

News

from



English Rural Housing Association

Latest affordable village homes unveiled

English Rural Housing Association's new development of 8 affordable homes at Wilkinson Close, Charing, will be officially opened **at 2.30pm on Tuesday 30th November 2010**. The development has been named after a local war hero, Sgt David Wilkinson, who sadly lost his life in Afghanistan over three years ago and we are delighted that his widow, Rachel Wilkinson has kindly agreed to mark the occasion by officially opening the development. The homes are the result of a partnership between English Rural, Ashford Borough Council and Charing Parish Council, with land made available by Ashford Borough Council and a local landowner. The project has been funded by the Homes & Communities Agency as part of the Governments National Affordable Housing Programme.

The new homes were completed in October after a build programme of around 10 months. Two of the homes are being sold on a shared ownership basis and the other six have been made available on affordable rents. English Rural will own and manage the development in a way that benefits the local community, ensuring that local people, unable to afford market prices can remain living in the village. To help achieve this a legal agreement has been put in place, ensuring that households with a genuine local connection will be given priority when the homes are allocated. The development demonstrates what can be achieved through a strategic partnership between a local authority and housing association with financial backing from government.

Charing, a small but lively village in the Ashford District of Kent is situated at the foot of the North Downs. Charing is still surrounded by farmland, but the good transport links, including its own railway station, and housing development since the 1960s have led to the area becoming a popular commuter village. The popularity and accessibility of the village has led to an increasing demand for homes and pushed property prices beyond the means of many local people.

English Rural and Ashford Borough Council have a longstanding partnership aimed at working with villages like Charing to ensure that they continue to house a mixture of income earners and age groups. This partnership to date has delivered 128 affordable homes in eleven villages and a further 16 homes in two villages are currently under construction, with another 6 homes to start construction shortly.

The homes have been built to high standards of energy efficiency and have achieved the 'Code for Sustainable Homes Level 3', which will help keep energy use and costs to a minimum. Innovative renewable technology has also been used - in this instance integrated solar thermal panels which provide hot water to the homes. The scheme will

also comply with 'Secure by Design' standards, which is a specific accreditation aimed at designing out anti social behaviour and crime.

Commenting on the success of the development Adrian Maunders, Chief Executive of English Rural, said: -

"Charing is yet another successful project for an Ashford village and demonstrates the benefit of the strong and productive relationship English Rural, the Borough Council and the Parish Councils have developed.

The new homes provided have been designed and built to a particularly high standard, but more importantly will go some way towards helping local households unable to afford market prices in their home community

Rachel's presence at the opening is particularly special and we hope that her late husband would have been pleased to have his name associated with something as important for current and future generations of the village".

Akin Durowoju, Head of Area at the HCA, said:

"We are committed to investing in our rural communities and supporting our partners in creating new and affordable places for local people to call home. This is an excellent new development and will help meet demand from the Charing community."

- End -

MEDIA ARRANGEMENTS/PHOTO OPPORTUNITIES

- 2.40 PM** **MARTIN COLLETT OF ENGLISH RURAL HOUSING ASSOCIATION
WELCOMES GUESTS**
- 2.45PM** **RACHEL WILKINSON, WIDOW OF THE LATE SGT DAVID WILKINSON
OFFICIALLY OPENS THE DEVELOPMENT BY CUTTING A RIBBON**
- 2.50PM** **GUESTS TOUR THE DEVELOPMENT**

**INTERVIEWS CAN BE ARRANGED WITH ENGLISH RURAL/ASHFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPRESENTATIVES ON THE DAY.**

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MAPS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST.

NOTES TO EDITORS

- English Rural Housing Association is a Registered Social Landlord that was established in 1991 to provide affordable homes in small villages for local people. Developments built by English Rural meet local needs and help to maintain sustainable rural communities.
- The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) is the single, national housing and regeneration delivery agency for England. Our vision is to create opportunity for people to live in homes they can afford in places they want to live, by enabling local authorities and communities to deliver the ambition they have for their own areas. For more information visit www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/newsevent
- The largest borough in Kent, Ashford has a fast-growing population which has more than trebled in the last 40 years. Although well known as an expanding urban area, much of the borough is made up of picturesque villages and stunning protected countryside. Ashford have the most listed buildings and conservation areas in Kent.