



Wivelsfield Parish Housing Needs Survey Summary

Survey undertaken in December 2024

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Introduction

In 2024 Action in rural Sussex was commissioned by Wivelsfield Parish Council, to assess the scale and nature of the need for locally affordable housing in the Parish.

The study identified households whose housing needs were not being appropriately met currently on the open market within the Parish.

Methodology

An assessment of the housing need was undertaken using a postal survey to every household, together with an online completion option. The survey gathered information on the household make-up of those with a housing need (e.g. single adult, family with children, older couple, 65+ etc.), current housing type, tenure and circumstance, household income and savings, and respondent's local connection.

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, which would meet their current requirements.

A total of 294 responses were received from the 1179 households in Wivelsfield Parish – 169 by post and 125 online. This represents an overall response rate of 25% - 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 of properties sold in the Wivelsfield area during the previous 24 months.

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

Incomes

The Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (Office for National Statistics) found the 2024 average (mean) gross income in Lewes District was £34,303 and the mid value (median) gross income was £28,359 per year.

Affordability

Property costs indicate an entry level gross annual household income requirement of some £42,000 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 £48,857 was required – assuming a 10% deposit and 3.5 x income to value multiplier. The purchaser would need to have savings for a deposit of £19,000.

This highlights an affordability issue for over half local wage earners.

Key Survey Findings

General

- The 2021 census highlighted that there is a significantly lower proportion of potentially cheaper smaller (one and two bedroom) homes in Wivelsfield Parish (23%) compared to the Lewes District as a whole (39%).
- A majority (54%) support local affordable housing provision if there is a proven need.
- The population has significantly fewer older people aged 65+ – Wivelsfield Parish (16%) compared to Lewes District as a whole (26%).

Affordable housing need identified.

- 20 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 in the parish.
- All 20 households have a local connection to Wivelsfield Parish.
- The household's make-up was: single adults (aged 18+) - 8 (40%); adult / family with children (aged under 18) – 6 (30%); adult couple (aged 18-64 -no children) – 4 (20%); a single older person (aged over 65) - 1 (5%); an older couple (aged over 65) - 1 (5%).
- The main reasons given for seeking to move were: the need to set up an independent home – 9 (45%); current home expensive to run/maintain - 3 (15%); need for a larger home- 3 (15%); changing circumstances e.g. divorce – 2 (10%); current rent/mortgage is unaffordable - 1 (5%); a home for the future – 1 (5%).
- The largest proportion of respondents - 14 (70%) required one-bedroom, followed by two bedrooms - 4 (20%), three bedrooms – 1 (5%), and four bedrooms - 1 (5%).
- Buying on the open market – 6 (30%) was the most preferred housing option. This was followed by renting from a local community organisation – 5 (25%), renting from a housing association or local authority - 4 (20%), and shared ownership - 3 (15%). One stated renting from a private landlord - 1 (5%)
- Based on their income, savings, and circumstances, 7 of the households in need of affordable housing appear to be able to afford shared ownership – depending on the shared ownership scheme, and a more detailed assessment of their income / expenditure and mortgage eligibility.
- Housing need is pressing for most respondents - 16 households (80%) need to move either now or within two years. Two households (10%) need to move between two and five years from now, and two households (10%) need to move between five- and ten-year's time.
- Five households in need of affordable housing identified that they are on a local authority or housing association housing register for a rented home. One was on a register for shared ownership.

- Most respondents would prefer to be housed in Wivelsfield Green or Wivelsfield.
- Specialist housing requirements: three households need ground floor accommodation, one household stated a need for housing with support services, and one household needs residential care.
- Three households were housing association tenants and may be able to address their housing need by transfer or mutual exchange.

Market preferences identified

As part of the process of reviewing the responses from households who completed Part 2 of the Housing Needs Survey, ten households were identified as not being in need of affordable housing due to their income and savings, or because they were currently housed in a way that met their requirements.

Whilst they are currently ineligible for affordable housing based on the criteria, it is important that we consider these households that possess either a housing aspiration or housing need, to enable us to better understand the housing market locally.

Nine of the households identified a first preference for buying on the open market.

Based on their income, savings, and circumstances, one of the households may be able to buy a shared ownership property – depending on the shared ownership scheme, detailed assessment of their income / expenditure / mortgage eligibility.

The characteristics of the households requiring market housing were:

- Adult couple (aged 18-65 – no children) – 6 (60%); Adult family with children (aged under 18) – 2 (20%); Single older person (aged over 65) – 1 (10%); and Older couple (aged over 65) – 1 (10%).
- All of the households possessed a local connection to the Wivelsfield Parish through living in the area, working locally, family connection, or past residence.
- Current housing comprised of 3 (30%) own a property with a mortgage; 3 (30%) households own a property with no mortgage, and 4 (40%) renting privately.
- Four (40%) indicated a preference for two bedrooms, 4 (40%) preferred three bedrooms, 1 – four bedrooms and 1 - five bedrooms
- Most respondents would prefer to be housed in Wivelsfield Green or Wivelsfield.
- Four (40%) respondents indicated a need to move either now or within two years, three (30%) indicated between 2 and 5 years from now, and two (20%) indicated between 5 and 10 years from now.
- Four indicated a requirement for ground floor accommodation, and one household indicated a need for sheltered housing.
- None of the households in need of market housing were on a local authority or housing association register housing for rented or shared ownership.