensured that all local people needing housing were aware of the scheme.

In July 2006, exactly five years after the school closure, School Court is complete and occupied by local people. The development shows that if you put in the effort all things are achievable. Everyone is delighted with the outcome; promises have been honoured; local people have been housed and the name 'School Court' is a fond reminder of what once stood there. *Terry Webber, Kirdford Parish Council*

Kirdford were the proud winners of the first Richmond Award. This is presented each year by AirS to the community that has worked hard to ensure that future generations continue to live in their village.

"It is very sad when you see the heart of community ripped out because people move away, perhaps driven by prohibitive housing costs, by the need to search for work or simply because there is little for people to do. Staff at AirS felt the work of the community in Kirdford was simply outstanding." said the *Duke of Richmond*

"Obviously Action in rural Sussex deeply regrets the loss of any small village schools. However, a community can either become a victim of change, accepting a gradual deterioration of community life or it can take a grip of its own future. For Kirdford, like many other villages, the future lies in there being housing, built to a good environmental standard, that can be afforded by people on ordinary local incomes" says *Jeremy Leggett Chief Executive of AirS.*

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