

Introduction

During the months of December 2016 and January 2017a Housing Needs Survey was undertaken by South Hams District Council on behalf of the Bigbury Parish Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG). The NPSG requested the survey to assist with their evidence gathering for the parish's Neighbourhood Plan.

The survey was distributed by hand to 389 households within the parish of Bigbury, this included St Anns Chapel and Challaborough. In the parish of Bigbury, the council is aware of 122 properties which are classed as second or unfurnished homes. This equates to 32.11% of the housing stock within the parish. The information was anonymised: all names and addresses were removed from data supplied to the NPSG with the exception of the names and addresses of those people wishing to know about the future neighbourhood plan.

Respondents were offered the opportunity to complete the paper survey and return this in the Ballot Box that was located at Holywell Stores. A small amount of surveys were returned direct to South Hams District Council and to the chairman of the steering group..

Survey Aims and Objectives

The survey was aimed at both private sector and affordable housing needs within the parish. The survey asked for responses from all households within the parish, regardless of ownership or rental status.

The objectives of the survey were as follows:

- To find out the level of affordable and open market housing required to meet the needs of those living in the parish within the next 5-10 years
- To establish what tenure and size of property is required in the parish to meet the above needs
- To identify a number of recommendations relating to the existing housing stock and the potential need for new housing stock

How the NPSG will use this information

The information obtained from the survey will form part of the evidence required by the NPSG to formulate housing policies for the parish's Neighbourhood Plan. The full breakdown of answers is included at appendix 2, all personal data has been removed from the information which is publicised.

This report was prepared in March 2017 and it should be noted that the information provided is a headline figure only, as housing needs are constantly changing. The responses to the survey should be treated as a snapshot in time. For this reason, it would be advisable to revisit the results within the next 3-5 years depending on changes within the market, local needs and requirements. For affordable housing needs, the Devon Home Choice and Help to Buy housing registers should also be consulted for the current levels of housing need and turnover of properties.

Survey Findings

Out of the 389 surveys that were distributed throughout the parish, 135 responses were received. This equates to a return rate of almost 35%¹, which is considered to be very good in terms of responses for a survey of this nature.

This report is broken down into 6 sections:

1. Current housing
2. Housing needs over the next 5-10 years
3. Future affordable housing provision
4. Future open market housing provision
5. Conclusion
6. Appendices

1. Current housing

Of the responses received, 80% were from those who lived, worked, and had family connections in the parish. There were also responses from second home owners which totalled 20%. The substantial number of second homeowners was not surprising, but reflects the high proportion of second homes in the parish, the district council records show this being 32% of second or unfurnished empty homes. Only 1 respondent lived elsewhere, but had immediate family living in the parish.

Of the 135 responses, almost 9% were from those who worked in the parish. It may therefore be concluded that people were either retired, not in work, or commuted outside the parish for employment. It should be noted that 27 of households that took part in the survey consisted of people who had a member of their household the over-65 age group. The bar chart at appendix 2 reflects the age demographic of people living in the parish.

Current property type and tenure

An overwhelming 85% of respondents were owner-occupiers, with 10% renting in the private sector and 4% from a housing association. There was only 1% of respondents living in shared ownership accommodation. There were no responses from people living with parents or family, this suggests that some further work may need to be carried out in this area by the NPSG as there is usually a number of people who may be in this position.

Of the responses 68% stated that their home in the parish was their main home and 32% stated that this was not their primary residence. There were a number of responses from people who stated that they let out part of their main home for holiday rentals and 2 responders stated that their home was used for B&B purposes.

Of the respondents, 34% lived in properties that have 4 or more bedrooms, which is similar to other areas in the South Hams where properties tend to be on the larger side, in comparison 25% lived in smaller 1 or 2-bedroom properties. There were a number of answers which stated that they had 5 or more bedrooms and the number of bedrooms has been provided.

