

Holwell – potential housing growth targets

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Housing Stock and Prices, and Key Population Statistics

The [2011 Census](#) records 160 households and 171 household spaces in Holwell parish. There are no communal establishments. The vacancy rate (6.4%) is lower than the West Dorset average, although slightly higher than the national average.

The Census data tells us that, in Holwell, the most typical dwelling size is a 3 or 4 bedroom property, which together account for just under 70% of the total stock. Only about 1 in 5 homes are 1 or 2 bedroom properties.

About 70% of households are 1 or 2 people households, so many of the homes are under-occupied according to the census data. The average household size is 2.3 persons. Households are 'older' than the average for the area, with very few residents in their 30s, although there are a reasonable number living here in their 20s. About 1 in 5 people say that their day to day activities are limited by a health problem or disability. There is also a high reliance on private car as reflected in the car ownership levels (with only 4.4% of households without a car, and more than 60% of households having 2 or more cars).

About three-quarters (74.4%) of the housing stock is owner-occupied, which is higher than both the district and national average. Although the number of private rented properties is slightly higher than typical for Dorset, there were very few (6.3%) affordable public rented properties at the time of the Census.

Land Registry data on house sales for Holwell indicates that typically about 4 dwellings get bought and sold every year. The average house price is about £350,000 (based on data over the last 5 years), with sold prices ranging from £180,000 to £625,000.

There is little historic data available on rental prices, but a wider area based-search on DT9 (which includes Sherborne) indicates rents currently are around £685 pcm for a two bedroom property, and £785 pcm for a 3 bedroom property.

Housing need information

As at October 2016 the Housing Enabling Officer confirmed that there were 3 households with a local connection to the area on the District Council's Housing Register. As of October 2017, this figure had dropped to 2 households with a local connection.

There are also households registered in need with a local connection to the adjoining parishes – in October 2016 the total was 16, which included households from Bishops Caundle (6), Folke and Alweston (4), Glanvilles Wootton in North Dorset (2), Lydlinch in North Dorset (4) and Pulham in North Dorset (2). In October 2017 this figure had reduced to 13 households. Bishops Caundle includes one of the larger villages with a settlement boundary, and has been actively progressing an affordable housing scheme. The settlement boundaries around Glanvilles Wootton, Kings Stag, Lydlinch and Pulham were removed in the latest review of the North Dorset Local Plan, and therefore opportunities for affordable housing remain but need to demonstrate that

there is at least one essential facility within 1 kilometre of the physical centre of the settlement to which it relates, and the estimated population living within the built-up area is more than 100 people.

Another indicator of local need is the number of potentially ‘concealed’ households recorded in the 2011 Census. This shows 4 households as falling outside the normal categories for standard household types. At 2.5% of all households this was lower than average, and also lower than the previous 2001 Census (6 households). The household composition data also shows slightly lower than average number of families with dependent children, and older persons, which may indicate that either the available housing types or local facilities and services do not cater as well for their needs.

11 responses to the 2016 household questionnaire (which had a 74% response rate) told us that someone in their household may be looking for accommodation in Holwell in the next 5 years – this was mainly children of existing families needing affordable types of accommodation (either to rent or to buy).

Discussions held with local estate agents¹ indicate that the key statistics broadly reflect their understanding of the local market, and that Holwell remains a popular area, and as such there is no upper limit where the provision of new homes would be likely to exceed market demand. Requests typically reflect a stronger demand for 2 bedroom homes and for bungalows / annexed accommodation for older residents.

The most recent district-wide evidence, contained in the [2014 Strategic Housing Market Report](#), suggests that about 2 in every 5 new open market homes should be built as 2 bedroom dwellings, with most demand being for 3 bedroom homes and larger properties.

Current supply

As of 31 March 2017

With the introduction of permitted development rights for the conversion of agricultural barns to housing, and the recent approval of an exception site for affordable housing, there are currently 20 dwellings with planning consent.

