



Thurlestone Parish Housing Needs Survey 2016

Prepared by South Hams District Council
on behalf of Thurlestone Parish
Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group



Introduction

In April 2016 a Housing Needs Survey was undertaken by South Hams District Council on behalf of the Thurlestone Parish Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG). The NPSG requested the survey to assist with their evidence gathering for the parish's Neighbourhood Plan.

The survey was distributed to 696 households within the parish of Thurlestone. The addresses were provided by the elections department at South Hams District Council, together with a few properties identified by the NPSG that were not on the list. The information was anonymised: all names and addresses were removed from data supplied to the NPSG.

If there was more than one possible household living in one property, for example, a couple living with parents but wanting their own first home, then each household was asked to complete their own survey. If anyone had moved away from the parish but worked and/or had immediate family living in the parish and wished to return, then they too could take part in the survey.

Respondents were offered the opportunity to complete the survey online using the SurveyMonkey programme or by completing the paper copy. Ballot boxes were placed in the Thurlestone and Bantham village shops for people to return paper copies. A pre-paid envelope was enclosed with the survey for copies to be returned by post to the council.

Survey Aims and Objectives

The survey was aimed primarily at affordable housing needs within the parish, but also obtained data relating to the private sector. The survey asked for responses from all households within the parish, regardless of ownership or rental status.

The objectives of the survey were as follows:

- To find out the level of affordable and open market housing required to meet the needs of those living in the parish over the next 5-10 years
- To establish what tenure and size of property is required in the parish to meet the above needs
- To identify a number of recommendations relating to the existing housing stock and the potential need for new housing stock

How the NPSG will use this information

The information obtained from the survey will form part of the evidence required by the NPSG to formulate housing policies for the parish's Neighbourhood Plan.

This report was prepared in June 2016 and it should be noted that the information provided is a headline figure only, as housing needs are constantly changing. The responses to the survey should be treated as a snapshot in time. For this reason, it would be advisable to revisit the results within the next 3-5 years depending on changes within the market, local needs and requirements. For affordable housing needs, the Devon Home Choice and Help to Buy housing registers should also be consulted for the current levels of housing need and turnover of properties.

Survey Findings

Out of the 696 surveys that were distributed throughout the parish, 243 responses were received. This equates to a return rate of 35%¹, which is considered to be very good in terms of responses for a survey of this nature.

This report is broken down into 6 sections:

1. Current housing
2. Housing needs over the next 5-10 years
3. Future affordable housing provision
4. Future open market housing provision
5. Conclusion
6. Appendices

1. Current housing

Of the responses received, 78% were from those who lived in the parish and 21% were from second homeowners. The substantial number of second homeowners was surprising, but reflects the high proportion of second homes in the parish. Only 1 respondent lived elsewhere, but had immediate family living in the parish.

Of the 243 responses, only 5 were from those who worked in the parish. It may therefore be concluded that people were either retired, not in work, or commuted outside the parish for their work. It should be noted that 49% of households that took part in the survey consisted of people in the over-65 age group, reflecting the age demographic and high proportion of retired people living in the parish.

Current property type and tenure

An overwhelming 88% of respondents were owner-occupiers, with only 5% renting in the private sector and 4% from a housing association. Tied accommodation (i.e. linked to their employment), living with relatives and mobile homes made up the rest.

Of the responses received, 57% were from those who occupied a house, 29% a bungalow and 11% a flat. This suggests that the parish has a fairly even mix of property types. Typically, when these surveys have been conducted, the property types do not include many bungalows, but the parish has a particularly high number. Bungalows are not always suited to the needs of a family, but they do meet the needs of the elderly due to their adaptability for disability: 6% of respondents stated that their property had been adapted for disability, detailing grab rails, wet rooms and stair lifts.

Of the respondents, 40% lived in properties that have 4 or more bedrooms, which is similar to other areas in the South Hams where properties tend to be on the larger side. This compares with 21% who lived in smaller 1 or 2-bedroom properties. These were mainly privately owned flats and bungalows, or bungalows rented from a housing association.

