



7. Housing

Background

7.1 At the last census (2011) the parish had a population of 6,717, which was projected to rise by 1.5 per cent per annum. Using this projection, the population of the parish is currently estimated to be 7,500 rising to 9,350 or so by 2033. When considering the likely impact on population associated with current and future TWBC housing targets of approximately 800 new homes for the parish the figure is estimated to rise to around 11,750 by 2033¹. The number of dwellings would rise by 33 percent by 2033.

Overall Policy Aims

- To deliver the housing needs of the parish in ways that respect heritage and tradition
- To encourage innovative design fit for the future
- To provide a range of housing types and tenures to meet the needs of a growing population
- To meet the demand for affordable housing to enable all who work in the parish, and wish to live here, but who are unable to afford to do so, to live locally
- To ensure the design of new housing schemes maintain the historic farmstead model of development by being small scale, sensitive and dispersed on the landscape.

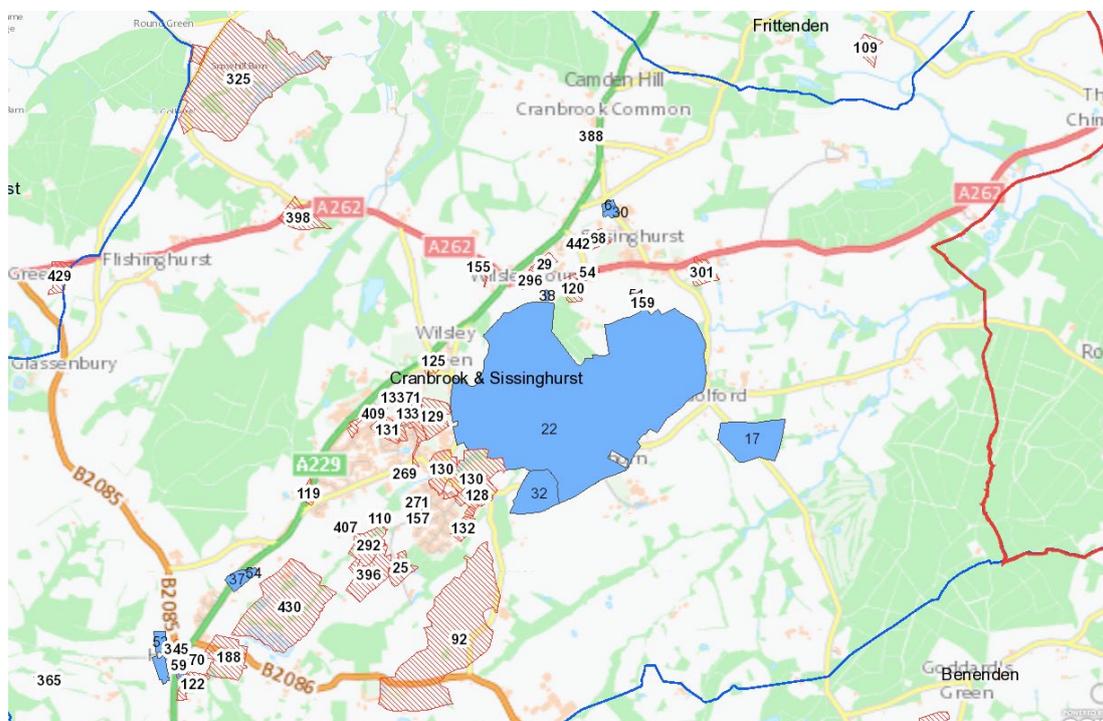
¹ Based on current average population of 2.4 people per household in the Parish, 2011 census.

Housing Supply

7.2 The UK population is growing, and successive governments have failed to build enough homes to meet this need. The current government has set a target for 300,000 new homes each year. They have tasked TWBC to provide 13,500 homes by 2033.

Call for Sites

7.3 In the development of the emerging Tunbridge Wells Local Plan, the Council conducted a call for sites in 2016 inviting individuals and organisations to identify sites and broad locations for housing and economic development uses within the borough. The Council then conducted a second call for sites, in which a number of 'late additional sites' were submitted. In total, the Local Plan 'Call for Sites' identified 50 sites available within CSNP area. A further 4 sites were identified locally for their development potential giving a total of 54 sites for consideration to meet the outstanding housing need in the CSNP area.



TWBC Local Plan 'Call for sites' map showing 50 sites within Cranbrook and Sissinghurst Parish

Local Housing Needs

- 7.4 A housing assessment need was carried out by AECOM in 2017 with the recommendation that the housing need for the Parish in the period 2017-2033 is at least 610 net additional dwellings².

How many houses do we need to deliver?