- WD/D/14/002191 - Sandhills Farm, Stock Hill Lane, Holwell (3 dwellings)
- WD/D/15/002295 - land at Crouch Lane adjoining the Pre-School (14 dwellings – as 100% affordable housing)
- WD/D/17/001369 - land adjacent Hill Street Farm, Stony Lane, Holwell (1 AOC dwelling, replacing the previous outline permission WD/D/16/001963)
- WD/D/16/002059 - Watkins Farm, Watkins Farm Access Road, Holwell (1 dwelling)
- WD/D/17/000081 - Barn At Lower Elsworth, Crouch Lane, Holwell (1 dwelling)

Considering the past rate of development

Development monitoring statistics² available from 2000/2001 to 2016/17 show 3 dwellings built (ie 1 dwelling every 5 years on average) – one in 2002/3, one in 2004/5 and one in 2014/15 (Barton Farm). This was in the context of planning policy based on restraint due to the classification of the whole parish as countryside during that time, with only agricultural workers dwellings allowed.

¹ Morton New and Symonds and Sampson, January 2017

² Previously published data by Dorset County Council supplemented by monitoring information provided by West Dorset District Council

Therefore for the period 2017 to 2031 this would suggest a minimum target of 3 dwellings (in order to meet the national planning policy framework requirement to boost housing supply)

Given the current supply, the continuation of past rates would not require the release of any further land for development.

Considering Holwell's contribution to the overall housing need in the area

The latest published information of the objective assessment of housing need across the Housing Market Area (HMA) is the 2014 Strategic Housing Market Report. From this, the housing target in the adopted [Local Plan](#) was set at 775 dwellings per annum for the period 2011 to 2031. This relates to the whole plan area of West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland.

The [review](#) of the 2014 report for the purpose of the Local Plan Review confirmed that although the base population projections had risen slightly, this would still on its own indicate a level of need below the objective assessment of housing need (that had been based on a previous period of housing growth as opposed to the population projections available at that time). In September 2017 the draft Indicative Assessment of Housing Need Based on Proposed Formula, 2016 to 2026, was issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government. This suggests that the starting point for considered the objectively assessed needs for the area should be an annual house building target of 780 dwellings per annum.

There are no targets set for areas below district level. Furthermore the development strategy (as explained in para 3.3.5 of the Local Plan) focuses the majority of new development on the larger settlements, which have more existing jobs and services, broadly in line with the local demand for that area, taking into account current imbalances, the current supply and existing constraints. Holwell is noted within the list of Settlements of 200+ population without a defined development boundary. This means that although infill development would not normally be permitted, the re-use of existing buildings for open market housing is allowed.

If the development strategy had simply been to distribute the projected housing need across the area, on a pro-rata basis, the potential 'target' for the amount of development within Holwell parish for the period 2016 to 2031 would have been

$$\text{HMA target for 2011-2031 (15,500)} \times \frac{\text{Holwell household in 2011 (160)}}{\text{HMA households in 2011 (72,921)}} \times \frac{15 \text{ years}}{20 \text{ years}} = 26 \text{ dwellings}$$

However this method of assessing need takes no account of the overall sustainability of the area in terms of the Local Plan's strategic objectives to achieve a sustainable pattern of development. As such 26 homes could be seen as an indicative upper limit rather than an appropriate target.

Local opinion

The household survey (2016) showed that most people (73% of respondents) agreed that we should have some housing, and 25% of respondents considered starter homes/small family homes the main need. There wasn't a strong consensus on how many homes, 36% wanted no increase other than that offered by Local Plan, 25% wanted between 1 and 5 properties, 20% between 6 and 10 properties and 19% more than 10 properties. So it is safe to say that only a few (less than 20%) wanted more than 10 homes.

With the approval of the Crouch Lane appeal, the current supply already goes beyond the level of growth that most residents had indicated they would be prepared to accept. As such, any further housing would be seen as contravening the current remit provided by the local community.

