

Wells Town Council

**Report on Housing Needs Survey
2020**

**Commissioned by Holkham Estate in
partnership with Wells Town Council
and Walsingham Estates and
supported by Homes for Wells**

Background

- Wells' population declined by over 12% from 2001 to 2011 (2165), reflective of the impact of second and holiday homes.
(There is every reason to believe that this process has continued.)
- Local government projections are of a 16% increase in the number of houses needed in North Norfolk in the next twenty years caused by population increase and inward migration to the District
- Population growth is heavily skewed towards those aged 65+, a figure which is project most steeply in the case of those aged 85+for whom housing with care is a priority.
- *The Local Plan proposes an increase of 80 houses in Wells during the period – a lower figure than its size would suggest because of its location by the sea in an AONB. This is not a maximum figure.*

Availability of houses against incomes

- With homes being taken out of the market for residents, house prices are rising steeply.
- A two bed house cost on average £315,000 two years ago; a three bed house cost on average £415,000.
(Note: according to the ONS the average price for three bed house in Wells has now risen to £557,000 – as of March 2020)
- The average gross household income of Wells residents of £38,550 will buy a house costing £180,000.
- The lower 25% of households has an income of £18,140 at which level households could afford outgoings of up to £380 a month or a property costing £85,000.

Houses for rent

- Houses for rent are becoming available at the rate of 20 lettings per year.
- At this rate it would take seven years to house those on the current housing list
Homes for Wells reports that tenants in privately rented housing are being evicted so that properties can be made available for holiday lets.
- Three quarters of those on the housing list wish to remain in the parish where they are.
- A modelled illustration of how new build schemes would match households' ability to access housing suggests that 60% of such schemes would need to consist of affordable rented housing.

What people want

Comments from those who filled in the questionnaire focussed on:

- the need for affordable housing for local people;
- the need to improve the supply of affordable housing;
- the number and rate of increase of second and holiday homes, of which most of the comments were critical.

Conclusions

- There is a significant level of need from older households, including those wishing to downsize, and from single, couple and family households in need of more permanent and more affordable homes of their own.
- The growth in the number of second and holiday homes, as well as people from out of county buying permanent homes in Wells is putting pressure on local people and their grown-up children who want to live in the town.
- The number of affordable homes, whether privately or socially rented, is decreasing.

Final Comment

- Richard Turkington of *Housing Vision*, which produced the report concluded with this sentence :

‘It is difficult to see how, in these circumstances, the need for suitable housing identified by the project can be satisfactorily met.’

- He described it as
‘A perfect storm’

Response

The Neighbourhood Plan Working Party will be meeting on April 29th and hopes to present to the next Council meeting some draft proposals intended to seek ways by which the issues raised by the report can be addressed.