¹ All figures in this report have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

2. Housing needs over the next 5-10 years

Of the respondents who answered these questions, 61 considered they or someone in their household may need to move within the next 5 years, of whom over 50% gave age/health related reasons, including the need to downsize or move out of the parish to be near family for support. Other reasons included: children leaving home, employment and uncertainty over future rental arrangements. There were 2 respondents who stated they would need bigger properties, while 2 respondents stated that they would like to have their own home, including one household currently living with parents.

Of the 81 respondents who considered their housing requirement or need was likely to change within the next 10 years, 75% gave age or health related reasons, including 16 respondents who stated they may need to downsize. There were 6 respondents who stated that they would need more space.

It is worth noting that the majority of the above responses were from people who were in the over-65 age group. Very few respondents under 65 wished or considered they needed to move.

Future property type and tenure

Of the responses received, 72% were from people who wished to move into a privately owned property. This is not surprising given that 88% of respondents were owner-occupiers.

The majority of respondents were in the over-65 age group and wished to move to a 2 or 3-bedroom bungalow or flat, as they considered their current accommodation would be too large for their needs. They currently lived in the larger 4-bedroom houses. Affordability of their current home was not an issue and they considered they had the financial means to buy a new property. At least 22 respondents wished to move to some form of privately owned sheltered/assisted living accommodation more suited to their needs than their current accommodation.

Of those under 65, there were 8 respondents who wished to move to family-sized properties with 2 or 3 bedrooms over the next 5-10 years. The property prices they could afford ranged from £125,000 - £350,000. Another 7 respondents had members of their household or immediate family members living outside the parish, who were looking for this type of property in the same price range.

There were 3 respondents who were interested in self-build accommodation; and 1 respondent who had immediate family members living outside the parish who would like self-build accommodation or to be part of a community land trust in the parish.

In terms of rental accommodation, there were 5 respondents including immediate family members who wished to privately rent in the parish; and 13 respondents who wished to move to housing association rental properties². Those who wished to move to private rental accommodation stated that they could afford rents of £500-650 per calendar month (pcm) for a 2-bedroom flat or house. Of those wishing to move to housing association properties:

- 7 respondents stated that the move needed to be within the next 5 years. Some did not give a reason, but 2 indicated that their current rent was likely to increase and they could not afford market prices; another 2 stated that they would need larger properties to accommodate their growing households; and

² One respondent wished to move to a housing association rental property outside the parish.

- 5 respondents indicated the move needed to be within the next 10 years. The reasons cited here were more varied, including: rent increases, children needing independence and the cost of maintenance of a mobile home.

To work out affordable housing needs in the parish, it is also necessary to consult the Devon Home Choice and Help to Buy housing registers.

Devon Home Choice

The Devon Home Choice (DHC) housing register advertises council and housing association owned properties available to rent in Devon. The register categorises applicants in bands depending on their priority need.³ There are currently 8 households in the parish already registered with DHC, as shown in the below table:

Bedroom need	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Grand Total
1	1		2	2	5
2	1	1			2
3			1		1
Grand Total	2	1	3	2	8

In response to the survey, there were 3 respondents who stated that they were already registered with DHC and 6 stated that they intended to register. It is important to note that all those applicants already registered currently live in the parish and are in the under-55 age group, which means they are in the 'general needs' category.

At the time of this report, the 6 respondents who intended to register have not yet registered with DHC. We would therefore recommend revisiting the above figures in 3 months' time to see if they have in fact registered. It is important to keep these figures under review as they frequently change and do not include those living outside the parish who meet the local connection criteria and wish to return. The above information should therefore be treated as a snapshot in time to meet local need for those currently registered.

