

**Affordable housing consultation - Frequently asked Questions.** March 2021

The consultation is paused until 1st May 2021 to provide more information and time. If you have a query which is not answered by any of the information on [www.hever.org](http://www.hever.org) then please contact the Clerk ([clerk@hever.org](mailto:clerk@hever.org)).

HPC will continue to update the website with further information and plans for May onwards and how to submit comments (from May).

1. **Can you give me more information on what other areas are doing in Kent?**

Please see the link below for lots of really useful information in a user friendly language that may be of interest – information on the concept of affordable housing and the process.

Kent Guide to Developing Affordable Homes in Rural Communities

<https://www.kenthousinggroup.org.uk/protocols/guide-developing-affordable-homes-rural-communities/>

1. **Can you tell me more about how the Sevenoaks District Council housing register works and how is it**

**different for rural exceptions sites? How can I get onto the waiting list?**

Any applicant for affordable homes for rent must be accepted onto the District Housing Register. For rural exceptions housing, where priority is given to those with a strong local connection to the Parish, different rules apply compared with the standard allocation policy rules, in relation to income limits and housing need. See section pages 10 / 11 of the allocations policy for information on income limits and pages 25 & 48 for information on housing need. Those applying to go onto the register need to state that they are interested in rural exceptions housing. You can apply to join the Housing Register through Kent Homechoice.

<https://www.kenthomechoice.org.uk/choice/default.aspx>

<https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/downloads/file/1742/housing_register_allocation_policy>

1. **How does SDC decide on numbers for district wide housing plans / Local Plan?**

SDC, as all District councils have to assess district-wide housing need using the government’s ‘standardised methodology for calculating housing need’.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-development-needs-assessments>

This uses a defined formula to identify the minimum number of homes expected to be planned for, which addresses projected household growth and historic under-supply.

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) considers the need for different types of housing e.g. market, affordable, the private rented sector, the needs of older and disabled people etc. This information is used in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to determine how many and what types of homes should be planned for in a District wide Local Plan.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

1. **What was the parish housing needs survey for?**

Parish housing needs survey uses information from the household survey to gauge the local need for housing in a parish area. They are used as one piece of evidence, to justify development under Core Strategy policy SP4 (and emerging Local Plan policy H3). When allocating affordable homes on a rural exception site, priority is always given to those with a local connection to the Parish (anyone in housing need who currently lives or works in the Parish or who has resided within the Parish within the last 5 years or whose parents/siblings still live there). This will be the case in “perpetuity”. Before any planning permission is granted, ERHA would enter into a legally enforceable planning agreement with the Local Authority to ensure that the affordable houses are always allocated to local people and can never be sold on the open market.

The relevant part of the NPPF is paragraph 77 and Core Strategy policy SP4 (and emerging Local Plan policy H3

Parish housing needs surveys are commissioned by the District Council in partnership with parish councils.

The SDC Local Plan includes a commitment to undertake a 5 year rolling programme of surveys across all 31 Parish/Town Councils. All surveys are being undertaken by the rural housing enabler and they follow a standard format to ensure direct comparability across the District. A new Hever survey will be carried out on or around 2023 (as the last one was in 2018).

SDC commissioned a further study in 2017, the Local Housing Needs Study (LHNS), which considered the district-wide housing need. This study was to ascertain residents’ future housing aspirations, as opposed to strictly defined housing need. The vast majority of residents aspired to own their own home (intermediate housing) rather than rent. The LHNS helped to understand the complexities and geographical differences in affordable housing need across the District. There is more information on this in paragraph 2.22 and policy H2 of the emerging Local Plan, and further detail on these local level needs are set out in the draft Affordable Housing SPD.

1. **What input did HPC have into the questions included in the 2018 Survey?**

HPC had minor suggestions to the questionnaire e.g. listing the villages in the parish by name, rather than just stating “parish”. HPC were relying on the experts and to ensure validity and comparison across parishes.

1. **What criteria did HPC apply when selecting ERHA as the possible rural housing provider?**

A number of factors were considered when considering which housing association to select;

* Experience and evidence of being a specialist rural housing provider v larger and more urban schemes
* Examples of projects elsewhere and feedback from those parishes
* Value for money statements (noting Government stats on analysis of value for money metrics)
* Annual accounts, noting any relevance to the Public Services Act 2012
* Proposed funding arrangements
* Financial returns on assets
* Management of development process and financial control
* Long-term business plan
* How they would work with HPC and SDC during the process and after
* Allocations on schemes and ensuring every household going forward would have a qualifying local connection
* Pattern of how long people stay in their rented homes
* Process of liaising with the local community
* Design and sustainability approaches
* Management and enforcing tenancy rules/agreements
* Process of the management, maintenance and repairs services of properties once a scheme is complete  
  Management structure / Specific tenant liaison officer   
  Range of shared-ownership marketing arrangements / Fixed-term tenancies / Views on Right-to-Buy / Lease length
* Frequency and mode of Reviewing Fixed Term Tenancies

1. **Can you explain the criteria that were used in selecting this site out of 23 sites?**

From the initial 23 sites that were identified, a total of 15 were submitted to SDC who undertook a preliminary site assessment process to complete sequential tests as to the suitability of shortlisted sites.  Some of these sites were already known to SDC from their own “call for sites” in the past.

[www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/downloads/file/1929/sup018\_site\_appraisals\_\_sites\_not\_included\_in\_the\_local\_plan](http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/downloads/file/1929/sup018_site_appraisals__sites_not_included_in_the_local_plan)

Subsequent discussions between ERHA with landowners of 6 of these sites resulted in only the Bull lane site progressing at that time.

*Criteria included, but not limited to:*

* Availability – i.e. whether the landowner was interested in a possible rural housing scheme.
* Suitability / sustainability considerations i.e. AONB, Conservation areas, proximity to services, transport links, size and location of neighbouring settlements
* *Geographical considerations such as topography, access, conservation, environmental*
* Achievability considerations – whether there were any viability concerns.

SDC Core Strategy Policy SP4 was considered as a template to form the basis of the assessment (proximity to local shops, transport links etc.). The Core Strategy can be found here <https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/downloads/file/356/core_strategy_adopted_version_february_2011>

1. **Where will I be able to walk my dog?**

There are a number of public rights of way across Four Elms and indeed the parish. Please see the following website for a useful tool to find a public route (anywhere in Kent). <https://webapps.kent.gov.uk/countrysideaccesscams/standardmap.aspx>

At the request of locals, HPC installed and maintain / empty a dog waste bin at the entrance to the field next to the Four Elms Inn (SR 553) where there is one (of many) public footpaths in the parish.

1. **Gibbs Field, Leigh (which was used as an example of a rural exception site locally)– how is it connected to the village, I couldn’t find the footpath?**

As you enter Gibbs Field, on the right hand side there is a solid footpath which leads onto Powder mill lane.

<https://www.google.co.uk/maps/place/Powder+Mill+Ln,+Tonbridge/@51.1984997,0.2169224,700m/data=!3m1!1e3!4m5!3m4!1s0x47df4f9eef797073:0xd64487e98cba503b!8m2!3d51.1960811!4d0.2282306?hl=en&authuser=0>

**J.** **Can you tell me more about the background of ERHA?**

<https://englishrural.org.uk/a-brief-history-of-english-rural/>