

Report of the Great Barford Housing Needs Survey

**Survey carried out August 2012
Report published September 2012**

Completed on behalf of Great Barford Parish Council by BRCC (Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity)



This report is the joint property of the Housing Provider who funded it (Jephson Housing Association Group) and the local housing authority (Bedford Borough Council) and parish council (Great Barford Parish Council) to which it relates. Should another Housing Provider want to use the survey findings to develop an affordable housing scheme, it shall reimburse the Housing Provider who originally funded the survey for the actual cost of the survey based on submitted paid invoice evidence.

For further information contact Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity, The Old School, Cardington, Bedfordshire, MK44 3SX.

1. Introduction

Great Barford Parish Council agreed for a Housing Needs Survey (HNS) to be carried out to assess the need in the parish for affordable housing for local people who cannot afford to buy or rent houses available on the open market. The survey was carried out by BRCC and funded by Jephson Housing Association Group.

Development in rural areas is generally restricted to designated Settlement Policy Areas. Outside Settlement Policy Areas, affordable housing in rural areas can be progressed on Rural Exception Site developments – this is where the planning authority accepts that there is a need for affordable housing in the parish, and is prepared to grant an “exception” to their general policy of not allowing any new development within the parish, providing that the development is for affordable housing that will be available to local people in perpetuity.

Affordable housing aims to meet not only current needs but also future need, with government guidelines that regulate its price, eligibility criteria and resale. It is usually provided by Registered Providers such as housing associations. Affordable housing can be affordable rented property (where rent is charged at up to 80% of market value), or it can be shared ownership in which people can own a share in the property and pay rent on the remainder.

Households seeking affordable rented accommodation through any new exception site development would have to apply through the Bedfordshire Choice Based Lettings scheme.

2. About Great Barford Parish

2.1 Population and demographics

In 2001 in the parish of Great Barford there were 738 households containing 1864 residents¹. By 2010 this had increased to around 800 households containing 2040 residents². The age profile in 2001 (compared to Bedford Borough as a whole) is shown below.

Age	% Gt Barford	% Bedford Bor.
Under 16	21.3	20.7
16 – 24	7.7	11.3
25 – 44	31.3	29.6
45 – 64	28.2	23.5
65 – 74	6.2	7.9
75+	5.4	7.0

While this may have changed since the 2001 census, it can be seen that the age profile is not that dissimilar to the area as a whole. It is noticeable that there is an under-representation both of young adults (16 – 24), and (more unusually) of people above the age of 65, both of which can reflect a lack of suitable accommodation.

2.2 Living Arrangements

Living arrangements (people 16+)	% Gt Barford	% Bedford Bor.
Single	18.6	24.1
Married/Cohabiting	69.0	61.7
Separated/Divorced	6.6	7.3
Widowed	5.8	6.8

There are relatively more married/cohabiting people, and fewer single, in Great Barford.

2.3 Household Composition

	% Gt Barford	% Bedford Bor.
1 person - pensioner	11.4	13.1
1 person - other	8.3	14.9
2 or more pensioners	8.0	8.8
Couple - no children	26.1	18.8
Couple + dependent children	23.9	22.2
Couple + non-dependent children	8.8	6.2
Lone parent + dependent children	5.3	5.4
Lone parent+ non-dependent children	2.6	2.8
Other	5.7	7.7

¹ 2001 census data (2011 data not yet available) – other data also from this source unless otherwise specified

² Office for National Statistics 2010 estimates

These figures largely reflect those in 2.1 and 2.2. There is a lower proportion of people living alone (which may be partly due to a lack of suitable accommodation), and a higher proportion of couples.

2.4 Housing Tenure

	% Gt Barford	% Bedford Bor.
Owner occupied	83.3	72.4
Social rented	8.6	15.8
Private rented (or living rent free)	8.1	11.8

The vast majority of households are owner occupiers in Great Barford, over the average for Bedford Borough. Availability of social rented housing is clearly relatively low.

2.5 Dwelling Types

	% Gt Barford	% Bedford Bor.
Detached house	45.2	27.7
Semi-detached house	21.5	32.7
Terraced house	31.9	22.6
Flat	1.5	16.3
Caravan/other temp. accommodation	0	0.9

As with most Bedfordshire villages, there are relatively more detached houses in Great Barford. More unusually, there is a lower proportion of semi-detached houses, and a higher proportion of terraced houses. There are very few flats and no temporary accommodation, which will mean that there is a relative shortage in the parish of properties at the cheapest end.

