

Lesbury Parish Housing Needs Survey Final Report

February 2018



Introduction

In July 2017, the Lesbury Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) Steering Group commissioned Community Action Northumberland (CAN) to undertake a Local Housing Needs Survey for the Parish. This was designed to provide detailed information which would directly input to the development of the Lesbury Parish NDP and also act as a potential catalyst for possible future development of local affordable homes if need was demonstrated.

Since April 2017, CAN has been contracted by Northumberland County Council to establish a Community-led Housing Hub to act as a support platform for local communities wishing to explore the potential for community-led housing in its various forms and to deliver local affordable homes where they are needed. This hub is called 'Communities CAN.'

This work is initially funded through the Northumberland County Council allocation of the government's Community Housing Fund and seeks to support all stages of development, including the initial identification of housing need.

As part of this work, CAN is funded to undertake Local Housing Needs Surveys where requested to do so by a local community and where there is a realistic prospect of any need identified resulting in the delivery of additional affordable homes. Critical to this work is that the local community is directly involved in both identifying need and in determining any potential response to the information generated.

In undertaking Housing Needs Surveys, CAN follows the principles set out in national guidelines drawn up by the Rural Housing Enablers Network as follows:

1. The goal of all Housing Needs Surveys is to provide an objective evidenced overview of the scale and nature of the full range of housing need in a locality, usually a village or parish.
2. Housing Needs Surveys are independent and balanced and seen to be so.
3. The process for collecting the data is open, fair and transparent.
4. Any secondary data used as a principal source of information or to augment data collected from households is up to date and relevant to the geography of the survey.
5. Data is anonymised and confidentiality and data protection statements are clear and correct.
6. The community, which is wider than just the Parish Council, is informed of the reasons for the survey, invited to participate and able to access the results.
7. The reports are written in plain English with explanations of how the findings and conclusions are drawn, including any caveats and noting sources of data.
8. Housing Needs Survey reports are publicly available once the commissioning body has agreed and signed off the survey.
9. Housing Needs Surveys are a snapshot in time, their 'shelf-life' is stated and a process for updating the data is available.
10. The Housing Needs Survey is only the start of the process. Once it is completed ongoing liaison should be maintained with the community, housing association or other developer, local authority and landowner to take the project forward.



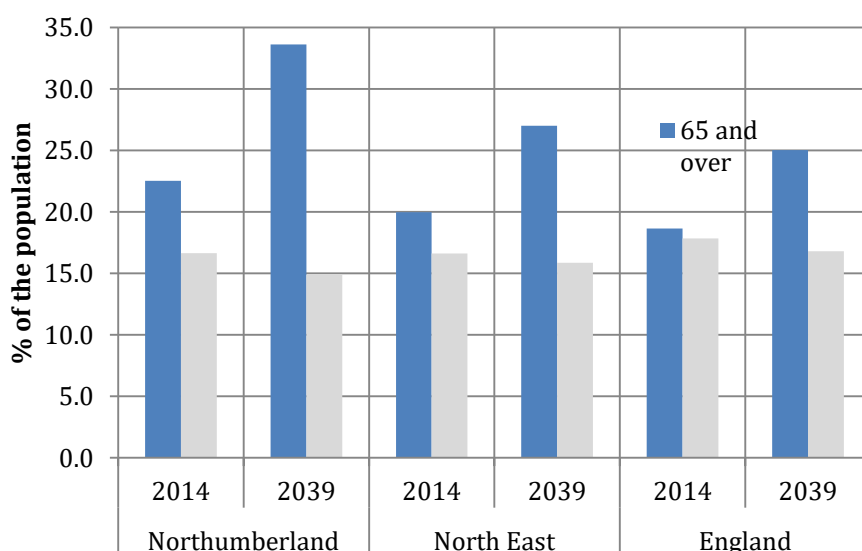
Population profile

At the time of the 2011 Census 1,007 people lived in Lesbury parish in 450 households. Average household size was 2.2 people per household. 13.5% of the population was aged 0-15 years (compared to 17% across Northumberland) whilst 30.3% were aged 65 or over (compared to 20.2% across Northumberland).

72.2% of households were owner occupiers compared to 66% across the county, whilst 10.9% of households were renting from a social landlord (18.7% for Northumberland) and 16.9% rented from a private landlord (13.3% across the county).

24% of households contained just one person, 60.2% of which were 65 years or older. Only 10% of households had no car or van.

The ageing population structure of Northumberland is well documented and this trend is predicted to continue into the future. The graph below shows projections from Northumberland Knowledge with respect to the growing proportion of the population that will be 65 years and older by 2039. It is noteworthy that in Lesbury Parish, 30.3% of the population already fell into this age group at the time of the census in 2011. The continued ageing of the population will clearly impact on the range of services and housing needs in the future.



Source: [Northumberland Knowledge Age Profiles](#)



Homefinder data

Northumberland County Council, in partnership with a number of social landlords operating in the county, manages the Northumberland Homefinder allocations service. Anyone aged 16 or over can apply to join Northumberland Homefinder, unless they are ineligible. Affordable homes which become available are advertised via this service. Homefinder operates a banding scheme where applicants are placed in one of five bands according to their level of need as follows:

- Priority Band P for those with an urgent and severe housing need.
- Band 1 for those who are in high housing need.
- Band 2 for those who are in medium housing need.
- Band 2R for those in reasonable preference categories but whose priority is reduced.
- Band 3 for those who are adequately housed.

Data is available from this service with respect to properties advertised within Lesbury Parish and, therefore, can provide a view with respect to local housing needs. However, the value of the data is limited for a number of reasons including:

- Data can only relate to those properties advertised and to those people who have applied to join Northumberland Homefinder.
- Individual households can make multiple applications to multiple available properties making conclusions with respect to specific numbers very difficult.
- It is widely known that many people do not apply to join Homefinder due to an expectation that properties which meet their needs are either not available or will be prioritised to households with a higher assessed need.

