

Lowick Housing Needs Survey Final Report

May 2019

Produced for Lowick Parish Council



Introduction

In February 2019, Lowick Parish Council commissioned Community Action Northumberland (CAN) to undertake a Local Housing Needs Survey for the Lowick parish. This was designed to provide information useful in the preparation of the Lowick Neighbourhood Plan.

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 and where there is a realistic prospect of any need identified resulting in the delivery of additional affordable homes.

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.

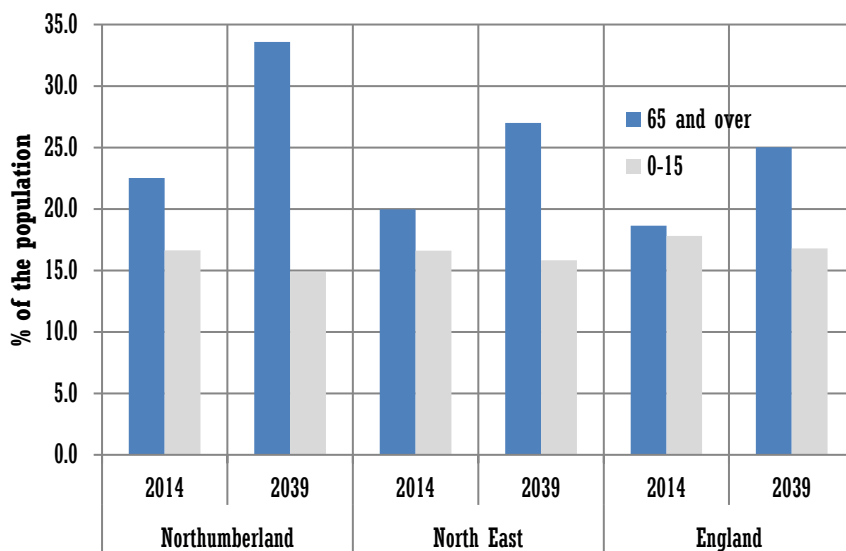
Population profile

At the time of the 2011 Census 552 people lived in Lowick parish in 252 households. Average household size was 2.2 people per household. 14% of the population was aged 0-15 years (compared to 17% across Northumberland) whilst 22% were aged 65 or over (compared to 20% across Northumberland).

68.3% of households were owner occupiers compared to 66% across the county, whilst 9.1% of households were renting from a social landlord (18.7% for Northumberland) and 22.6% rented from a private landlord (13.3% across the county).

28.6% of households contained just one person, 47.2% of which were 65 years or older. Only 9.1% 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. In Lowick parish, 22% 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](#)

The Housing Needs Survey

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

The questionnaire was distributed by post to all 289 households in the parish. A freepost envelope was provided to each household for return of completed questionnaires.

The questionnaire included five initial questions to be answered by all households and a further eight 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.

**Lowick
HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY**

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. Please return your completed questionnaire in the envelope provided by Friday 29 March 2019.

PART ONE – TO BE COMPLETED BY ALL HOUSEHOLDS

Q1. Please tell us about your household's connection with the Lowick Parish

Do you live in the Lowick Parish? Yes No

- If yes, how long has a member of your household lived here? Yrs Mths

Does any member of your household have close family (parents, children or siblings) living in Lowick Parish? Yes No

Does any member of your household work in the Lowick Parish? Yes No

- If yes, how long have they worked here? Yrs Mths

Would you be happy to live in suitable accommodation in Lowick? Yes No

If no, where is your preferred location to live (please give your reasons in the box below?) Location

Q2. Please provide details of everyone living in your home including yourself.

Relationship to You	Employment status*	Age						
		<25	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
self								

*Please select one of the following options: employed/ looking after home or family/ sick or disabled/ unemployed/ student/ child/ retired

Q3. About the home you currently live in. Do you:

Rent from local authority Rent from Housing Association

Live in accommodation provided by your employer Rent from Private Landlords

Part own / part rent (shared ownership) Own with or without mortgage

Other (please specify)

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A total of 96 completed questionnaires were returned representing a response rate of 33.2%. This is a good 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 Lowick parish.

