

Classification: Public

Key Decision: No

Gravesham Borough Council

Report to: Housing Services Cabinet Committee

Date: 25 September 2019

Reporting officer: Assistant Director (Planning)

Subject: Rural Housing Needs Survey update including four Rural Housing Needs Surveys

Purpose and summary of report:

- (1) To update Members on the future rolling programme for Rural Housing Needs Surveys
- (2) To update Members on the outcome of Rural Housing Needs Surveys undertaken between 2017 and 2018 for Vigo, Istead Rise, Luddesdown and Shorne;

Recommendations:

1. That the future rolling programme be noted for publication on the Council's website
2. That the Rural Housing Needs Surveys for Vigo, Istead Rise, Luddesdown and Shorne are noted for publication on the Council's website.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Borough Council has a statutory duty (1985 Housing Act) to investigate housing needs and examine ways of meeting those needs. Best practice recommends that in rural areas Housing Needs Surveys are carried out as part of a rolling programme every five years.
- 1.2 The aim of the surveys is to provide an impartial evidenced overview of the scale and nature of the full range of housing need in a locality, usually a village or parish. The information from these surveys is then utilised to ensure that any new homes built in the area reflect what is needed by existing local residents who have a connection to a particular area. The surveys are a snapshot in time and best practice recommends that they have a 'shelf-life' of no more than 5 years, at which point a new survey should be undertaken.
- 1.3 The surveys also form an integral part of the evidence needed to support the implementation of Local Plan Core Strategy Policy CS16: Affordable Housing, which seeks developments in the rural area of 3 units or more or on sites of 0.1 hectares or more to deliver 35% of the development as affordable housing.

2. Timetable for Surveys and Future Rolling Programme

2.1 Rural Housing Needs Surveys for Gravesham are undertaken by Action with Communities in Rural Kent (ACRK). As ACRK also undertake such surveys for other Kent districts, they only have the capacity to undertake two Rural Housing Needs Surveys in any given financial year for Gravesham. Rural Housing Needs Surveys for Vigo and Istead Rise were undertaken in 2017 and the Rural Housing Needs Surveys for Luddesdown and Shorne were undertaken in 2018. ACRK have agreed to undertake the Rural Housing Needs Surveys for Meopham, Higham and Cobham in January, February and April 2020 respectively (see table below).

Table 1 : Rural Housing Needs Surveys Timetable

Parish / Village	Published Rural Housing Needs Surveys	Replacement Rural Housing Needs Survey Undertaken / Agreed with ACRK	Indicative Future Rolling Programme
Cobham	March 2015	April 2020	April 2025
Higham	October 2015	February 2020	February 2025
Meopham	February 2015	January 2020	January 2025
Luddesdown	November 2013	October 2018	October 2023
Shorne	November 2013	October 2018	October 2023
Vigo	June 2012	June 2017	June 2022
Istead Rise	July 2012	July 2017	July 2022

2.2 As the Council has a statutory duty to investigate housing needs and as Rural Housing Needs Surveys have a shelf life of five years, it would be beneficial to advise local residents and Parish Councils of both the current timetable and future rolling programme by making this information publicly accessible on our website.

2.3 Given the contentious nature of the Local Plan Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Document further detail will also be provided online regarding the purpose of Rural Housing Needs Surveys and how the information is utilised. This will be carefully worded to ensure that it does not prejudice members future ability to consider how they wish to allocate development quantities to urban and rural areas in future including affordable housing.

3. Survey distribution and response rate for 2017 and 2018

3.1 The Rural Housing Enabler from Action with Communities in Rural Kent (ACRK) posts survey forms to every household within the relevant Parish or Village. For the four surveys recently, undertaken approximately 3,380 surveys were distributed, with 990 surveys being returned. This represents a response rate of 29% (see table overleaf). The slightly lower response rate in Istead Rise (27%) maybe linked to local residents desire not to see any additional development in the area and in particularly on Green Belt land, this is emphasised by comments made by those who did respond who commented that:

- the infrastructure in Istead Rise could not cope with additional development and people,
- no more homes were needed in Istead Rise,
- the Green Belt should not be built on,
- affordable housing may devalue existing property prices,
- new development will bring in people from outside of Istead Rise instead of meeting the needs of local people.