Nevertheless, Northumberland Homefinder does provide a readily accessible source of data to contribute to this report. Data has been kindly supplied by Northumberland County Council for the period from December 2016 to December 2017. This is summarised below.

Priority Banding by bedroom eligibility					
Band	Bedroom Eligibility				Total
	1	2	3	4+	
Band 1	3	2	0	0	5
Band 2	3	0	0	0	3
Band 2R	0	0	0	0	0
Band 3	2	7	0	0	9
Band P	0	0	0	0	0
Total	8	9	0	0	17

This table suggests that Homefinder applicants living in Lesbury Parish are fairly evenly split between those requiring a two bedroom property (53%) and those requiring one bedroom



(47%). 53% of applicants were considered to be adequately housed and not in priority need whilst 8 applicants demonstrate a priority need. The table below shows the current tenure type of applicants.

Current tenancy		
Tenancy	Count	%
Housing Association tenant	6	35.3%
Living with family & friends / no fixed abode	6	35.3%
Other	5	29.4%
Total	17	100.0%

The table below shows that in the period from December 2016 to December 2017, there were 14 advertised properties which received 295 bids – an average of 21 bids per property. 76% of these bidders were from outside the Lesbury area. 55% of bidders were 55 years old or older.

Homefinder advertised properties (Dec 2016 to Dec 2017)							
Property Type	Bedrooms				Total	Bids count	%
	1	2	3	4+			
Bedsit	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Bungalow	2	2	0	0	4	76	25.8%
Flat	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
House	0	5	5	0	10	219	74.2%
Maisonette	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Sheltered	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Total	2	7	5	0	14	295	100.0%

Both houses and bungalows are clearly demonstrated to be popular properties in terms of number of bids received.



The Housing Needs Survey

Our Housing Needs Survey involved the distribution of a questionnaire to all households within Lesbury parish. The questionnaire was based on a tried and tested questionnaire utilised elsewhere which was developed and amended through discussion and agreement with the Lesbury Parish NDP Steering Group.

The questionnaire was distributed by hand to all households by the NDP Steering Group, utilising a number of local volunteers. A freepost envelope was provided to each household for return of completed questionnaires.

The questionnaire included two initial questions to be answered by all households and a further twelve questions which only needed to be answered by those households who had expressed some form of housing need. For respondents planning to divide their current households into two or more households, an additional sheet was included enabling relevant questions to be completed for each of the proposed new households.

LESBURY PARISH
Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Group
HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY FOR LESBURY

We are currently preparing a neighbourhood plan and are interested in your views on the principle of providing affordable homes for local people in your parish. We would therefore be grateful if you could take a little time to help us by filling in this questionnaire.

PART ONE – TO BE COMPLETED BY ALL HOUSEHOLDS

Q1. What are your views on housing developments in Lesbury Parish?

a. Would you be in favour of small pockets of development to bring additional homes to Lesbury parish? Yes ☐ No ☐

b. Would you be in favour of a small development of affordable homes with a priority for people with a local connection to Lesbury Parish? Yes ☐ No ☐

c. Would you be in favour of developments which focus on the housing needs of the older population? Yes ☐ No ☐

Any comments (These may be included, anonymously, in our report):

Q2. Is your current home suitable for your household's needs?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If no please tick all boxes that will apply to your household within the next five years:

Too small (overcrowded)	Too expensive
Too large	In the wrong place
Needs repairing	Family circumstances are changing
Can't manage the stairs	Needs adapting due to disability / health needs
Want to move but there are no suitable homes available locally	One or more members of the household need their own home
Other (please give details)	

If you answered 'No' to Q2 please continue to Part Two.
If you answered 'Yes', there is no need to answer any further questions. Please return your questionnaire using the prepaid envelope provided. Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

A total of 274 completed questionnaires were returned representing a response rate of 55.7%. This is an excellent response rate for questionnaires of this nature.

This was a survey of existing residents and, therefore, is an expression of the needs and desires of these residents reflecting the current age profile of the Lesbury area.



