# **Penshurst Parish Council Meeting with Rural Housing Enabler, Penshurst Village Hall – 21st September 2021**

**Q1 How many as a percentage of forms sent out filled in Section 2?**

727 surveys were distributed.

29 respondents completed Section 2 of the survey which is 4% of surveys sent out. (6 of those respondents were excluded for various reasons)

18 respondents who completed Section 2 required affordable housing which is 2.4% of surveys sent out.

**Q2 The PC asked if anyone from Fordham had filled out Section 2, was it possible to determine how many had filled in from Fordham and Penshurst?**

Q14 asks respondents to leave their contact details, although they are not obliged to do so (as stated in the survey). There were 4 respondents that indicated that they lived in Fordcombe and 8 respondents that indicated they live in Penshurst. The remaining respondents that filled in Section 2 did not leave their contact details.

In total 19 of the households currently live in the parish and 4 live outside. All respondents indicated that they have a local connection to Penshurst Parish by answering Q17 of the Housing Needs Survey.

**Q3 The PC asked who is responsible for checking the Local Connection criteria?**

The purpose of a Rural Exception Site Scheme is that it provides affordable homes in perpetuity to people in need of affordable housing who have a local connection to the village. A Section 106 agreement will set out the qualifying criteria for those who will occupy the homes. Commonly these will be people who are: - Already living in the community or have a long-term connection with it, supporting or require support from someone in the village, employed locally, and those who would contribute to the sustainability of the village.

For further information: Parish Council’s Guide to Affordable Housing, newly updated by the Rural Housing Alliance: <https://ruralhousingalliance.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/parish-councillors-guide-to-rural-affordable-housing.pdf>

Q17 of the Penshurst Housing Needs survey form asks about Local Connection this question reflects Sevenoaks District Council’s Local Plan Policy SP4 (Rural Exception Sites) which establishes the connection criteria for Rural Exception Site homes. This criterion is then set out in the planning permission (Section 106 agreement) applying to each Rural Exceptions Site home. It is possible for the Parish Council to request some variations, negotiated with the Housing Association and Local Authority.

Respondents that complete Section 2 of the Housing Needs Survey are asked to indicate their local connection. Any respondents that do not, are excluded from the survey results. When the homes are allocated, Sevenoaks District Council and the Housing Association will check that the applicants have a local connection. If there is any doubt, they will ask the Parish Council for confirmation.

**Q4 Who checks eligibility e.g. incomes to ensure that all checks are carried out?**

Sevenoaks District Council will check eligibility of applicants in accordance with their allocation policy in the usual way. The Housing Association will also make checks to confirm eligibility.

**Q5 How can we be sure we are providing the right size, tenure type in the future to match the need?**

The survey gives the initial steer on the number, type and tenure of homes required. If the scheme proceeds, and before a planning application is submitted, a consultation event will be held in the village where people can register their need for affordable housing and a second stage survey will be undertaken. This updates the level of housing need identified in the first survey. SDC and the housing association will confirm the final mix of properties to be developed. The Parish Council will be consulted at these stages.

**Q6 Can we develop Local Needs Affordable Housing in Phases?**

We discussed the feasibility of developing the scheme in phases as the Parish Council wanted to see if this was a feasible route to bring affordable housing to the parish and gain support from the community. The scheme would be unlikely to be developed in phases as such. Schemes are generally small with the average being 8 homes, but some are smaller. Some villages that have an existing scheme have gone on to develop a second scheme when they have recognized it is needed but they must go through the same process as the first scheme did.

A scheme does not have to be developed to meet the full need identified by the survey; the Parish Council can liaise with the Housing Association developer on the size of the scheme suitable for their parish.

**Q7. What is the value of Rural Exception Sites?**

These sites have no open market housing value, so typically, if a landowner sells to a housing association or community housing organisation, they can expect around £10,000 a plot (per unit built), but with some small variation reflecting local and site circumstances.

**Q8 Are there any examples of where open market development has helped to subside local needs affordable housing?**

* In the Ashford District at Warehorne, see an example of a self-build plot <https://englishrural.org.uk/case-studies/warehorne-kent/>
* In the Swale District at Throwley and Hernehill, 2 open market bungalows were included <https://englishrural.org.uk/developing-homes/our-projects/throwley-kent/><https://englishrural.org.uk/developing-homes/our-projects/hernhill-kent/>
* In the Dover District, 2 open market bungalows were included at the development in Staple.

<https://englishrural.org.uk/developing-homes/our-projects/staple-kent/>

Bungalows are often built for cross subsidy purposes to meet a need for older owner occupiers needing to downsize. They can be reserved for 12 weeks for local people, after that they will be open for anyone to purchase.

**West Kent Housing / Becket Trust –** the parish council noted the Affordable Rent levels set by Sevenoaks District Council and were interested to compare these with local HA’s such as West Kent Housing and the Becket Trust which they will investigate if possible. It was noted that some local rents are higher or lower than mentioned in the report but it was generally agreed these figures were a helpful guide.

**Resources**

**Newly updated guide** **for Parish Councils from Rural Housing Alliance**: <https://ruralhousingalliance.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/parish-councillors-guide-to-rural-affordable-housing.pdf>

**Newly updated guide for Kent:** <https://englishrural.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/21-01-11-v2FINAL-KHG-Rural-Housing-Protocol.pdf>

**English Rural** <https://englishrurl.org.uk/>

**Sevenoaks District Council Local Plan (Policy SP4)**

<https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/info/20069129/current_local_plan>

**Action with Communities in Rural Kent** <https://ruralkent.org.uk/services/housing/>