

# Sevenoaks District Council

## Local Housing Needs Evidence Base

Older persons housing study - January 2022

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of the older persons housing study (OPNS) is to provide deeper insight into the future housing needs of older people across Sevenoaks District. This study complements the evidence base prepared through the Targeted Review of Local Housing Needs Evidence Base to support the emerging Local Plan and helps inform the preparation of the housing strategy.
- 1.2 The OPNS has included focus group discussions with registered providers and the Sevenoaks District Seniors Action Forum (SDSAF); an online survey of residents aged 65 and over; and includes data from the 2017 Local Housing Needs Study district-wide household survey (LHNS 2017 household survey).
- 1.3 This report is structured around the following themes:
  - National planning policy
  - Older person population and households 2021 to 2043
  - Current housing situation
  - Future housing choices
  - Findings from the 2021 household survey and focus group consultation
  - Future need to specialist older persons' accommodation and residential care provision
  - Concluding comments and policy recommendations

### 2. National Planning policy

- 2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework Annex 2 defines older people as 'people over or approaching retirement age including the active, newly-retired through to the very frail elderly; and whose housing can encompass accessible, adaptable general needs housing through to the full range of retirement and specialist housing for those with care and support needs.'
- 2.2 Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) which supports the NPPF recommends the following are considered in an assessment of older persons need:
  - The future need for specialist accommodation (including but not restricted to age-restricted general market housing, retirement living or sheltered accommodation, Extra Care or housing with care), broken down by type and tenure.

- The need for care in residential care and nursing homes (C2).
- The need for co-housing communities.
- The role of general housing and in particular bungalows and homes that can be adapted to meet a change in needs.

2.3 PPG notes that ‘plan-making authorities will need to count housing provided for older people against their housing requirement’ (source: PPG Paragraph: 016 Reference ID: 63-016-20190626). These matters are covered further in the Local Plan evidence base.

### 3. Older person population and households 2021 to 2043

3.1 The latest 2018-based Office for National Statistics (ONS) population projections indicate that in 2021 21.7% of the population in Sevenoaks District were aged 65 and over and this is projected to increase to 25.9% of the population by 2043 (Table 1.1). The largest increase will be in the 85 and over age group. By 2043 around 33,750 people will be aged 65 or over compared to around 26,500 in 2021.

Age Group	Year			
	2021	2043	Change	% change
65-74	13,523	14,735	1,212	9.0%
75-84	9,037	12,705	3,669	40.6%
85+	3,913	6,304	2,392	61.1%
Total 65+	26,472	33,745	7,273	7.2%
% of total population	21.7	25.8	N/A	N/A

Source: 2018-based ONS population projections

3.2 Table 1.2 sets out the latest 2018-based Office for National Statistics (ONS) household projections for older persons. These show the number of households where the “household reference person” is aged 65 or over and also the total number of all households in the district. The household projections are based on the population projections and take into account the likelihood that someone within the household will be a household reference person. *The Office for National Statistics defines a household reference person (HRP) as the householder, who is the household member who owns the accommodation; is legally responsible for the rent; or occupies the accommodation as reward of their employment, or through some relationship to its owner who is not a member of the household. If there are joint householders, the one with the highest income is the HRP. If their income is the same, then the eldest one is the HRP.*

3.3 According to the 2018-based household projections, there will be around 5,245 more households where the household reference person (HRP) is aged 65 and over in 2043. The number of older person households is projected to increase by 30.8% compared with and 12.8% across all age groups. In 2021, there were around 17,032 older person households, 28.5% were single person households, 42.4% were households with two or more adults and 29.1% were households with children. By 2043, there

are projected to be around 22,276 older person households with the range of household types very similar to the 2021 figures.

	One Person	Households with at least 1 dependent child	Other households with two or more adults	All household types
2021				
65-74	2,657	195	4,807	7,658
75-84	2,827	30	3,552	6,410
85+	1,972	9	983	2,964
All older	7,457	233	9,342	17,032
All households	14,230	14,541	21,220	49,991

	One Person	Households with at least 1 dependent child	Other households with two or more adults	All household types
2043				
65-74	2,864	209	5,302	8,375
75-84	3,981	40	5,079	9,099
85+	3,177	15	1,611	4,803
All older	10,021	264	11,991	22,276
All households	17,126	14,717	24,523	56,365

	One Person	Households with at least 1 dependent child	Other households with two or more adults	All household types
Change 2021-2043				
65-74	206	14	495	716
75-84	1,153	10	1,526	2,690
85+	1,205	7	627	1,839
All older	2,564	31	2,649	5,245
All households	2,896	175	3,304	6,375
% change in older person households	34.4	13.5	28.4	30.8
% change in all households	20.3	1.2	15.6	12.8

Source: 2018-based ONS household projections

## 4. Current housing situation

- 4.1 Data from the LHNS 2017 household survey provides a comprehensive review of the range of dwelling types and sizes occupied by older person households (Table 1.3). This shows that the majority (69.9%) live in houses, particularly those with 3 or

more bedrooms; 13.4% live in bungalows, 14.3% in flats and 2.3% in other dwelling types.

- 4.2 Table 1.4 shows that 80% of older person households are owner occupiers, 5% private rent and 15% live in affordable housing. The proportion in affordable housing increases by age group, with around 20% of households with a HRP aged 85 and over living in affordable housing.