- 7.5 The draft Tunbridge Wells Borough new Local Plan underwent a public consultation in the autumn of 2019. In the plan a total of 818-918 new houses over 14 sites are allocated for Cranbrook and Sissinghurst parish. Once adopted, the Local Plan policies and housing allocations will supersede those in the current Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan (adopted 2006)³ the Core Strategy (adopted 2010)⁴ and the Site Allocations Local Plan (adopted 2016)⁵.

² Housing assessment need was carried out by AECOM in 2017

³ Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (2006): 'Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan' [online] available at: <<http://www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/residents/planning/planning-policy/local-plan/local-plan-chapters>> [accessed 02/04/19]

⁴ Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (2010): 'Core Strategy Development Plan Document' [online] available at: <http://www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/138636/Core-Strategy-adopted-June-2010.compressed.pdf> [accessed 02/04/19]

⁵ Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (2016): 'Site Allocations Local Plan' [online] available at: <<http://www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/residents/planning/planning-policy/development-plan-documents/site-allocations>> [accessed 02/04/19]

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Affordable Homes in Sustainable Locations

- a) **Planning applications for the development of affordable sustainable housing schemes, which can demonstrate that they are of a high design standard in keeping with town and/or landscape settings, will be supported.**
- b) **Affordable housing should be made subject to a local connection test.**

Policy Supporting Text

- 7.6 In the Parish there are some 3,000 households⁶ of which 65% are owned, 20% are social rented and 11% private rented. The housing stock comprises 33% detached, 35% semi-detached, 21% terraced and 12% flats/maisonettes/apartments. The average cost⁷ of a detached house is £816,000, semi-detached, £435,000 and terraced, £308,000. The average house price in 2017 was £534,000, whereas the average earnings for workers in the Parish was £28.2k per annum (a ratio of 19:1 compared to the national figure of 12:1) making the Parish one of the most unaffordable areas in the country for local people.
- 7.7 An independent Housing Needs Assessment by AECOM concluded that there is a need for an additional 610 homes by 2033 and recommended that 50% of which should be 1 and 2-bedroom homes as the demand for 4-bedroom houses and larger is already well catered for in the parish, whereas there is a high demand for affordable homes. Thus, the proportion sought by the plan is for approximately 300 affordable homes of mostly 1 and 2-bedroom and some 3-bedroom homes.
- 7.8 A similar conclusion was reached from the NDP Business & Employment questionnaire⁸ that surveyed local businesses. 65% of enterprises surveyed said their staff needed affordable housing. A need for a minimum of 300 affordable homes for local businesses was identified. 82% of employees travel into the parish to work because they cannot afford to live locally, some from as far away as Gillingham and Bexhill.
- 7.9 Visioning events were held in 2017 to explore the main challenges and opportunities within the parish. The results of these events provided a key ingredient to the emerging CSNP. From the comments received from this and other public exhibitions there was a clear demand for a range of local housing types and tenures to meet the needs of the population from first home to downsizing and for affordable homes for those who work in the parish.

⁶ Extrapolated from 2011 census data

⁷ Source: Right Move, August 2017

⁸ See also Business & Employment chapter

- 7.10 Throughout the public engagements, residents reported a high incidence of young adults still living with their parents as they were unable to afford their own accommodation.
- 7.11 The options available for families and individuals on low to no income are limited due to the high cost of both market and rented housing and where demand exceeds supply. Generally, low-income households are living in social rented housing owned by housing associations, or on waiting lists. The parish has a significant stock of social housing representing 20 percent of total households. Of this 77 percent is for 1 and 2-bedroom properties and 23 percent for 3 to 4-bedrooms.
- 7.12 Those on relatively higher incomes are renting from the private rented sector, which varies in quality and cost. The demand for 1-bedroom social housing is highest by single people over the age of 65 and for 2-bedrooms by young adults aged 18-24. The availability of 3 to 4-bedroom social housing is very limited representing only 6 percent of total social housing stock⁹ serving some 1,000 applicants. The number registered for social housing appears to have dropped slightly in recent years.

⁹ TWBC Housing Allocations Officer 2018

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Lifetime Homes & Accessible Intergenerational Living

- a) Applications for accessible homes suitable for the elderly and those with a disability, which can demonstrate that they are of a high design standard in keeping with town and/or landscape settings, will be supported.
- b) Applications that enable inter-generational living will be supported.

Policy Supporting Text

7.13 As previously stated, the housing needs assessment by AECOM concluded that there is a need for an additional 610 homes by 2033, of which the report recommended that 50% should be 1 and 2-bedroom homes. This concurs with evidence gathered throughout public engagements which highlighted the shortage of suitable housing supply for both older people wanting to downsize and those with a disability requiring additional space allowance for accessibility.

7.14 In some cases, this has meant that people have moved out of the area and away from the family support they rely on. Older residents also reported that they would like to release family-sized houses onto the market and to move to accommodation more appropriate for their needs, yet remain within the parish, but recognised the shortage of supply.