Research Findings

Connection to the Lowick area

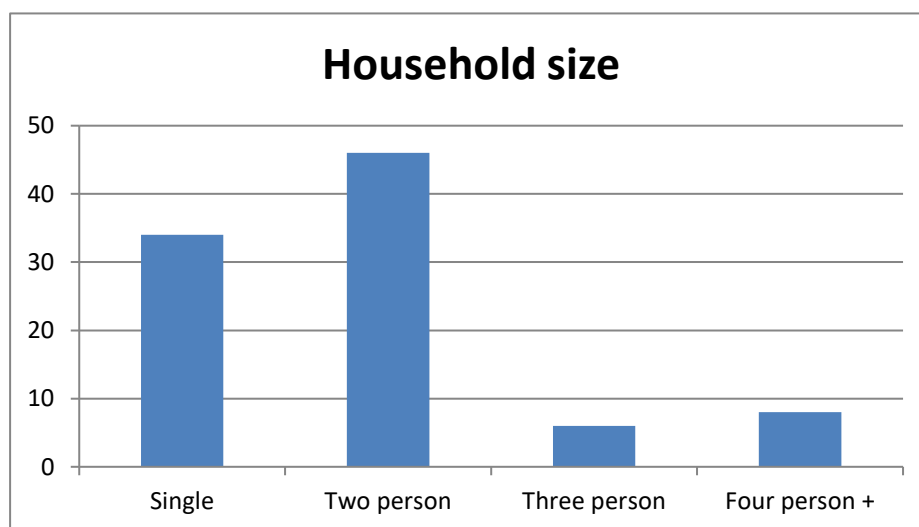
The overwhelming majority of respondents (97.9%) lived in the Lowick area. This is not surprising given the distribution of the questionnaire to households in the Lowick area only but does mean that the responses represent local views. 69.2% of respondents had lived in the Lowick area for more than 10 years

Almost two thirds of respondents (64.5%) did not have close family (parents, children or siblings) living in Lowick Parish. 20.1% of all respondents had at least one member of their household who worked in the Lowick area. Most of these family members (79%) had worked in Lowick for more than 10 years.

The overwhelming majority of respondents (92.2%) stated that the Lowick area was their preferred place to live.

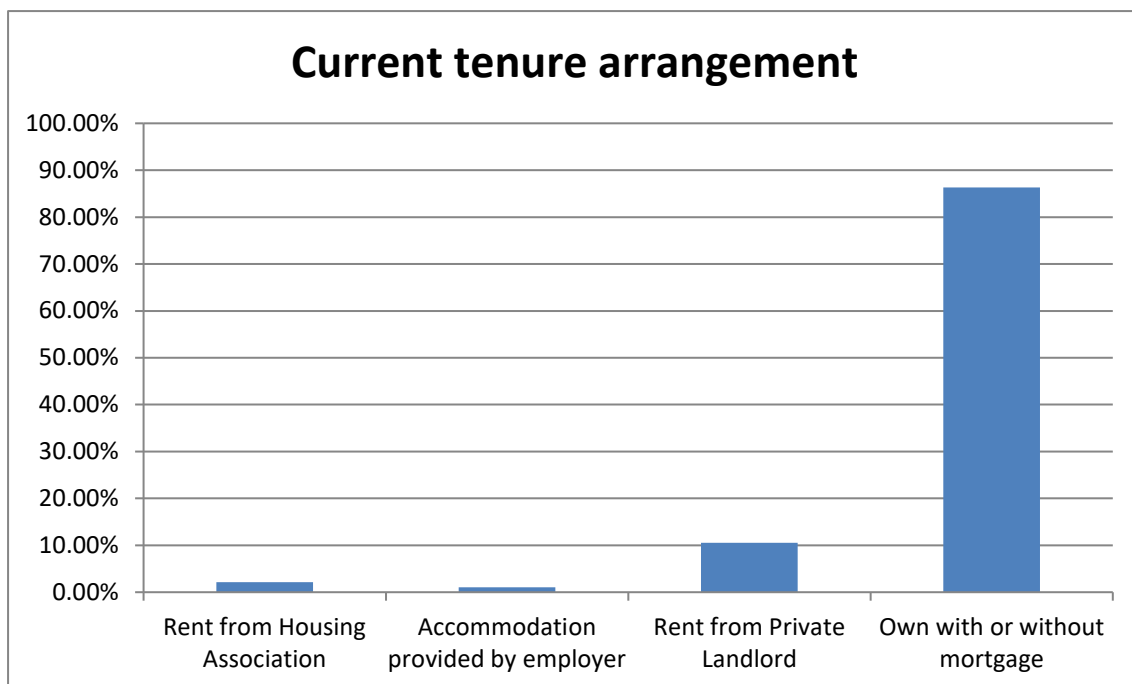
Household characteristics

A large proportion of respondents (48.9%) were in two-person households with a further 36.2% living alone. 14.9% of respondents lived in households containing 3 or more people.