2.6 Housing in poor condition

	% Gt Barford	% Bedford Bor.
Households in overcrowded conditions	3.1	7.6
Households without central heating	2.9	4.6
Households in fuel poverty (2008)	11.6	12.1

Overcrowded housing can highlight areas with pressing needs for more affordable housing, and overcrowding counts as a housing need for households applying through the Choice Based Lettings scheme. In 2001 there were 25 households in Great Barford classified as being overcrowded (data is rounded to nearest 5), which works out as considerably under the Bedford Borough average.

Where central heating is not present, fuel poverty is significantly more likely. The levels of households without central heating and those in fuel poverty in Great Barford are just below the Bedford Borough average.

2.7 People on low incomes

155 people in Great Barford are classified as "income deprived" (figure is rounded to

nearest 5). While, at 8%, this is considerably lower than the national average, it does signify that housing affordability may be an issue for a significant number of residents.

2.8 Households on Bedford Borough Council Housing Register

There are currently 14 households on the Bedford Borough Council housing register currently living in Great Barford, these break down as follows:

- 4 x single applicants
- 2 x elderly people
- 2 x families with 1 child
- 1 x family with 2 children
- 1 x family with 4 children
- 4 x lone parent with 1 child

Applicants to the register are no longer asked where they would prefer to live, so it is not possible to know how many of the above wish to remain in Great Barford.

It should be noted that the difficulty of securing affordable housing, particularly in villages, can act as a significant deterrent to people in housing need from placing themselves on the register; so there are likely to be more households than this in housing need.

3. Housing Availability and Affordability in Great Barford

3.1 Home purchase

Overall housing affordability in Bedford Borough

The 'affordable housing ratio' (the lowest 25% of house prices as a ratio of the lowest 25% of earnings) in Bedford Borough as a whole is 12.4. In other words, the most affordable houses on the market cost 12.4 times the lowest incomes³.

Dwellings in lower Council Tax Bands

2.1% of dwellings in Great Barford are in Council Tax Band A, and 33.5% in Band B, compared to 13.6% and 24.9% for Bedford Borough as a whole. This indicates a shortage in Great Barford of the most affordable housing for purchase, although there is a relatively high number of Band B properties, corresponding to the relatively high proportion of terraced houses.

Snapshot of current housing market in Great Barford

In late August 2012, we found 51 properties for sale in Great Barford as follows⁴.

Dwelling type/size	Asking price
1 bedroom maisonette	£90,000
2 bedroom semi-detached	£139,950
3 bedroom terraced	£139,950
3 bedroom terraced	£140,000 (sold STC)
3 bedroom terraced	£147,500 (sold STC)
3 bedroom end of terrace	£150,000
3 bedroom end of terrace	£150,000
3 bedroom end of terrace	£152,000
3 bedroom end of terrace	£156,950
3 bedroom end of terrace	£189,950 (sold STC)
3 bedroom detached	£189,995
3 bedroom detached	£210,000
3 bedroom detached	£215,000
4 bedroom semi-detached	£230,000
3 bedroom semi-detached	£235,000
4 bedroom detached	£242,000
3 bedroom semi-detached	£249,950 (sold STC)
3 bedroom detached	£249,950
4 bedroom semi-detached	£249,995
4 bedroom detached	£249,995
5 bedroom detached	£274,995
4 bedroom detached	£275,000
4 bedroom end of terrace	£279,995
3 bedroom detached	£300,000 (sold STC)
4 bedroom detached	£329,500 (sold STC)
3 bedroom detached	£349,000
4 bedroom bungalow	£350,000

³ Data from community profile for Great Barford (Parish), © ACRE, RCAN, OCSI 2012

⁴ Data sourced from www.mouseprice.com, www.zoopla.co.uk, www.rightmove.co.uk

5 bedroom detached	£350,000 (sold STC)
4 bedroom detached	£355,000 (sold STC)
3 bedroom semi-detached	£380,000
4 bedroom detached	£389,950 (sold STC)
3 bedroom detached	£400,000 (sold STC)
4 bedroom detached	£400,000
4 bedroom detached	£400,000
5 bedroom detached	£400,000
3 bedroom detached	£450,000
4 bedroom bungalow	£465,000
4 bedroom detached	£469,950 (sold STC)
4 bedroom detached	£469,950 (sold STC)
4 bedroom detached	£485,000
5 bedroom detached	£499,950
5 bedroom bungalow	£500,000
4 bedroom bungalow	£515,000
5 bedroom detached	£525,000
4 bedroom detached	£550,000
5 bedroom detached	£550,000
5 bedroom detached	£550,000
5 bedroom detached	£575,000
4 bedroom detached	£575,000
6 bedroom detached	£850,000
5 bedroom detached	£2,000,000

This represents around 7-8% of total private housing stock in the parish.