Help to Buy

Help to Buy is a government scheme aimed at people with small deposits to buy a home or move up the property ladder. There is currently 1 person living in the parish on the register for a 2-bedroom property and another 384 people on the register who have stated that they would like to live in the parish. However, the number of those who would like to live in the parish is quite misleading as the likelihood is that people have stated that they would like to live anywhere in the South Hams, and the parish will be included in this data. It is therefore reasonable to accept that there is just 1 person on the register who would qualify for the scheme who meets the local connection criteria, i.e. who lives and/or works and/or has immediate family in the parish.

³ Details of the priority bands can be found at Appendix 1.

Of the survey responses, only 1 respondent stated that they were already registered and 1 respondent stated that they intended to register. Again, we would recommend reviewing these figures in 3 months' time to ensure the 1 respondent who intended to register has in fact registered.

3. Future affordable housing provision

The existing affordable housing provision in the parish is all rental accommodation owned and managed by Devon and Cornwall Housing Association, Westcountry Housing Association and South Devon Rural Housing Association. All former council owned housing has been sold off and there is no provision for any other types of affordable housing in the parish, for example, shared ownership or intermediate home ownership, such as, discount market sale.

The current affordable housing provision is as follows:

General Needs		Over-55s	
3 bed houses	11	2 bed bungalows	9
2 bed house	1	1 bed bungalows	6
4 bed bungalow	1		
3 bed bungalows	5		
2 bed bungalows	5		
1 bed bungalows	9		
Total	32	Total	15

There are 12 'general needs' 2 and 3-bedroom houses and 6 'general needs' 3 and 4-bedroom bungalows suited to families; 5 'general needs' 2-bedroom bungalows suited to couples or people with children; and 9 'general needs' 1-bedroom bungalows suited to single people or couples without children.

It is worth noting that the survey responses also provided evidence of under-occupation of existing affordable rental accommodation. Two households who responded to the survey were living in accommodation that had one bedroom more than their needs, but neither of these households stated that they had a need to move. This could be subject to further investigation, if requested, as the Council can offer financial incentives for people to downsize, the purpose being to make best use of the existing affordable housing stock.

Recommendations for new affordable housing provision

In order to determine the level of new affordable rented housing provision needed in the parish, it is necessary to look at turnover or vacancy rate of the existing rental properties. The number of properties that have become vacant and re-let since 2011 is 9, plus 4 new houses were provided in 2014, bringing the total to 13. This equates to an average of 2.6 vacancies per year. However, there have been no vacancies since 2014 and it should also be borne in mind that this rate will have been slightly skewed by the 4 new houses provided in 2014. Without these 4 new houses, the vacancy rate would have only been 1.8 per year.

Therefore, taking into account the 8 households we know are currently in need of rental accommodation and given the turnover rate (around 2 vacancies per annum), plus the 1 person who

we know qualifies for the Help to Buy scheme, the recommended level of new affordable housing provision for the parish over the next 5 years is as follows:

Affordable rented

- 1 x 1 bedroom general needs
- 2 x 2 bedroom general needs
- 1 x 3 bedroom general needs

Discount market/shared ownership

- 1 x 2 or 3 bedroom property

These figures are based on the responses to this survey and the projected turnover of current stock. We know there has been a limited turnover of 'general needs' family accommodation and hence, the recommendation for more two and three bedroom 'general needs' properties. There also has to be some degree of speculation as to whether people will move on before any accommodation becomes available so as to avoid the oversupply of affordable housing stock, as the intention is to provide for local people. It is worth noting that at the time the 4 new houses were provided in 2014, there were no housing need applicants from the parish and these houses were allocated to households from outside the parish.⁴ This may have been due to the timing of any previous housing need and the fact that applicants had since moved away from the parish. This reinforces the point that housing needs figures do need to be kept under review.

The parish may also wish to look at developing a local lettings policy to ensure that any future relets on the current properties are extended to Band E for local people before allocating beyond the parish. Band E is for people who are assessed as adequately housed, but living in costly private rental accommodation.