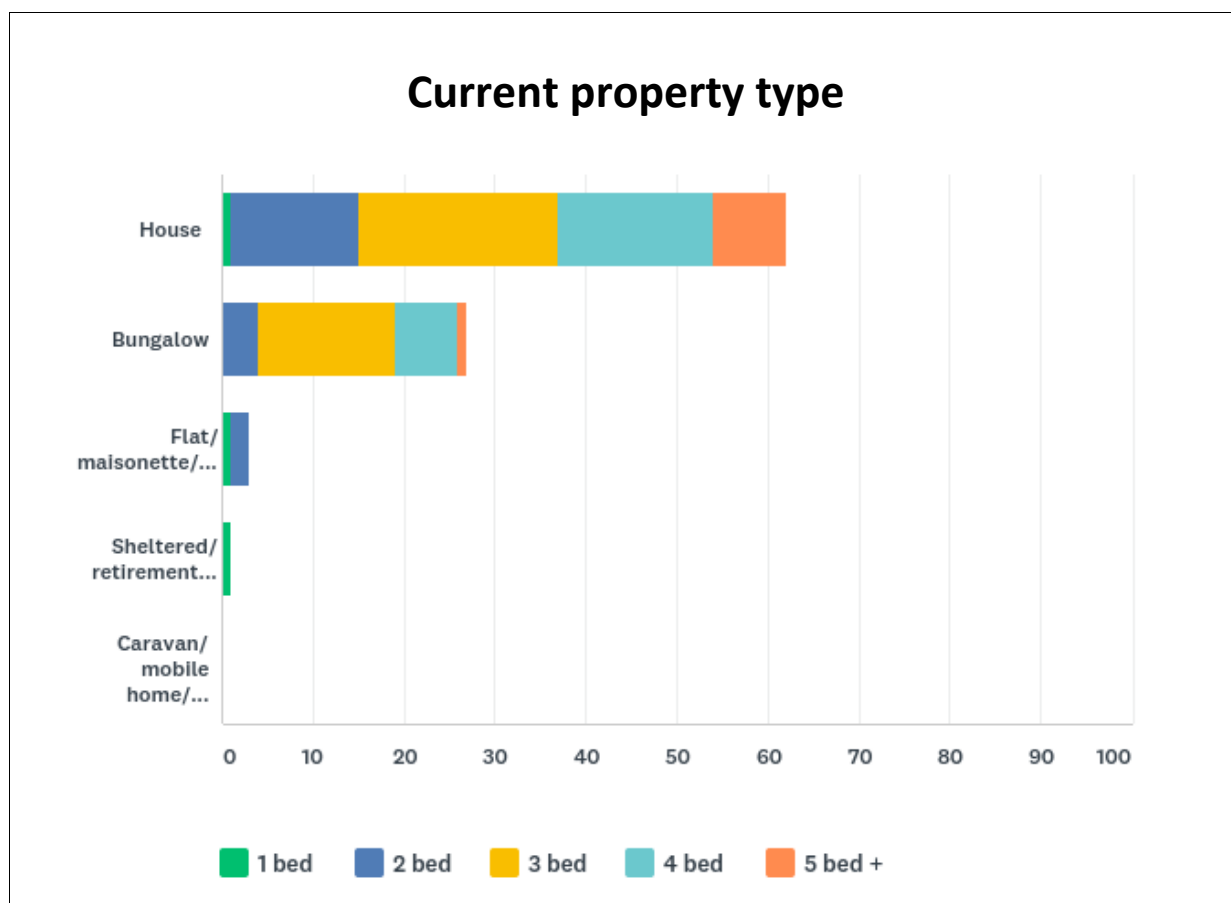


The proportion of individuals completing the questionnaire who were retired was 61.6%. The proportion in employment was 37.2%.

86.3% of respondents owned their own homes (with or without a mortgage). 10.5% rented from a private landlord and 2.1% from a social landlord. Compared to census statistics, this suggests that respondents were potentially skewed towards owner occupiers.



41.9% of all responding households lived in a 3 or 4 bedroom house and 23.7% in a 3 or 4 bedroom bungalow. 24.7% of households lived in a property with 1 or 2 bedrooms.

