

Fovant

Parish Housing Needs

Survey Report

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1. PARISH SUMMARY

The parish of Fovant is in the ward of Chalke and Nadder, within the area of Salisbury District Council.

- There is a population of 685 according to the 2001 census, comprising of 323 households.
- Fovant is 2 miles from Dinton, 4 miles from Tisbury, 7 miles from Wilton, 10 miles from Salisbury and 11 miles from Shaftesbury.
- There is a pre-school in the village but no primary school.
- The community services are a shop, a post office, mobile library and a village hall.
- Fovant also has a church, a public house, a playing field and a children's play area.
- There are regular bus services to Salisbury and Shaftesbury.
- Fovant is an active social village with lots of local clubs.
- Other local facilities include a trout farm and a restaurant.
- The existing affordable rented homes are provided by Salisbury District Council. There is also a sheltered scheme. Turnover of these homes is reported to be low.

2. INTRODUCTION

In October of 2006, the Rural Housing Enabler (RHE) discussed carrying out a housing needs survey with the Parish Council to establish if there was a proven need for affordable housing in the community of Fovant.

Such surveys assist officers in identifying those areas with the greatest housing problems so that scarce financial resources can be put to best use.

Experience has shown that these surveys need to be carried out at regular intervals if the results are to remain relevant in identifying trends.

- The RHE is employed by Community First in Devizes, which is part of the national network of Rural Community Councils.
- The RHE works closely with rural communities, housing associations, local authorities and landowners to meet the affordable housing needs of rural communities.
- The post is primarily funded by Defra with contributions from Salisbury District Council, West Wiltshire District Council, Kennet District Council, North Wiltshire District Council, Swindon Borough Council and some housing associations.

3. AIM

The aim of carrying out the survey is to investigate the affordable housing need for local people (or those who have a need to live in the parish or the locality) of Fovant.

- 'Housing need' can be defined as the need for an individual or household to obtain housing which is suitable to their circumstances.
- It implies that there are problems or limitations with the household's current housing arrangements and that the household is unable to afford or to access suitable accommodation in the private sector.
- Such problems may be concerned with housing costs, size, location, layout, state of repair, or security of tenure.
- This need may be immediate or anticipated in the near future.

4. Survey distribution and response

In order to carry out the housing needs survey, questionnaires were posted to all dwellings in the parish in January 2007.

To encourage a good response, households were given a pre-paid return envelope and anonymity was ensured.

They were asked to respond within 14 days. Once returned, the forms were inputted onto the computer and analysed.

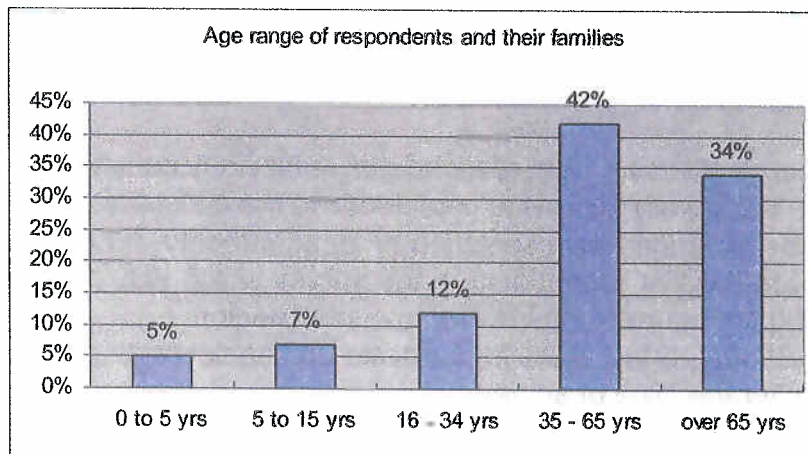
- A total of 323 questionnaires were distributed in the parish, with a further 10 being sent out to people who have moved away from the parish.
- Everyone was asked to complete the first section of the form.
- If a household considered itself in need, or likely to be in need of affordable housing within the next five years, it was invited to complete the rest of the survey.
- There was an excellent response rate of 57% with 189 replies received, which provides confidence in the reliability of the data, and compares favourably with other postal surveys of this type.

5. Key findings

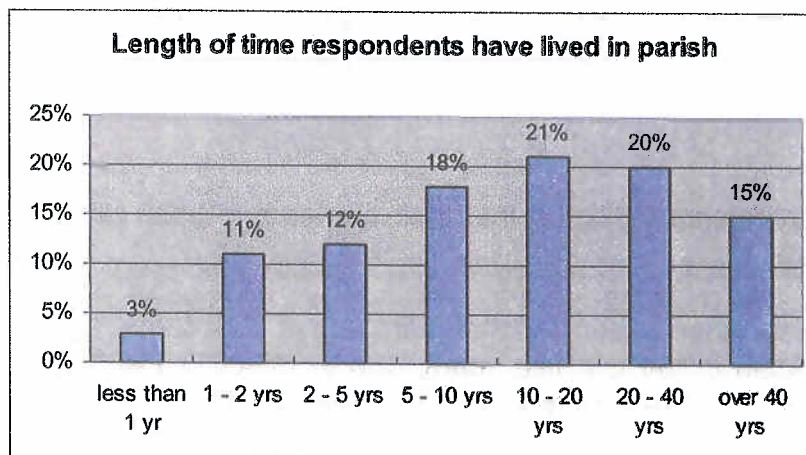
Part one – You and your household

The first question to those responding was whether Fovant was their main home. 95% of respondents reported that it was.