Most importantly, any new properties that are developed as part of the Neighbourhood Plan should be bound by a legal agreement⁵ to ensure that local people are prioritised for any affordable housing.

4. Future open market housing provision

The survey responses have also provided data about the open market housing provision that may be useful to the NPSG when they are formulating the housing policies for the Neighbourhood Plan.

Properties and land to buy

The survey has identified the following potential needs in the private sector over the next 5-10 years:

- More 2 and 3-bedroom properties for young families/couples to buy in the £125,000 - £350,000 price range
- Self build/custom build plots for families/couples to buy at a discounted price

⁴ South Hams District Council Local Allocations Policy can be found at Appendix 2.

⁵ A legal agreement under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act (as amended)

- More rental properties for young families/couples to rent for £500-650 pcm
- Retention of a reasonable proportion of bungalows for those wishing to downsize as these are suited to the needs of the elderly
- Sheltered/assisted living accommodation

At the time of this report, there were 5 properties for sale in the parish on Rightmove:

4-bedroom house - £1,250,000
 4-bedroom house - £1,100,000
 3-bedroom bungalow - £550,000
 3-bedroom flat - £575,000
 1 bedroom flat - £230,00.00

Another 4-bedroom house in Bantham, with self-contained flat, was advertised in the Kingsbridge & Salcombe Gazette for a guide price of £1,500,000.

There were 2 building plots for sale with planning permission in Thurlestone: one for £1,500,000 and another for £1,250,000 (following the demolition of a single detached house). Also in Thurlestone, there was planning permission for a development site of 8 x 4-bedroom detached houses and two further building plots: one originally marketed for £1,100,000 with planning permission for a substantial 4-bedroom detached house, and another for a 3-bedroom single storey dwelling. In total, 11 additional properties, but only one that would meet local housing needs identified in this survey.

Smaller properties are normally aimed at first-time buyers as they tend to be less expensive than the larger properties, but this is not necessarily the case in the parish where a 1-bedroom property is currently on the market for £230,000. To afford this property, a household would need to have an income of approximately £60,000 per annum. Given that the average local wage for people living in the parish is in the region of £24,000 per annum, there is obviously some disparity between what the average family would earn and the house prices in the area that could make obtaining a mortgage difficult.

It is clear therefore that there are currently no properties (or land) available in the parish that would meet the price range of first time buyers, or lower and middle income families. Most of these people will be, or already have been, priced out of the market if they wish to remain in the parish and start a family in the area. Looking at the average income level of £24,000 per annum, a couple may be able to obtain a mortgage of around £140,000, but they would also need to have access to a significant deposit. It is, however, worth noting the government's recent proposals for starter homes, whereby in areas outside London the property price would be capped at £250,000. This is unlikely to meet all needs, but it may help a number of people in the parish to be able to get onto the property ladder⁶.

⁶ More details about starter homes are set out in the Housing and Planning Act 2016.

Properties to rent

The NPSG has been told by local estate agents that there is a shortage of rental properties in the parish, particularly properties that families can afford to rent. They have also been told that families have had to move out of the parish due to high rents, but it is very difficult to substantiate this. It is always difficult to ascertain how many local people have had to move away from an area because they cannot afford to rent (or buy) there.

The survey identified 5 respondents, including those with immediate family members who were living outside the parish, who would like private rental accommodation and they could afford £500-650 pcm for a 2-bedroom house or flat.

Responses to the survey disclosed that rents in the parish were relatively reasonable, with the majority of respondents' rents being below £650 pcm. This maybe because respondents were in housing association properties, tied accommodation, living with relatives or paying ground rent for a mobile home. However, these rents do not compare with those currently being advertised. At the time of this report, there was only one property available to rent on the open market on Rightmove. This was a 3-bedroom house in Bantham at £875 pcm. Given that there was only one property to use as an example, it was therefore felt appropriate to look at rents charged elsewhere in the district:

3-bedroom house in Kingsbridge - £850 pcm

3-bedroom house in Wembury (a comparable market area) - £985 pcm

If the above rental figures are a true reflection of the current market rate in the parish, then it is clear that the private rented sector is not meeting the needs of people who are on low incomes and are reliant on benefits, either in whole or in part, to meet their housing costs. This could therefore impact on young families who are trying to rent private accommodation within the parish. The table below shows how the Local Housing Allowance works: for example, anyone claiming housing benefit for a 3-bedroom property can claim up to £663.08 pcm, but must pay anything above that amount.