Table 2 : 2017 and 2018 Rural Housing Needs Surveys Survey Distribution and Response Rate

Parish / Village	No. of Surveys Distributed	No. of Surveys Returned	Response Rate
Vigo	797	239	30%
Istead Rise	1,445	383	27%
Luddesdown	85	33	39%
Shorne	1,056	338	32%

3.2 Following receipt of completed surveys, ACRK prepares draft reports, which are primarily reviewed by the Planning Policy team prior to being circulated to Housing Strategy and Development colleagues. The reports for Vigo, Istead Rise, Luddesdown and Shorne are available at Appendices 2-5. The surveys give respondents an opportunity to make general comments as part of their response. These comments are included within each survey report verbatim.

4. Results of the Vigo Rural Housing Needs Survey 2017

4.1 ACRK's analysis is set out in Table 3 (overleaf). Compared to previous survey reports, ACRK now identify the needs of older persons separately. The data provided shows a decreasing need for affordable homes in Vigo and Shorne, but an increasing need for affordable homes in Istead Rise and Luddesdown when compared to previous survey reports. There is also a need for market housing that can meet the needs of older person households e.g. smaller accommodation to enable downsizing and reduce day to day household costs.

Table 3: Affordable and Older Persons Housing Needs for Vigo, Istead Rise, Luddesdown and Shorne

Parish / Village	Previous Housing Need	Current Housing Need					
		Households			Tenure		
		Types	Affordable Homes*	Older Persons Homes	Older Persons (Tenure)		
Vigo	Overall No. of Households	17	Overall No.	10	7	Total	7
	Single Person Households	8	Single Persons	3	4	Market	7
	Couple Households	4	Couples	3	3	Affordable	-
	Family Households	5	Families	4	N/A	Residential Care	-
Istead Rise	Overall No. of Households	8	Overall No.	10	12	Total	12
	Single Person Households	3	Single Persons	5	7	Market	9
	Couple Households	1	Couples	4	5	Affordable	2
	Family Households	4	Families	1	N/A	Residential Care	1
Luddesdown	No requirement identified	Overall No.	-	1	Total	1	
		Couples	-	1	Affordable	1	
Shorne	Overall No. of Households	13	Overall No.	6	9	Total	9
	Single Person Households	8	Single Persons	2	5	Market	5
	Couple Households	3	Couples	2	4	Affordable	4
	Family Households	2	Families	2	N/A	Residential Care	-

* Excludes needs of Older Persons

5. Conclusion

5.1 The reports have been compiled by ACRK using data from the approved rural housing needs survey. It is therefore recommended that the reports be noted and published on the Council's website and for final copies to be sent to the respective Parish Councils and Community Association. .

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

6.1 Anyone wishing to inspect background papers should, in the first place, be directed to Committee & Electoral Services who will make the necessary arrangements.

IMPLICATIONS	APPENDIX 1
Legal	The undertaking of and subsequent publication of RHNS for the rural areas contributes towards the Borough Council meeting its statutory duty as set out in the 1985 Housing Act.
Finance and Value for Money	The Council has a rolling programme in place to ensure that all parishes are regularly surveyed. An annual budget of £3,500 has been allowed to ensure the rolling programme of rural housing needs surveys continues. This figure also covers retaining ACRK in an advisory capacity.
Risk Assessment	Failure to undertake RHNS for the Borough's rural areas will mean that insufficient impartial evidence is available to show that the Council is meeting its statutory duty as set out in the 1985 Housing Act. It will also reduce the Council's ability to seek Affordable Housing from developers within the rural area.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	<i>A data protection impact assessment (DPIA) should be carried out at the start of any major project involving the use of personal data or if you are making a significant change to an existing process.</i>
	<p>a. Does the project/change being recommended through this paper involve the processing of personal data or special category data or criminal offence data? A definition of each type of data can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office website via the above links.</p>
	<p>b. If yes to question a, have you completed and attached a DPIA including Data Protection Officer advice? N/A - the answer to question a. is 'No.'</p>
	<p>c. If no to question b, please seek advice from your nominated DPIA assessor or the Information Governance Team at gdpr@medway.gov.uk.</p>
Equality Impact Assessment	<p>a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community? If yes, please explain answer. No</p>
	<p>b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality? If yes, please explain answer. Yes Contributes towards ensuring the correct tenure and size of properties are built in the rural areas.</p>
	<i>In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above</i>
Corporate Plan	Corporate Objective 02 Stronger Gravesham - Key Theme: Quality local housing

Crime and Disorder	There are no Crime and Disorder considerations pertaining to this report.
Digital and website implications	Subject to approval, the RHNS page on the Council's website will be updated with the most recent survey reports, a timetable illustrating when future surveys will be undertaken and additional explanatory text.
Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults	There are no "safeguarding children and vulnerable adults" implications pertaining to this report.