

Neighbourhood Plan

Brief Update for Parish Council Meeting – 19th May 2021

Housing Needs Survey (HNS)

A draft report on the HNS has just been received from RCCE and will now be evaluated and discussed by the NP Steering Group. This process will almost certainly require further dialogue with RCCE and may result in some amendments to the draft report.

Proposals for policies to be included in the NP regarding the housing needs of existing residents will then be developed using data taken from the HNS as the main evidence base. Draft proposals for these policies will be presented to the full Parish Council at a subsequent monthly meeting.

For your information a summary of the main recommendations contained in the draft report from RCCE are as follows:

Key Findings and Recommendations

*This Housing Needs Survey was carried out in the parish of Earls Colne in early 2021 by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and the Rural Housing Enabler at RCCE. The Parish Council arranged for the delivery of the forms. The survey had a **32%** response rate (527/1650) which is well above the county average of 25%.*

*There was support for a small development, with **64%** stating they would be supportive of a small development (4 - 8 homes) which is primarily affordable housing for local people. Only **15%** of respondents would be supportive of further developments of houses for sale on the open market.*

There were comments around the sustainability and suitability of any further development in the parish, especially with regards to existing schemes and concerns over the lack of local infrastructure. There was general support for housing for the local community, more particularly the younger generation and older/retired people, whilst hoping any development will not be too large and unsympathetic (in both cost and design) to its surroundings. On road parking seemed to be an issue highlighted amongst the community that is causing real concern. There were suggestions for possible sites which can be referenced in the Appendix 5.

*In Part 1, one hundred and fifteen households indicated that they had a need to move to alternative accommodation. Forty one of these did not progress to answering Part 3 of the survey, as they aspired to move out of the parish or did not complete the form. This therefore leaves the total number of respondents, expressing a housing need and who completed Part 1, Part 2 and Part 3 at **seventy four**. There is also evidence of a younger generation coming through, whose needs are hard to identify at this time due to lack of finances. Eighteen households (including self-build) were considered capable of accessing open market housing, one private renting which left thirty-four households seeking some*

*form of affordable housing; the majority of which are required within the next 5 years. Twenty-one respondents did not provide sufficient information to assess their need. The main reason respondents had a desire to move to alternative accommodation was to **downsize to smaller accommodation**, with twenty-three, out of the seventy four (31%) households citing this option. Two-bedroom households were the most preferred property size (47%). Eleven households confirmed they are on the local authority housing register. As a result of our analysis of the data provided, we would suggest an **affordable rented** recommendation of **up to 32 units** of mixed size. We would recommend that the Parish Council raise awareness of the need to be on the Braintree District Council Housing Register, amongst the residents of Earls Colne parish, in order for them to be considered for local needs affordable housing schemes in the future. The majority of those in need of affordable accommodation were families or younger residents looking to move out on their own. Some aspired to open market but the level of finances declared (salary, savings and equity) would not be sufficient, given the house prices in the area.*

*Upon reviewing the financial situation of those households aspiring to open market, discounted market sale, self-build and shared ownership properties, we have assessed potentially seventeen would be suitable for **open market** and two would be suitable for the **shared ownership** tenure. Interestingly, of the 17 households suitable for open market, 12 (71%) are for those in an older age category looking to downsize.*

*Twelve respondents answered that they have **special housing needs**, leading to a recommendation that bungalows or ground floor properties be considered for five of the open market homes and one of the affordable homes.*

This report provides information on open market and affordable housing. For any affordable housing schemes discussions on finalizing the size and tenure should take place with the parish council, the housing association partner and the local authority at an appropriate time should a scheme go ahead.

Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)

A funding application for the LCA can now be progressed as access to Neighbourhood Plan funds for the new financial year (2021/2022) have just been released by the government.

The application form and supporting documentation will be submitted in the next few days.

Design Code

As agreed at the last meeting an application for the “Free” Design Code Technical Support Package will be made at the same time as the funding application for the LCA.

Tony Calton

13.05.2021