Room requirement	Weekly	Calendar monthly
Shared room rate	£63.50	£275.16
1 bedroom	£96.91	£419.94
2 bedroom	£128.19	£559.49
3 bedroom	£153.02	£663.08
4 bedroom	£192.24	£833.04

Sheltered/assisted living accommodation

At least 22 respondents stated that they would like to move to sheltered/assisted living accommodation offering a mix of 2 or 3-bedroom flats and bungalows over the next 5 -10 years. However, it should be noted that there are particular criteria that this type of accommodation would need to meet, which is why the existing Local Plan for South Hams identifies this type of housing for the area centres, such as Totnes and Kingsbridge. Evidence from Devon County Council would also need to be considered. As an alternative, it is worth noting that care packages could be provided to more homes, with alarms linked to a 24-hour care system.

5. Conclusion

It is clear that there is a disproportion between those over the age of 65 and those in other age groups living in the parish. If the community wishes to address its unbalanced age demographic in their Neighbourhood Plan, then the provision of additional affordable and rental housing for young families/couples and more reasonably priced 2 and 3-bedroom open market housing of mixed type and tenure and/or self build plots is needed. By encouraging younger people to the area, this will ensure the sustainability of the parish all year round and not just during the peak holiday period. The NPSG should also consider the needs of its ageing population and, in particular, the feasibility of providing sheltered/assisted living accommodation in the parish and/or retention of a reasonable proportion of bungalows which are more suited to adaptation for disability.

6. Appendices

1. Extract from 'Your Guide to Devon Home Choice'
2. South Hams District Council Local Allocation Policy

Any further information about this survey can be obtained by contacting:

Alex Rehaag – alex.rehaag@swdevon.gov.uk - (01822) 813722

Appendix 1

The five priority bands are:

Band A – Emergency Housing Need

Your application will only be placed in this band if your need for housing is assessed as so exceptional that you must take priority over all other applicants. For example:

- you have an urgent health or wellbeing need
- your home is in a state of emergency disrepair
- you need to move to escape violence or the threat of violence, harassment or a traumatic event

Substantial evidence must exist to award this priority.

Band B – High Housing Need

Your application will be placed in this band if:

- a Devon council has accepted that you are statutorily homeless and it is not considered possible and appropriate for you to find private rented accommodation
- you are threatened with homelessness and have been placed in the 'Prevention of homelessness' category by a Devon council
- you are severely overcrowded
- you are a tenant of a Devon Home Choice partner landlord and want to move to a smaller home
- you have a high health or wellbeing need
- your home is in a state of high disrepair
- you are ready to move on from supported housing

Band C – Medium Housing Need

Your application will be placed in this band if:

- you are overcrowded and lack 1 bedroom
- you have been assessed as having a medium health or wellbeing need

- you live on, or above the 4th floor with children under 8
- you have served in the armed forces and are assessed to be in urgent housing need
- you need to need to move for work, where you would otherwise have to travel more than 30 miles (each way) from home to work

Band D – Low Housing Need

Your application will be placed in this band if:

- a Devon council has accepted that you are statutorily homeless but it is considered possible and appropriate for you to find private rented accommodation
- you have no permanent home. For example you have been assessed as non priority or intentionally homeless by a Devon local authority, or are 'sofa surfing'
- you have been assessed as having a low health or wellbeing need
- you share facilities, such as a toilet, bath, shower or kitchen (for example you are living with your parents)
- you have received a valid notice to quit from your landlord
- you meet a local priority agreed by the local authority managing your application
- you have a housing need but have no local connection to Devon
- you have been assessed as having deliberately worsened your circumstances

Band E – No Housing Need

From your application it has been assessed that you are adequately housed.

