



AVON DASSETT HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY

**Commissioned as part of the Avon Dasset
Parish Plan 2007**

**Carried out in partnership with
Warwickshire Rural Community Council and
Warwickshire Rural Housing Association**

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1. Summary of results

Approximately <number> housing needs survey forms were distributed and <number> forms were returned. This equates to a response rate of <number>%, a <comment> achievement for a survey of this type.

<Number> respondents expressed a need for alternative housing. The specific needs are for

Owner-occupier

Rented

Shared ownership

2. Introduction

Avon Dassett Parish Plan Steering Group and Avon Dassett Parish Council commissioned a local housing needs survey in April 2007.

The aim of the survey was to collect accurate housing needs information for Avon Dassett Parish. This information can be used in a number of ways, but perhaps the most important is to help justify a small scheme of affordable homes for people with a local connection. This type of scheme is referred to as a 'Rural Exception' scheme, because the development of new homes in rural areas is an exception to normal planning policy.

A survey form was designed with input from the Parish Plan Steering Group and the Rural Housing Enabler for Warwickshire Rural Community Council. The basis of the form was a model document, previously used for many local needs surveys in parishes across Warwickshire.

A copy of the survey form was delivered to every home in the parish. Additional copies of the form were available for people not currently living in Avon Dassett. A copy of the survey form can be seen as Appendix A to this report.

All households were requested to fill out Part 1 of the survey form. The first segment in Part 1 was designed to collect information on household composition and property tenure, type and size. The second segment was an opportunity for residents to comment on specific issues, in order to build up a profile of positive and negative aspects to life in the parish. The final segment asked whether any member of the household had left the parish to find affordable or suitable accommodation and whether or not they would be in favour of a small scheme of new homes to meet locally identified housing needs.

Only households with or containing a specific housing need were asked to complete Part 2 of the survey form. This asked for respondents' names and addresses and other sensitive information, e.g. financial details. Respondents were assured that any information they disclosed would be treated in the strictest confidence.

Completed survey forms were posted via a 'Freepost' envelope to the Rural Housing Enabler. Analysis of all the information provided took place in early June 2007.

3. Planning context

Planning policy at all levels {national, regional and local} imposes considerable restraint on new housing development in rural areas. There is, however, capacity for this restraint to be relaxed in exceptional circumstances, but only where new housing meets an identified local need for affordable homes.

Policy CTY.5 of the Stratford on Avon District Local Plan 1996-2011 provides the local planning policy mechanism for 'Rural Exception' schemes. The policy states:

"The development, in exceptional circumstances, of affordable dwellings to meet local housing need in perpetuity may be permitted in settlements where residential development is normally resisted.

Such schemes will be supported within or adjacent to existing settlements provided that:

- It has been demonstrated that there is a local and long-term need for affordable housing
- The content of the scheme reflects and can reasonably be expected to meet identified local need
- The scheme has been initiated from within the local community and has the support of the relevant Parish Council, or is identified in an adopted Parish Plan (or equivalent)
- Satisfactory prior arrangements for the management and occupation of the properties have been made to ensure that the homes to be provided will meet identified local housing needs, both initially and in perpetuity, and
- The need to ensure that other relevant policies of the Plan are not undermined in the location and design of the scheme"

‘Local need’ refers to need originating or relating to a particular village. For parishes that contain more than one village, the housing needs of each village must be considered separately. In the case of Avon Dassett the village and the parish are effectively the same thing.

A household is considered to have a local connection if it meets one or more of the following **‘Local connection criteria’**:

- An individual who was born in the parish
- An individual who currently lives in the parish and has done so for at least 12 months
- An individual who was resident in the parish for at least 3 continuous years but has left in order to find suitable accommodation
- An individual who works full time in the parish and has done so for at least 12 months
- An individual with a close family member, i.e. mother, father, brother or sister, son or daughter resident in the parish for at least 3 continuous years

‘Affordable housing’ is defined as homes available to rent through a housing association at a low (subsidised) rent or homes available on a shared ownership basis. Shared ownership (sometimes known as ‘Homebuy’) is a middle ground between renting a property and full ownership. A ‘shared owner’ buys a share of the property, typically 50% initially, and pays rent to a housing provider, usually a housing association, on the remaining share. A ‘shared owner’ can usually increase their share of the property up to a certain limit, but they are not able to buy the property outright (under current legislation).