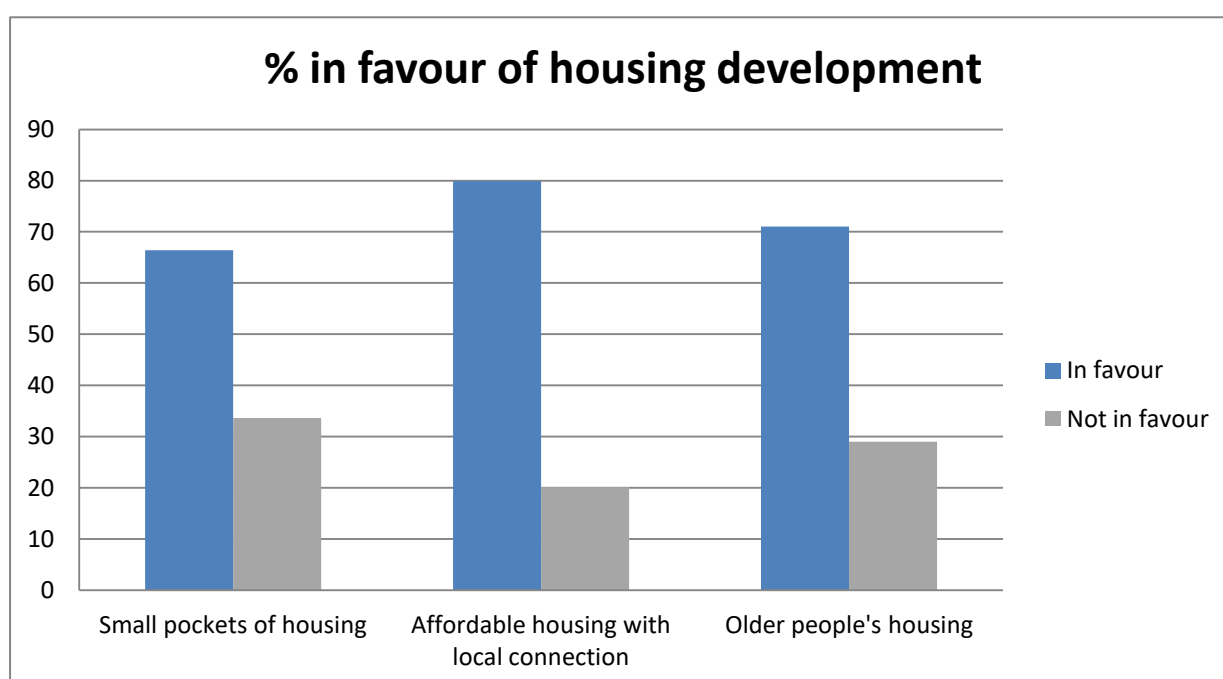
Research Findings

Housing Development in Lesbury Parish

Two thirds of respondents (66.4%) were in favour of small pockets of development to bring additional homes to Lesbury Parish.

This figure rose to 79.9% of respondents who were in favour of a small development of affordable homes with a priority for people with a local connection to Lesbury Parish.

71% of all respondents were also in favour of developments which focus on the housing needs of the older population.



Respondents were able to complete a comments box in relation to their views on housing development. Many respondents were concerned about over-development in the Parish and a number commented on the growing number of second homes.

23% of those respondents making a comment specifically mentioned the needs of older people whilst 29% mentioned the needs of younger people and young families in the Parish, often referencing the need for a balanced population in terms of age.

Households in need

A total of 33 households who responded to the questionnaire indicated that their current home was not suitable for their household's needs. The remaining elements of the questionnaire were only to be completed by these 33 households. The Research Findings below relate solely to these respondents.



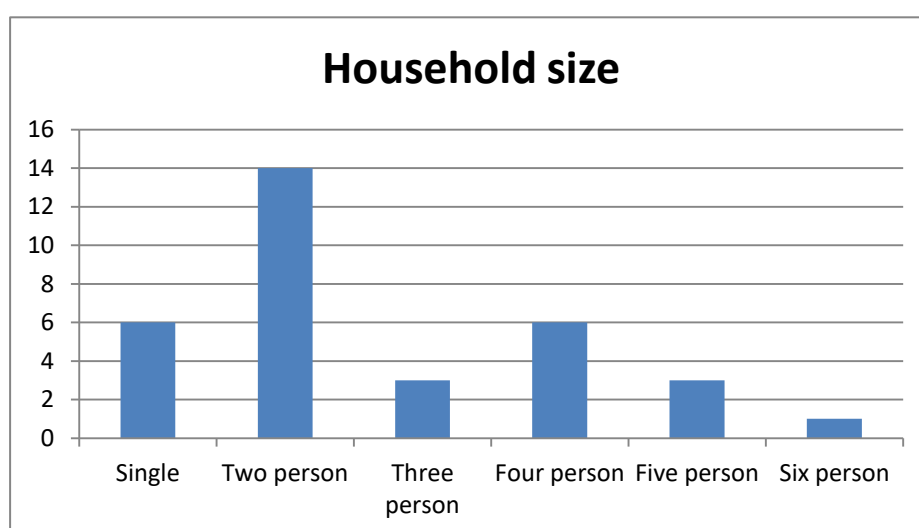
Connection to Lesbury

The overwhelming majority of respondents (96.7%) lived in Lesbury Parish. This is not surprising given the distribution of the questionnaire to households in the Lesbury area only but does mean that the responses provide a good picture of local needs.

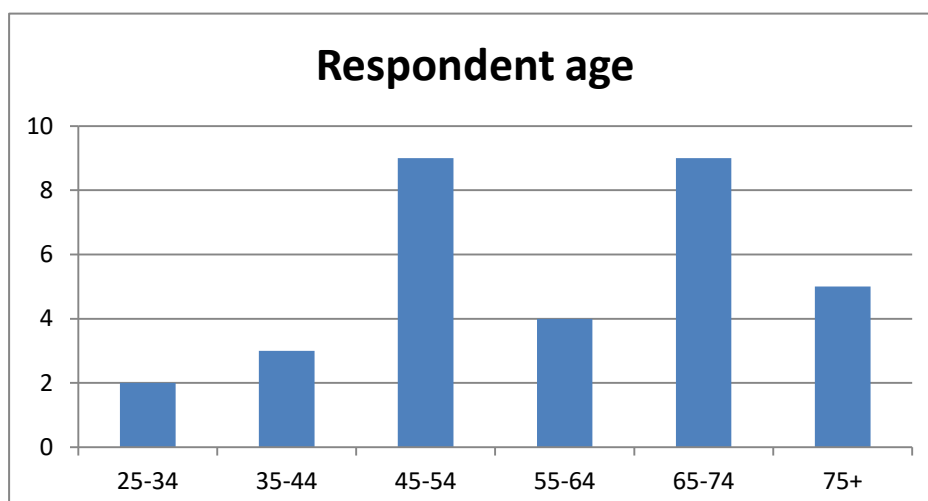
41.9% also have close family (parents, children or siblings) living in Lesbury Parish. 23.3% of all respondents had at least one member of their household who worked in Lesbury Parish. The overwhelming majority of respondents (87.5%) stated that Lesbury Parish was their preferred place to live.