Appendix 2

SOUTH HAMS DISTRICT COUNCIL

LOCAL ALLOCATION POLICY

South Hams District Council is committed to reflecting the full diversity of the community it serves and to promoting equality of opportunity for everyone.

This policy and all associated documentation and leaflets can be made available in large print, Braille, tape format or in any other languages, on request.

September 2015

CONTENTS

Page

1. SCOPE OF THE POLICY	3
2. INTRODUCTION	3
3. STATEMENT OF CHOICE	4
4. COMMON POLICIES	4
Devon Home Choice	4
Housing Act 1996	5
5. COUNCIL SPECIFIC POLICIES	
Homeless Households	5
Assisting Vulnerable Households	6
Local Housing Needs	6
Armed Forces Personnel	7
Tenants Incentive Scheme	8
6. EXCEPTIONS	
Supported Housing Schemes	8
Meeting the needs of the physically disabled	8
7. GENERAL	
Publicity	9
Diversity & Equal Opportunities	9
Policy Review	9

SOUTH HAMS DISTRICT COUNCIL

LOCAL ALLOCATION POLICY

1 Scope of the policy

- 1.1 This Local Allocations Policy sets out how the Council will deal with specific local issues outside of the Devon wide Choice based lettings system called Devon Home Choice. The document also sets out 'exceptions' to the Devon Home Choice Scheme i.e. where the Council will allocate outside of the scheme.
- 1.2 In exceptional circumstances South Hams District Council reserve the right to depart from any aspect of this policy. Any decision to depart from the policy will be taken by the Community of Practice Lead for Housing, Revenues & Benefits in conjunction with the Executive Member.
- 1.3 Homes delivered in the Dartmoor National Park, on exception sites or on Community Led schemes are controlled by very specific needs in a particular parish. The criteria for these schemes will be set out within the Section 106 Agreement relating to the specific site.
- 1.4 The Devon Home Choice Policy is a separate document and should be read in conjunction with this policy.

2 Introduction

- 2.1 South Hams District Council (SHDC) no longer holds any housing stock, having transferred the entire stock to, various Registered Providers (RPs) in 1999.
- 2.1 Devon Home Choice is the model adopted by the Council, and RPs operating within the District, to allocate housing through this jointly operated Choice Based Lettings Scheme
- 2.2 Devon Home Choice covers all 10 Devon Authorities including Plymouth & Torbay, enabling applicants to apply across Devon for vacant properties

- 2.3 SHDC coordinates Devon Home Choice within South Hams and maintains the common housing register for all partners operating within the area.
- 2.4 RPs label, advertise and let their properties. They have their own allocation policies and will verify applicants details to ensure they meet their criteria
- 2.5 This policy document sets out:
 - a. the common policies adopted by all partners within Devon Home Choice
 - b. Council specific policies, and
 - c. exceptions to the Devon Home Choice Scheme

3 Statement of Choice

- 3.1 South Hams District Council is committed to offering the greatest choice possible in the allocation of housing within the District, whilst ensuring that such choice is compatible with ensuring that housing goes to those with the greatest need.
- 3.1 Within this it must be recognised that there is very high demand for affordable housing in South Hams and that this demand cannot currently be fully met from available resources. Consequently, more often than not, only those in the greatest housing need are likely to obtain suitable accommodation, which means that the degree of choice will always be limited
- 3.2 South Hams District Council is also committed to extending choice to homeless households as far as is compatible with the effective use of council resources and the need to reduce the use of temporary accommodation. (paragraphs 5.1 – 5.5 of this policy which set out our policy relating to homeless households)