7.15 It is envisaged this can be achieved in several ways, either through including accessible homes as part of new developments, or through the development of flexible spaces which enable multiple generations to live closer together yet retain their own private spaces.

7.16 These policies seek to address this shortage of suitable accommodation for those wishing to stay near to their families to enable greater social sustainability.

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Innovative Construction Solutions

Alternative construction solutions such as self-build, co-housing and other community-led housing schemes will be supported, if they can be demonstrated to comply with other plan policies and are in response to a specified housing need in the parish.

Policy Supporting Text

- 7.17 This policy is to support resident- and community-led initiatives to provide an alternative housing delivery mechanism, to supplement the efforts of the major house-building companies.
- 7.18 Innovative construction methods such as off-site modular housing will be considered.
- 7.19 This policy is supported by the National Design Guide (2019)¹⁰ which recognises the important role the community can play in helping to deliver new housing.
- 7.20 The Crane Valley Land Trust (CVLT) is a local community interest company (CIC) set up in 2018 to help deliver affordable housing in the parish.

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-design-guide>

Draft Policy HO6.4

Rural Exception Sites

- a) Applications for development outside agreed allocations and away from the Limits to Built Development will only be supported where it can be clearly demonstrated that they are small or medium scale, in response to local need, that they respect and enhance the distinct historic landscape character, and that designs are compliant with the High Weald AONB Design Guide and the Parish Council's Eco-Design guide for new buildings¹¹.
- b) A small proportion of market housing on these sites will be permitted to facilitate this, so long as they are built to the same 'tenure blind' standards as the rest of the development.
- c) Proposals for such schemes will need to demonstrate how the sustainability constraints of their location can be mitigated and satisfactorily overcome.

Policy Supporting Text

- 7.21 To achieve high quality design housing which is still affordable to workers on low- to medium-incomes in the local area, it is recognised that some housing may need to be provided in locations outside the main settlements. This policy is intended to enable smaller scale developments of the highest architectural standard that can demonstrate they enhance their setting and are in response to a specified local housing need within the parish. It is not intended to support isolated homes in the countryside.
- 7.22 To ensure social sustainability, both market and affordable housing should be tenure blind within a coherent and well-connected design scheme. In order to mitigate against their unsustainability, there will be an expectation to demonstrate how the sustainability constraints of the location have been overcome.

¹¹ Refer to Design & Heritage chapter

APPENDIX

Affordable Housing¹²

7.23 Housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers); and which complies with one or more of the following definitions:

- a) **Affordable housing for rent** meets all the following conditions:
 - the rent is set in accordance with the Government's rent policy, or is at least 20% below local market rents (including any service charges)
 - the landlord is a registered provider, except where it is included as part of a Build to Rent scheme (in which case the landlord need not be a registered provider); and
 - it includes provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision. For Build to Rent schemes affordable housing for rent is expected to be the normal form of affordable housing provision (and, in this context, is known as Affordable Private Rent)
- b) **Starter homes** is as specified in Sections 2 and 3 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 and any secondary legislation made under these sections. The definition of a starter home should reflect the meaning set out in statute at the time of plan preparation or decision-making. Income restrictions should be used to limit a household's eligibility to purchase a starter home to those who have maximum household incomes of £80,000 a year or less
- c) **Discounted market sales housing** is that sold at a discount of at least 20% below local market value. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Provisions should be in place to ensure housing remains at a discount for future eligible households
- d) **Other affordable routes to home ownership** is housing provided for sale that provides a route to ownership for those who could not achieve home ownership through the market. It includes shared ownership, relevant equity loans, other low-cost homes for sale and rent to buy (which includes a period of intermediate rent). Homes to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for any receipts to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision or refunded to Government or the relevant authority specified in the funding agreement

¹² House of Commons Library Briefing Paper Number 07747, 19 March 2018: What is affordable housing? By Wendy Wilson and Cassie Barton

Accessible & Lifetime Homes

Accessible homes, sometimes referred to as Lifetime homes, are ones that are designed with features that cater for young families with children, people with injuries as well as seniors and people living with disabilities. They incorporate design features to make homes easier to access, navigate and live in over the lifetimes of their occupants and include:

- a safe continuous and step-free path of travel from the street entrance and / or parking area to a dwelling entrance that is level
- at least one, level (step-free) entrance into the dwelling
- internal doors (870mm) and corridors (1000mm) that facilitate comfortable and unimpeded movement between spaces, including wheelchair access
- a toilet on the ground (or entry) level that provides easy access (1200mm clearance in front of WC)
- a bathroom and shower that provides easy access with a larger, 'step-free' shower recess
- reinforced walls around the toilet, shower, and bath to support the safe installation of grab rails at a later date.

Full details can be found in the Lifetime Homes Guide at: www.habinteg.org.uk/lifetime-homes-design-guide