Dwelling type and size	65 to 74	75 to 84	85+	Total
1 or 2-bedroom house	10.1	10.8	10.4	10.4
3 or-more bedroom house	64.2	56.0	50.1	59.5
1-bedroom bungalow	1.0	2.7	2.2	1.7
2 or more-bedroom bungalow	11.2	12.5	12.0	11.7
1-bedroom flat	6.3	8.7	11.7	7.8
2 or more-bedroom flat	4.7	7.1	11.8	6.5
Other	2.5	2.2	1.8	2.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Base	7,233	4,251	1,993	13477

Source: LHNS 2017 household survey

Age group	Tenure (%)				
	Owner Occupier (%)	Private Rented (%)	Affordable (%)	Total (%)	Base
65 to 74	81.9	5.2	12.9	100.0	7342
75 to 84	79.6	5.4	15.1	100.0	4349
85 and over	75.5	5.1	19.5	100.0	2054
Total older	80.2	5.2	14.6	100.0	13745
All age groups	73.0	12.7	14.3	100.0	45753

Source: LHNS 2017 household survey

- 4.3 Details of all specialist older persons' housing in the District can be found on the District Council's website (search Targeted Review of Local Housing Needs 2021).
- 4.4 Key providers of specialist older provision in Sevenoaks District include West Kent Housing Association, Rockdale and Anchor Living. Key points from Focus Group discussions with housing and support providers included:

Rockdale Housing Association:

- Has 180 rented and leasehold units and provides 24 hour on-site support for independent living schemes.

- Majority of units are studio flats and one bedroom or larger properties are needed. There are issues with letting some of these properties (which could be addressed through reconfiguration of stock).

#### Anchor Living:

- A large national provider of independent and retirement homes.
- They have a new development strategy including 5,700 new homes over the next 8 years and looking at Sevenoaks as one of their target priority areas for growth.
- New developments do not include studio flats and seek to provide aspirational retirement homes with an emphasis on affordability, with a need to provide mixed tenure and affordable products.

#### General comments:

- Over last year there has been difficulty in re-letting properties, particularly studio flats.
- People need assistance to help them move and this is now being provided by some organisations.
- ‘Small is beautiful’ incentive offering tailored service for people in general need, give them extra to guide them through the process.
- A lot of older people still want to own their own property; they feel like they’re taking a step back if they rent.
- There is a big gap in supply for affordable housing/provision for middle market households.
- There is a legacy of stock which is not necessarily fit for purpose but stock can be re-modelled via demolition and new build or refurbishment, to make them places where people want to live.
- Greater capacity for people to access home ownership products in Sevenoaks.
- There should be a better process of identifying people who want extra care housing - there is a risk that some people ‘fall through the net’ and although they would benefit from extra care, they are not identified as being in need.
- Process for people wanting Extra Care can be too long winded..
- Importance of health and wellbeing, keeping people fit and delay frailty for longer.
- Prevent issues arising in the future.
- Provide what the person wants (tailored package), using personal budgets to acquire the right level of support.
- Need modern aspirational homes to encourage people to rightsize.

## 5. Future housing choices

- 5.1 The Local Housing Need Study 2017 household survey indicates that the majority of older people (79%) want to remain in their current home with help and support when needed (Table 1.5). There is also interest in a range of options including sheltered, Extra Care, co-housing and open market accommodation. For the 85+ age group, staying in their own home with help and support or residential care were the two highest preferences.

Housing option	65-74 (%)	75-84 (%)	85+ (%)	All 65+ (%)
Continue to live in current home with support when needed	74.0%	82.3%	86.4%	79.0%
Buying a property on the open market	25.3%	13.5%	4.4%	17.7%
Rent a property from a private landlord	2.2%	1.9%	0.2%	1.7%
Rent from HA	6.8%	7.4%	4.3%	6.6%
Sheltered accommodation - To Rent	13.0%	13.9%	11.5%	13.1%
Sheltered accommodation - To Buy	19.1%	19.7%	12.7%	18.2%
Sheltered accommodation - Part Rent/Buy	4.6%	3.4%	3.6%	4.0%
Extra Care housing - To Rent	7.2%	12.3%	9.3%	9.3%
Extra Care housing - To Buy	12.7%	15.1%	11.6%	13.3%
Extra Care housing - Part Rent/Buy	3.0%	3.2%	4.1%	3.3%
Residential care home	4.4%	8.3%	15.9%	7.7%
Co-housing	8.6%	9.3%	6.2%	8.4%
Go to live with children or other relatives / friends	3.6%	4.0%	4.3%	3.9%
Other	2.5%	2.8%	0.6%	2.3%
Base	4439	3163	1574	9176

Source: LHNS 2017 household survey

- 5.2 In terms of tenure, preferences stated in Table 1.5 can be brought together and summarised as: 57% buying, 32% renting and 11% part rent/buy.
- 5.3 The Local Housing Need Study 2017 household survey indicates that 63.9% of older people planning to move would like to move to a property with fewer bedrooms but 27.9% would like to move to a property with the same number of bedrooms and 8.2% would like to move to a property with more bedrooms (Table 1.6). The general conclusion is that for new market housing, two bedroom dwellings with excellent internal space and light standards are needed to attract older movers. There are also households who desire the same or even an increase in the number of bedrooms in their properties.

Housing choice	Aspiration (%)	Expectation (%)
Downsizing (moving to a smaller property)	63.9	66.4
Staying the same	27.9	29.4
Upsizing (moving to larger property)	8.2	4.3
Total	100.0	100.0
Base (households responding)	1,284	1,137

Source: LHNS 2017 household survey

## 6. Findings from the 2021 Household Survey and focus group consultation

6.1 An older persons housing market research survey was commissioned by the District Council. The aim of the 2021 survey was to obtain further information from households about their housing choices. Following the success of the online completion of the 2021 Census, the household survey was hosted online and advertised widely through the Council's website and local interest groups. People also had the opportunity to complete the survey by telephone.

