

Housing Needs Survey

At its meeting in November 2020 (**Min. 20.11.06 refers**), the parish council considered report **WPC.20.11.02**, which summarised the approach from Community Action Suffolk (CAS) to undertake a Housing Needs Survey in Wickhambrook, West Suffolk Council (WSC) having selected it as a pilot parish based on:

- current housing need figures; and
- where West Suffolk Council feel housing needs may be identified which would hopefully bring forward a development for local people.

And resolved:

That Wickhambrook Parish Council ask Community Action Suffolk to undertake a Housing Needs Survey for the parish, based on West Suffolk funding CAS to undertake the work, and Wickhambrook Parish Council underwriting the cost of printing and stationery and data input where returned as a hard copy, at not more than £3.50 per property.

In January 2021, the parish council appointed Cllrs J Barton, K Merritt and S Thwaite (Min. 21.01.12 refers) to a working group to prepare the necessary documentation and agree timescales with CAS.

The working group met by zoom in early March with Sunila Osborne at CAS, who confirmed that:

Community Action Suffolk (CAS) will undertake a survey which ensures that it considers national policy planning framework and it takes into account people in the parish who want to downsize or move to an upgraded property that meets their changed needs. Under the National Planning Policy Framework, the HNS now capture all tenure types of need. This can be for affordable rented, shared ownership, open market. People currently living in the parish may want to upgrade or downsize and find that there isn't anything suitable for them.

A summary of the Housing Needs Survey, and implications for taking forward Rural Exception Sites can be found in report [WPC.21.03.21](#).

Because the work of the parish would not be restricted to community engagement and the practical delivery of the housing needs survey in the parish, but may, if a housing need is evidenced, extend to working closely with CAS and West Suffolk to identify and bring forward one or more Rural Exception Sites to be developed by a Housing Association (or through a Community Land Trust), the parish council considered these implications at its March meeting (Min 21.03.5.1&5.2) and resolved:

That Wickhambrook Parish Council confirm its aspiration to work with CAS and West Suffolk Strategic Housing and Planning Services to identify and bring forward a Rural Exception site if evidence of a housing need for such a site is identified from the Housing Needs Survey which it has commissioned; and

That the parish clerk, in consultation with the Housing Needs Survey Working Group, be delegated authority to sign the agreement with Community Action Suffolk.

The working group has subsequently met with the Housing Needs lead officer at CAS and agreed:

- The Housing Needs Survey & covering text
- The covering letter to be sent out with the survey
- A schedule of engagement leading up to delivery of the survey
- The survey period (6th to 17th September)
- Latest date for delivery of surveys (3rd September)

A flyer inviting residents of the parish to a community engagement day on 3rd July included initial information on the Housing Needs Survey, and a poster display and detailed information on the parish council's website have also been part of the engagement plan.

In late August, the parish council will need to prepare the Housing Needs Survey Packs for delivery (30th August – 3rd September). CAS will provide:

- Copy of HNS
- Copy of PC covering letter
- 2x A4 envelopes (1 pre-paid & the other for putting everything into)

These will need to be collated, and a label added to the front. This is likely to take at least one day, and volunteers will be needed to complete this work in advance of delivery.

Due to the size of the parish and scattered nature of many of the dwellings, it is proposed to use a delivery service (which has experience of delivering in the parish). Budget has been approved in this financial year for the Housing Needs Survey, and power to undertake this activity falls under Local Government Act 1972, s.111.

Recommendation:

To authorised the cost of delivery of Housing Needs Surveys in the Parish of Wickhambrook at a cost of £75.00 plus VAT.