

Knockholt Housing Needs Survey

July 2024



In partnership with Knockholt Parish Council

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INTRODUCTION

Kent's Rural and Community Housing Enabling service (RACE) undertook a local Housing Needs Survey in the Parish of Knockholt. The survey was undertaken as part of Sevenoaks District Council's 5 year district wide programme of local Housing Needs Surveys being carried out by RACE.

Housing Needs Surveys investigate the affordable housing needs of people who live in or have close ties to a parish, town or rural area and provide an independent report of that need, using a transparent and robust methodology. In addition, they investigate the needs of older households of any tenure needing to downsize or move to more suitable housing for their needs.

The Knockholt Housing Needs Surveys is valid for 5 years, to June 2029.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The 2021 ['Parish Councillors' Guide to Rural Affordable Housing'](#) states that 'Across the country there is a lack of affordable housing to rent or buy in many villages, in some there is none at all. This causes hardship for people across the generations, young people just starting out on an independent life, families trying to provide for their children and older people who have lived in the village for most of their lives but whose growing frailty means they can no longer manage in their current home.' Due to high property prices within the Sevenoaks District, the same challenges arise in more urban settlements and towns.

The Kent Rural Housing Protocol ['A Guide to Developing Affordable Homes in Rural Communities'](#) states that 'Within the County of Kent, most land (85%) is classed as "rural" and over 40% of businesses in Kent are based in rural areas. KHG recognise that provision of affordable housing is vital to ensure that communities continue to thrive and prosper.'

Small developments of local needs housing can provide affordable homes for local people, thereby enabling them to stay in their community, benefit from family and friends' networks and contribute to local life. This can make a real difference to the sustainability of communities and the vitality of local services and amenities.

The housing needs of older people has been a subject of concern given the growing numbers in that age group whose needs are not being met by the market. A nine month enquiry starting in 2017 on Housing and Care for Older People concluded in their report¹ that 'policy makers must recognise the growing housing needs of older people living in the countryside. It recommends that Local Planning Authorities ensure provision of new homes for older people, noting the value of both the building of small village developments "perhaps six bungalows on an unused scrap of land" or larger scale retirement schemes in towns close by.'

RACE is an independent service for Kent, delivered through the [Kent Housing Group](#) and is supported by Local Authorities across Kent and Medway, including Sevenoaks District Council. RACE's Rural Housing Enablers (RHE) will undertake a Housing Needs Survey, analyse the results and where appropriate, help identify potential suitable sites for the development of new local needs housing, ie Rural Exceptions Sites, or to secure a proportion of the affordable housing to be provided on larger sites to meet the needs of local people, ie Local Lettings Plans.

If new local needs housing is to be developed on a Rural Exceptions Site, a partnership will be established between the Parish and or Town Council, the preferred housing provider, eg Housing Association, and the Local Authority. Proposals for new local needs housing will be developed and the

¹ [Rural Housing for an Ageing Population](#): Preserving Independence. Happi 4- The Rural HAPPI Inquiry. April 2018. Jeremy Porteus

community consulted. The independent role of the RHE helps to ensure any eventual local needs housing scheme proceeds smoothly and for the benefit of the community.

HOUSING IN KNOCKHOLT

The Census 2021 tells us 86.8% of households in Knockholt are owner occupiers, 3.7% live in social housing and 9.4% live in private rented housing or are living rent free. The housing stock comprises 3.9% flats, 95.9% houses or bungalows and 0.2% caravans or other mobile or temporary structures.

There are a total of 18 social housing properties Knockholt parish. The majority of social housing properties in the district are owned by West Kent Housing Association. This follows the transfer of the Sevenoaks District Council housing stock in 1989. There are 2 social housing properties provided as local needs housing in the neighbouring parish of Halstead. Knockholt parish shares nomination rights to these properties. Local needs housing is where priority is given to those with a strong local connection to the local parishes. All other social housing is let in accordance with the Sevenoaks District Housing Register Allocations Policy, or direct by the landlord Housing Association, ie a new tenant is unlikely to have a local connection to the parish.

