



**Northiam Parish  
Housing Needs Survey Summary**

**Survey undertaken in October 2021**

## **Introduction**

In 2021 Action in rural Sussex was commissioned by Northiam Parish Council, with support from Rother District Council, to assess the scale and nature of the need for affordable housing in the Northiam Parish.

The study identified households whose housing needs were not being appropriately met, and who could not afford to meet them on the open market within the parish.

## **Methodology**

An assessment of the level housing need was undertaken using a Housing Need Survey delivered to every home in the parish. The survey gathered information on household make-up of those with an affordable housing need (e.g. single adult, family with children, older couple, 65+ etc.), current housing type, tenure and circumstance, gross household income and savings, and details of respondent's local connection to the area.

Eligibility for affordable housing was based on two main aspects. Firstly, the housing in which the individual/household resided was not adequate for their needs e.g. too few bedrooms. Secondly, that they cannot afford an appropriate property which would meet their needs to rent or buy on the open market within the local area. This was determined by comparing respondents' financial information against the baseline rental and purchase costs for a property that would meet their current requirements.

A total of 322 responses were received from the 1,084 households in Northiam Parish. This represents an overall response rate of 31% - a good response rate for a survey of this nature.

## **Property prices**

In order to develop a baseline of the affordability of property within the parish, sale price information was gathered from the previous 24 months of properties sold in the Northiam area.

Rental costs were calculated by identifying the cheapest property of each bedroom size being marketed for rent in the Northiam area at the time of compiling the report.

## **Incomes**

The 2021 Provisional Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (Office for National Statistics) identified that the mean gross income in Rother District was £29,951, and the median gross income was £22,424 per annum.

## **Affordability**

Property costs indicate an entry level gross annual household income requirement of some £33,000 to rent a one-bedroom property – assuming direct housing costs did not exceed 30% of annual gross household income.

To buy a one-bedroom property, costs indicated an income of £56,057 was required – assuming a 10% deposit and 3.5 x income to value multiplier. The purchaser would also need to have savings for a deposit of £21,800.

## Key Survey Findings

### General

- There was strong support for the development of affordable housing for local people within the parish where there is a proven need – with 269 responses in favour (81%).
- The majority of respondents supported the delivery of housing and other community assets via a Parish Community Interest Company – with 162 (49%) respondents in favour, 67 (20%) opposed, and 85 (26%) expressing 'no opinion'.
- There were fifty-three affordable housing site suggestions – mostly St Francis Fields.

### Affordable Need identified

- Twenty-three households were identified as needing affordable housing due to the inadequacy of their current housing in meeting their needs, and their inability to afford to rent or purchase a suitable property on the open market within the immediate area.
- All the households had a local connection to the parishes through residence, past residence, work, or family connection.
- Of those in need of affordable housing, ten (47%) need to set up an independent home, and nine (39%) – living in private rented housing find their current home unaffordable.
- The largest household type were single adults (aged 18 – 64) - 10 (44%), followed by adult couples (aged 18 - 64 with children aged under 18) – 9 (39%). There were 3 (13%) single older people (aged over 65), and one adult couple (aged 18 - 64 with no children).
- Three of the households are currently housing association tenants needing to move to a more manageable or larger home.
- Renting from a housing association or local authority was preferred by 10 (44%) of respondents, 6 (26%) would prefer to buy on the open market, and 5 (22%) would prefer shared ownership. One indicated a preference for renting from a community housing organisation, and one indicated a preference for private renting.
- A majority of households in affordable need require one-bedroom properties – 14 (61%). This reflects the high proportion of single and couple households identified as being in-need. This was followed by 5 (22%) of respondents requiring a 2-bedroom property, 3 (13%) requiring a 3-bedroom property, and 1 (4%) requiring a 4-bedroom property.
- Based on their income, savings, and circumstances none of the households in need of affordable housing appear to be able to afford shared ownership.
- The three households renting from a housing association may be able to address their housing need by a transfer or mutual exchange.
- Housing need is pressing for most of the respondents to the survey with twenty households (87%) stating a need to move either now or within two years. Three households (13%) need to move between two and five years from now.
- Four respondents to the survey in need of affordable housing identified a requirement for ground floor accommodation, one identified a need for sheltered housing, and one identified a need for housing with support services.
- Only 3 (14%) households stated that they are on a local authority or housing association housing register for a rented home. Two (11%) stated that they are on a local authority or housing association housing register for shared ownership.

## **Market preferences identified**

Six households were identified who could not be categorised as in need of affordable housing due to their income and savings, or because they were currently housed in a way that met their requirements.

- Five households (83%) identified a preference for buying on the open market, and one stated a preference for renting from a housing association or local authority.
- Based on their income / savings and circumstances, one household could buy on the open market.
- Two households (33%) needing market housing were living in shared ownership property.
- Two households (33%) had sufficient income to sustain a private rented tenancy, but currently insufficient savings to enable a shared ownership purchase.
- One household had sufficient income to afford private rented housing, and income / savings that would enable a shared ownership purchase, but insufficient income / savings for an outright purchase.
- It should be noted that eligibility for shared ownership depends on the particular model of shared ownership or shared equity that might be available and would need to be determined separately.
- The make-up of the six households was: one single adult (18 - 64), two adult couples (aged 18 – 64 with no children), two adult couples (aged 18 – 64 with children aged under 18), and one adult couple (aged 18 – 64 with children aged over 18).
- All of these households possess a local connection to the parishes through work, previously residence or family connection.
- Two of the households needing market housing stated they required 2-bedroom accommodation, two required 3-bedroom, and two required 4-bedroom.
- Three respondents indicated a need to move either now or within two years, and three indicated a need to move between two and five years.
- None of the households requiring market housing identified a need for specialist accommodation.
- One of the six households in need of market housing – currently living in shared ownership, stated that they are on a local authority or housing association housing register for shared ownership.

**For further information** on the survey please contact: Action in Rural Sussex

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