All new affordable homes provided as part of a ‘Rural Exception’ scheme are subject to a planning obligation, referred to as a **‘Section 106 Agreement’**. This limits occupation of the homes to people with a local connection in the first instance and ensures that the homes remain ‘affordable’ in perpetuity.

4. Results – Contextual information

A total of <number> survey forms were returned equating to a response rate of <number>%. This level of response is a <comment> achievement for a survey of this type because people generally respond for one of three reasons:

1. To express a housing need.
2. To offer support in principle to the idea of a small housing scheme to meet local needs.
3. To state opposition to the idea of a housing scheme.

i) Age profile (<number> responses, <number> people)

The following chart shows the age profile captured by the survey returns. In common with many Warwickshire parishes, the chart shows an ageing population, with <number>% of people aged 45 years or over. Encouragingly though, the number of children in the age bracket 0–16 years and adults in the age bracket 30-44 years indicates a relatively high number of young families as well. In terms of the future sustainability of the village, this is a healthy sign.

ii) Household size profile (<number> responses)

The information collected from the age profile can also be used to create a profile of household size, as shown in the following chart. The chart shows a dominance of 1 and 2 person households as indeed do the majority of parish housing needs surveys. The mean average household size is <number> people; slightly less than the Census 2001 figure for Avon Dassett Parish of 2.26 people.

iii) Housing tenure profile (<number> responses)

The following chart shows the housing tenure profile for the survey respondents. In a pattern typical for villages in south Warwickshire, owner-occupiers represent <number>% of the total. Tenures traditionally considered within the 'social sector' represent <number>% of the total.

iv) Housing type profile (<number> responses)

The chart below shows the types of homes that the survey respondents live in. Perhaps unsurprisingly houses represent the largest factor.

v) Housing size profile (<number> responses)

The following chart shows the sizes of homes that respondents live in. 2, 3 and 4 bedroom homes make up the majority.

vi) Housing type and size profiles cross referenced (<number> responses)

Cross-referencing the data from 4.iv and 4.v provides a combined profile of type and size. 3 bedroom houses emerge as the largest single factor.

vii) Life in the parish: positive and negative aspects (<number> responses)

Respondents were asked a series of questions in respect of the perceived positive and negative aspects to life in Avon Dassett Parish.

Information relating to the sustainability of a village is important to assess whether any affordable homes that are subsequently provided will be 'sustainable'. Ensuring that people will take up tenancies is a crucial consideration when proposing new affordable homes.

The first chart shows respondents' views on the benefits to living in Avon Dassett. The majority of respondents thought the parish had a good reputation, was a nice place to live, and had a balanced and varied population and a friendly spirit.

The second chart shows respondents' views on negative issues that exist in the parish. In respect of crime and antisocial behaviour, the majority of people didn't perceive there to be an issue. In respect of whether or not there was a lack of facilities, although the majority of respondents were happy with the level of provision, a significant minority thought that extra facilities were needed. In respect of whether or not there was adequate housing, a significant number of respondents thought there was a lack of housing.

Respondents were asked to elaborate on their views regarding a lack of facilities and a lack of housing. Certain key issues emerged, as described in the following tables:

Lack of facilities – comments:

Key issue	Number of respondents' comments

Lack of adequate housing – comments:

Key issue	Number of respondents' comments

viii) Outward migration from the parish (<number> responses)

Respondents were asked whether anyone in their household had had to leave the parish in the last 5 years because no affordable/suitable housing was available. The following chart shows the overall response.

ix) Support for one or more small housing schemes based on local needs (<number> responses)

The chart below shows the level of support amongst respondents for one or more small housing schemes to meet the needs of local people being built in the parish. The chart shows there is a high level of support amongst respondents for one or more small schemes. Only 22% of respondents were completely against this idea. Comments received from respondents in respect of this matter are reproduced as Appendix B to this report.