Property sales over last 3 years

Property sales over the last 3 years can be broken down as follows⁵:

£	2010	2011	2012 (to date)
Under 100,000	4	0	0
100,000 – 150,000	6	10	6
150,001 – 200,000	4	4	4
200,001 – 300,000	12	12	3
300,001 – 400,000	9	7	1
400,001+	8	8	2
Total	43	41	16

Only 4 properties for under £100,000 have been available to purchase in the parish in the 3-year reference period. However, there is clearly a consistent market for properties costing between £100,000 and £150,000, with 6 properties currently for sale in this range.

Minimum household income required to purchase in Great Barford

The Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) provides a guideline that "A household can be considered able to afford to buy a home if it costs 3.5 times

⁵ Data sourced from www.nethouseprices.com

the gross household income for a single earner household or 2.9 times the gross household income for dual-income households.”⁶ According to this guidance, in order to purchase the cheapest property currently available in Great Barford (the 1 bedroom maisonette at £90,000), a single earner household would need an annual gross income of just over £25,000, and a dual-income household would need a gross income of just over £30,000. It should be noted that median annual household income in the UK currently stands at £26,572⁷, so even the cheapest property is likely to be unaffordable for those on lower than median incomes.

Minimum deposit required to purchase in Great Barford

The biggest barrier to entry to the property market for first-time buyers is the high deposit needed for a good mortgage rate, particularly over the last few years. The average loan to value for first time buyers nationally in June 2012 was 80%⁸, unchanged for over a year, and this figure remains the benchmark for most mortgages. Some smaller deposit mortgages are still available despite the credit crunch, however they come with interest rates of almost double those charged to borrowers with larger deposits⁹. (The government’s new mortgage indemnity scheme, which enables mortgages to be offered at up to 95% loan to value, only applies to new build housing).

Currently, in order to purchase the cheapest property highlighted above, a first-time buyer household would need a deposit of £18,000.

3.2 Home rental

In June 2012, we found the following properties available for private rent in Great Barford¹⁰:

Dwelling type/size	Price
1 bedroom bungalow	£590 pcm
3 bedroom terraced house	£850 pcm
6 bedroom detached house	£1,900 pcm

According to the above DCLG guidance, “A household can be considered able to afford market house renting in cases where the rent payable was up to 25% of their gross household income.” (The ‘Rent Payable’ figure is defined as the entire rent due, even if it is partially or entirely met by housing benefit.) To rent the 1 bedroom bungalow mentioned above, a household’s gross income would therefore need to be just under £24,000.

We also found a part buy, part rent property: a 4-bedroom semi-detached available for a £8,000 deposit then £286 per week (i.e. around £1,200 pcm).

⁶ Strategic Housing Market Assessments: Practice Guidance Version 2 (DCLG 2007)

⁷ Data for 2010-11 from Institute of Fiscal Studies, June 2012

⁸ Council of Mortgage Lenders press release 13 August 2012, www.cml.org.uk/cml/media/press/3281

⁹ From story on www.thisismoney.co.uk website, 21 November 2011

¹⁰ Data sourced from www.mouseprice.com, www.zoopla.co.uk, www.rightmove.co.uk

4. Survey process and response

A survey form put together by BRCC (Appendix A) was delivered to all households at the end of July 2012. The survey form also invited anyone else with a strong local connection to the parish to submit a form. A FREEPOST envelope was provided to enable residents to return their completed survey to BRCC by Friday 31 August 2012.

The survey form was in two parts. Section 1 aimed to gain the views of all respondents on overall housing needs in the parish (see chapter 5). Section 2 was for completion by any household member likely to be looking for different accommodation within the next 3 years. This part of the form included questions concerning motivation and income, designed to identify whether the expression of need is one which genuinely cannot be met through the open market and current household resources. The findings from this section are analysed in chapter 6.

A total of 191 responses were received for analysis, out of around 800 forms distributed, providing a return rate of around 24%. This is a good response rate for a housing needs survey (typical return rate is 20-25%), particularly from a larger village where response rates are often lower.

5. Views on housing needs in the parish

63% of respondents thought that there was a need for one or more types of new affordable housing in the parish (Q1). The % of respondents in favour of each specific type of housing was as follows:

Housing type	% of respondents
Smaller houses for first time buyers/young families to buy	40%
Bungalows for older people to buy	37%
Extra care housing	29%
Bungalows for older people to rent through a housing association	27%
Smaller houses to rent through a housing association	20%
Flats for first time buyers to buy	17%
Flats to rent through a housing association	12%
Larger family homes to rent through a housing association	9%
Larger family homes to buy	6%

Smaller houses and bungalows were the clear favourites. There was a preference also for properties to buy rather than for affordable rent. Unusually, nearly a third of respondents identified a need for extra care housing.