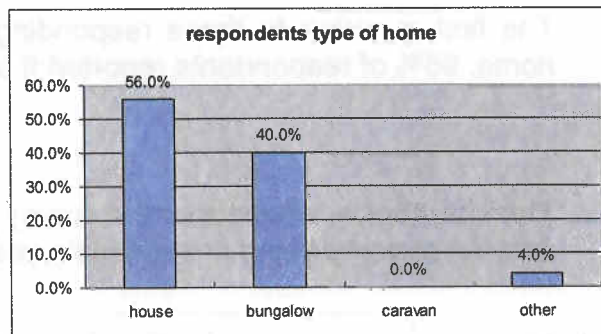
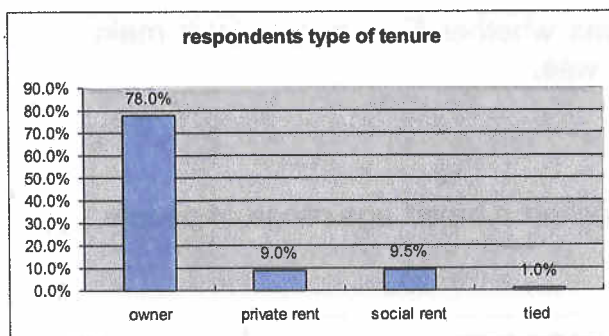
The chart below shows that the survey reached a broad age range of people, with the majority being in the middle years.



The chart below indicates the length of time respondents have lived in Fovant. It shows that the majority of people in the parish have lived in the parish for more than two years, which would be appropriate for such a high level of owner occupation.

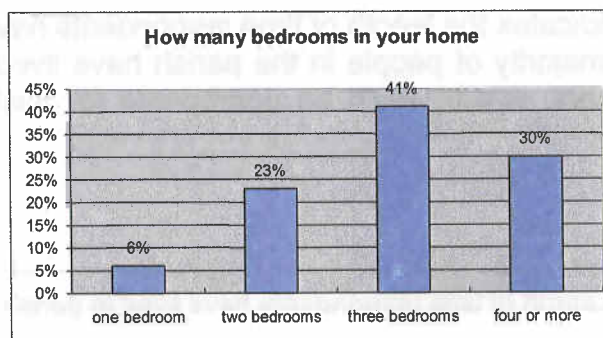


The charts below show that the majority of respondents in Fovant are owner-occupiers, occupying houses and bungalows, this percentage being greater than the national average and in the whole of Salisbury District.



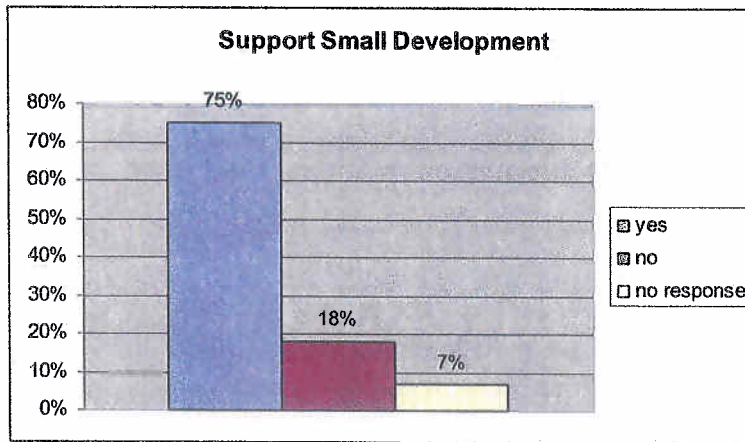
- The patterns of tenure from respondents sufficiently match existing data on tenure in this parish to provide confidence in the accuracy of the survey.
- There was an under-representation of local authority /housing association and private tenants responding to the survey which would have the effect of inflating the figures in the owner occupied sector.
- Disproportionately low rates from private and social renting tenants are not untypical for this type of survey.

The survey shows that the majority of homes in Fovant are larger family homes with 71% of homes in the parish having 3 or more bedrooms, 23% having two bedrooms and only 6% having one bedroom.



Twelve respondents indicated that their homes had been physically adapted in some way.

Fourteen respondents reported that members of their family had moved away from the parish in the last five years, due to difficulties in finding a suitable home locally. This is a very high number of people having to move away.



From the above chart, it is possible to say that there is a very high level of support for new build affordable housing for local people, with 75% of respondents being in favour of a small development and only 18% not being in favour.

Part two – Housing needs

Thirty respondents gave information regarding their need, all except three live within the parish.

Seven of the respondents are currently on the Salisbury District Council housing register.