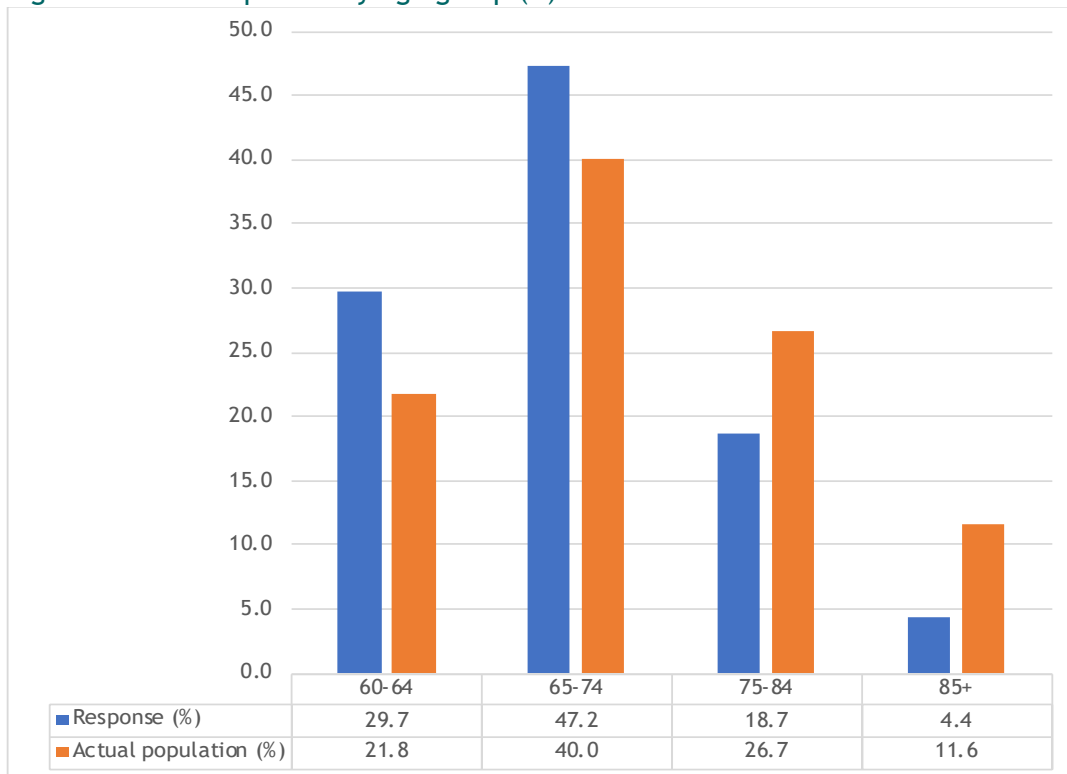
### Survey respondents

6.2 Figure 1.1 summarises the survey responses by age group. The level of response amongst the under 75 age group was proportionately higher to the overall population and for older age groups it was lower. 21 responses were received from people aged 85 and over but it was expected that this would be the group least likely to respond.

6.3 In terms of the household type of respondents, 35% lived on their own, 54% lived with a partner, 6% shared with a friend/relative and 5.1% were other/preferred not to say. 26% of respondents were male and 74% female

6.4 Table 1.7 shows the range of dwellings occupied by respondents. This shows that the majority of respondents lived in detached and semi-detached houses but there was representation from households living in a range of dwelling types and sizes. The overall dwelling stock profile of households responding was broadly similar to the overall dwelling stock profile of the district.

Figure 1.1 Responses by age group (%)



Source: 2021 survey



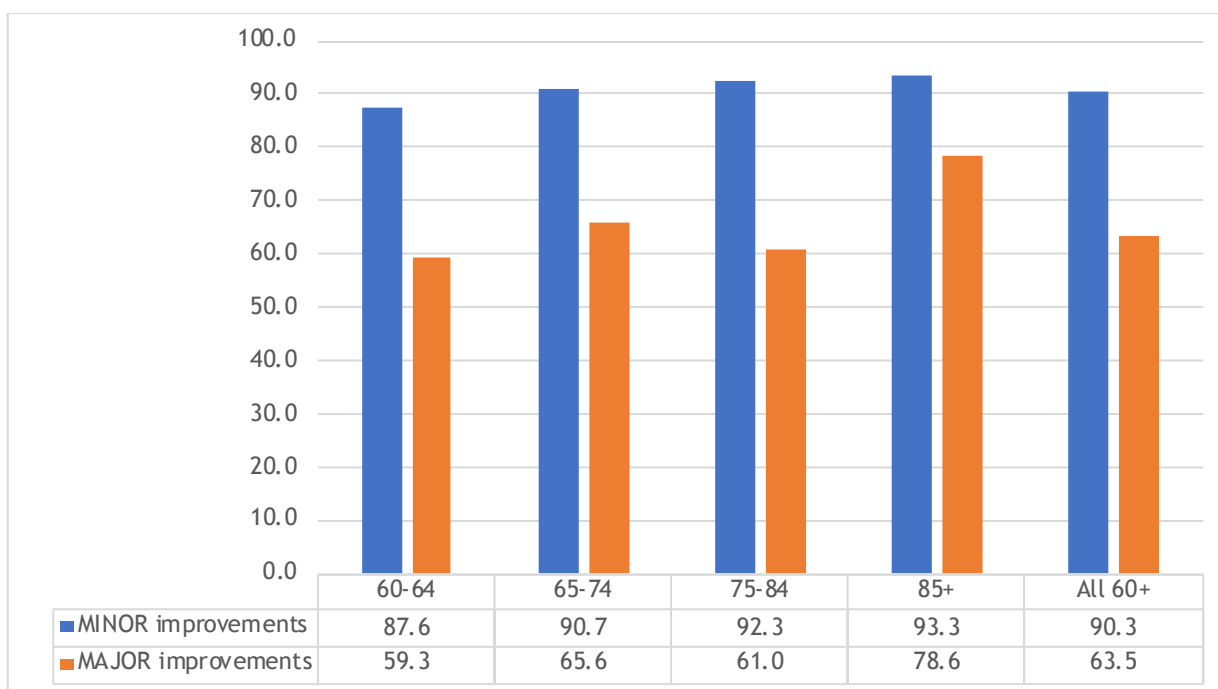
Table 1.7 Dwelling type and size occupied by respondents							
Type of property	Number of bedrooms (Table %)						
	One/bedsit	Two	Three	Four	Five or more	Total	All dwellings (VOA 2020)
Detached house	0.4	0.8	6.9	14.5	7.1	29.8	24.6
Semi-detached house	0.4	4.2	17.2	6.3	1.9	30.0	23.9
Terraced house	0.4	4.6	8.8	0.4	0.0	14.3	25.7
Bungalow	1.1	3.8	5.7	1.3	0.2	12.0	10.4
Flat/Apartment/maisonette	5.7	4.8	0.8	0.0	0.0	11.3	15.4
Caravan / Park Home	0.2	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.1	N/A
Other	0.4	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.2	1.5	N/A
Total	8.6	19.5	39.7	22.7	9.5	100.0	N/A
All dwellings (VOA 2020)	9.1	23.1	43.9	23.9	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: 2021 household survey and Valuation Office Agency 2020

### Affordability of home improvements

- 6.5 For homeowners, the household survey asked if the household could afford minor improvements (such as grab rails and over-bath showers and assistive technology) and major improvements such as stair lifts and wet rooms (Figure 1.2). Data suggests that the vast majority (90.3%) could afford minor improvements but only around 64% could afford major improvements, although the proportion who could afford major improvements increases with age group.