The provision of a small development of affordable housing (up to 10 units) based on identified local need (Q2) was supported by 63% of respondents, with 37% not supporting the idea. This is generally in line with most housing needs surveys. 22 respondents indicated having family or friends who have moved away from the parish within the last 5 years who would like to return (Q3). However, no further forms were requested from BRCC.

81 respondents chose to provide additional comments (Q4), attached as Appendix B. Many of these are from those not in favour, expressing concerns about the size and character of the village and the impact on its infrastructure (e.g. school).

6. Analysis of housing needs

6.1 Number of households indicating a housing need

There were a total of 24 usable responses to Section 2 of the survey. (There were another 10 respondents to Section 2, however 5 of these did not give a name or address, and the other 5 did not give sufficient information to assess both need and resources – these have been disregarded.) These 24 households are therefore regarded in principle as being in some form of housing need.

5 of these respondents indicated that they were looking for different accommodation in the parish now (Q5), and the other 19 indicated that they would be looking within the next 3 years. (Housing needs are taken to mean needs within the next 3 years, as a rural affordable housing scheme will usually take at least 3 years to complete.)

6.2 Nature of local connection

Exception site housing would be made available in the first instance to people with a strong local connection, and evidence of housing need must come from such people if an exception site is to progress. The local connections identified by the 24 respondents (Q11) were as follows (respondents could tick more than one):

Nature of local connection	No. of households
Currently living in settled accommodation in Great Barford	24
Previously lived in Great Barford for 10 years or more	1
Have an immediate family member (parent, child, or sibling) living in Great Barford	9
Have permanent employment in the parish	1

All 24 these households were current residents.

6.3 Housing tenure of households in need

The housing tenure declared by the 24 respondents (Q6) breaks down as follows:

Housing tenure	No. of households
Owner occupier	7
Shared ownership	0
Live with parent(s)	7
Rented from a private landlord	7
Rented from a Housing Association	2
Provided with job	1

Owner-occupiers are unlikely to be prioritised for rented housing on an exception site (see Introduction), although they might be eligible for shared ownership. However, 6 of the owner-occupier respondents were only seeking to buy on the open market, so would be unlikely to apply for exception site housing in any case – these 6 will not be considered further in this report. The other respondent was on the Housing Register, so an assumption has been made that this respondent is in housing need and would be eligible.

6.4 Composition of households in need

The composition of the 18 households still under consideration (Q13 & Q14) is as follows:

Household composition	No. of households
Single adult	7
Couple without children	3
Family inc. dependent child(ren) (2 bedroom need)	3
Family inc. dependent children (3 bedroom need)	3
Family inc. non-dependent child (2 bedroom need)	2

'Household' here refers just to the people requiring new accommodation (thereby forming a new household) rather than the entire existing household, which may be larger (i.e. two of the single adults are currently living with their parents).

Bedroom needs have been assessed against Choice Based Lettings criteria under the Bedford Borough Housing Allocations policy, based on data provided by respondents. Bedroom needs can change over time due to e.g. different sex children growing older or new children joining the family.

6.5 Housing Register

2 respondents indicated that they were already on a housing register (Q7). As noted in 2.8, this does not mean that the other 16 respondents are not in housing need. It is not uncommon for people on the register not to indicate this in the form.

6.6 Reason for housing need

Applicants for affordable rented housing through an exception site must demonstrate a clear housing need. The needs identified by the 18 respondents (Q12) can be summarised as follows (respondents were able to identify more than one need):

Need	Number of households
Don't have enough bedrooms	3
Want to move out of the family home	6
First time buyer	11
Insecurity of tenure	2
Household contains child(ren) aged 0-18 or unborn child	4
Current housing affecting health	1
Extra care/support needs	0
Need cheaper housing (under 'Other')	1
Long-term limiting illness or disability (Q16)	3

The fact that 11 respondents regarded themselves as first time buyers suggests that there is a need for some shared ownership properties as well as affordable rent.

6.7 Gross income of households in need

We saw in Chapter 3 that, in order to purchase the cheapest property currently available in Great Barford, a single earner household would need an annual gross

income of just over £25,000, and a dual-income household would need a gross income of just over £30,000. We also saw that, to rent the cheapest rental property available, a household's annual gross income would need to be almost £24,000.