5. Results – Housing needs information

Out of the <number> responses to the survey, <number> individuals/households expressed a need for alternative housing. <Number> of these <number> housing needs was discounted from the final analysis, however, because the respondents' housing requirements appeared to be met already.

Section 5 provides a breakdown of information from the remaining <number> individuals/households.

i) Reason(s) for housing needs – breakdown (<number> responses)

The following chart shows the reasons for the <number> respondents' housing needs. Where more than one reason was specified, the first reason shown on the survey form was counted.

ii) Local connection – breakdown (<number> responses)

The chart below shows the types of local connection that the <number> respondents have. The <number> respondents that were not currently living in the parish had <both/all> previously lived in the parish.

iii) Waiting list – breakdown (<number> responses)

The following chart shows the number of respondents registered on the local authority waiting list and/or a housing association waiting list.

iv) Preferred tenure – breakdown (<number> responses)

The preferred tenures of the <number> respondents are shown in the chart below.

v) Preferred type and size – breakdown (<number> responses)

The preferred types and sizes of accommodation expressed by the <number> respondents are shown in the following chart.

6. Determination of specific housing needs

The following table shows the specific housing needs of the <number> respondents. A number of rules were used to compile this table:

- Where a respondent indicated a preference for a 1 bedroom home they were classified as being in need of a 2 bedroom home. There are three reasons for this: 1.) The possibility of a 1 bedroom home sitting vacant for a period of time, 2.) The extra flexibility that a 2 bedroom home provides and 3.) The possibility that a household will grow and need additional space in the future.

Past experience of providing 1 bedroom affordable homes in rural areas has often proved to be problematic. The needs that exist in the short term may change significantly in the medium and long term. The consequence of these changes is that 1 bedroom homes, especially older homes, can be difficult to let and therefore sit vacant for periods of time.

In reality a 1 bedroom home can accommodate only a single person or a couple, whereas a 2 bedroom home can also accommodate a small family. This increased flexibility, weighed up against the relatively small extra cost and extra space associated with building a 2 bedroom home, is a strong argument for providing the larger unit.

- Where a respondent indicated a preference for shared ownership their ability to enter into a shared ownership arrangement was assessed. The mortgage the respondent could raise was compared against a 50% share (the usual starting % for shared ownership) of a comparable open market property. Research was carried out on property prices in the Avon Dassett area and this can be seen as Appendix C to this report. Having assessed whether the respondent could afford to enter into a shared ownership arrangement, if they could not do so they were re-classified as being in need of rented accommodation from a housing association.
- Where a respondent indicated a preference for owner-occupied housing their ability to afford this was clarified using the income and mortgage capacity information they provided. If a respondent could not afford owner-occupied housing then they were reclassified as being in need of shared ownership housing under the terms described in the paragraph above.

Local connection verified	Preferred tenure	Preferred type/size	Actual tenure	Actual type/size

A full breakdown of the needs can be seen as Appendix D to this report.

7. Conclusions

There is need for <number> new homes in Avon Dassett for people with a local connection. The specific needs are:

Owner-occupier

Rented

Shared ownership

8. Recommendations

It is recommended that an exercise is carried out to identify a suitable piece of land, or pieces of land, to meet the <number> housing needs identified by this survey. Partners in this exercise should include:

- The Parish Council and/or Parish Plan Steering Group
- Stratford on Avon District Council
- Warwickshire Rural Housing Association
- Local landowners
- Rural Housing Enabler for Warwickshire Rural Community Council

Any new homes that are intended to meet the needs described in Section 7 should be accompanied by an appropriate planning obligation to restrict occupancy of the homes to people with a local connection, as described in Section 3 of this report.

9. Acknowledgements

Gratitude is expressed to all those who helped distribute survey forms.

10. Contact information

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