Analysing the results of those in need of rented accommodation shows the following –

- There were 15 single people requiring rented accommodation; 12 in need of independent accommodation, 1 in need of a change of tenure, 1 in need of a secure home and 1 in need of being closer to a carer/dependant.
- There were 4 couples requiring rented accommodation; 1 couple are in need of independent accommodation, 1 couple needs a physically adapted home, 1 couple needs a cheaper home and 1 couple needs to be closer to a carer/dependent.
- There were 4 families requiring rented accommodation; 2 families need to change tenure, 1 family needs a larger home and 1 family needs a secure home.

Eighteen households responded to the maximum rent they could afford.

Less than £50 / wk (£200 / month)	5
£50 - £99.99 / wk (£200 - £399 / month)	5
£100 - £149.99 / wk (£400 - £599 / month)	7
£150 - £199.99 / wk (£500 - £799 / month)	1
£200 - £249.99 / wk (£800 - £999 / month)	
More than £250 / wk (£1000 / month)	

With the level of income given by respondents it would suggest that the following may be able to afford shared ownership (where the occupiers buy a percentage of the property on a mortgage and pay rent on the rest), but would be unlikely to be able to sustain a full mortgage.

- There were 2 couples requiring independent accommodation and 1 couple requiring larger accommodation who may be able to afford shared ownership.
- There was 1 family who need to be closer to employment that may be able to afford shared ownership.

Investigation of individual cases would have to be undertaken to ensure that they would be able to sustain the shared ownership mortgage as well as the rental element.

Further analysis of these tables shows that there were 3 households seeking alternative accommodation who would be able to afford to buy a property on the open market.

Eighteen households responded to the total house price they could afford to buy on the open market.

Less than £50,000	2
£50,000 - £69,999	1
£70,000 - £99,999	6
£100,000 - £149,000	6
£150,000 - £199,999	1
£200,000 - £250,000	
Over £250,000	2

For a full analysis of households actually looking for, or considering themselves to need affordable housing – see appendix one, two and three.

6. Affordability

In order to investigate affordability, further research has been carried out on house prices in the area.

Using information gained from the Land Registry it is possible to obtain the average property prices in the postcode area that covers Fovant.

Typical price bands for the postcode area which covers Fovant are as follows:

Average House Prices in Local Area (£)		
House Type	Price (£)	Number of Sales
Detached	£368,829	18
Semi-detached	£180,786	7
Terraced	£295,000	1
Flat/Maisonette	-	

As shown in the above table, **26** owner occupied homes were sold in the 24 months up to March 2007.**

**House sales volumes are for new and existing properties where the sale details registered with the Land Registry are for the postcodes defining the parish.

- Data was obtained from "ourproperty.co.uk" with data supplied by the Land Registry which is subject to disclosure rules.
- This means that any volume count of less than 3 is disclosive and one or more counts may be removed in order to protect the disclosure figure. A zero figure is disclosed.
- There are sometimes delays in registrations especially for new build properties and this may result in under counting.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to split this information down to bedroom size of the property.

It also must be pointed out that these figures represent the average price for total number of properties sold.

For research purposes we are mainly concerned with the low end of the market, or those properties that are accessible to households on lower incomes.

Example calculation for a mortgage

Typically, a household can obtain a mortgage of 3 times their annual income, and would expect to need a deposit of at least 5% of the total price.

If an average semi-detached property in Fovant costs £180,786, then a household may require £9,039 as a deposit, and their annual income would have to be at least £57,249.

Gross Earnings (Full Time) Employees (£), 2004

Area	Male Weekly	Female weekly	Household total	Annual
Kennet	251	217	467	£24,310
North Wilts	249	234	484	£25,210
Salisbury	214	202	416	£21,642
West Wilts	246	197	444	£23,088
Swindon	266	217	484	£25,168
Wiltshire	233	210	443	£23,015
South West	243	205	449	£23,353
Great Britain	250	209	459	£23,889

Source: National Statistics web site.

All figures shown are lowest 10% except *Kennet DC where it is the lowest 20% of workers' earnings.

- As shown by the above table, the average earnings of workers in Salisbury District are lower than the county, the regional and the national average.
- Considering the average prices of homes in Fovant it would be unlikely that a household would be able to purchase a property without a large deposit, some equity in an existing property or a substantial income.
- First time buyers would generally struggle to meet any of the criteria necessary for obtaining their own home.
- In some cases intermediate housing (shared ownership or low cost market housing) would be a suitable option, whilst in other instances affordable rented accommodation would be appropriate.

7. Summary

This survey has concentrated on those households who are unlikely to buy such accommodation on the open market.

This is just a third of the research needed for this assessment, the housing register of Salisbury District Council and the advice from allocation staff who manage the register must be taken into account.