Household characteristics

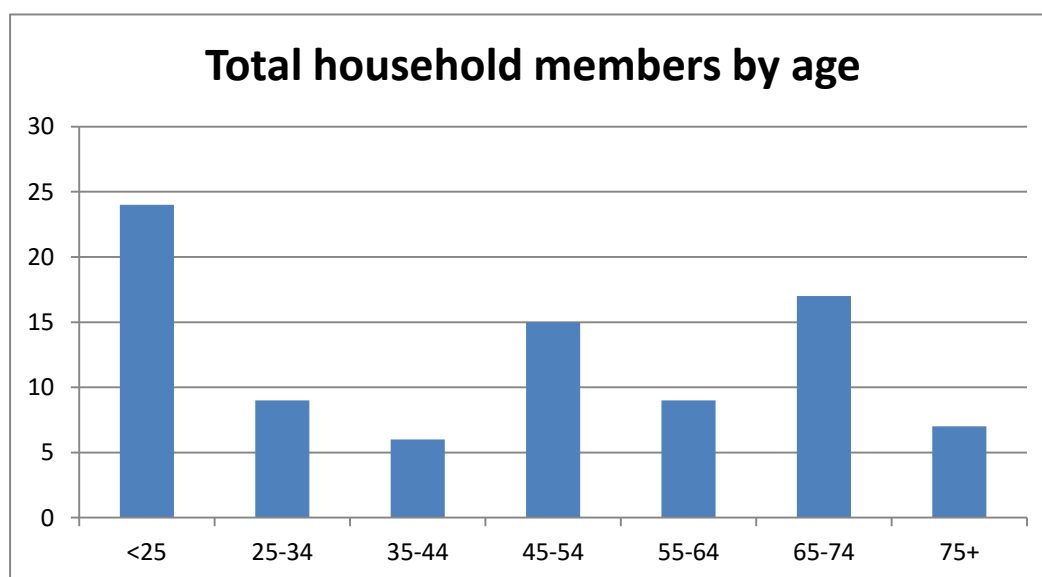
A large proportion of respondents (42.4%) were in two person households with a further 39.4% in households with 3 or more people.



The proportion of individuals completing the questionnaire who were retired and the proportion in employment were very similar – 41.9% and 38.7% respectively. The age profile of those completing the questionnaire is shown below.

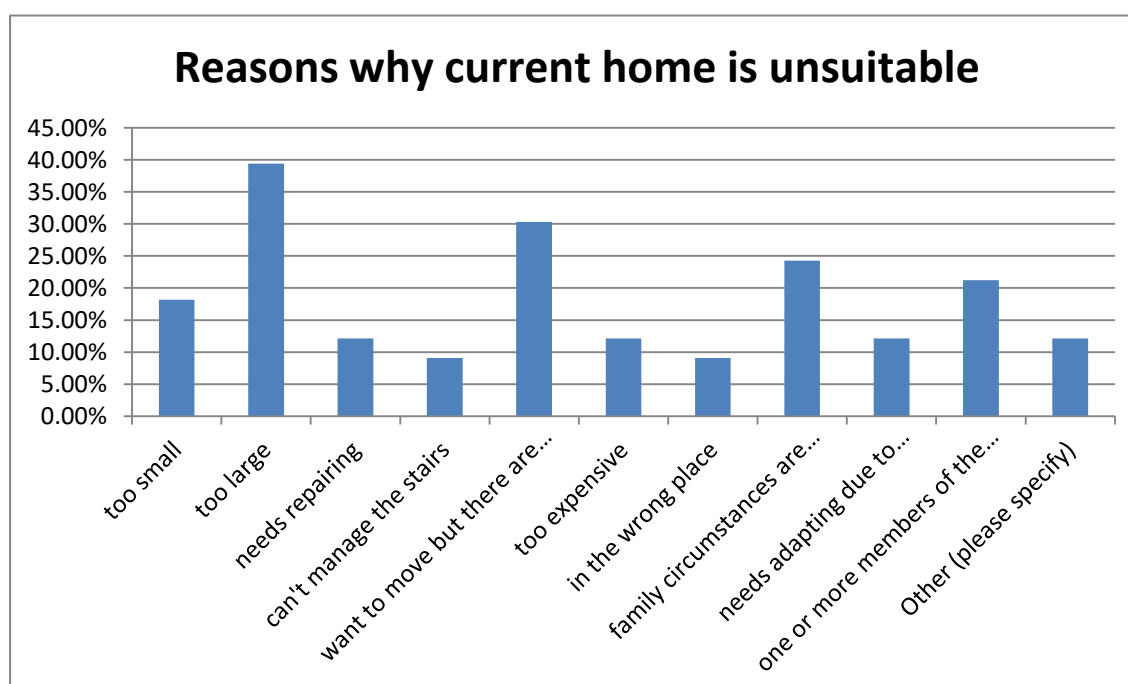


Those households indicating a need were home to a total of 24 people under the age of 25 and also 24 people 65 or over. The table below shows the total number of people living in the respondent households by age.



Type of need

The reasons why households indicated that their current home is unsuitable for their needs were varied. The main reasons for housing need were that existing accommodation is too large (13) followed by no suitable homes are available locally (10), changing family circumstances (8), one or more members of the household need their own home (7) and the current property is too small for the household's needs (6). The percentage of respondents indicating each area of need is shown in the table below (NB: respondents could indicate multiple preferences).



The survey included an opportunity for respondents to explain their reasons for needing to move in more detail. Responses to this question break down into a range of broad categories shown on the table below.

Response	%
Son / daughter requires separate accommodation	25
Current property too large	20
Family is growing	13
Need to reduce costs	13
Changing family circumstances (e.g. bereavement or marriage breakdown)	8
Need to move closer to services	8
Future proofing against old age	8
Mobility and access issues	4

These responses indicate two clear issues relating to:

1. Households containing young people requiring their own accommodation and households requiring larger accommodation as they grow.
2. Issues relating to age with many people looking to downsize or adjust their property requirements to ensure suitability as they get older.