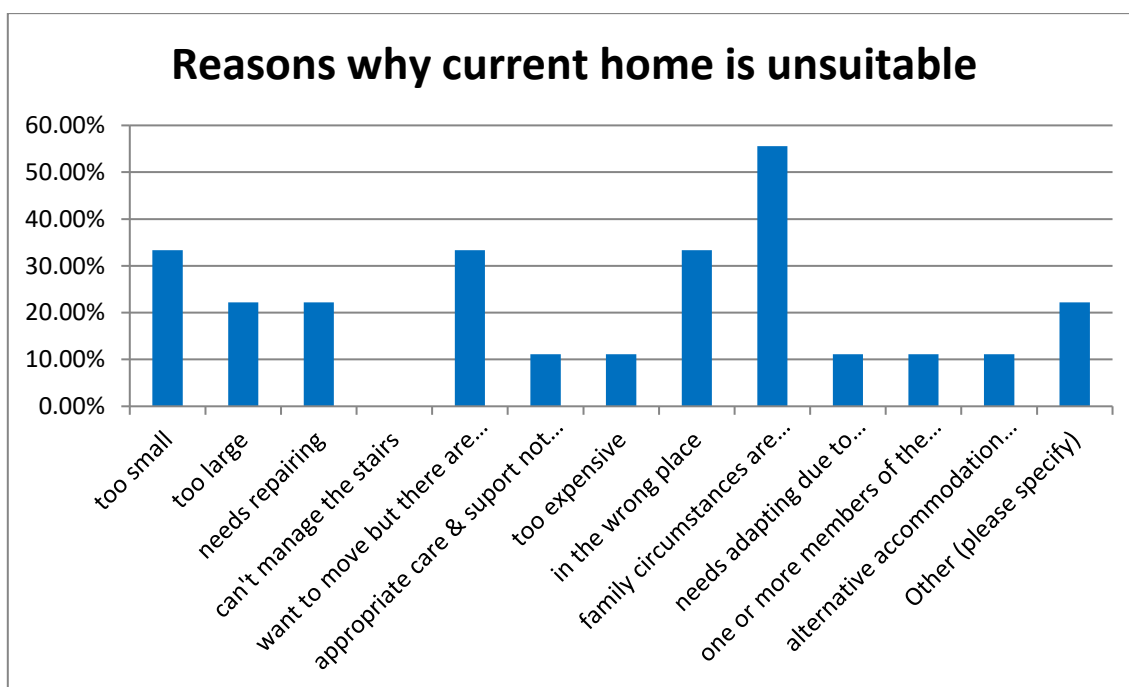


Households in need

The vast majority of households who responded to the questionnaire indicated that their current home was suitable for their household's needs over the next five years. 9.5% of respondents indicated that this was not the case (9 households). The remaining elements of the questionnaire were only to be completed by these 9 households. The Research Findings below relate solely to these respondents.

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 family circumstances are changing followed by the existing property is too small, no suitable homes are available locally and the existing home is in the wrong place. The percentage of respondents indicating each area of need is shown in the table below (NB: respondents could indicate multiple reasons).



The survey included an opportunity for respondents to explain their reasons for needing to move in more detail. Responses to this question fell into two main categories:

- Long term working people in private rented accommodation needing affordable homes
- Children needing to move to their own home