- It is notoriously difficult to get accurate data on the housing need of single people, especially the under 25s, and surveys of this type tend to underestimate the figures.
- Those who have expressed a genuine need have been considered in the recommendations, rather than those with a wish to move.
- Housing development in Fovant should take account of anticipated housing need as well as the number of households in immediate need of more suitable accommodation.
- There is currently a shortage of properties in Fovant for affordable rent or shared ownership that are suitable for single people or couples. With the results of the survey there is already a high proportion of singles/couples already looking for accommodation.
- With families needing larger accommodation there is probably a further need for family homes, with a mix of rented and shared ownership.
- The District Council report that there are currently 132 people on the housing register wanting to reside in Fovant.
- It is also reported that there is limited movement within the existing stock as there have been 13 vacancies in the past 12 months. Of these 13 vacancies 11 were for sheltered accommodation, 1 was a bungalow and 1 was a house. This proves that most households, particularly those requiring a house/bungalow, wishing to access the stock in Fovant may have a very long wait.

A large majority of those who responded would support a small development of affordable homes.

8. Recommendations

The following indicates the **minimum** need over the next three years for affordable housing development in the parish. The rest do not have the immediate need for independent accommodation, or can afford to buy property for themselves.

Social rented housing

- 4 x one or two bed homes for singles or couples
- 2 x three bed homes

Shared / Low cost home ownership

- 2 x two/three bed homes

Comments from residents

"Favour a small development - no more than 6 houses in total."

"Starter homes are the only way that local young people can afford to get onto the property ladder. Young people keep the villages alive, and are our future generations. A suitable piece of land that could be used for affordable housing is in Sutton Road which is part of a council owned farm. A very local family."

"In favour of a small development provided 'local people' means a direct Fovant link only. It is important that it is only 'Fovant houses for Fovant people' that are considered. A survey with this title was carried out in 1989-1992 and failed to be implemented on planning grounds alone. Community views on a site must be taken into account. It must not be decided by Parish Council alone."

"Favour a small development subject to location, type, style and how many."

"Favour small development within village boundaries only and for only for local people. Fovant is already a large village. I do not think it needs to be any larger - it may lose its community feel. I also feel very strongly that we need to keep our green spaces for the sake of the environment and the villagers."

"One member of the family moved more than five years ago. I consider they would return if affordable housing were available."

"This village is above all a community. The housing stock is a balanced mix of private/council properties plus a large council run residential home for the elderly. Over the past five years there has been a considerable increase in 'back filling' developments and it continues apace. These developments are already putting the rural character of the village at risk. I do not support yet another development in the village that already has a fair share of social housing. The Chilmark experience also raises doubts as to the validity of the need for low cost housing for local people."

"Affordable rural housing is necessary but should be constructed well so that it is not flimsy, does not waste energy and blends into the rural community."

"Depends on many considerations."

"We live on the border of the next parish. A large development of affordable houses is expected to be built fairly near to us - enough is enough!"

"3 at maximum if needs are very desperate. Fovant doesn't need any more houses of any sort. The High Street gets congested at certain times of the day already and is dangerous for pedestrians. To my certain knowledge at least 72 houses and 13 old people's flats have been built here since the main drains were put in 40 years ago or so."

"I have lived in Fovant for 40 years and in that time there have been built nearly 80 homes and Clay's Orchard. Can the infrastructure take more? Are the drains sufficient? The High Street can hardly accommodate the present traffic and is impossible for pedestrians. Elsewhere there are very few pavements."

"I do not wish to see an affordable housing development in Fovant. There are an adequate number of homes in surrounding areas such as Dinton & Tisbury. Please do not ruin our beautiful village and good community with new development."

"The proposed housing scheme should only be available to people living or wishing to return to the immediate vicinity, not as a dumping ground for undesirables from Salisbury District Council or any Government scheme for distributing refugees around the country."

"We answered 'No' to Q 11 however if a planned increase to the family occurs we will need an extra bedroom and will not be able to afford to move to a 3 bedroom property in the village."

"Land adjacent to Orchard Cottage, Moor Hill is a suitable piece of land that could be used for affordable housing."

"I am not against affordable housing, however I am concerned that it doesn't go on and on, as I have seen in other areas, and one's village disappears."

"We will need sheltered accommodation in a couple of years or so. The garden and outside area are getting difficult to manage."

"Depends what 'small' is. If 3-4 homes - no if more than 4. It is a pity you have not defined 'small'. Why have you not asked whether we have dining room, sitting room, study or conservatory? I do not think Fovant should expand with any type of housing. High Street too congested."

"Housing will never be affordable while parish councils, county councils and central government maintain restrictive planning laws. Relax planning laws and more houses will be built. The price will then fall to 'affordable' levels."

"It is essential to provide land for it - if there is a need for the sale of housing in villages."

"Answered 'Yes and No' to favour small development question - If the houses were definitely for local people. Depends where it was going to be built - Not enough green spaces in the village now!"

"Favour a small development if there were a proven need."

"Regarding 16,22,23,24,25 my circumstances and therefore my preferences are expected to change in the next 2-5 years. I can only confirm my expectation to need affordable local housing."

"I have fought for the past 30 years for starter homes. We have had plenty of suitable sites in the past, but have lost out to large 4-5 bedroom houses all in the £400,000 plus. Only people from the city can afford these and do very little for our village. Our last site, Brim Close, built only 50 years ago was pulled down and two large homes are being built there at present when six or eight smaller homes could have been on that site. Salisbury R.D.C. has done nothing for village life, just nothing!"