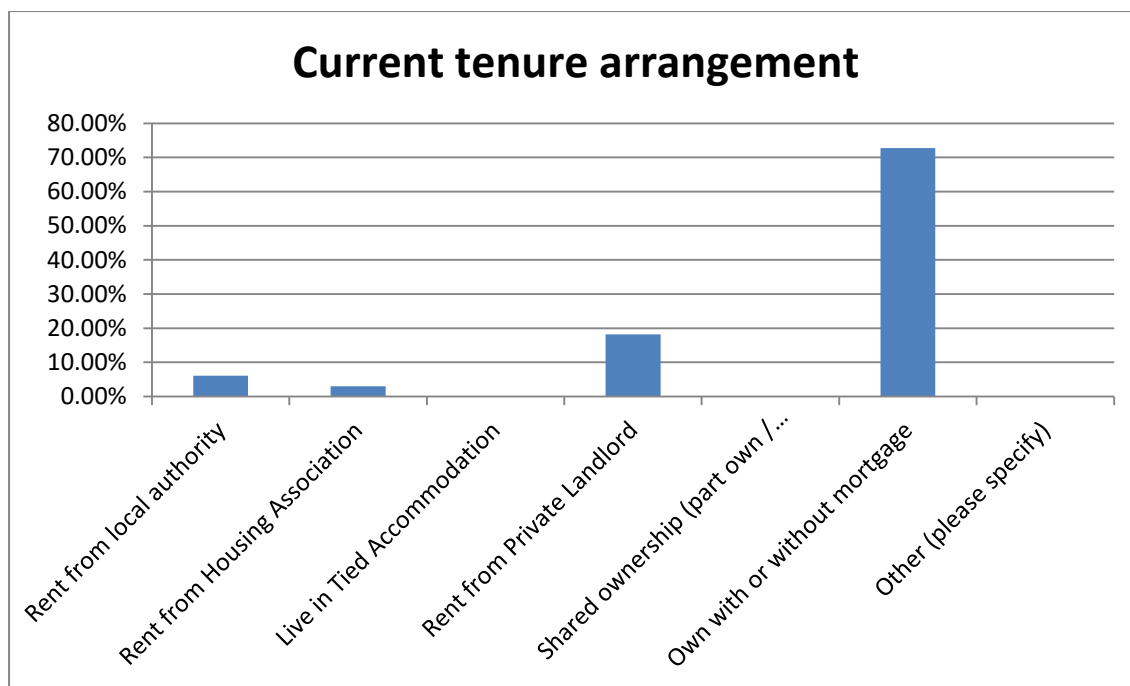
The text map below indicates some of the key words used in responses.

Live Bathroom Family Downsizing Children Daughter
House Able Smaller Garden

Existing tenure and property type

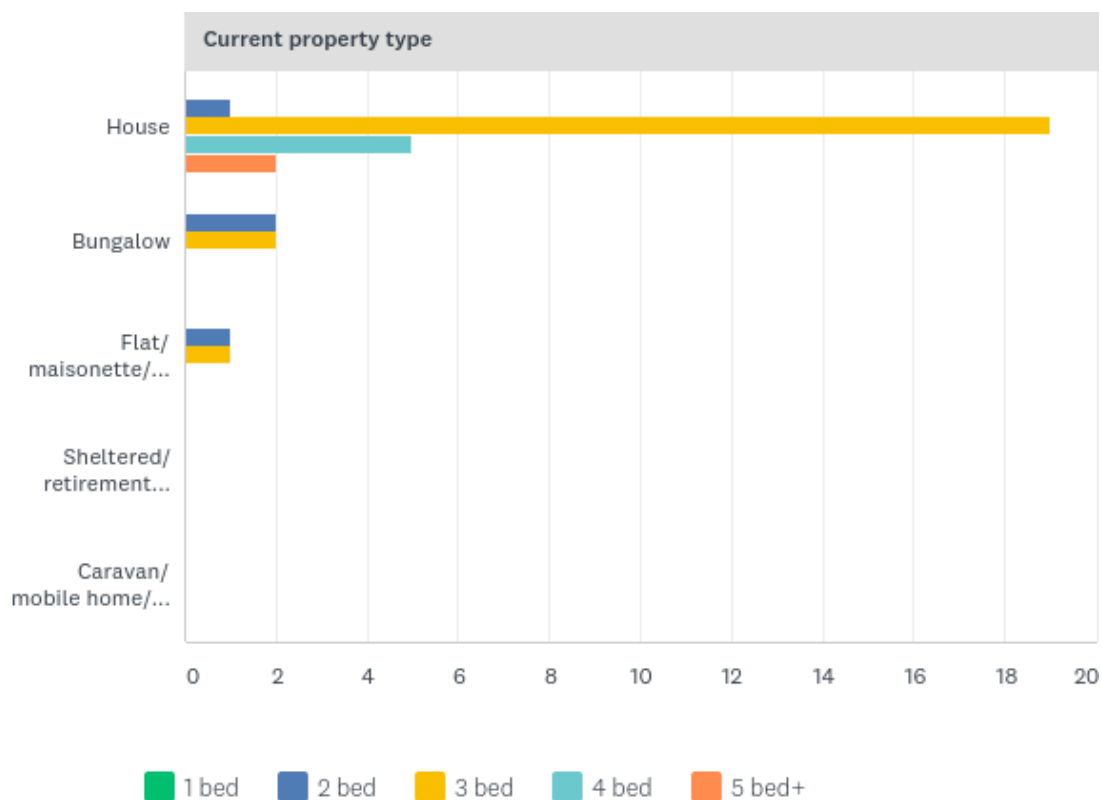
Almost three quarters of all respondents (73%), who expressed a housing need, were owner occupiers. 18% rented from a private landlord whilst 9% rented from a social landlord (6% local authority and 3% housing association). A higher proportion (50%) of these owner occupiers stated that their existing property is too big for them compared to 39% of all those expressing a need. This reflects the downsizing and future-proofing issues raised by respondents.





