

LEIGH PARISH COUNCIL

Housing Needs Survey

January 2017

Dear Householder

Owing to the high cost of housing in this area, the Parish Council is considering whether there might be a need for additional affordable housing in the Leigh Parish so that residents who cannot afford to buy or rent locally will not be forced to move away. This type of affordable housing is also known as local needs housing; they are homes that can be rented or part bought (shared ownership) from a Housing Association. If developed, the new dwellings would be available on a similar same basis as the Gibbs Field development. The reason for providing local needs housing is to help local people of all ages who would like to stay or return to their parish and contribute to the village services that still exist.

We are sending out this Housing Needs Survey to assess the demand and gauge the level of support another small scheme might have in our community. Tessa O'Sullivan, the Rural Housing Enabler from Action with Communities in Rural Kent is assisting us to carry out this survey. **The survey will be analysed by the Rural Housing Enabler, with all information given being kept confidential.** She will then give a summary report to the Parish Council.

Depending on the outcome of this survey, we may try to find a suitable site within the parish of Leigh.

The most likely type of site would be what is known as a 'Rural Exception Site', within or on the edge of the village whereby:

- All homes on the site are owned and managed by a Housing Association
- Local needs homes are either rented or part-sold (shared ownership) to tenants
- Only households with a genuine Parish connection are able to live in the local needs housing.

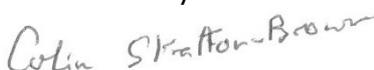
Under the Government's newly introduced voluntary Right to Buy, housing association tenants may be eligible to buy their homes. Housing Association landlords can decide if any homes are to be excluded from sale. Rural organisations, such as English Rural Housing Association, have already taken the decision to exclude all rural homes from the Right to Buy, so as to prevent this scarce resource being lost to the open market. Also, through the Sevenoaks District Council Local Plan, any homes developed on a Rural Exception Site would be bound by a legal agreement, which would require the homes to be kept available to meet local housing needs in perpetuity. Members of the Parish Council wish to establish the housing need in the parish before proposing a scheme. This survey will establish the parish need and the parish view on the importance of a rural exemption to the Right to Buy. Please be assured that the Parish Council will take this into account if a scheme is required to meet the need.

Once a site is found a village consultation event will be held so that residents of the parish can view and discuss the proposals and put their views forward.

This is a very important issue, so please take time to fill in this survey. Even if no one in your household has a housing need, we want to know your views. If any further information or additional questionnaires are required please contact the Rural Housing Enabler on 01303 813790.

Please return this form using the FREEPOST envelope provided by 15th February 2017.

Yours sincerely



Colin Stratton-Brown
Chairman, Leigh Parish Council