"In retirement a home with a smaller garden for easier management. We would like our needs to be met within the village but that may not be possible. We like privacy and it may be necessary to build a new home where planning permissions allow."

"This form is not easy to understand. The above "NB" is wrong and is not designed to determine needs but I hope your conclusion is correct in that some affordable housing is needed. "

"We have lived in this area for over 12 years. We are not on the council list, but must now think of our forthcoming retirement. Ideally we would like council accommodation but in this rural area."

"One member of the household is currently looking for property and due to high prices in Fovant has to look far away. They also work locally so this is not what they really want."

"We would like to move back to Fovant. It is where I grew up. My family is living in Fovant. We would very much like affordable rural housing but do not know how to go about it. Please help."

"Too much infill has already taken place in Fovant with large houses the villagers cannot afford. Any spare space is now a premium to allow for further development."

"Restrictions should be relaxed so that there are more lodgings when new housing estates are built. They should contain a block of flats for single people to rent. Old military camps should be turned into hostels for the homeless. When I first left home I lived in an excellent hostel in Swindon. Later I lived in many excellent lodgings with families all over Southern England and even when married, until we could afford a mortgage on our first property."

"Although agreeing in principle to the need for more affordable housing in villages, particularly for young people, I do wonder whether they would not prefer to live somewhere more lively with entertainment facilities."

"I feel there should be more houses for young families which they can afford, and not the terrific prices of housing we have at this time."

"I'm in favour of a small dwelling of homes being built in Fovant. To help the people of Fovant stay in Fovant if they wish to and for whatever reason. Thank you for taking the time to survey the population."

"The No of council dwellings in Fovant must represent over 20% of total housing stock so I cannot see a local need for more. 16 @ The Elms, 24 @ The Poplars 19 @ Clays Orchard 8 @ Weeping Ash. A few of which are now in private ownership. Other dwellings approx 250. There is more than adequate council housing in Fovant to meet local needs - demonstrated by the fact that this accommodation is largely filled by couples coming here (with no family ties in the village) from outside the parish. I think every village should have low cost housing but you need to keep the balance right and we are already having a high proportion of houses, bungalows and supported maisonettes/flats."

"Within the legislation covering this issue there is no guarantee that those proving the need will occupy the homes that are built. Thus, in the case of Fovant, where there is no land available within the village envelope, the scheme is probably nothing more than a way of breaching that envelope."

"We feel that affordable housing in Fovant is very necessary. Houses now built in the village in recent years (and currently) are in the region of £400,000 pushed in with very little room between them. Our children have had to move out of the village for this reason - but we have grandchildren who are very interested in the scheme (still living in Fovant)."

"Unless better public transport etc. is available increasing the numbers of those on lower incomes (who depend on such services) simply adds to the overall problem. Low cost homes should be built in urban areas where good public services either exist, or can be set up."

"Small development long overdue. I think the population is unbalanced towards older/retired people and housing is currently beyond the means of young people."

"As discussed with Carol Southall, this form provided to me is one of the many which did not include part one of the survey and so I have printed it from the internet. Building yet further housing would further destroy the rural character of this village."

"Much infilling goes on in this village. Almost exclusively its new houses built cater for the upper income bracket, and thus the bias is towards an older age group. To correct this imbalance we need affordable starter homes which would attract younger couples with small children. Land available at modest cost however is a perennial problem."

"Our family moved away because they could not afford a property. They are now returning home and depending on where they obtain work depends where they live but they will still need affordable housing. So I do hope people are sympathetic to the needs of our young people."

"In a village of narrow lanes and a congested High street, Fovant already has 20% of housing being council owned."

"Affordable housing is really needed in small villages but how long do these houses remain affordable - only for the first people who take one up or one lucky enough to be chosen to live in one. Are there clauses in deeds to keep these houses in the affordable bracket? These houses must be for genuine villagers. How do people get chosen? How do you decide what price an affordable house should cost? Would the village be involved in the design and layout of such an estate?"

"There is no affordable transport to and from Fovant. The roads in the village are becoming dangerous for young and elderly pedestrians due to the volume of traffic and the absence of footpaths. Because of this, affordable housing is inappropriate."

Appendix 1

List of those who could afford rented properties

Need when ? Yrs	No of beds	Wish list	Type preferred	Reason	Family size	Ages	Current tenure	Total monthly household income
2-5 yrs	1	PL	Flat	Independent accommodation	Single	35-65	LWF	<420/mth
2-5 yrs	2	Not stated	Not stated	Independent accommodation	Single	16-34	LWF	Not stated
2-5 yrs	2	Not stated	Not stated	Independent accommodation	Single	16-34	LWF	Not stated
5+ yrs	2	Not stated	Not stated	Independent accommodation	Single	16-34	LWF	Not stated
2 yrs	1	S/O	House or flat	Independent accommodation	Single	16-34	LWF	835 – 1249/mth
2 yrs	1	Buy	Any	Independent accommodation	Single	16-34	LWF	Not stated
2 yrs	1	Buy	Any	Independent accommodation	Single	16-34	LWF	Not stated
2 yrs	2	HA	Flat	Secure accommodation	Single	35-65	PL	835 – 1249/mth
2-5 yrs	1	PL	Flat	Change tenure	Single	35-65	LWF	420 – 834/mth
2 yrs	2	HA	Flat	Independent accommodation	Single	16-34	LA	Not stated
5+ yrs	2	HA	Bungalow	Independent accommodation	Single	65+	Owner	835 – 1249/mth
2-5 yrs	2	HA	House or flat	Independent accommodation	Single	16-34	LWF	Not stated
2 yrs	2	Not stated	Bungalow	Closer to carer/dependent	Single	35-65	LA	Not stated
2-5 yrs	2	S/O	House	Independent accommodation	Single	16-34	LWF	Not stated
2-5 yrs	2	S/O	House	Independent accommodation	Single	16-34	LWF	Not stated
2 yrs	2	Buy	Bungalow	Close to carer/dependent	Couple	65+	Not stated	Not stated