The local needs housing scheme is located in Concorde Close, Halstead. The scheme is managed by English Rural Housing Association. The scheme was built in February 2022 and English Rural Housing Association have confirmed there have been no relet vacancies since the properties were first let.

High property prices mean that some local people are unable to afford a home in the parish of Knockholt. At the time of writing the report the cheapest property for sale was a 2 bedroom terraced house for £395,000; for a first time buyer to afford this property an estimated 10% deposit of £39,500 would be required along with an income of approximately £79,000 based on a mortgage of 4.5 x income. The cheapest available private rented sector property was a 1 bedroom flat for £1,100 per calendar month; an income of approximately £33,000 would be required to afford this property (affordability is based on rent being no more than 30% gross income).

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

An A5 postcard providing information and online links for completion of the survey was posted to every household in Knockholt in June 2024. Only residents with a housing need were asked to respond; options were provided for those unable to use the online method. 504 surveys were distributed with 11 completed surveys returned.

SUMMARY

Of the 11 returns, a need for up to 6 affordable homes for the following local households was identified:

- 1 x couple without children
- 5 x families with children
- 4 of the households live in Knockholt and 2 live outside and have indicated they have a local connection to Knockholt.

In addition to the above, there was a requirement for 3 properties for older homeowners

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

11 surveys were completed. 2 surveys were disallowed for the following reasons:

- 1 x did not wish to remain in the parish
- 1 x no housing need indicated

Identified need for Affordable Housing

Total Number of Affordable Homes Required	6
Respondent Current Location	4 x live in Parish 2 x live outside Parish
Respondent Current Housing	1 x renting from Housing Association 3 x living with relatives 1 x private rented 1 x shared ownership
Household Composition	5 x families 1 x couple
Tenure Preference (more than one choice allowed)	4 x Affordable Rented (Social housing) 2 x Shared Ownership Low-cost home ownership 2 x First Homes
Level Access Housing Required	None
Interest in cohousing for older people indicated	None
Number of older households requiring affordable housing	1
Analysis shows that only 1 respondent indicated having a deposit towards a low cost home ownership option. This indicates that the majority need is for social housing.	

Identified need for Self-Build housing

Total Number of Homes Required	0
Number of Self-Builds Required	None

Identified need for alternative housing for older homeowners

Total Number of Homes Required	3
Respondent Current Location	3 x live in Parish
Respondent Current Housing	3 x owner occupier
Household Composition	2 x couples 1 x family
Tenure Preference (more than one choice allowed)	3 x open market 1 x shared ownership 1 x self-build
Level Access Housing Required	1 x level access without support
Type of housing required (more than one choice allowed)	2 x bungalows 1 x house 1 x level access without support

ADDITIONAL INDICATION OF LOCAL HOUSING NEEDS

Information obtained from Sevenoaks District Council's Housing Register indicates there are currently 21 households registered who have indicated a local connection to Knockholt Parish requiring the following social housing:

- 4 x 1 bedroom
- 7 x 2 bedroom
- 8 x 3 bedroom
- 2 x 4 bedrooms

CONCLUSION

The Knockholt Housing Needs Survey demonstrates that at least **6 new affordable homes** are required to meet the needs of local people. From the responses received it demonstrates at least **3 open market properties for older homeowners** wanting to downsize or move to more suitable housing, are required.

The Housing Needs Survey is an important source of evidence in measuring the housing needs of local people. Complementary indicators of housing need, including data from the Sevenoaks District Housing Register, verified local registrations of interest held by partner Housing Associations and data captured through ongoing engagement within the local community, can also provide suitable robust evidence.

The Housing Needs Survey together with complementary indicators, ensure local housing needs data remains valid over a five year period. All such evidence may be used to support the delivery of new affordable homes to meet the needs of local people.