¹ All figures in this report have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

2. Housing needs within the next 5 and 10 years

Of the respondents who answered these questions, 9% considered they or someone in their household would or may need to move within the next 5 years, of whom over 50% gave age/health related reasons, including the need to downsize or move to a location that was on a bus route as a reason. Only one response stated that a larger 4 bed house was required.

When asked who would need to move in the next 10 years, 28% of respondents considered they would or may need to move. Of the 16 responses that stated that they would need to move, a reason was given. Out of the 16 responses 9 stated that they would need to move to a 1 or 2 bed property. Given the other answers throughout this survey it could be assumed that they wished to down size. The remainder of the responses gave health related reasons for a move. Interesting to note that no one stated that they required larger accommodation.

It is worth noting that the majority of the above responses were from people who were in the over-65 age group. In terms of not wishing to move in the next 5 years, 82% stated that they would not need a move but when asked about the next 10 years, 58% stated that they would consider a need to move.

Of those who considered a move in the next 5 – 10 years we asked where that move would be. The answers that were provided were that 49% would stay within the Bigbury parish, 17% would remain in South Hams, 14% would stay within Devon and 19% provided a comment detailing various options which included remaining within Bigbury.

Future property type and tenure

Of the responses received, 72% were from people who wished to move into a privately owned property. This is not surprising given that the majority of respondents were current owner-occupiers. There were however responses which stated that some form of affordable tenure was required. This totalled 11% affordable rented property and 5% intermediate home ownership accommodation. 5% of respondents stated that they would like some form of accommodation which was specifically aimed at the elderly, whether this was through extra care or sheltered accommodation. 4% of the respondents had a desire for self-build or self-finish but it is unclear whether this was to own a property built to their own specification or whether this was to reduce costs.

The majority of respondents were in the over-65 age group and wished to move to a 2 or 3-bedroom bungalow – 44% or flat 13%, as they considered their current accommodation would be too large for their needs. In addition to this 16% stated that they would like designated properties for the elderly. In terms of actual houses 52% would be seeking this type of accommodation. These respondents appear to currently live in the larger 4+bedroom houses.

Affordability of their current home was not an issue and they considered that they had the financial means to buy a new property. Of these responses 85% felt that they had the financial means to buy alternative accommodation if it became available and 18% stated that they would not have the financial capacity to buy an alternative home. When looking at income levels in the parish 38% of respondents earned £60k plus per annum and just 13% earned £20k or less per annum. This is a large disparity in affordability.

In terms of rental accommodation, there were 11 respondents who wished to privately rent in the parish; and 9 respondents who wished to move to housing association rental properties². Of those who wished to move to private rental accommodation 11 responders stated they could afford rents of £451-600 per calendar month (pcm), 7 stated £601 – 759 (pcm) was the price they would pay and 7 stated that over £751 (pcm) was in their price range. Of those wishing to move to housing association properties in the parish, it is also necessary to consult the Devon Home Choice and Help to Buy housing registers.

Devon Home Choice

The Devon Home Choice (DHC) housing register advertises council and housing association owned properties available to rent in Devon. The register categorises applicants in bands depending on their priority need see appendix 3 for details of how the banding system works. There are currently 17 households in the parish already registered with DHC, as shown in the below table, this includes the bedroom need and level of priority. These people currently have Bigbury within their address and their area of preference. There may be people living outside of the parish who wish to return or live in the area due to work, previous residence or family connections. Applicants in Band E (no housing need) may be adequately housed but may have insecure private rented accommodation or are finding the rent too expensive.

Bedroom need	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Grand Total
1			4	9	13
2	3	1	3	1	8
3					0
Grand Total					21

In response to the survey, there were 5 respondents who stated that they were already registered with DHC and provided their reference number. Therefore it is clear that not everyone who requires an affordable rented home completed this survey. It should be noted that this survey and the Devon Home Choice register both need to be considered when assessing housing needs.

It is important to keep these figures under review as they frequently change and do not include those living outside the parish who meet the local connection criteria and wish to return. The above information should therefore be treated as a snapshot in time to meet local need for those currently registered.