The current gross annual income of anyone responsible for paying the rent/mortgage for the 18 households under analysis breaks down as follows:

Current gross income	No. of households
Less than £15,000	6
£15,000 to £20,000	5
£20,000 to £25,000	2
£25,000 to £30,000	1
£30,000 to £40,000	2
More than £40,000	2

Based on the data provided, at least 11 respondents could not afford to purchase or rent on the open market within Great Barford. Between 5 and 7 households might be able to afford the cheapest rental property (the 1-bed bungalow), although 3 of these needed larger properties.

5 might be able to purchase the cheapest available properties based on income alone (but see also 6.8, below); 2 of these needed larger properties, however.

6.8 Savings or equity of households in need

As we saw in Chapter 3, the minimum deposit required for a first-time buyer to purchase the cheapest property currently available in Great Barford is £18,000.

The savings or other equity that these 18 households could use to contribute towards a mortgage breaks down as follows:

Savings/equity	No. of households
No savings or equity	7
Below £10,000	8
£10001 - £20,000	2
£20,001 - £30,000	0
£30,001 - £40,000	0
Above £40,000	1

At least 15 of these respondents do not have enough savings or equity to buy on the open market (although 11 households could potentially contribute savings or equity to a mortgage under a shared ownership deal).

Out of the other 3, one household could possibly afford to purchase the 1-bed maisonette but was looking for a larger property under shared ownership; and the other 2 did not have enough income.

7. Conclusions and recommendations

7.1 Overall need for affordable housing in Great Barford

Analysis of the survey has identified a need for affordable housing within Great Barford from those with a strong local connection to the parish that is unlikely to be met by normal market provision.

Chapters 2 and 3 indicated in general terms that there was a relative shortage of smaller, cheaper properties in Great Barford, particularly for private or social rent. This was supported by the views of respondents to section 1 of the survey (chapter 5), which identified a need for smaller houses and bungalows in particular, as well as extra care housing.

Chapter 6 showed that, based on data supplied by respondents, 18 households with a local connection would be suitable for housing within an exception site development: some for rent and some for shared ownership. However, it must be recognised that this is a snapshot of current, self-assessed need: some respondents may withdraw, move, or be housed by other means during the planning and development of any future scheme. In order to have reasonable confidence that any new housing provided through an exception site will be taken up by people with a local connection to Great Barford, we typically make a recommendation to meet between 50% and 80% of the need identified. Our recommendation in the case of Great Barford is **12 units**, based on two-thirds (66.67%) of the need identified.

63% of respondents indicated that they would support a small development of up to 10 units to meet this need (see 5). 37% were opposed to the idea. If the decision is taken to proceed with an exception site in Great Barford, it will be important to engage the local community in the process and raise awareness of the need for affordable housing for local people (as opposed to conventional market or social housing, which would be allocated on the basis of need to applicants across Bedford Borough). It should also be pointed out that a development of only 12 units within a village of around 800 homes is unlikely to have a significant effect on infrastructure or village character.

7.2 Type of units required

Our assessment from the data is that the 12 units could be broken down as follows:

5 x 1-2 bed house (4 rent, 1 shared ownership)
5 x 2 bed house (3 rent, 2 shared ownership)
2 x 3 bed house (rent)

In making this assessment we consider a number of factors including household size and circumstances; the type and tenure being sought by respondents; and their financial means. This breakdown is explained further below:

5 x 1-2 bed house (4 rent, 1 shared ownership)

7 respondents were young single adults who wanted to leave the parental home, and 1 further respondent was a couple without children looking for a cheaper property to rent. These respondents were flexible about renting or shared ownership, however, based on financial data provided, the latter option would only be suitable for 2

respondents.

While these respondents would require a 1 bedroom property based on need, it is generally accepted that, in order to help to ensure sustainability in rural areas, young people/couples should be allowed to under-occupy 2-bed properties in the first instance, as this enables them to remain in the parish if and when they decide to start a family. On the other hand, forthcoming changes to Housing Benefit may make under-occupation untenable for some households. A mix of 1 and 2 bed houses is therefore recommended for this group.

5 x 2 bed house (3 rent, 2 shared ownership)

5 respondents were small families with a need for 2 bedrooms. Most were looking to rent, and only 1 of these had sufficient savings/equity to make shared ownership a realistic option. 2 were couples without children looking for shared ownership, with sufficient financial means.

2 x 3 bed house (rent)

3 respondents were families with a need for 3 bedrooms looking to rent, with no savings or equity.

The final number of houses and mix of tenures (i.e. rented v shared ownership) would be agreed between the appointed Registered Social Landlord, Great Barford Parish Council and the local authority.