Figure 1.2 Affordability of home improvements by age group



Source: 2021 household survey

### Long-term suitability of dwellings

- 6.6 Respondents across all tenures were asked if their current accommodation was suitable for their long-term needs. Respondents could answer:
- Very suitable - my current property would not need any adaptations to support me into older age
  - Reasonably suitable - my current property would need minor adaptations to enable me to live independently
  - Not very suitable. My current property would need quite a few adaptations/changes to allow me to stay here into older age
  - Not suitable at all. If my health or mobility changed I would have to move.
  - Don't know.
- 6.7 Table 1.8 shows that 64% of all respondents felt that their property was suitable or reasonably suitable. This was highest amongst 75+ age groups and those in sheltered/Extra Care.

**Table 1.8 Long-term suitability of dwellings by age of occupant**

HRP	Very suitable	Reasonably suitable	Not very suitable	Not suitable at all	Don't know	Total	% Very / reasonably suitable	% not very suitable/not suitable at all
60-64	12.4	47.4	18.2	20.4	1.5	100.0	59.9	38.7
65-74	12.3	50.0	19.5	15.5	2.7	100.0	62.3	35.0
75-84	14.9	56.3	11.5	11.5	5.7	100.0	71.3	23.0
85+	47.6	38.1	9.5	4.8	0.0	100.0	85.7	14.3
Total	14.5	49.6	17.2	15.7	3.0	100.0	64.0	33.0

**Long-term suitability of dwellings by tenure of occupant**

Tenure	Very suitable	Reasonably suitable	Not very suitable	Not suitable at all	Don't know	Total	% Very / reasonably suitable	% not very suitable/not suitable at all
Owner occupied	12.4	52.8	17.9	13.7	3.2	100.0	65.2	31.7
Private Rented	18.2	31.8	18.2	31.8	0.0	100.0	50.0	50.0
Social Rented	17.8	35.6	15.6	26.7	4.4	100.0	53.3	42.2
Sheltered/Extra Care	37.5	41.7	8.3	12.5	0.0	100.0	79.2	20.8
Total	14.5	49.6	17.2	15.7	3.0	100.0	64.0	33.0

Source: 2021 household survey

6.8 One-third of respondents said their current accommodation was not very suitable (17%) or not suitable at all (16%). This was highest amongst under 75 age groups and those who are private and social renters. Table 1.9 shows overall suitability by dwelling type and size. This shows that most bungalow owners said their property was very/reasonably suitable.

Table 1.9 Long-term suitability of dwellings by dwelling type and size

Dwelling type and size	% Very / reasonably suitable	% not very suitable/not suitable at all	Don't know
1-bedroom house	83.3	16.7	0.0
2-bedroom house	52.3	43.2	4.5
3-bedroom house	61.4	34.8	3.8
4 or more-bedroom house	60.3	37.6	2.1
1-bedroom flat	50.0	50.0	0.0
2-bedroom flat	65.2	30.4	4.3
3-bedroom flat	75.0	25.0	0.0
1-bedroom bungalow	100.0	0.0	0.0
2-bedroom bungalow	90.0	10.0	0.0
3-bedroom bungalow	96.3	3.7	0.0
4 or more-bedroom bungalow	85.7	0.0	14.3
1-bedroom other	33.3	66.7	0.0
2-bedroom other	75.0	0.0	25.0
4 or more-bedroom other	50.0	50.0	0.0
Total	64.0	33.0	3.0
Base	301	155	14

Source: 2021 household survey

- 6.9 When considering long-term suitability of accommodation, the SDSAF focus group members suggested:
- A need to provide more than just one bedroom specialist homes for older people, with very good space standards, as it is what they are accustomed to. Need two bedrooms so family/carers can stay over.
  - Choice is vital: not one size fits all and provide a range of housing options to diversify the market.

### Future moving intentions and dwelling choices

- 6.10 A total of 128 or 27.2% of respondents were considering moving home within the next 5 years. Table 1.10 summarises the current age group and tenure profile of households considering moving. People aged under 75 and renters were most likely to consider moving. Owner occupiers and those aged 75 and over were less likely to consider moving.

**Table 1.10 Percentage of respondents by age group and tenure considering moving within five years**

Age group	%	Tenure	%
60-64	34.3	Owner occupied	24.5
65-74	25.5	Private Rented	45.5
75-84	21.8	Social Rented	40.0
85+	19.0	Sheltered/Extra care	29.2
Total	27.2	Total	27.2
Base	128	Base	128

- 6.11 Respondents considering a move within the next 5 years were asked about property attributes and dwelling size/type preferences. Table 1.11 shows that the most popular property attributes were accommodation on one floor, fewer bedrooms, a smaller garden, located in their current area and more storage space.
- 6.12 Table 1.12 considers the number of bedrooms preferred. A two bedroom property was mentioned by 61% of all respondents and was mentioned by the majority of all age groups. Overall, 13% stated a preference for a one-bedroom property, 61% a two-bedroom property, 19% a three-bedroom property and 7% a four or more - bedroom property.
- 6.13 The household survey explored the range of dwelling types that would be considered by households considering moving (Table 1.13). Strongest preferences were for properties in town centre locations, properties in the respondent's current parish/neighbourhood and bungalows. Overall, 85.7% stated they were very/fairly interested in bungalows and the next highest response was a mixed development restricted to older people (64.9%). Interest in apartments was lower at around one-third of respondents. Around one-quarter were very/fairly interested in a McCarthy Stone type development, which was the lowest response for any option.