2-5 yrs	2	HA	Bungalow	Cheaper home	Couple	35-65	PL	1250 – 1665/mth
2-5 yrs	1	PL	Sheltered/retirement	Physically adapted	Couple	65+	LA	835 – 1249/mth
2-5 yrs	2	S/O	House	Independent accommodation	Couple	16-34	LWF	1250 – 1665/mth
2 yrs	3	Buy	House	Secure home	Family		PL	Not stated
2 yrs	3	HA	House	Change tenure	Family		Not stated	835 – 1249/mth
2-5 yrs	4+	S/O	House	Larger home	Family		LA	835 – 1249/mth
2 yrs	3	HA	House	Change tenure	Family		Not stated	1666 – 2499/mth

HA – Wish to live in housing association rented

S/O – Wish to have shared ownership accommodation

LWF – Living with family

PL – Private landlord (rented)

LA – Local Authority (rented)

Key: Pink = singles; blue = couples; green = elderly; yellow = families

Appendix 2

List of those who may afford shared ownership properties

Need when? Yrs	No of beds	Wish list	Type preferred	Reason	Family size	Ages	Current tenure	Total monthly household income
2 yrs	2	S/O	House	Independent accommodation	Couple	16-34	LWF	1250 – 1665/mth
2 yrs	2	S/O	House	Independent accommodation	Couple	16-34	LWF	1666 – 2499/mth
2-5 yrs	2	Buy	House	Larger accommodation	Couple	35-65	PL	Not given
2 yrs	3	Buy	House	Closer to employment	Family		Not stated	835 – 1249/mth

Appendix 3

List of those who could afford to buy their own properties

Need when? Yrs	No of beds	Wish list	Type preferred	Reason	Family size	Ages	Current tenure	Total monthly household income
2-5 yrs	3	Buy	Bungalow	Retirement home	Couple	65+	Owners	3300+
2 yrs	4+	Buy	House	Larger accommodation	Family		Owners	2500– 3329/mth
2 yrs	3	Buy	House	Larger accommodation	Family		Owners	1666– 2499/mth

RURAL EXCEPTIONS POLICY

4.0 Basis

The principle of 'Rural Exception sites' for affordable housing is well established. Its basis lies in the fact that new development is not being focused towards many smaller communities, largely as a result of their relatively unsustainable locations. However, this restrictive stance has limited the supply of dwellings in these communities and accordingly the prices of properties have increased to a level which is often significantly greater than a comparable property in a more urban setting. The result of this has been that certain groups of local people, namely the young, and those working in rural areas for relatively lower wages, can no longer afford to rent or buy properties. The effects of this can include,

- A greater degree of reverse commuting by workers employed in rural enterprises who are forced to live elsewhere as a result of their inability to buy.
- An erosion of family and community ties as younger family members are forced to move away.
- A shift in the demographic balance which has impacted upon the ability of local services, particularly schools, to maintain their patronage, and subsequently, their overall viability.

Accordingly, Rural Exceptions policies, which are now a common element contained within Local Plans, seek to provide a means whereby housing for local people can be provided where normal open market housing would not normally be allowed.

4.1 Suitable Settlements and Locations

From the outset it must be noted that exception sites will only be considered appropriate in settlements where there are a **range of local facilities**. Basic facilities will vary from place to place, but there should at least be a primary school, access to a regular public transport service and a shop meeting a range of daily basic needs. The presence of other amenities such as a pub and recreation area will also be important.

Providing the community is well served by facilities and amenities to support local people, careful consideration then needs to be given to the location of the site. Firstly, it is important that the exception site is **well related to most of these amenities**, typically being within a 10 minute walk of most or all of the available facilities. The basis for this expectation is that exception sites should be located within the community, not in a peripheral location away from the main focus of activity.

Secondly, the site must be in a position which largely **conforms with planning policy**. The exceptions policy still requires that well planned and good quality development is provided, and accordingly issues such as poor access, risk from flooding and landscape impact remain as important as they would be to any other proposal.