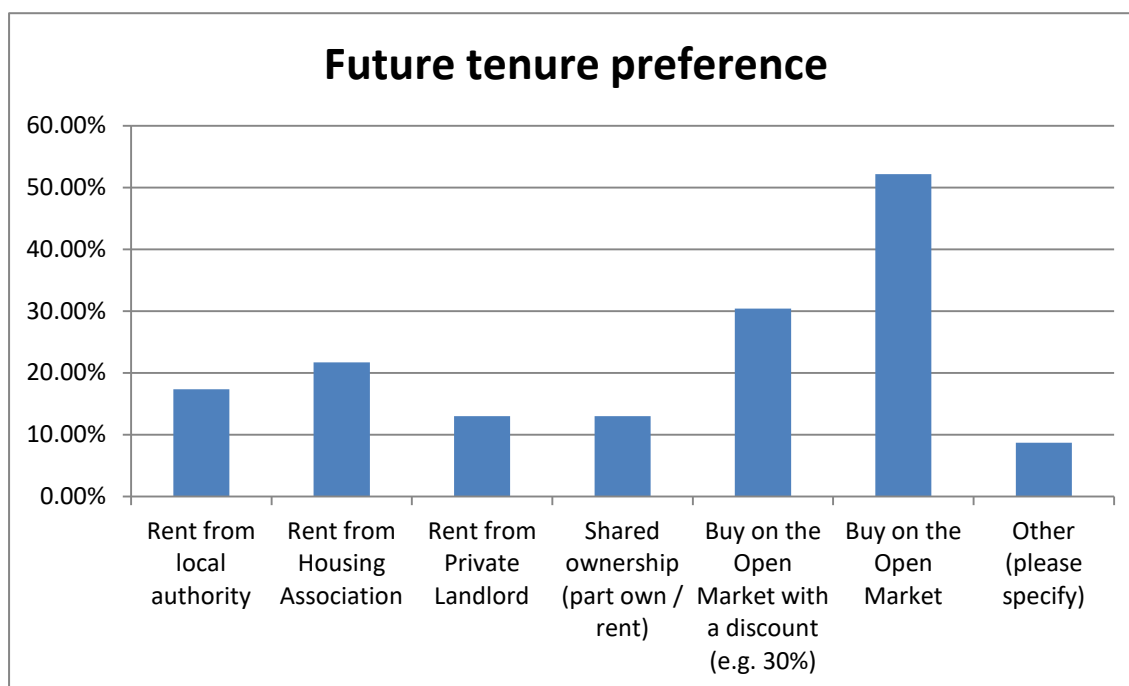
The reasons for the expressed housing need of current renters housing were more mixed with a number of respondents indicating each category.

The vast majority of respondents (81.8%) currently live in a house. The remainder were split between bungalows (12.1%) and flats/apartments/maisonettes (6.1%). 70% of respondent households, currently living in a house, had 3 bedrooms.



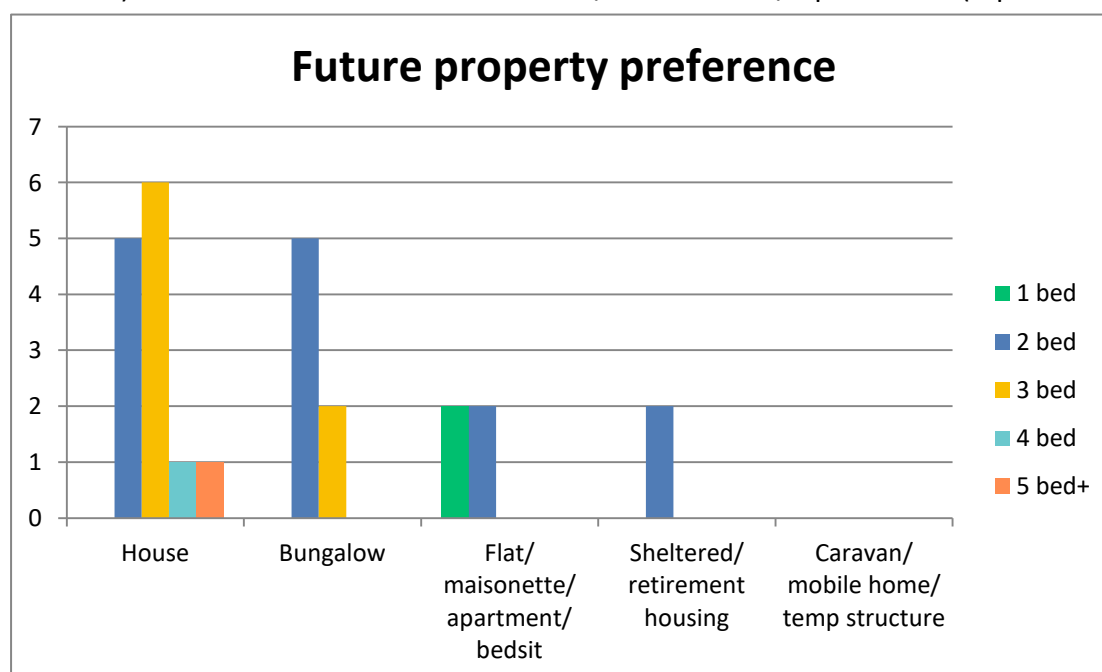
Future tenure preferences

Buying on the open market was the preferred option for the majority of those households expressing a housing need (52.2%). A significant proportion (43.5%) indicated a preference for either shared ownership (3 households) or discounted purchase (7 households). 39.1% indicated a desire for affordable rented homes from either a Housing Association (5 households) or the local authority (4 households). NB: respondents could indicate multiple preferences.



