

# Salehurst and Robertsbridge Neighbourhood Plan

## Housing Report

### Evidence

- Housing Needs Survey 2008
- Report from Housing Needs Manager 2016
- Older People's Housing Needs Survey Report 2012
- Robertsbridge Report Housing Register 2016-09-20
- Housing Needs re Countrycrafts, Site 2015
- Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire results 2015
- RDC Overview and Scrutiny 13 June 2016 Agenda Item 5.1 Affordable Housing – the future challenges
- Comments from public consultations

### General Housing Needs

The NP Questionnaire completed by 67% of households in the Parish and indeed all supporting documents above confirmed the perceived requirements for housing in the Parish: first is that residents wish to stay in this vibrant village and 40% of the Questionnaire respondents said they envisaged moving within the next 10 years, but wish to stay in the Parish. 54% of those under 45 years old want to stay in the parish. There is a dearth of affordable housing for young people. The village itself is a popular place to live in. This also supported by interviews with the manager of the estate agent located in the High Street for the purposes of the NP. He confirmed that Robertsbridge is popular in terms housing of all types and bedroom numbers. He also confirmed that the village suffers from a dearth of property available to be let.

The most useful result from the Questionnaire in terms of the type of housing existing residents envisage is the question dealing with *Housing Needs in General* (Slide 23a).

The following were the most needed property types as perceived by respondents:

- 2 bedroom 56%
- 3 bedroom 54%
- Housing Association retirement 43%
- Private retirement 33%
- Shared ownership 31%
- Rented housing association 31%

Looking at *Combined Housing Needs* (Slide 22) again the responses confirmed that residents perceive the need to be for smaller properties. 73% felt the need to be for two or three bedroom homes. Other consultations confirmed that homes of four bedrooms plus were the least favoured.

### **Social Housing**

From all the national evidence, the following states the case in Robertsbridge, in Rother and across England: the imbalance between supply and demand in social housing has become severe. Rother District Council has a statutory duty ‘to meet the housing needs of many of the households on the Housing Register, and affordable rented accommodation is the most required tenure to meet this need.’ (Agenda Item 5.1 *Affordable Housing Overview* and Scrutiny Committee 13 June 2016)

### **Demand**

- There are 1,136 households on Rother District Council’s Housing Register (June 2016).
- During 2015/16 222 were accommodated.
- With the Welfare Reform Programme the greatest demand has been for one-bedroom properties.
- For Rother District as a whole there are a total of 583 households on the Housing Register who have a one bedroom need.

In Robertsbridge specifically, in February 2015 as indicative of housing need there were 26 applicants on the waiting list who had a connection with Robertsbridge, i.e. through family, employment or current residency (*Housing Needs re former Countrycrafts Site*):

Number of applicants	Bedroom need	Percentage of total need
12	One bedroom	46
9	Two bedroom	35
4	Three bedroom	15
1	Four bedroom	4

However, the figures on the housing register who have expressed a preference for Robertsbridge exceed these figures. According to the current register 40 applicants have a connection with Robertsbridge.

Of the 40, only four are in Band A. According to Agenda Item 5.1 *Affordable Housing* from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 13 June 2016, 'The reality for those on the Housing Register is that the majority of properties that become available are allocated to households in in Band A.' This underlines the desperate need for affordable housing in Robertsbridge as those lower than Band A are most unlikely to be housed.

The following table showing how many applicants bid for housing becoming available in Robertsbridge again highlights this parlous situation:

Total of 11 lets in Robertsbridge since 01.01.2015 till September 2016  
(*Report of RDC Housing Needs Manager 2016*)

Address	Bedrooms	Let to	Number of Bids
Heathfield Gardens	2	Band A	33
Heathfield Gardens	2	Band A	75
Heathfield Gardens	2	Band A	82
Heathfield Gardens	2	Band A	22
Bellhurst Cottages	3	Band A	1 (direct let)
George Hill	1	Band C	26
Heathfield Gardens	2	Band B	14
Heathfield Gardens	2	Band B	48
Orchard Flats	1	Band C	22
Bishops Lane	2	Band A	51
Heathfield Gardens	1	Band A	24

### **Social Housing Needs for the elderly**

Robertsbridge is the only large village without sheltered accommodation for the elderly. There is anecdotal evidence that many elderly have to leave the village and their friendship and support networks when they become unable to manage unsupported. In the past there have been unsuccessful campaigns supported by the District Councillor and Age UK to address this need.

In the Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire it should be noted that 43% identified a need for Housing Association retirement homes and 33% Private Retirement homes.

ESCC report in 2012: *Information to support Robertsbridge Older People's Housing Need*, the conclusion was:

'For reference, across East Sussex there is an average of 17 residents aged over 65 for every individual unit of sheltered housing available. The Salehurst ward that contains Robertsbridge has one sheltered housing scheme along its border (Burghwood House in Hurst Green) with 26 units of sheltered housing. That equates to 26.6 people aged over 65 per unit available in Salehurst. **In order to achieve the same ratio in the area as the East Sussex average, a sheltered housing scheme of 14-15 units would be required.'**

As the above situation has not changed since 2012, the conclusion is regarded as current. The above information supports absolutely what the NP Policy HO 6 is requiring so far as the provision of social and affordable housing in the village for the timespan of the Neighbourhood Plan

S & R NP Housing Group  
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