

# HSA1

## Supporting Document HSA1 Parish Plan 2015

The introduction to the Housing chapter in the Parish Plan states:

*Housing came up as a major issue in the village questionnaire. With very high land and residential property values, the availability of affordable housing for purchase or rent (especially for younger people and families) was seen as key to the longer term vitality and sustainability of the village.*

Subsequently, a local housing needs study was conducted and as a result the Parish Council and English Rural Housing association built 6 affordable homes for local people at Iden Green, and there are currently planning permissions for a further 12 affordable units as part of larger permitted housing developments in the parish.

### Existing housing stock in Benenden

Figures below are taken from the TWBC Housing Needs Survey (HNS) 2018:<sup>1</sup>

- The population (2011 Census) of the parish is given as 2374 but this includes around 500 pupils at Benenden School. A more representative figure of permanent population is therefore 1874 which includes staff living at the school.
- There are 827 dwellings in Benenden of which over 46% are detached, 18 % semi-detached, 8% terraced, 10% bungalow, 12% flats.
- Of these, 64% are owner occupied, 24% private rented and 12% affordable.
- Average house prices in the High Weald are 142% higher than in the South East. House prices in the Borough have risen 162% since 2000.
- There is significant demand for houses to buy in the parish from families migrating from London and surrounding areas, leading to higher prices (average £600,000); local grammar schools are an added attraction and lead to an additional premium making it virtually impossible for first time buyers in routine occupations to get onto the property ladder.
- The HNS also stresses the importance of the private rented sector in order to facilitate employment and lend economic flexibility.
- An estimated 29% of the population in the High Weald is retired. Estate agents consulted in the HNS 2018 recognised that demand from older people will rise due to the growing numbers of older people seeking specialised accommodation or to downsize.

The scale of the local housing need is reflected in the following two surveys: the Benenden Housing Needs Survey 2015 undertaken by Action for Communities in Rural Kent<sup>2</sup> identified the 'need for 13 homes for older people and for up to 21 general needs affordable homes. In total there is a need for 24 housing association rented properties (18 general needs, 6 for older people) and 3 shared ownership properties for general needs.' Some of this has been met by the six affordable homes at Vyvyan Cottages, Iden Green opened by HRH The Princess Royal in March 2016.

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<sup>1</sup> TWBC Housing Needs Survey

[http://www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0019/132256/711D8F912E166417E0531401A8C086E8\\_Tunbridge\\_Wells\\_HNS\\_draftreport\\_May\\_2018V4.pdf](http://www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/132256/711D8F912E166417E0531401A8C086E8_Tunbridge_Wells_HNS_draftreport_May_2018V4.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> HNS 2015 Action for Communities in Rural Kent Executive Summary p. 3

TWBC's HNS 2018 identified 15 households in need with the net annual affordable housing imbalance in Benenden estimated as 6 small (1-2 bed) affordable units, 2 general and 4 for older people.<sup>3</sup>

### **Consultation**

At the Visioning Workshops (28<sup>th</sup> October; 11<sup>th</sup> November 2017) a number of issues were explored including:

- Limiting the size of any one development
- Ensuring affordable stays affordable
- Sheltered housing for the elderly/opportunities for downsizing
- Housing staying in the control of the community
- Community Land Trust
- A variety of different types of housing
- Affordable rental
- Maintaining the rural 'feel' of the parish

The participants then considered possible scenarios or reasonable alternatives via a 'SWOT' (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) exercise<sup>4</sup> (see Supporting Document HSA1) as to how the parish could meet future housing needs:

- A single large development
- Two or three 'medium' sized developments
- Scattered development of groups of 10-13 houses
- Scattered development with no more than 4 houses on each site

The feasibility and suitability of these scenarios/options or reasonable alternatives have then been subject to the further work of the Housing Supply Working Group.

### **Training**

BNDP volunteers were trained by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) planning officers to undertake site assessments consistent with Planning Practice Guidance, TWBC and best practice guidance from Locality. Subsequent meetings with TWBC have helped to ensure the working group deliberations were consistent with the Basic Conditions requirements.

### **Assessing the Sites**

Individual site appraisal (ISA) sheets were compiled on each site following TWBC's pro-forma bringing together as much information as possible on every site. The observations of the group were then discussed at the next meeting and the results moderated before the ISA was then produced.

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<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/residents/planning/planning-policy/new-local-plan> Evidence Studies - Housing Needs Survey p72,;123

<sup>4</sup> Appendix HSA1 'SWOT' analysis from Visioning Workshop 28<sup>th</sup> October 2017

Each site was also scored numerically using a range of criteria which enabled an objective comparison to be made of the sites, the highest scoring being the most suitable for development.

When all the ISAs had been completed they were shared with TWBC, compared with their own draft SHELAA/HELAA's (Strategic Housing and Environmental Land Availability Assessment/ Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment) and finally submitted our planning consultant for review (see Supporting Document HSA3).