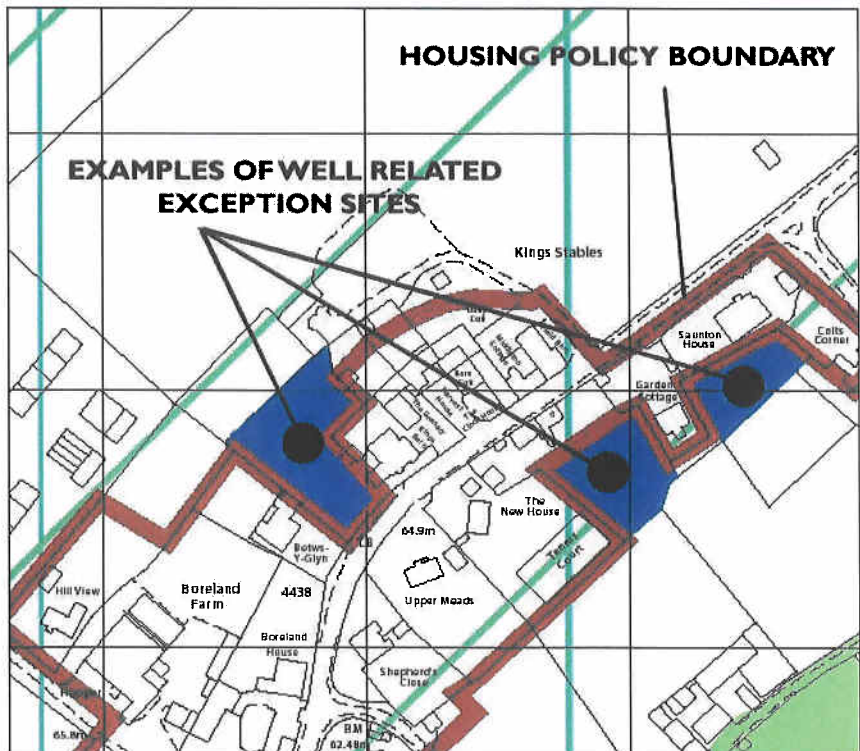
However, as the "rural exception" title suggests, some flexibility from normal planning policies does exist in relation to the sites position relative to the settlement boundary, or Housing Policy Boundary. A Housing Policy Boundary (HPB) can be defined as a boundary around a settlement inside which new residential development is considered acceptable, subject to detailed matters such as appropriate access, good design, impacts on neighbouring amenity, etc.

Inside these HPB's, available plots are normally sold for open market housing. Completed properties or suitable land will normally be sold at a price reflecting the prevailing market conditions which, more often than not, are beyond the means of young first time buyers or rural workers.

Outside of the HPB, residential development is strictly controlled, and accordingly the land value reflects the use. In many rural settlements, surrounding land will typically be in agricultural use and accordingly its value is a fraction of that of land within the HPB. The rural exceptions policy takes advantage of this lower land value to enable the delivery of affordable homes. Whilst some premium on the land value can be expected by the landowner, the maximum price for a rural exception site should not exceed £75,000 per hectare or £2,500 per building plot. This ceiling, which should be seen only as a guide, will enable the land value, and the resultant housing to be provided cheaply, in turn, ensuring that rental/shared equity levels can be within the range of the incomes of those in housing need.

Taking into account the proximity of services and facilities, as outlined above a **suitable rural exception site for affordable housing will normally be located just outside of a Housing Policy Boundary, and would be expected to be closely related to the existing built up area.** Map 1 shows examples of well related sites, however, as stated above, just because they are well related does not automatically make them suitable.

Finally, a **rural exception site will normally consist of no more than 10 dwellings, and for smaller settlements only one or two dwellings might only be appropriate.** As considered in the following two sections, supply will be determined by identified needs and the availability of the properties will be maintained in perpetuity for local people, normally through the involvement of a Registered Social Landlord.



Map 1: An indicative plan showing potential rural exception sites that are well related to the existing settlement pattern.

Anyone seeking to promote or facilitate a site for development as a rural exception is advised to arrange a meeting with a member of the Forward Planning service to discuss the potential in planning terms ahead of any further considerations. A final point which must be clearly made is that under no circumstances will the policy be relaxed to permit market housing on exception sites, even as a minority proportion.

4.2 Identifying Local People in Housing Need

Other parts of this guidance refer to those individuals or households in housing need. In the case of a rural exception site, the need must relate directly to a village, parish or cluster of parishes. At a district level, the Council's Housing Needs Survey cannot, for reasons of production time and cost, relate down to a local level and so Local Needs Assessments will need to be undertaken to make a case for rural exception schemes.

A Local Needs Assessment is a mini Housing Needs Survey which seeks to understand local housing conditions, incomes and property values, as well as identifying whether there are households or individuals who need or wish to remain resident in the community but are unable to gain access to suitable housing on account of its cost. The relevant Local Plan policy, H26, defines the types of persons which exception schemes would cater for.

- (a) people who already live in the local area and are seeking separate or more suitable accommodation;
- (b) people whose work provides important services (e.g. *key workers & carers*) and who need to live closer to the local community; or
- (c) people who used to live in the local area and wish to return for reasons of employment or family connections; or
- (d) people who have found permanent employment in the local area but who live elsewhere;

Appendix E sets out a good example of a Local Needs Questionnaire to give an impression of the investigation which needs to be undertaken. A further requirement of a Local Needs Assessment will be to assess whether identified housing needs could be met in any other way.

