**Affordable housing *consultation*** - Frequently asked Questions.

If you have a question please check [www.hever.org](http://www.hever.org) for other information sheets / links if your query isn’t answered below. If you still have a query, please contact the Clerk, ideally before you complete your online survey, so that you have all the information you want.

**Why can’t we wait until we can hold a public meeting?**

We are unfortunately unable to hold public meetings (and unlikely to do so for quite some time) due to covid and we have no way of knowing when this might end, even with the vaccine programme. Even when meetings are allowed, there may be members of the community who don’t feel comfortable attending a crowded meeting. We are holding zoom meetings daytime, weekend and early evening to make it as accessible for everyone. There is a lot of information on [www.hever.org](http://www.hever.org) and we have deliberately held this consultation after Christmas and for a longer period of time to encourage people to respond, being well aware of the limitations of the pandemic. The consultation and information process we have in place is far more detailed and extensive than usual ‘best practice’ at this stage. Please remember that the Parish Council don’t have to do this consultation, but have chosen to and are working hard to gather your views, we are here to represent all parts of the community.

If none of the dates or times are convenient, please contact the Clerk who will happily arrange another time to answer your queries (by email or on the phone). For a lot of people this is more accessible as everyone gets to have their say in a way they feel comfortable with. This is an opportunity to get information. Please do submit your comments online or by email once you have the information you need.

**What is the relationship between Hever Parish Council and English Rural Housing association?**

ERHA is a rural specialist, a leading developer of affordable housing in small villages. In Kent they currently own and manage local needs developments in 31 villages and are also working with Chiddingstone and other local parish councils. ERHA was *invited* *by* the Parish Council to work with them to consider the options for providing affordable homes for those in the Parish. Please see their website for more information <https://englishrural.org.uk/>

As a parish council, we are obliged to undertake a housing needs survey every 5 years.  The motivation for HPC is to respond to the local need identified and to ensure that **should** affordable homes built in the parish, they are for local benefit.  Currently, those locals in housing need and on the housing register are part of the Sevenoaks District housing register and are unlikely to be allocated a home in the parish where they wish to live.

There is **no** contract, obligation or incentive (financial or otherwise) in this proposal for HPC. The Parish Council won’t own the land or housing or have any financial interest or risk in the scheme whatsoever. The 10 parish Councillors (who are all volunteers) give their time to support the community, with no financial or other gain, no allowances and no financial (or other) personal interests in this proposal. There is no obligation for HPC to support or provide affordable housing in the parish and Sevenoaks District Council are not dictating or deciding on this proposal. *Should* it develop into a planning application then Sevenoaks District Council would be the independent planning authority, not the parish council.

**Couldn’t the new housing in Edenbridge provide affordable homes for Four Elms locals?**

No.  Any affordable homes built in Edenbridge will be open to ***anyone*** on Sevenoaks District Council’s housing register to apply for, so not local needs housing.  Those in greatest need from anywhere in the Sevenoaks District (spread from Swanley in the north to Cowden in the South) will be given priority.  The homes in Edenbridge also may not be the type and size that local people to the parish need and probably not close enough to family / work they want to stay close to.  However, affordable homes built locally with ERHA would be only for those with a local connection and could not be sold to residents under the right to buy.

Any proposals would go through the usual planning processes and consider the effectiveness of the green Belt, Conservation Areas, Local Wildlife sites, AONB etc.  All other planning considerations such as utilities and flood risks will also be considered.

Affordable homes on a rural exception site can **only** be filled with those with a local connection (anyone in housing need who currently lives or works in the Parish or who has resided within the Parish within the last 5 years and whose parents/grandparents still live there). This will be the case in “perpetuity”.

**Why not another site in the parish?**

Ideally, there would be a number of sites to consider. However, the entire parish (Four Elms, Hever and Markbeech) was studied, field by field, to reach a first list of possible locations. Each site was considered carefully in terms of geography, accessibility etc. and then availability by the landowner. There were 9 areas in Four Elms, 2 between Four Elms and Hever, 9 in Hever and 3 in Markbeech initially considered. HPC don’t have the landowner permissions to share the exact locations.

**What about traffic concerns along Bough Beech road?**

This would be considered (as with many planning aspects and details) as part of any planning application, should the proposal progress – traffic flows, safe sight lines and access, pedestrian routes etc. would all be critical. Any planning application would of course be in the usual manner and open to anyone and everyone to contribute to.

This is still very much a **consultation** on the principle of an affordable housing scheme on this site.

**Does this mean the Green Belt can be built on everywhere across the villages?**

No. Should this proposal progress, it would as a Rural Exception site – only *considered* by the planners because it would provide affordable housing for local people to meet an identified, specific need, as an exception.

**What about the wildlife?**

Again this would be very much considered in the proper manner, should the proposal progress, once all the required land, wildlife, environmental and other surveys are carried out as part of any planning application.

**Where can I find out more?**

You may not (understandably) remember or have been interested at the time, in the housing needs survey in 2018 (carried out by an independent Rural Housing Enabler) or the call for sites process or the agendas and minutes, Annual Assembly (2019) etc.- from the parish council. If you would like a reminder of the story so far, please see hever.org for more information. This consultation is to give you the latest update and ask for your comments on the proposal for affordable housing and now that we have a site to consider.

For information on the Housing needs survey <http://hever.org/973-2>

The rural housing enabler <https://ruralkent.org.uk/services/housing/>

The call for sites <http://hever.org/hever-parish-council-call-for-sites-for-local-needs-homes>

English Rural Housing Association <https://englishrural.org.uk/>

Please note this is a consultation and opportunity to ask questions which we hope will be of interest, **NOT** a planning application. This is because the parish council would like your views. You can do this in many ways – online through the survey;

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfZLsmr9GbNY8Lwu7QTU0pYIGmjm4jUIfjA8uPQ6TSfHozU-g/viewform>

emailing [clerk@hever.org](mailto:clerk@hever.org) or also in confidence on paper through the boxes at Four Elms village hall and at the Nursery / Bistro.

**Please see lots of information on** [**www.hever.org**](http://www.hever.org) **and join a zoom meeting if you have queries, before you comment** and advise the Clerk if you need any assistance in submitting comments etc. You do not need to download / install any apps.

The deadline for comments is **14th February**.

Thank you.



January 2021