Future property type preferences

The largest demand is for 2/3 bedroom houses (11 preferences in total) and bungalows (7 preferences). Some demand also exists for flats/ maisonettes/ apartments (4 preferences),



sheltered/retirement housing (2 preferences) and for 4/5 bedroom houses (2 preferences).

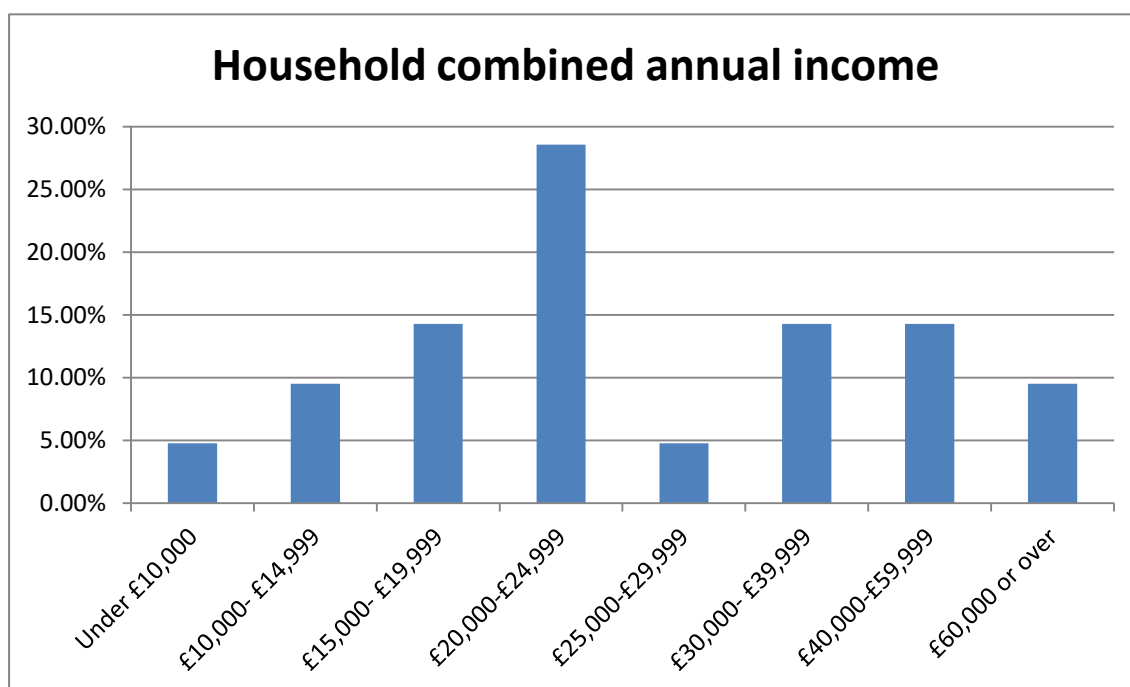
There was no significant difference between existing owner occupier and renting households in terms of their future property type preferences.

Northumberland Homefinder Register

Only 2 of the households who expressed a housing need were registered with Northumberland Homefinder. This confirms the view that data from the register only relates to a small subset of the actual need which exists.

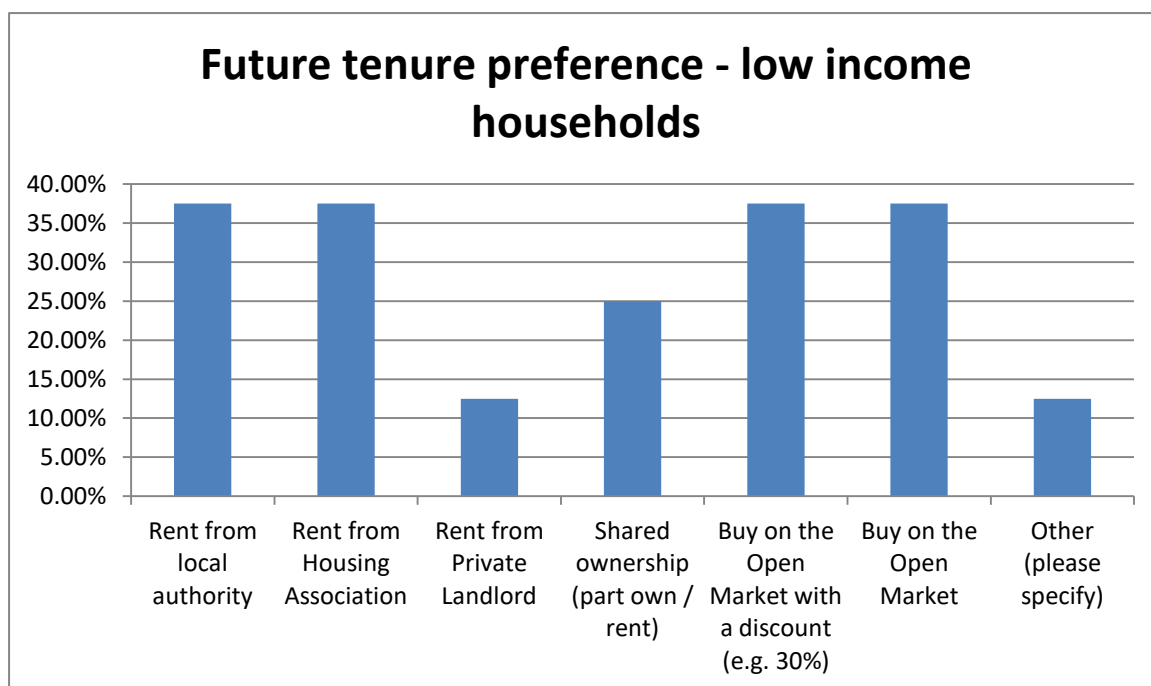
Household income and affordability

57% of respondents, who indicated their household income and expressed a housing need, indicated an annual household income of less than £25,000 (12 households). Only 24% of respondents indicated an annual household income above £40,000.



