RIVERHEAD HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY
FEBRUARY 2025

Sevenoaks DISTRICT COUNCIL

RACE
The Rural and Community Housing Enabling Service

In partnership with Riverhead Parish Council

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INTRODUCTION

Kent's Rural and Community Housing Enabling service (RACE) undertook a local Housing Needs Survey in the Parish of Riverhead. The survey was undertaken as part of Sevenoaks District Council's 5 year district wide programme of local Housing Needs Surveys being carried out by RACE.

Housing Needs Surveys investigate the affordable housing needs of people who live in or have close ties to a parish, town or rural area and provide an independent report of that need, using a transparent and robust methodology. In addition, they investigate the needs of older households of any tenure needing to downsize or move to more suitable housing for their needs.

The Riverhead Housing Needs Surveys is valid for 5 years, to February 2030.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The 2021 'Parish Councillors' Guide to Rural Affordable Housing' states that 'Across the country there is a lack of affordable housing to rent or buy in many villages, in some there is none at all. This causes hardship for people across the generations, young people just starting out on an independent life, families trying to provide for their children and older people who have lived in the village for most of their lives but whose growing frailty means they can no longer manage in their current home.' Due to high property prices within the Sevenoaks District, the same challenges arise in more urban settlements and towns.

The Kent Rural Housing Protocol 'A Guide to Developing Affordable Homes in Rural Communities' states that 'Within the County of Kent, most land (85%) is classed as "rural" and over 40% of businesses in Kent are based in rural areas. KHG recognise that provision of affordable housing is vital to ensure that communities continue to thrive and prosper.'

Small developments of local needs housing can provide affordable homes for local people, thereby enabling them to stay in their community, benefit from family and friends' networks and contribute to local life. This can make a real difference to the sustainability of communities and the vitality of local services and amenities.

The housing needs of older people has been a subject of concern given the growing numbers in that age group whose needs are not being met by the market. A nine month enquiry starting in 2017 on Housing and Care for Older People concluded in their report[1] that 'policy makers must recognise the growing housing needs of older people living in the countryside. It recommends that Local Planning Authorities ensure provision of new homes for older people, noting the value of both the building of small village developments "perhaps six bungalows on an unused scrap of land" or larger scale retirement schemes in towns close by.'

RACE is an independent service for Kent, delivered through the Kent Housing Group and is supported by Local Authorities across Kent and Medway, including Sevenoaks District Council. RACE's Rural Housing Enablers (RHE) will undertake a Housing Needs Survey, analyse the results and where appropriate, help identify potential suitable sites for the development of new local needs housing. In parishes such as Riverhead this can be achieved by securing a proportion of the affordable housing to be provided on larger sites to meet the needs of local people through Local Lettings and Sales Plans.

[1] Rural Housing for an Ageing Population: Preserving Independence. Happi 4- The Rural HAPPI Inquiry. April 2018. Jeremy Porteus

HOUSING IN RIVERHEAD

The Census 2021 tells us 75.6% of households in Riverhead are owner occupiers, 1.9% live in social housing and 22.6% live in private rented housing or are living rent free. The housing stock comprises 14.1% flats, 85.8% houses or bungalows and 0.1% a caravan or other mobile or temporary structure.

There are a total of 19 social housing properties in the Parish together with shared ownership properties. The properties are owned by West Kent Housing Association. Social housing is let in accordance with the Sevenoaks District Housing Register Allocation Policy or direct by the landlord Housing Association. There is currently no local needs housing in the Parish where priority would be given to those with a strong local connection to Riverhead. This means social housing vacancies are allocated to those with a connection to the Sevenoaks District, i.e. the new tenant is unlikely to necessarily have a local connection to Riverhead.