A further consultation was undertaken in Summer 2017. At this stage a similar question was asked (given the intervening approvals) – ie should any more homes be built (apart from conversions and rural housing exceptions sites (if a future need were to arise)), with possible options of up to 3, 6 or 10 custom build houses. The response to this second consultation indicated

Max # of Custom Build Houses Acceptable	As % of those responding:
(a) conversions and rural housing exceptions sites only	40%
(b) conversions and RES plus up to 3 custom build houses	22%
(c) conversions and RES plus up to 6 custom build houses	16%
(d) conversions and RES plus up to 10 custom build houses	22%

Based on a weighted average, the responses suggested that there should be support for 3 or 4 new build homes in addition to rural housing exceptions sites and possible conversions.

Sustainability

Two recent planning decisions have both commented on the sustainability of Holwell.

In the Crouch Lane appeal (ref 3154493, February 2017) the Planning Inspector acknowledged that “Holwell has few services, facilities and employment opportunities, with limited access to public transport connections to nearby larger settlements” but went on to consider provision in nearby settlements, concluding that “there are a range of services and facilities in Bishops Caundle including a primary school, public house and restaurant, a garage, a village shop and Post Office as well as a village hall, with public transport links to larger towns. There are also more limited services facilities in King’s Stag. Both villages are a relatively short car journey from the appeal site.” On this basis he came to the view that “future residents’ reliance on the private car for most of their shorter journeys would be significantly offset by the valuable role that the proposed development would have in sustaining the local services and facilities in the nearby settlements. In my view, the proposed development would therefore reflect the approach of locating housing where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities, including locating development in one village to support services in a village nearby, set out at paragraph 55 of the Framework. It would also reflect the guidance in paragraph 29 of the Framework, which recognises that the opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions may be more limited in rural areas.” From this decision it appears that, in terms of sustainability, further housing in the parish might be considered favourably (subject to considering wider environmental harm).

More recently the replacement of the barn at Lower Elsworth has come under scrutiny (ref 17/0081, March 2017) – with an officer recommendation for refusal over-turned by the Planning Committee. Slightly contrary to the appeal decision, the officer stated that Holwell “is remote from any larger towns or villages, the nearest town is Sherborne approximately 5 km to the west.” And he went on to conclude that “While it is possible that the proposal could meet some of the requirements contained in the NPPF for social need in terms of being located next to a Nursery School where it could help support this facility, with the very limited facilities and services other than the school to meet basic daily needs available in Holwell, the addition of even 1 dwelling would be unsustainable.” One of the reasons given for differing from the appeal decision was that the site was more isolated (being on the far side of the nursery school) and as such could be considered to be isolated, and would set a precedent that potentially would be harmful to the countryside around the village.

Conclusions and recommendations

For the period 2017 – 2031, the existing planning consents would deliver up to 20 new dwellings including a substantial amount of affordable housing as part of a rural exception site scheme. There is also potential that further development will meet the prior approval requirements for the conversion of agricultural buildings within the plan period.

Without a Neighbourhood Plan, the adopted Local Plan would also continue to support conversions of existing buildings to provide open market or affordable housing, rural exception sites for 100% affordable housing (subject to local need), and the potential for rural workers dwelling (where a need can be demonstrated).

The review of evidence suggests that a housing target (if defined) would be within the range of 3 to 26 dwelling completions over this period, and that a reasonable target would have been about 15 homes, the vast majority of which should be affordable homes. However, taking into account the 1 completion (2011 - 2017) and deducting extant consents (20), this target is already exceeded by the supply.

On this basis, taking into account the limited sustainability of the settlement and the wishes of local residents, the Neighbourhood Plan may wish to make provision for up to 5 additional dwellings. This could include the potential for infill development, alongside conversions. The potential for conversions through permitted development rights is not something the Neighbourhood Plan can vary, but it may wish to consider including criteria in relation to conversions which would be decided against the development plan policies.

The Neighbourhood Plan should not seek to restrict the provision of more affordable housing or rural workers dwellings if a further need is demonstrated in the plan period. However the current evidence suggests that there is unlikely to be a need to release further sites for affordable housing.

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