- 6.14 The level of interest does vary slightly by age group as shown in Table 1.13, although bungalows were consistently reported across all age groups as the option which people were most likely to be very/fairly interested in.
- 6.15 Table 1.14 establishes a net score for each option. This is based on the total percentage who stated they were very/fairly interested minus the percentage who stated they were slightly/not interested. Net satisfaction scores for properties in town centre locations, properties in the respondent's current parish/neighbourhood and bungalows exceeded 70. Mixed developments had a net score of under 30 and apartments and McCarthy Stone type developments had negative scores.
- 6.16 Additional considerations raised by the SDSAF focus group included:
- Car parking for at least two vehicles for each dwelling or one space and a garage which could also be used for storage.
  - Rainwater collection for a non-drinking water supply.
  - Alternative energy sources such as ground source heat pumps.
  - Careful planning of wiring in new builds, with additional cables to blanked off sockets, ready to be accessed if necessary.
  - Properties to be built for easy maintenance.
  - Charging hubs for electric vehicles.
- 6.17 Further views and comments made by the SDSAF in focus group discussions are presented at Appendix A.

Table 1.11 Accommodation attributes sought by age group and tenure profile of respondents considering moving within five years										
Option	Current Tenure (%)				All tenures	Current Age group (%)				All age groups
	Owner Occupier	Private Renting	Social Renting	Sheltered/ Extra Care		60-64	65-74	75-84	85+	
Accommodation all on one floor	65.0	60.0	84.6	60.0	66.7	55.0	70.2	93.8	66.7	66.7
More bedrooms	7.5	0.0	7.7	40.0	8.3	12.5	6.4	6.3	0.0	8.3
Fewer bedrooms	47.5	40.0	15.4	20.0	41.7	37.5	46.8	31.3	33.3	41.7
Bigger bedrooms	11.3	10.0	15.4	0.0	11.1	25.0	4.3	0.0	0.0	11.1
Smaller bedrooms	1.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.0	0.0	6.3	0.0	0.9
Bigger kitchen/living room etc	18.8	20.0	15.4	0.0	17.6	20.0	21.3	6.3	0.0	17.6
Smaller kitchen/living room etc	6.3	10.0	0.0	0.0	5.6	2.5	8.5	6.3	0.0	5.6
More storage space	18.8	30.0	46.2	20.0	23.1	32.5	19.1	18.8	0.0	23.1
Bigger garden	3.8	30.0	7.7	0.0	6.5	12.5	4.3	0.0	0.0	6.5
Smaller garden	60.0	40.0	53.8	20.0	55.6	47.5	59.6	62.5	66.7	55.6
To stay in the same location/village	56.3	70.0	46.2	40.0	55.6	60.0	48.9	56.3	100.0	55.6
Base (number of respondents)	80	10	13	5	108	40	47	16	3	108

Source: 2021 household survey

Table 1.12 Number of bedrooms sought by respondents considering moving within five years								
Age group	Number of bedrooms						Total	Base
	Bedsit/studio	One	Two	Three	Four or more			
60-64	2.4	19.0	52.4	19.0	7.1	100.0	42	
65-74	0.0	6.4	66.0	25.5	2.1	100.0	47	
75-84	0.0	11.8	76.5	0.0	11.8	100.0	17	
85+	0.0	0.0	66.7	33.3	0.0	100.0	3	
All	0.9	11.7	61.3	18.9	7.2	100.0	111	

Source: 2021 household survey

**Table 1.13 Accommodation scheme type options and percentage by age of those very or fairly interested in the option**

Accommodation option	% very or fairly interested				TOTAL
	60-64	65-74	75-84	85+	
Property in a town centre with easy access to shops and services	84.8	87.5	90.9	100.0	87.5
Property in my current parish/neighbourhood	84.8	87.5	90.9	100.0	87.5
Bungalow	85.7	87.5	92.9	0.0	85.7
Mixed development of houses, flats and bungalows with all properties restricted to older people	51.7	73.0	75.0	50.0	64.9
Mixed development of houses, flats and bungalows all age restricted	51.7	73.0	75.0	50.0	64.9
Mixed development of houses, flats and bungalows with some properties restricted to older people	51.6	74.2	66.7	66.7	63.5
Mixed development of houses, flats and bungalows with some properties restricted to older people	51.6	74.2	66.7	66.7	63.5
Small 2 or 3-bedroom house with ground floor bathroom/toilet and two living rooms one of which might be used as a bedroom	40.6	64.7	70.0	66.7	55.7
Annexe to a family member's home	34.8	56.7	33.3	0.0	43.8
Apartment block with a lift to all floors all age restricted to older people	23.1	38.5	71.4	66.7	37.1
Apartment block with lift to all floors	16.0	44.0	57.1	0.0	32.2
McCarthy Stone type development (managed, small leasehold flats, with communal areas)	4.3	34.5	50.0	50.0	25.8
Base	42	47	17	3	111

Note: excludes 2 'prefer not to say'.