High property prices in the parish, mean that some local people are unable to afford or secure a home in Riverhead. Searches of www.rightmove.co.uk found the cheapest open market property to buy within the Parish at the time of writing this report was a 1-bedroom apartment for £230,000; for a first-time buyer to afford this property an estimated 10% deposit of £23,000 would be required along with an income of approximately £46,000 based on a mortgage of 4.5 x income. The cheapest available private rented property was a 2-bedroom cottage for £1,575 per calendar month; an income of approximately £63,000 per annum would be required to afford this property (affordability is based on rent being no more than 30% gross income).

There were no shared ownership properties for sale in Riverhead on the 'Share to Buy' website at the time of writing this report.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

An A5 postcard providing information and online links for completion of the survey was posted to every household in Riverhead Parish in January 2025. Only residents with a housing need were asked to respond; options were provided for those unable to use the online method. 1,060 surveys were distributed with 17 completed surveys returned.

SUMMARY

Of the 17 returns, a need for up to 10 affordable homes, for the following local households was identified:

- 2 x single people
- 6 x families with children
- 2 x couples
- 1 of the 10 households includes an older person
- 4 of the households currently live in Riverhead and 6 live outside and have indicated local connections to the parish.

In addition to the above, there was a requirement for 3 x properties for older homeowners.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

17 surveys were completed; 4 surveys were disallowed for the following reasons:

- 1 x respondent did not wish to remain in the Parish
- 2 x respondents did not indicate a local connection
- 1 x respondent did not indicate a need for affordable housing or housing for older homeowners

Identified need for Affordable Housing

Total Number of Affordable Homes Required	10
Respondent Current Location	4 x live in Parish 6 x live outside Parish but indicated a local connection
Respondent Current Housing	4 x private rented 3 x living with relatives 2 x renting from Housing Association 1 x other ('sofa surfing')
Household Composition	2 x single people 6 x families with children 2 x couples
Tenure Preference (more than one choice allowed)	8 x Affordable Rent* 1 x Shared Ownership 3 x First Homes *Social housing } Low-cost home ownership
Level Access Housing Required	1
Specialised Housing Requirements	4
Number of older households requiring affordable housing	1

Analysis shows that 1 respondent indicated having a deposit towards a low-cost home ownership option. This indicates that the majority need is for rented affordable housing, ie social housing.

Identified need for alternative housing for older homeowners

Total Number of Homes Required	3
Respondent Current Location	2 x live in the Parish 1 x lives outside the Parish
Respondent Current Housing	3 x Homeowner
Household Composition	2 x couples 1 x family
Tenure Preference (more than one choice allowed)	3 x open market 1 x self-build 1 x shared ownership
Level Access Housing Required	1
Specialised Housing Requirements	0
Type of housing required (more than one choice allowed)	2 x House 2 x Bungalow 1 x Level access accommodation without support 1 x Cohousing for older people

ADDITIONAL INDICATION OF LOCAL HOUSING NEEDS

Information obtained from Sevenoaks District Council's Housing Register indicates there are currently 53 households registered who have indicated a local connection to Riverhead Parish requiring the following social housing:

- 14 x 1 bedroom
- 17 x 2 bedrooms
- 16 x 3 bedrooms
- 6 x 4 bedrooms.

CONCLUSION

The Riverhead Housing Needs Survey demonstrates that at least **10 new affordable homes** are required to meet the needs of local people. From the responses received it demonstrates at least **3 open market properties for older homeowners** wanting to downsize or move to more suitable housing, are required.

The Housing Needs Survey is an important source of evidence in measuring the housing needs of local people. Complementary indicators of housing need, including data from the Sevenoaks District Housing Register, verified local registrations of interest held by partner Housing Associations and data captured through ongoing engagement within the local community, can also provide suitable robust evidence. The Housing Needs Survey together with complementary indicators, ensure local housing needs data remains valid over a five-year period. All such evidence may be used to support the delivery of new affordable homes to meet the needs of local people.