Help to Buy

Help to Buy is a government scheme aimed at people with small deposits to buy a home either directly from a developer or some forms for shared equity, lower than market sale property. There are currently 2 households living in the parish on the register for properties and another 250 households are on the register from the South Hams who have indicated that they would like to remain in the District. However, this number is quite misleading as the likelihood is that people have

² current stock is detailed in this report.

stated that they would like to live anywhere in the South Hams, and the parish will be included in this data. It is therefore reasonable to accept that there is just 2 households on the register who would qualify for the scheme who meets the local connection criteria, i.e. who lives and/or works and/or has immediate family in the parish.

Of the survey responses, only 1 respondent stated that they were already registered and they have provided their reference number. Again, we would recommend reviewing these figures in 12 months' time to ensure that this information has not changed. This register also needs to be considered when assessing need.

3. Future affordable housing provision

The existing affordable housing provision in the parish is all rented accommodation owned and managed by Devon and Cornwall Housing Association, and South Devon Rural Housing Association. All former council owned housing, not detailed in the table below, has been sold through the Right to Buy and there is no provision for any other types of affordable housing in the parish, for example, shared ownership or intermediate home ownership, such as, discount market sale.

The current affordable housing provision is as follows:

General Needs	
St Annes Chapel	16
Bigbury	1

There are 17 'general needs' properties suited to families; none of which are designated to older persons. The parish does not have any properties for single persons of any particular age group.

Subject to further investigation, if requested by a current tenant, the Council can offer financial incentives for people to downsize. The purpose being to make best use of the existing affordable housing stock. The survey did not identify if there were people who were under or over occupying their housing association homes.

Recommendations for new affordable housing provision

In order to determine the level of new affordable rented housing provision needed in the parish, it is necessary to look at turnover or vacancy rate of the existing rental properties. The number of properties that have become vacant and re-let since 2012 is 3 properties. One 2 bed property became vacant in St Anns Chapel in 2014 and one 2 bed house in 2014 and one 3 bed house in 2012 became available in Bigbury. There has been no new affordable houses in the area. This equates to an average of less than one vacancy per year. Please note that there have not been any vacancies since 2014 according to the report from Devon Home Choice.

Therefore, taking into account the 21 households we know are currently in need (registered with DHC) of rental accommodation, the 9 people who state that they would require housing association accommodation in the survey and given the turnover rate (less than 1 vacancy per annum), plus the 1 applicant who we know qualifies for the Help to Buy scheme, the recommended level of new affordable housing provision for the parish over the next 5 years is as follows:

Affordable rented

- 4 x 1 bedroom general needs
- 10 x 2 bedroom general needs
- 2 x 3 bedroom general needs

Discount market/shared ownership

- 3 x 2 or 3 bedroom property

These figures are based on the responses to this survey, the projected turnover of current stock and the current registrations on Devon Home Choice. We know there has been a limited turnover of 'general needs' family accommodation therefore the recommendation for more one and two bedroom 'general needs' properties. There also has to be some degree of speculation as to whether people will move on before any accommodation becomes available so as to avoid the oversupply of affordable housing stock, as the intention is to provide for local people.

The parish may also wish to look at developing a local lettings policy to ensure that any future relets on the current properties are extended to Band E for local people before allocating beyond the parish. Band E is for people who are assessed as adequately housed, but living in costly private rental accommodation.

Most importantly, any new properties that are developed as part of the Neighbourhood Plan should be bound by a legal agreement to ensure that local people are prioritised for any affordable housing. This will include any households that are registered in Band E, no housing need.

4. Future and current open market requirements.

Adaptations

Respondents were asked if there were any adaptations which were required to their home. One respondent stated that they needed a bungalow and 3 stated that they needed bathroom adaptations such as walk in showers or wet rooms. It is also clear from the responses that this was not something which warranted action at present as most people did not know if this would be required in the future.