60% of those households with an annual income less than £25,000 are currently owner occupiers and most currently live in 3 bedroom houses.

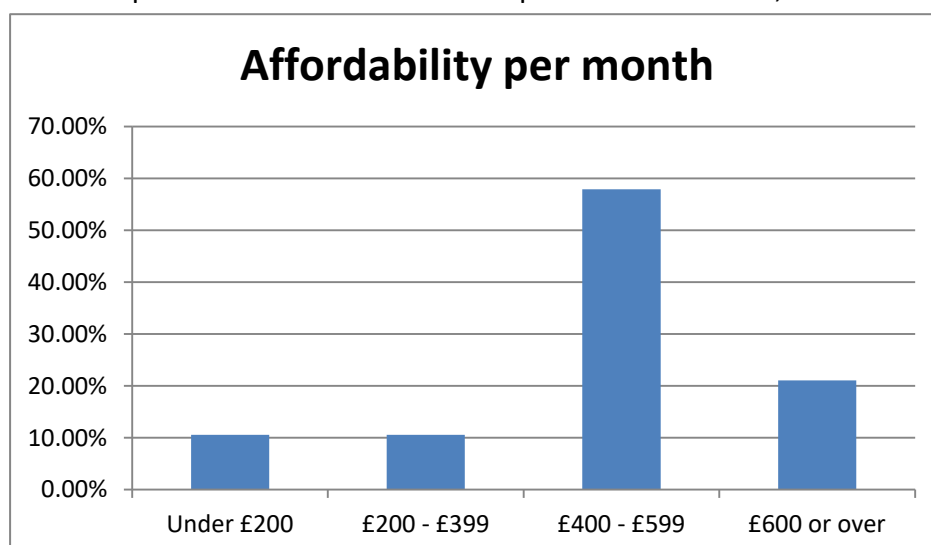
Current low income households show an equal preference to rent their property in the future (from the local authority or a Housing Association) or to purchase on the open market with or without a discount. (NB: respondents could express more than one preference).



In relation to preferences for types of property, there was a strong preference for 2 bedroom properties amongst low income households (NB: respondents could express more than one preference).

Property type preference – low income households	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed
House	0	2	1	1
Bungalow	0	1	2	0
Flat/maisonette/apartment/bedsit	1	2	0	0
Sheltered/retirement housing	0	1	0	0

In terms of the amount households could afford to pay for their housing, 21.1% could not afford more than £400 per month. The majority of respondents (57.9%) could afford between £400 and £599 per month. 26.3% of respondents (5 households) could afford less than £5000 as a deposit. 63.2% could afford a deposit of at least £10,000.



A selection of individual responses

"Housing needs to be available to all, the young families, couples, the elderly. It should be affordable. I am not in favour of large houses that only the select few can afford. This does not lead to a thriving community."

"Where housing needs for older people are required these would be best placed closer to shops, medical facilities, better transport links than are available in Lesbury"

"There is a considerable lack of affordable housing for in particular young people who often have to leave the area to rent as they couldn't possibly afford to live in the area they have grown up in. (I know from personal experience). I do not want this to happen to my children."

"There is a lack of smaller homes for the elderly or those wanting to stay in the area and downsize."

"Lesbury would benefit from encouraging younger families into the village."

"Priority should be meeting the needs of the local population & keeping the community vibrant & mixed which means affordable homes."

"Many older people would downsize to smaller properties but not smaller rooms."

"Lesbury has plenty affordable homes which unfortunately are now second homes. Most new housing are second homes and this does nothing to help village life."

"Any future developments should be for locals not holiday homes."

"Lesbury is a small area and parking issues in particular are already at stretching point! No room for even more families!"

"Old people's accommodation needed urgent."

"We need "modest" housing - 3/4 bedrooms - suitable for young couples with young children. We need to keep our primary school viable."

"We favour very small development focusing on the needs of the elderly within our community."

"Whilst we acknowledge there is a growing older population, we feel it is important to acknowledge the need for a broad range of ages within the population."

"Too many 'new' homes being built - the village is large enough. Any new homes need to be affordable."

"As things stand, many people are unable to remain in an area where they grew up."



Key messages from the survey

This was a survey of existing residents and, therefore, is an expression of the needs and desires of these residents reflecting the current age profile of Lesbury Parish. Key messages from the survey include the following:

- Most people in the parish are in favour of possible small pockets of development to bring additional homes to Lesbury Parish – especially where these are affordable homes with a priority for people with a local connection to Lesbury Parish (80% of respondents).
- 33 households expressed some form of housing need, in particular reflecting the following:
 - Households containing young people requiring their own accommodation and households requiring larger accommodation as they grow.
 - Issues relating to age with many people looking to downsize or adjust their property requirements to ensure suitability as they get older.
- The survey reflected a wide spread of age groups, those retired and those in work. Most households contained either two people (42%) or more than two people (39%).
- Buying on the open market was the preferred option for the majority of those households expressing a housing need (52%), whilst a significant proportion (44%) indicated a preference for either shared ownership or discounted purchase. 39% indicated a desire for affordable rented homes from either a Housing Association or the local authority.
- The largest demand is for 2/3 bedroom houses (11 preferences in total) and 2/3 bedroom bungalows (7 preferences).
- As expected, data from the Northumberland Homefinder Register does not reflect local need but does demonstrate robust demand with an average 21 bids per available property.
- 57% of respondents, who indicated their household income and expressed a housing need, indicated an annual household income of less than £25,000 (12 households). There was a strong preference amongst low income households for 2 bedroom properties.

Credits

Sincere thanks go to the residents of Lesbury Parish for their participation in this survey, to the Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Group for their clear direction and to the local 'champions' who distributed the questionnaires to every household in the Parish. Many thanks one and all.