Appendix 1 - Paper Version of Housing Needs Survey

The Rural and Community Housing Enabling Service

RIVERHEAD HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY

January 2025

Dear Riverhead Resident,

The Rural and Community Housing Enabling service (RACE) is working with Sevenoaks District Council and Riverhead Parish Council to establish whether there is a need for **affordable housing** (housing rented at 50% - 80% of open market rents, or low-cost home ownership) for people of **all ages** with strong connections to Riverhead parish.

The survey **also** seeks to understand whether there are older homeowners who need to downsize or move to more suitable housing for their needs.

It is widely recognised that people living on low or even average incomes can face real difficulties trying to find a secure and affordable home in the area where they live and/or work. RACE is undertaking the survey to understand what the local housing need is and how local people can be supported to stay close to their support networks, work or education.

We also know that some **older people, including homeowners**, can struggle to find alternative housing that better suits their needs whilst enabling them to remain in their community.

This survey is designed to see if such housing is needed in the parish for people with strong local connections (the local connection criteria can be seen at Q6 of the survey form).

If you or anyone in your household has a housing need, even if they've had to move away to find housing elsewhere, please complete and return this survey in the pre-paid envelope provided by the **26th February 2025**. Households might be single people, couples or families. It is only necessary to complete this survey if you feel you have a housing need. The survey should take no more than 15 minutes to complete.

The findings of the survey will be published on Riverhead Parish Council's website.
You can also complete the form online at: https://online1.snapsurveys.com/riverhead or by using the QR code below.

Thank you. Your input is important and appreciated.

RACE (Rural and Community Housing Enabling)
www.kenthousinggroup.org.uk/race 07825 967570

The Rural and Community Housing Enabling Service

RIVERHEAD HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY

1. **Are you in need of affordable housing?** (Housing Association rented housing at 50%-80% of open market costs. Shared ownership (part rent/part buy). First Homes - purchase with a minimum 30% discount)

☐ Yes ☐ No

2. **Are you an older person/household wanting to downsize/move to more suitable housing for your needs?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

3. **When do you think that you will need new housing?**

☐ Now ☐ Within the next 3 years ☐ Within the next 5 years

4. **If you currently live in Riverhead do you wish to stay there?**

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

5. **If you live outside of Riverhead do you wish to return?**

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

6. **What is your connection with Riverhead? Please tick any that apply**
*immediate family = mother/father, children, brother/sister. Extended family will only be considered if they have played an important role in the applicant's upbringing.
**The applicant's place of work must be located in the parish

☐ I currently live in the parish and have done so continuously for the last 3 years
☐ I have previously lived in the parish and have immediate* family who currently live there and have done so continuously for the last 10 years
☐ I have lived in the parish for a total of at least 5 out of the last 10 years
☐ I am in permanent full time** employment in the parish
☐ I need to move to the parish to take up permanent full time** employment
☐ I am full time self-employed and the majority of my work is in the parish
☐ I provide an important service in the parish that requires me to live locally e.g. unpaid carer, school crossing patrol etc.

7. **What is your current housing situation?**

☐ Private rented ☐ Renting from housing association ☐ Owner occupier
☐ Renting from Local Authority ☐ Shared ownership ☐ Living with relatives
☐ Other

If other, please specify

8. **How many bedrooms does your current home have?**

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5+

9. **What type of household will be living in the new accommodation?**

☐ Single person ☐ Couple ☐ Family ☐ Other

If other, please specify

10. **What size will your household be in the new accommodation (total number of people)?**

☐ 1 person ☐ 3 people ☐ 5 people ☐ 7 people

☐ 2 people ☐ 4 people ☐ 6 people ☐ 8 people

Please use the boxes below to state the age and gender of each person who will be living in the new accommodation (include yourself).

