

## Information Sheet

### HOUSING NEEDS SURVEYS



**What is a Housing Needs Survey (HNS)?** A Housing Needs Survey is a key tool used to gather detailed evidence on local housing needs within a parish. Planning policy requires this evidence for the development of Rural Exception Sites. Sometimes they are used in other circumstances such as for neighbourhood planning or to provide evidence of sizes and types of affordable housing needed on allocated sites or on market-led sites.

#### Why is a HNS Important?

- It provides essential data to help plan for affordable housing.
- Provides robust evidence of the housing that local people need, including size and tenure.
- On Rural Exception Sites, a HNS can help ensure that new affordable homes are allocated to local people first, helping communities stay sustainable.

**Who Conducts the Surveys?** Devon Communities Together (DCT) has been the main provider of Housing Needs Surveys in Devon for many years. We work in collaboration with Local Authorities across Torridge, North Devon, Mid Devon, East Devon, and Teignbridge. Our HNS are well-regarded and follow national guidelines.

#### How Does a HNS Work?

- Surveys are distributed to all households in the community, which ask for information on the household, its make-up, number of bedrooms required and household income.
- The survey is completed anonymously, either on a paper copy or online.
- Reply-paid envelopes are provided for returns.
- The survey is also shared with those who have expressed an interest to Devon Home Choice in living in the parish
- No individual data is shared with the Local Authority or Parish Council.
- The data collected is combined with census data and Devon Home Choice records.
- The results provide a snapshot of housing needs within a parish, guiding future development.
- They remain valid for five years.

Two versions of the HNS questionnaire are available:

**Standard survey:** shorter simpler questionnaire which asks only those who are in need of affordable housing in the parish to fill it in.

This is a less expensive survey that provides robust information on affordable housing need only, suitable for planning applications.

**Enhanced survey:** Longer questionnaire which asks everyone in a parish to fill it in. This is a slightly more expensive survey which asks more questions including on the housing requirements of older people, suitable where wider information is required, e.g. for Neighbourhood Planning purposes.

**Are HNS Results Reliable?** While no survey captures 100% of local needs, HNS remains the best available tool for understanding housing need at parish level. Typical response rates for the Enhanced survey range between 18% and 25%.

#### How Does It Benefit the Community?

- Supports the development of affordable homes on Rural Exception Sites.
- Helps understand and address local housing need.
- Helps local people stay in their communities instead of moving away.

**Learn More** To see some examples of successful community-led housing developments that have used our housing needs surveys, visit: <https://www.devonhousinghub.org.uk/community-led-housing/success-stories/>  
For further information, contact: [info@devoncommunities.org.uk](mailto:info@devoncommunities.org.uk)