Source: 2021 household survey



Table 1.14 Net interest score (very/fairly interested minus slightly/not interested)					
Accommodation option	Net interest score (very/fairly interested minus slightly/not interested)				
	60-64	65-74	75-84	85+	TOTAL
Property in a town centre with easy access to shops and services	69.7	75.0	81.8	100.0	75.0
Property in my current parish/neighbourhood	69.7	75.0	81.8	100.0	75.0
Bungalow	71.4	75.0	85.7	100.0	71.4
Mixed development of houses, flats and bungalows with all properties restricted to older people	3.4	45.9	50.0	0.0	29.9
Mixed development of houses, flats and bungalows all age restricted	3.4	45.9	50.0	0.0	29.9
Mixed development of houses, flats and bungalows with some properties restricted to older people	3.2	48.4	33.3	33.3	27.0
Mixed development of houses, flats and bungalows with some properties restricted to older people	3.2	48.4	33.3	33.3	27.0
Small 2 or 3-bedroom house with ground floor bathroom/toilet and two living rooms one of which might be used as a bedroom	-18.8	29.4	40.0	33.3	11.4
Annexe to a family member's home	-30.4	13.3	-33.3	100.0	-12.5
Apartment block with a lift to all floors all age restricted to older people	-53.8	-23.1	42.9	33.3	-25.8
Apartment block with lift to all floors	-68.0	-12.0	14.3	100.0	-35.6
McCarthy Stone type development (managed, small leasehold flats, with communal areas)	-91.3	-31.0	0.0	0.0	-48.4

Source: 2021 household survey

## 7. Future need for specialist older person accommodation and residential care provision

- 7.1 The Targeted Review of Local Housing Needs contains a section on the needs of additional groups and includes an analysis of the need for older persons' accommodation. In summary, across Sevenoaks District there are 2,874 units of specialist older persons accommodation comprising 1,982 specialist older accommodation (C3 planning use class) and 892 units of residential care (C2 use class).
- 7.2 Given the ageing of the population, the need for specialist older person accommodation is expected to increase. Based on population projections there is an additional need for 1,345 additional units of specialist older persons' accommodation by 2043 (Table 1.15) . The total C3 (dwelling) need is 928 or 40 each year and C2 (residential) need is 418 or 18 each year to 2043.

Current provision (and planning use class)	Number of units 2021	Number aged 75 and over 2021	Number aged 75 and over 2043(projected)	Change in need	
		Ratio of population to current provision	Ratio applied to 2043 population	Total	Annual
		12,949	19,010		
Specialist older person (C3)	1,982	0.15306	2,910	928	40
Residential Care (C2)	892	0.06889	1,310	418	18
Total	2,874	N/A	4,219	1,345	58

Source: EAC data, 2018-based population projections

### Senior cohousing communities

- 7.3 Senior cohousing is specifically mentioned in PPG as a housing option for older people: 'senior cohousing communities are created and run by residents, based on the intention to live with a group of people of a similar age. The sites often consist of self-contained private homes as well as shared community space. Some communities offer an additional option for informal care.'
- 7.4 The 2016/17 Household Survey indicated that 8.4% of older people would consider cohousing. The dwelling type, size, tenure and current place of residence are set out in Table 1.16.

Table 1.16 Accommodation choices of households considering cohousing

Number of bedrooms	Like %	Expect %	Dwelling type	Like %	Expect %
1	16.0	28.9	House	20.2	22.2
2	54.6	47.8	Flat	26.1	27.8
3	29.4	23.3	Bungalow	37.8	18.9
			Other	16.0	31.1
Total	100.0	100.0	Total	100.0	100.0

Current placemaking area	%
Darent Valley	16.5
North East	20.3
North West	19.6
Sevenoaks Urban Area and Surrounds	22.1
South	11.9
Upper Darent Corridor	9.5
Sevenoaks District	100.0

Base: 765 households 65 and over who would consider cohousing

Source: LHNS 2017 household survey

## 8. Concluding comments and policy recommendations

- 8.1 Where and how people live in later life depends on their individual needs, aspirations, taste, and financial circumstances, much the same as any other age group. Our evidence tells us that the majority of people will want to live in their current home for as long as possible, but others will want to or will need to move. There will be people who live independently all of their lives, whilst some will need accommodation with access to specialist care and support. Choice of options is important.
- 8.2 Homes need to be accessible, adaptable, and technology enabled. They need to be safe and warm and in established and vibrant neighbourhoods, recognising the importance of attachment to place and social connections. Getting this right has a remarkable impact on people's health and wellbeing. It improves general health outcomes and enables people to maintain independence; it is the platform on which people can live well and create positive futures. Good quality housing can prevent physical frailty, support positive mental health, and reduce hospital admissions; it can delay or avoid unwanted moves to residential care or more specialist housing, all of which also create enormous social and public savings benefits.
- 8.3 Having reviewed a range of evidence, there are a number of key conclusions to this study to help inform strategic decision making. Crucially, there is

need to recognise that the older person community across the district is diverse and increasing. Maintaining quality of life is important and housing need has to be viewed in a wider context which takes into account transport, access to services and health. Seniors should be seen as a vital and integral part of any local community.

### **Future residential choices**

- 8.4 Although a majority of people want to remain in their own home, there is a need to continue to diversify the range of older persons' accommodation across the district. Providing dwelling and scheme choice is vital. There is a strong need for two bedroom market dwellings. Any accommodation must have very good space standards if it is to attract rightsizers - in both the market and social sectors. Equity-based options such as shared ownership along with rented options are needed. Strongest preferences are for properties in town centre locations, properties in neighbourhoods/parishes where people currently live, bungalows and, to a lesser extent, properties in mixed developments of houses, flats and bungalows. Specific interest in apartment-only developments and McCarthy Stone type development is low. The likelihood of moving also decreases with age: people are more likely to move before they are 75.
- 8.5 The authority has a 'small is beautiful' offer with West Kent for social housing tenants to move to smaller homes. The authority may wish to extend this offer with other Providers and into other tenures, as well as introducing a rightsizing support service to households in any tenure that want to move. This may be a 'helping you move' service, 'finding an alternative property' service etc. Research should help to identify the barriers to moving and focus on tailoring support accordingly.
- 8.6 Across the social rented sector, there is a need to think about the older persons' housing offer differently rather than just giving eligibility to a 1 bedroom flat. The Council may wish to explore this issue when developing its updated Sevenoaks District Housing Register Allocations Scheme.
- 8.7 Generally, the concept of 'rightsizing' needs to take account of the diverse needs of older people, it's not just about moving to a smaller property as households tend to still need a useable space for overnight stays by grandchildren and to accommodate a lifetime of possessions. This can be addressed by creative design, e.g. the inclusion of a separate dining room/hobby room or a useable loft space in a bungalow - "bungaloid". The Council may wish to consider trialling these designs when developing its own land and when developing specific older persons' housing policy for the emerging Local Plan.