11.	Age	12.	Gender
Person 1		Person 1	
Person 2		Person 2	
Person 3		Person 3	
Person 4		Person 4	
Person 5		Person 5	
Person 6		Person 6	
Person 7		Person 7	
Person 8		Person 8	

13. **Which tenure would best suit your housing need?**
Indicate any options that apply

☐ Affordable Rent - rent levels are between 50%-80% of open market rent

☐ Shared ownership - part rent/part buy. **Deposit required**

☐ First Homes - purchase with a minimum 30% discount. Maximum price after discount is £250,000. **Deposit required**

☐ Open Market homeownership

☐ Self-Build - see your local authority self and custom build register. Call Sevenoaks District Council on 01732 227000

14. **What type of housing would you prefer?**
Indicate any options that apply

- ☐ Flat
- ☐ House
- ☐ Bungalow
- ☐ Level access accommodation suitable for older persons/persons with disabilities without support
- ☐ Level access accommodation suitable for older persons/persons with disabilities with support e.g. extra care
- ☐ Cohousing for older people - a small development of self-contained homes for older people that includes shared spaces e.g. communal vegetable garden. The group will influence the design of the development and control its on-going management
- ☐ Other

If other, please specify

15. **How many bedrooms would you need in new accommodation?**
Please note - If you need affordable rented housing, your local authority housing register allocation policy will determine how many bedrooms you would be eligible for.

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4

16. **Do you or a member of your household have any particular or specialised housing requirements e.g. due to a disability or special need?**

☐ No ☐ Yes

If you answered Yes, please state what they are

17. **Please state the total gross annual income of the household in housing need (joint if a couple). Do not include housing benefit or council tax benefit.**

- ☐ Under £10,000
- ☐ £10,000 - £15,000
- ☐ £15,000 - £20,000
- ☐ £20,000 - £25,000
- ☐ £25,000 - £30,000
- ☐ £30,000 - £35,000
- ☐ £35,000 - £40,000
- ☐ £40,000 - £50,000
- ☐ £50,000 - £60,000
- ☐ £60,000 - £80,000
- ☐ £80,000 +

18. **If you are interested in Shared Ownership or First Homes, please tell us how much money you can raise towards a deposit on a new home** (we need this information to assess whether this option is affordable to you)

19. **Why are you seeking a new home? Tick any that apply**

- ☐ Current home in need of major repair
- ☐ Current home too expensive
- ☐ Current home affecting health
- ☐ Setting up home with partner
- ☐ Alternative accommodation due to age/infirmity
- ☐ To move to a better/safer environment
- ☐ Homeless/threatened with homelessness
- ☐ To be nearer family
- ☐ Need smaller home
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Disability/disabled
- ☐ Access problems
- ☐ Employment
- ☐ Private tenancy ending
- ☐ Retirement
- ☐ Increased security
- ☐ Divorce/separation
- ☐ First independent home
- ☐ Difficulty maintaining current home
- ☐ Need larger home

If other, pleas specify

20. **Are you registered on your local authority housing register?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

21. **We may wish to contact you again to update you on any local housing opportunities. If you are happy to do so, please provide your name and email or phone number. These will not be passed to any third parties.**

Name:

Email, home address or phone number:

Thank you for completing this survey.

Please return this survey in the pre-paid envelope provided by 6th November 2024. If you need assistance please call RACE on 07880 151872.

To apply for affordable rented housing you must register on Sevenoaks District Council's Housing Register. If you would like to register go www.kenthomechoice.org.uk or contact Sevenoaks District Council on 01732 227000

If you are interested in Shared Ownership and/or First Homes, please call Sevenoaks District Council on 01732 227000 for more information.

Rural and Community Enabling (RACE) is the data controller for any personal information collected in this survey. Your information will be used to understand the housing need in the surveyed area. Collection and processing is being conducted under the public task lawful basis. We will always anonymise your data before using it in any publically available reports. We won't share your personal information with any third parties unless we are required or permitted to do so by law. For more information about your data protection rights please see our data protection pages Privacy Policy Kent Housing Group or contact the Data Protection lead at RACE@ashford.gov.uk