Properties to rent

There is a shortage of rental properties in the parish, particularly properties that families can afford to rent. When looking at Right Move (March 2017), there are currently zero properties available for the private rented market, 14% of people who stated they may wish to move indicated that this was their tenure of choice. Therefore households may have to move away from the parish as there is little option for them to be able to rent in the area. It is always difficult to ascertain how many local people have had to move away from an area because they cannot afford to rent (or buy).

Responses to the survey evidenced that the majority of rents in the parish were relatively reasonable, with the majority of respondents' rents being below £650 pcm. This maybe because respondents were in housing association properties, tied accommodation, living with relatives or

had some alternative arrangements in terms of the rent charged. There were responses from 4 households that were paying above £701 pcm but it is unclear whether this was affordable to them or whether there was a reliance in full or part to use local housing allowance (housing benefit). At the time of this report, as there were no properties available to rent on the open market on Rightmove, it was felt that the surrounding locations should be looked at. When looking at a 3 mile radius it showed that there were 5 properties to rent. Two of these properties were almost £800 pcm and 3 were almost £1300 pcm.

If the above rental figures are a true reflection of the current market rate in the parish and surrounding 3 mile radius, then it is clear that the private rented sector is not meeting the needs of people who are on low incomes and are reliant on benefits, either in whole or in part, to meet their housing costs. This could therefore impact on young families who are trying to rent private accommodation within the parish. The table below shows how the Local Housing Allowance works: for example, anyone claiming housing benefit for a 3-bedroom property can claim up to £663.08 pcm, but must pay anything above that amount.

Room requirement	Weekly	Calendar monthly
Shared room rate	£63.50	£275.16
1 bedroom	£96.91	£419.94
2 bedroom	£128.19	£559.49
3 bedroom	£153.02	£663.08
4 bedroom	£192.24	£833.04

Sheltered/assisted living accommodation

There were 12 responses that stated that extra care/sheltered accommodation was their choice of future housing. It was not clear from the survey whether this was to own privately or if this was rented accommodation. There is no current provision for this type of property in the Parish but it is also worth noting that a scheme of 12 units of accommodation for extra care or sheltered accommodation is likely to be unviable. The funding which is potentially available to deliver this type of scheme is usually for much larger numbers. This type of scheme would also need to be considered by health and Devon County and a strategy is produced by them to decipher where future schemes should be developed.

5. Conclusion

It is clear that there is a disproportion between those over the age of 65 and those in other age groups living in the parish. If the community wishes to address its unbalanced age demographic in their Neighbourhood Plan, then the provision of additional affordable and rental housing for young families/couples and more reasonably priced 2 and 3-bedroom housing of mixed type and tenure and/or self build plots is needed. There is also a need to address, in particular the single persons accommodation for affordable needs. By encouraging younger people to the area, this will ensure

the sustainability of the parish all year round and not just during the peak holiday period. The NPSG should also consider the needs of its ageing population and, in particular, the feasibility of providing sheltered/assisted living accommodation in the parish and/or retention of a reasonable proportion of bungalows which are more suited to adaptation for disability.

It is recommended that the NPSG look to enable a scheme of no more than 10 - 12 units, potentially using the Village Housing Initiative if a 100% affordable housing scheme is not achievable. This will ensure that a balance of property size and tenure is provided and will avoid the oversupply of affordable housing in the area. There are various initiatives and potential funding streams that may be available to deliver this type of scheme. However, it is important to note that the Parish has a sensitive land designation. Therefore if an application was to come forward using open market properties to subsidise the affordable properties, this should not exceed the number of homes needed overall. The community will need to understand that the affordable housing element may be reduced by 3 or 4 properties in order to deliver affordable housing. It is therefore important to re-iterate that any development could only be provided to meet the affordable housing need. Various ways of providing housing could be considered and the affordable housing team would be happy to discuss this further.

6. Appendices

Survey questions – Appendix 1

Anonymised Survey results – Appendix 2

Explanation of Devon Home Choice Bands - Appendix 3

Local allocations policy Appendix 4

Right move print out – Appendix 5

Any further information about this survey can be obtained by contacting:

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