## **Support in the home and home improvements**

- 8.8 Given that the majority of people want to stay in their own home, and that this increases with age, the council needs to think about how this can be best achieved. Support falls into two broad categories: home improvements and personal care/support. An audit of what help and support households need would be useful and it is crucial that older people across all tenures are involved.
- 8.9 Provision of wet rooms and toileting was specifically mentioned by focus group respondents. For private renting tenants, the ability to improve homes may be challenging.
- 8.10 The Local Housing Need Study 2017 Household Survey indicated that the highest level of need is for help with repair and maintenance of the home, help with gardening and help with cleaning the home.
- 8.11 The cost of buying support services was raised as an issue. There would be scope for the council and its partners to further develop support service for older people across all tenures and introducing a charging policy for those that can afford to pay for this service
- 8.12 Support requirements could potentially be financially supported through an ethical equity release loan. In this case, a charge would be placed on an owner's home and not repaid until the home was sold. The value of the charge could buy in-home help to support individuals to remain living at home for longer. The costs of this could be explored with Adult Social Services as it should significantly save funding in the long run.
- 8.13 The Council may wish to expand the services of the Home Improvement Agency (HIA) to maintain independent living for longer. The council may wish to commit to researching the potential demand and business case for expanding the role of the HIA to develop a holistic and commercial approach to all tenures and creating innovative solutions to support people living in their home for longer.
- 8.14 The Council could consider creating a practical guide that provides advice on how best to maximise improved accessibility to 'age in place' when homes are being retrofitted or improved by Registered Providers and owners

## **Better support and advice**

- 8.15 There is a lack of information on housing options or where to get advice on assistance in the home. The council should co-ordinate the preparation of information for people in different tenures about their housing options and how to get help and support when it is needed which may support people to think earlier about their home in later life. This may be through a tailored website and marketing campaign. It may offer specific 'handholding' and financial support to move or adapt current homes. It should be promoted widely and enable housing provider networks, health and social care networks, and the local authority to coordinate the current support available. It may be developed at a county level. The authority may

consider working with people in later life to scope out what a practical offer may look like and consider the current barriers. The types of support people may need could include:

- A checklist of what to look for in a new home or how to assess a current home for a positive later life.
- Information on alternative housing options and design that are not currently widely available (in order to influence demand and housing provision). This includes for instance designing in rooms for hobbies, maximising storage space within homes and creating useable loft space.
- Video footage/case studies from people who have moved or stayed, and what drove their decision-making, and the benefits they have found to help people make better informed decisions.
- Financial support available to make home improvements.
- Advice on how to create a healthy home through increased energy efficiency, reducing energy costs, increasing household income, and improving health and wellbeing.
- A directory of specialist retirement homes linking to [www.carehome.org](http://www.carehome.org) for example.

8.16 One of the barriers is households do not want to try and negotiate the purchase chain and trying to find the right home for their future and sell their current home can be off putting. However, if the authority provided a bridging loan (interest free and repayable on sale of their property) for owners to move in a timeframe that works for them and to enable them to find the 'right' property for them, this may encourage more people to make the move. The service should work within the existing market but should also link to purpose built new units that create moving opportunities.

### **New development**

8.17 The 2017 LHNA recommended all new build homes should be accessible and built to Building Regulation Standard M4(2). This is broadly equivalent to the Lifetime Homes Standard. Accessible homes help older people live independently for longer. The Council should consider including this requirement in the emerging Local Plan.

8.18 It is important that this research is shared with providers of older persons' housing and developers. Housing and Ageing Population Panel for Innovation (HAPPI) principles equivalent for Sevenoaks should become embedded in planning policy. The HAPPI principles are based on 10 key design criteria. Many are recognisable from good design generally but they have particular relevance to the spectrum of older persons' housing which, needs to both offer an attractive alternative to the family home, and be able to adapt over time to meet changing needs.

They reflect:

- Space and flexibility
- Daylight in the home and in shared spaces
- Balconies and outdoor space
- Adaptability and 'care ready' design
- Positive use of circulation space
- Shared facilities and 'hubs'
- Plants, trees, and the natural environment
- Energy efficiency and sustainable design
- Storage for belongings and bicycles
- External shared surfaces and 'home zones'

8.19 Further considerations by the Council may be:

- Purchasing larger homes on the market and converting it into accommodation to support co-housing schemes for older people. Mixed tenure solutions could be offered to support viability and commuted sums could be utilised.
- Incorporating digital technology to improve services such as 'asking Alexa' and using cameras and motion-sensors to track active live independent lives for longer to help older people.
- Develop Supplementary Planning Guidance for delivering homes and neighbourhoods for later life to set out what is meant by Age Friendly neighbourhoods and intergenerational living.

8.20 The Council should consider developing a specific older persons' housing policy in the emerging Local Plan.

### **New delivery models**

8.21 There is potential to support the development of innovative solutions, such as Homeshare. Where older people are under-occupying homes, the Council could offer a 'vetting' and management service for older people prepared to offer a room for rent to young people, particularly those affected by the increased age of the single room rate. This has a number of benefits; it offers additional good quality accommodation to the Council without significant capital investment and enables older people to access additional income, security, and support whilst remaining in their homes.

8.22 In light of the evidence from the 2017 LHNA, the Council should consider working with the Kent Community Housing Hub to explore the development of a pilot senior cohousing scheme. Senior co-housing communities are created and run by residents, based on the intention to live with a group of people of a similar age. A pre-requisite to the recommendation is the

identification of a group who are interested in co-housing in a specific location.