Future tenure preferences

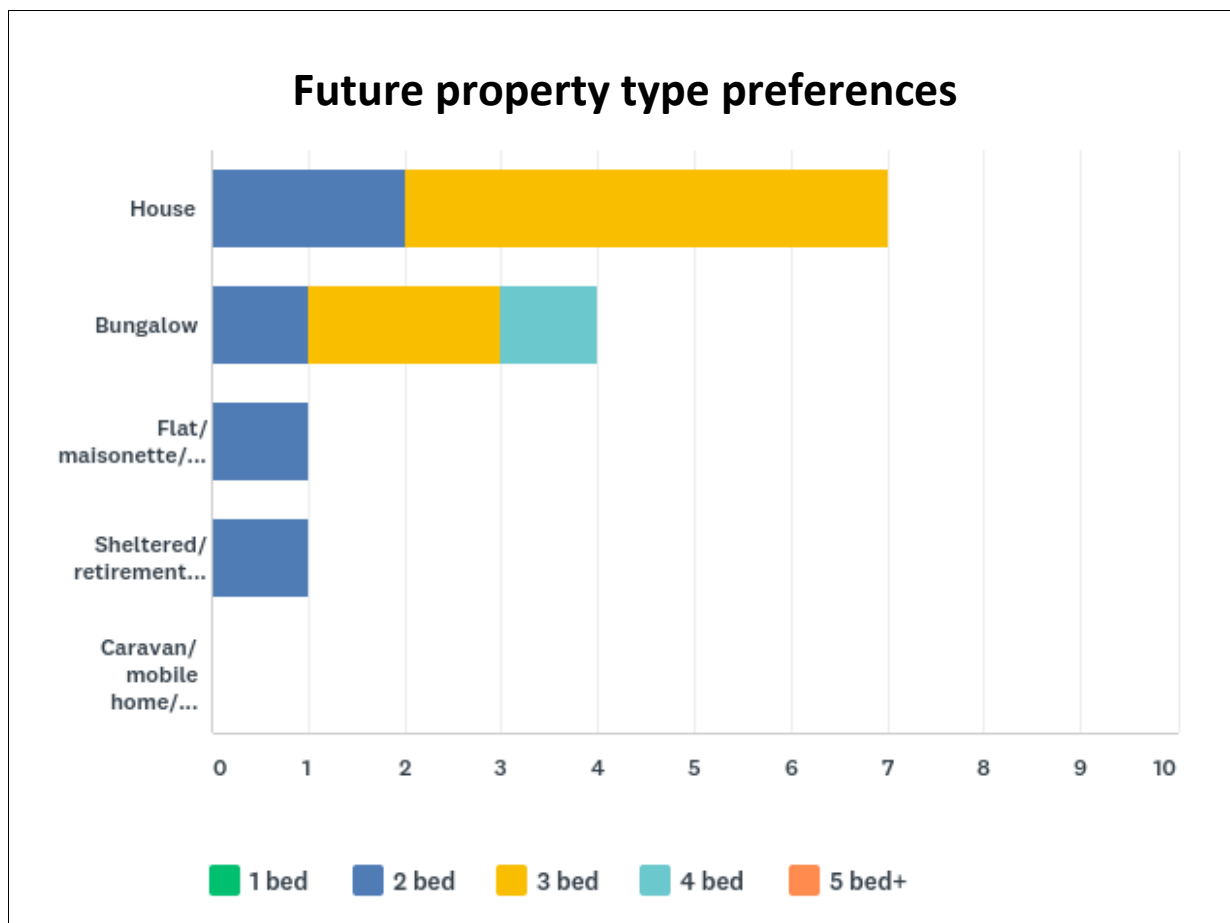
Buying on the open market was the preferred option for 77.8% of those households expressing a housing need. 22.2% indicated a desire for affordable rented homes from the

local authority. A small number of other preferences were indicated for other rental tenures or buying on the open market with a discount.

NB: respondents could indicate multiple preferences.

Future property type preferences

The largest demand is for two or three-bedroom houses (7 preferences in total) followed by bungalows of various sizes (4 preferences). No preferences were expressed for one-bedroom properties of any type. *NB: some respondents gave more than one preference*



Specific health, accessibility and other needs

None of the respondents expressed specific health or accessibility issues which would require a specific type of accommodation.

Northumberland Homefinder register

Only 1 of the households who expressed a housing need were registered with Northumberland Homefinder. This confirms the view that data available from the register only relates to a small subset of need.

Household income and affordability

37.5% of respondents, who indicated their household income and expressed a housing need, indicated an annual household income of less than £25,000. 25% of respondents indicated an annual household income above £40,000.

In terms of the amount households could afford to pay for their housing, 57.1% could not afford more than £400 per month.

In terms of a deposit, 14% of respondents who indicated their household income and expressed a housing need, could not afford a deposit of £1000. By contrast, 71% could afford a deposit of £10,000 or more.

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 Lowick parish. Key messages from the survey include the following:

- A good response rate was achieved for the survey. However, the proportion of responses from renting households was lower than expected when compared to census statistics. More work may be required to understand any needs which exist from these households.
- 9 households expressed some form of housing need. This is a small number, despite the good response rate to the questionnaire, and could reflect a number of factors. For example, the existing social housing stock may already be sufficient to cater for the substantive local need generated, people who find it difficult to compete in the housing market may have already moved away from the community, or people in housing need may not have responded to the survey. Nevertheless, a level of currently unmet need has been identified by the survey.
- The most common reason expressed for housing need was that family circumstances are changing. Comments made in responses often related to the need for children to move to their own home or the need for affordable homes to accommodate people as they retire – for example, from the agricultural sector.
- The survey reflected a spread of age groups, those retired and those in work. Most households contained either two people (49%) or one person (36%).
- Buying on the open market was the preferred option for the great majority of households expressing a housing need (78%). 22% indicated a desire for affordable rented homes from the local authority.
- The largest demand is for two and three-bedroom houses (7 preferences in total) followed by bungalows of various sizes (4 preferences in total). There were no preferences for one-bedroom accommodation of any type.
- 37% of respondents, who indicated their household income and expressed a housing need, indicated an annual household income of less than £25,000 and 57% could not afford more than £400 per month to pay for their housing. By contrast, 71% could afford a deposit of £10,000 or more.

Credits

Sincere thanks go to the residents of Lowick Parish for their participation in this survey.