4 COMMON POLICIES

Devon Home Choice

- 4.1 By joining the Devon Home Choice partnership all partners have agreed to the Devon Home Choice Policy
- 4.1 The Devon Home Choice Policy document sets out in detail how the scheme will operate, how applicants will be prioritised and how properties will be let

- 4.2 The Devon Home Choice Policy forms the best part of the Council's allocation policy, being the document which sets out the fundamental principles upon which the Scheme is based
- 4.3 The Devon Home Choice Policy is a separate document and should be read in conjunction with this policy
- 4.4 South Hams District Council reserves the right to deviate from this policy in exceptional circumstances. Any decision to depart from this policy will be taken by the Head of ICT and Customer Services and/or the Housing Services Manager along with the Executive member for housing.
- 4.5 Homes which are delivered through Dartmoor National Park, through the Village Housing Initiative (VHI) or on exception sites within South Hams are controlled by specific legal criteria relating to housing needs in a particular Parish. These criteria will be detailed in the Section 106 agreement.

HOUSING ACT 1996

- 4.6 The Housing Act 1996 as amended requires all Councils to give 'reasonable preference' in their allocations schemes to groups in high housing need such as the homeless, those who need to move on welfare and medical grounds, people living in unsatisfactory housing and those who would face hardship unless they can move to a particular locality within the district. However guidance states that Local Authorities can take into account local pressures with regard to this.
- 4.7 Further guidance was issued in August 2012 in relation to the armed forces stating that local allocation policies should not be utilised for this group in certain circumstances, this is explained in detail in paragraph 5.15.

5 COUNCIL SPECIFIC POLICIES

- 5.1 The Council has specific duties to meet local housing needs and to meet the needs of the homeless. This section sets out the Council's policies in this respect and how they operate alongside the Devon Home Choice Policy

Homeless Households

- 5.1 If the Council accepts a statutory duty to re-house a homeless household they will be placed in the High Housing Needs Band (Band B) in accordance with the Devon Home Choice Policy

- 5.2 Homeless households will be offered the same degree of choice as other applicants for a period of 6 weeks after being accepted as homeless
- 5.3 If bids have not been made for suitable accommodation within the 6 week period (and suitable vacancies have been advertised) then the Council will bid on behalf of the homeless household, for all suitable vacancies that arise, until the household is offered a property
- 5.4 If no suitable vacancies occur within the first 6 weeks, the period of choice will be extended by a further period of up to 6 weeks
- 5.5 Refusals of accommodation by homeless households will be considered in accordance with the Homelessness Code of Guidance

Assisting Vulnerable Households

- 5.7 To ensure vulnerable households, who do not have any support network, are able to access Devon Home Choice and bid for properties the Council will activate the automatic bidding process, this will be done with the applicants consent.
- 5.8 Regular checks will be made on “non-bidding” households to identify households who may need our support. When a household has been identified, and with their approval, bids will be made by Council staff on their behalf
- 5.9 A copy of the Automatic Bidding Procedure is detailed in the Devon Home Choice Policy

Local Housing Needs

- 5.10 Whilst choice will be extended as widely as possible, certain housing schemes may only be let to applicants with a local housing need
- 5.11 In very rural villages with general needs social rented housing stock of less than 100 properties, preference will be given to local households, provided they have an existing housing need ie bands A - D. For the purposes of clarity this is everywhere in South Hams apart from Dartmouth, Ivybridge, Kingsbridge, South Brent and Totnes.
- 5.12 Schemes delivered in the Dartmoor National Park and exception sites within South Hams will be controlled by very specific criteria relating to needs in a particular parish. These criteria will be set out within the S106 Agreement relating to the specific site