Any Local Needs Assessment must be undertaken under the advisement of the Council's Housing Service to ensure the findings can be relied upon in a subsequent planning application. The contact details of the Housing Strategy Officer and other relevant contacts are set out in **Appendix A**. The most authoritative means for a Local Needs Assessment to be undertaken is through the Parish Council. Whether undertaken as a one off exercise or as part of a formal Parish Plan, the involvement of the Parish should reassure residents and promote a higher response rate. This will contribute to its value and make a stronger case for any exception schemes coming forward.

A Local Needs Assessment will normally have a shelf life of up to 2 years, and accordingly if needs are recognised to be persistent there should be some means for review. Aside from a biennial survey, a confidential local register could be established, although proper custodianship of this data will be essential in order that the subject does not become a stigma locally.

4.3 Securing Affordability and Eligibility of Occupancy.

Criteria vii) and the supporting text to policy H26, as set out in Appendix C, clearly state that dwellings on rural exception sites will be secured to ensure that they are always available to local people in housing need. This requirement is essential to ensure that properties do not find themselves being sold on the open market. The District Council will require that an applicant can fully demonstrate that affordability is secured prior to planning consent being granted. The preferred and most appropriate means of doing this is through the transfer of land or completed properties to a Registered Social Landlord. Potential applicants are advised to get in touch with a Registered Social Landlord (such as a Housing Association) at an early stage in the research of exception schemes.

Occupancy of dwellings provided under this policy will also be restricted. In the first instance, dwellings will only be made available to local people, as identified initially in the Local Needs Assessment. However should vacancy arise that cannot be met locally, properties will be offered to individuals or households in need from adjacent localities. Ultimately, properties cannot be allowed to stand empty as a result of a lack of demand in the immediate community.

A final point of significance in terms of securing affordability in the long term is the role of Mortgagee in Possession clauses which allow property to be sold on the open market by a lender where a borrower defaults on repayments. The release of rural exception properties onto the open market is not considered acceptable in any circumstance and hence such clauses will not be acceptable.

Both of these matters are considered further under separate headings in section 6.

4.4 Design

In the first instance it should be noted that Housing Corporation standards of design will apply to any affordable homes where grant funding is secured. However, more generally, properties secured under the rural exceptions arrangement will, in common with all new development, be subject to the normal design considerations in the Local Plan. Although rural exception housing is expected to be cheaper than market housing, this can be achieved by virtue of the reduced land value, not as a result of poor quality materials and design. It will be expected that the quality of the design should reflect local styles and characteristics, although innovative approaches will not be discouraged where they are appropriate. Layout, materials and associated landscaping should also ensure that properties are fully integrated into the surroundings.

4.5 Future Variations

In its Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3) consultation paper the government is seeking to put in place a mechanism to allow Local Planning Authorities to make affordable housing allocations in rural areas within Local Plans (or their Local Development Framework replacements) in addition to the Rural Exceptions scheme outlined in this section. This move is welcomed as it provides the opportunity for the Council and its Parishes to work more proactively to identify sites where there is an expressed need in the community. Any houses built as part of this approach will only be made available for local people in housing need and the involvement of a Registered Social Landlord will be essential to ensure that future occupancy is restricted to such people.

4.6 Detailed Matters

The preceding sections have set out the principle considerations for affordable housing provision on rural exception sites. However there are a number of detailed considerations which are relevant in the implementation of proposals. The following list of headings should be used to guide and inform readers of other relevant issues and highlight specifics which are dealt with in section 6 of this document.

- Tenures of affordable housing
- Securing Affordability and the role of Registered Social Landlords.
- Legal Agreements
- Types, Size and Mix of dwellings
- Design Issues
- Funding
- Application Process
- Occupancy Controls
- Access to services and Facilities

4.7 Summary

Policy H26 is the main means by which the District Council will consider applications for affordable housing through rural exception schemes. Where there is a demonstrable local need, clearly identified in a Local Needs Assessment, the District Council will actively assist communities to progress suitable exception schemes where they conform with the policy.

The key requirements of the policy can be summarised as follows.

- An application for a rural exception must be supported by a proper Local Needs Assessment which identifies needy local households or individuals, and which shows that this need could not be met by any other means.
- That in broad planning terms the proposed site and eventual scheme is acceptable with regard to other policies in the Local Plan.
- That the site in question is well related to the existing settlement pattern.
- That the site in question is well placed to allow current and future occupants to make use of basic facilities such as a primary school, public transport service and shop meeting a range of basic daily needs.
- That the land in question is made available at a nominal cost.
- That all dwellings allowed are made available in perpetuity to meet local housing needs, normally through a formal arrangement with a Registered Social Landlord.
- That housing secured under this policy will be occupied by local people recognised by the Council to be in housing need.
- That during negotiations prior to and during the planning application process, regard will be had to the range of other planning obligations and costs associated with a particular development.
- That, as a result of the exceptional case being made, the design of the properties is fully in keeping with the prevailing local style and character of existing development.