

## Watlington Neighbourhood Plan Forum

Meeting to discuss the Housing Survey on 4th May 2016.

Present: Gill Bindoff (Facilitator), Stuart Edwards, Nick Greaves, Robin Holmes-Smith, Francesca Holmes-Smith, Vivien Martin, Margaret Peach, Karen Vincent.

1. Apologies for absence: Debbie Hemmins, Luke Johnson, Helen Rints, Becky Spicer,
2. The aim of the meeting was to review the outcomes of the housing survey and to discuss the mix of new housing needed for Watlington. Everyone who had expressed an interest in housing issues linked to the Neighbourhood Plan had been invited to attend.
3. There was a wide ranging discussion about the current housing market in Watlington and the problems associated with the high cost of housing and high rents. The survey, together with local knowledge demonstrates that many people, especially key workers and young people are being priced out of the market. 675 questionnaires were completed which equals 54% of the 1250 circulated.
4. Key information noted in the survey:
  - there is strong support for the provision of affordable housing and starter homes
  - there is a high level of home ownership, with and without a mortgage. 526 out of the 675 who responded
  - 33 families need a home provided by a housing association
  - there are nearly 100 households wanting to move to Watlington to be near their family.
  - two and three bedroom semi-detached houses are the most popular
  - 36 people want to stay in Watlington but move to their own first, starter, home.
  - people looking for a different home in Watlington mainly need 2 or 3 bedrooms
  - Watlington is a very stable community where people tend to stay for many years
  - a significant number of households are thinking of downsizing in the next few years
  - 47 households need a bigger home in Watlington
  - 84 people are interested in building their own home
  - 84 people are considering building an extension to their home
  - a relatively small number of people(19) have left Watlington in the last five years because of the lack of suitable or affordable housing
  - a small but significant number of people are looking for low cost homes, either prefabricated construction or permanent mobile homes
  - bungalows are a popular choice
  - there is a strong interest in housing for people as they get older including sheltered housing and homes with care support
5. Key points made in the comments boxes in the questionnaire:
  - the most frequent comment was about the need for cheaper housing
  - people are concerned about the impact of more housing on existing roads and infrastructure
  - concerns about car parking were raised by 23 people

- 11 people think a good mix of housing types is needed
- 11 people think new housing should be on small sites rather than on large housing estates

6. The group agreed on the following priorities:

- more housing is needed in Watlington to ensure that the community thrives
- the top priority is to make sure that there is a good mix of housing to sustain a well balanced community
- local people want to be able to stay in Watlington so there is a need for them to be able to find a bigger home or to downsize
- more affordable, housing association, homes are needed as well as low cost homes (prefabricated buildings and/or permanent mobile homes)
- the mix of new homes needs to include bungalows, flats and small living spaces.
- more homes for older members of the community are needed, like Orchard Walk and Old School Place

7. Other observations:

- House prices are being pushed up by people moving out from London
- the buy to let market also helps to price local people out of the market
- the evidence from the survey shows that many young people want to be able to stay in Watlington and find their own first home here
- there is no evidence to show whether most young people want to stay in Watlington or move away.