- 5.13 Other larger sites enabled through the planning process within South Hams will allow 50% of all new rented affordable housing to be allocated to those in bands A – D. For the avoidance of doubt this will be schemes in Dartmouth, Ivybridge, Kingsbridge and Totnes.
- 5.14 For the purposes of clarity a household has a connection with the Parish/Town in any of the following circumstances:-
- (i) The person has lived in the parish/town for 3 out of the 5 years preceding the allocation.
 - (ii) The person has immediately prior to the allocation lived in the parish/town for 6 out of 12 months preceding the allocation
 - (iii) Immediate family have lived in the parish/town themselves for 5 years preceding the allocation. For avoidance of doubt The Local Government Association guidelines define immediate family as parents, siblings and non dependent children.
 - (iv) The person has permanent employment in the parish/town with a minimum contract of 16 hours per week which has continued for the 6 months preceding the allocation without a break in employment of more than 3 months such employment to include self employment. This should not include employment of a casual nature
 - (v) Any periods of (ordinary) residence of the person in the Parish/Town

ARMED FORCES PERSONNEL

- 5.15 Further guidance issued in August 2012 in relation to the armed forces stated that where housing authorities utilise local connection policies they must not apply them to the following persons:
- a) those who are currently serving in the regular forces or who were serving in the regular forces at any time in the five years preceding their application for an allocation of social housing
 - b) bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the regular forces where (i) the bereaved spouse or civil partner has recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled, to reside in Ministry of Defence accommodation following the death of their service spouse or civil partner, and (ii) the death was wholly or partly attributable to their service
 - c) current or former members of the reserve forces who are suffering from a serious injury, illness, or disability which is wholly or partly attributable to their service

TENANTS INCENTIVE SCHEME

- 5.16 One of the priorities in the HOMES strategy is to maximise the use of existing Social Housing Stock including maximising family sized accommodation by offering a financial incentive where appropriate. The Council can offer payments to households to move to a more appropriate property in terms of size. This policy is a separate document and can be read in conjunction with the allocations policy.

6 EXCEPTIONS TO DEVON HOME CHOICE

Supported Housing Schemes

- 6.1 It is inappropriate to advertise vacancies in certain supported housing schemes as they have been developed to meet very specific needs
- 6.2 The allocation process for such schemes will be agreed outside this allocation policy between Housing, Social Services and the RP and will be developed to meet the very specific needs of the client and sensitively manage the lettings of the scheme
- 6.3 List of supported housing and Extra Care schemes exempt from Devon Home Choice within South Hams:-

Westville, Kingsbridge
St Barnabas Project, Dartmouth
Highland Villa, Ivybridge
Belmont Villa, Ivybridge
Redworth Terrace, Totnes
Douro Court, Ivybridge
Bishops Court, Newton Ferrers
See Separate Lettings Policies for the above.

Meeting the needs of the physically disabled

- 6.4 Properties that have been adapted for the disabled will be labelled to ensure the property is let to an applicant with the need for this type of accommodation *e.g. preference will be given to an applicant with the need for a level access shower*
- 6.5 However, there are occasions when the needs of a disabled household cannot be met within the general housing stock and a specific property needs to be built

- 6.6 In such circumstances close liaison will take place between the Council, Social Services and the RP to ensure the property is built to meet the specific needs identified. In this case the property will not be advertised through the Devon Home Choice Scheme but will be allocated through Devon Home Choice as a direct match.

7 GENERAL

Publicity

- 7.1 This policy is a formal Council document and is not intended to be used as a publicity document
- 7.2 Full details of the Devon Home Choice Scheme and the Council's policies will be produced in leaflet format and on the Council's website in a user-friendly format

Diversity and Equal Opportunities

- 7.3 South Hams District Council is committed to reflecting the full diversity of the community it serves and to promoting equality of opportunity for everyone
- 7.4 This policy and all associated documentation and leaflets can be made available in large print, Braille, tape format or in any other languages, on request

Policy Review

- 7.5 The Devon Home Choice scheme and Policy are regularly reviewed and any changes are implemented only after majority agreement amongst all Devon Home Choice partners
- 7.6 The Council's allocation policy will be monitored regularly and reviewed and updated annually and in conjunction with new developments.