- 8.23 Local Authority staff were asked what could be done to improve the housing market in the Sevenoaks District area. It was advised that Registered Providers could look at remodelling the use of outdated sheltered units to improve the housing market (source: 2021 Targeted Review of Local Housing Needs.) The Council may consider developing a programme with those Providers who have unmodernised sheltered schemes in the District, to identify those schemes which could benefit from re-modelling. This may also allow the delivery of a greater number of homes to meet the needs of older people.
- 8.24 The Council could consider developing its own land to provide new housing which is suitable for older people. To incentivise older people to downsize, accommodation needs to be of the type/style that is attractive and sought after. For example, whereas the market is unwilling or unable to build bungalow accommodation, the Council may choose to use its enabling role to deliver these homes, for both affordable and market housing, when developing its own land.



# Appendix A Feedback from Sevenoaks District Seniors Action Forum (SDSAF)

The SDSAF focus group helped to establish some broad principles and useful commentary for assessing the needs of older people. These include:

- Understanding housing need in a wider context including transport, connectivity, broadband, access to shops, doctors and healthcare. It is important not to put housing in a separate 'compartment' to other issues.
- Recognition of a diverse range of needs from a diverse population but important not to isolate older people from the wider community.
- A need for a wide range of choice and making sure a broader range of things such as space for guests, hobbies and home office work are taken into account.
- Quality of life is important - it's more important when you retire. For instance having safe places to go, soundproofing of properties and helping to address loneliness.
- Most older people in Sevenoaks District are owner occupiers but there is a general lack of advice and support for owner occupiers - for instance how to manage your home, where to get advice on repairs and how to get help and support when it is needed.
- Barriers to moving: stamp duty, legal fees and increasing prices have an impact on the financial ability to move and can reduce the equity available to buy an alternative property.
- Rockdale schemes are cited as exemplars.
- Don't wait until a crisis point is reached before moving - people should be encouraged to plan ahead.
- The council should provide a range of support services for older people.
- More older persons housing is needed.
- There is a need for larger older person homes - having two bedrooms is important so carers or others, for instance family can stay over.
- Costs of care homes and specialist accommodation can mount up, causing anxiety, with a concern raised about leasehold properties and fees associated with them.

Other matters which were raised by the SDSAF focus group include:

- Seniors in a valuable house may decide to retain the home rather than downsize to preserve inheritance tax allowances available to their children.
- The cost of support in the home can be as high as £40 each hour which is causing difficulties in accessing help.
- Re-designation of older persons housing can have a major impact on well-being. The change of designation of some West Kent HA properties was raised in the discussions. This has resulted in a reduction in age criteria down to 30. The participant felt this had broken up a well-functioning senior community.
- Design of wet rooms and toilets should be based on lived experience. Wet rooms allow a shower, toilet sink, mirror and mobile storage unit (cosmetics, soaps, towels, toilet paper, etc.) to be in one space. The flat floor with a gentle slope to allow water to drain and covered with a non-slip vinyl flooring, properly sealed and lapping up the base of the walls, will reduce hazards, such as tripping over the edge of shower tray and allows for easy cleaning to keep the space hygienic. The space needs to be sufficient for a shower chair or shower wheelchair and access to the room needs to be wide. Consider too, where the room itself is sited; ideally on the ground floor. Can the ambulance service or fire brigade get quick access if required is a question that should always be considered. I speak as one who has experience and knows just how stressful these issues are, and the stress they put on the carer and the cared for.
- Geberit toilets were mentioned by a respondent as a practical solution to needs. These can be installed at different heights - it's a mistake to cite a toilet higher despite it making it easier to get down to. Much better to have a separate portable seat 'riser' if or when needed. A tall upright wall radiator/towel rail is another extremely useful item for a wet room or bathroom. These can operate on a timer, so that the room is warm enough when someone is taking a shower, clothes can be warmed and towels dried more quickly.
- Inspection doors placed where it is necessary to access pipework is essential, as once plastered or tiled over, the access to them becomes impossible.
- Ensuring dignity is vital. That's why we have to build in things like automatic toilets and ensure personal space for the individual.
- Build in some walkways under cover - it becomes difficult for some people to carry an umbrella, especially if they have other things to carry; maybe a pergola type structure with a roof; water from which could be collected for other purposes.
- Effective planning of facilities in the home will also do wonders to the health and well-being of people who need the services and those who are caring for them, which in turn will reduce the drain on a number of other services that some people come to rely on more heavily as they get older.

- Alternatives to pull chords for help should be considered - not everyone can use a pull chord.
- Easy access to at least some shops is important along with chemists with 'on call' facilities.
- Elderly people living independently may suddenly require additional 'aids'. For instance; a monitoring system for health and safety.
- A 'caretaker' or 'care supporters' on site who hold spare keys to the houses in a safe only accessible to certain individuals and only in emergencies. Small key safes should be available in a discrete position on every house for the occupier to use as they see fit. This would probably be a necessity when they need a carer. The carers would then be able to let themselves in.
- Regarding dementia, people can have an electronic tracker on a key ring that is kept on them; so if they should wander, something can track where they are.
- Whilst a person is in their own home they can choose what they eat and drink, when they eat or drink and how much they consume but if they are in care someone else makes those choices for them and they may not suit them, they may be left going without, because of other demands and they may never get to eat their favourite food again. We need local chefs even trainees who make colourful nutritious offerings and insure they understand the needs and food choices of each resident before they buy in food.
- Need for a 'halfway house' and cottage hospitals. To free up space in our emergency hospitals, much smaller units, scattered throughout Kent; a bit like the function of a nursing home. 5 large houses set out across the borough like the 5 on a dice; NE, NW, SE, SW and one more central to be used as temporary units for those diagnosed with life limiting conditions (such as motor neurone disease). Fully kitted out with all the 'disability aids' they need; whilst their houses are converted etc. Room for family and carers to live in.
- There is a lack of information about older persons housing: lack of knowledge, lack of help and lack of advice.
- Quality of life for majority of older people has changed, they are healthier, happier, better educated, better resourced; this isn't being taken into account when developing new housing.
- Some people want to live in a mixed community, so they don't feel isolated.
- Consider 'greening' of new housing provision and how it can be more environmentally sustainable; and
- Use local builders and maintenance companies.