

West Ashton

Parish Housing Needs Survey

Survey Report

March 2017

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1. Parish Summary

The parish of West Ashton is in the Trowbridge Community Area within the local authority area of Wiltshire. West Ashton is located 2 miles east of Trowbridge, the County Town of Wiltshire. It retains its rural nature and village attitudes and seeks every effort to maintain the separation of the boundary between Trowbridge and the Village of West Ashton. The green fields are part of the agricultural heritage of the village.

The population at the last census (2011) was 737 and comprised of 303 households, although this will now have varied with the infilling of land on Bratton Road, the parish boundary changes in April 2017 and with the transfer of the Old Farm Estate to Trowbridge. The village is a ribbon development stretching from the A350 along Bratton Road and into East Town Road, with properties also located close to the crossroads of the A350. There are outlying small groups of properties at Dunge, Heath Hill, Rood Ashton and East Town.

There is little that remains of the historic Rood Ashton House. It was originally designed in 1808, extended in 1836 as the home of Lord Long. After his death in 1924 the estate was broken up and sold. In 1950 it was sold on and asset-stripped of the main of its fittings and its roof. Most of the remaining property was demolished in the late 1970's. The remaining wing is now a fully refurbished private house. The stables were also converted into residential dwellings in the 1980's. The estate workers cottages, situated on Bratton Road were constructed in the 1850's and still survive today, alongside a wide range of styles and sizes of houses built from that period up to 2017.

In the 1730's the village had a mineral well with reputed cures, according to the London Evening Post. The Village hall was built in 1922 and has been extended several times in the last few years to meet modern needs. Although there are no shops in the village, there are good shopping facilities in Westbury, Trowbridge and Melksham. Mini supermarkets are located at nearby garages: Yarnbrook; West Ashton Road; Leap Gate. There are a variety of active groups operating out of the Village Hall and the Parish Church plus a Community Farm on the opposite side of the A350 on West Ashton Road. There is also a recreation area on East Town Road and a variety of footpaths from the village. The Church of England (aided) primary school is located within the village.

2. Introduction

In July 2016, Wiltshire Council's Development Officers discussed carrying out a rural housing needs survey with West Ashton Parish Council, to establish if there was a proven need for affordable housing in the parish and potentially to use the findings of the survey to inform the parish plan.

Such surveys assist officers in identifying those areas with the greatest housing problems so that scarce financial resources can be put to best use.

Experience has shown that these surveys need to be carried out at regular intervals if the results are to remain relevant in identifying trends.

- The Principal Development Officers are employed by Wiltshire Council's Service Development and Enabling Team to assist in the delivery of new affordable housing.
- The Principal Development Officers work closely with rural communities, housing associations, local authorities and landowners to meet the affordable housing needs of rural communities.
- The survey is funded by members of the Wiltshire Rural Investment Partnership (WRIP).¹
- 'The Wiltshire Rural Investment Partnership brings together representatives from the economic development, regeneration, spatial planning, service development and enabling teams of Wiltshire Council together with Registered Provider [housing association] partners and the Homes and Communities Agency to enable and promote the sustainable delivery of new build housing in the rural communities of Wiltshire.'²

3. Aim

The aim of carrying out the survey is to investigate the affordable housing needs of local people in the West Ashton parish or those who have a need to live in the parish of West Ashton.

- 'Housing need' can be defined as the need for an individual or household to obtain housing that is suitable to their circumstances.
- It implies that there are problems or limitations with the household's current housing arrangements and that the household is unable to afford or to access suitable accommodation in the private sector.
- Such problems may be concerned with housing costs, size, location, layout, state of repair, or security of tenure either immediately or in the future.

4. Survey Distribution and Methodology

In order to carry out the housing needs survey, questionnaires were delivered to the Parish Council for distribution on the 23rd January 2017.

To encourage a good response, households were given a pre-paid envelope in which to return the completed survey. The council applies the data protection policy to responses, ensuring that all survey responses remain anonymous.

Residents were asked to return the completed surveys in the pre-paid envelopes by 3rd March 2017. The forms were recorded and analysed by the Service Development Officers at Wiltshire Council.

¹ The members of WRIP that contribute to the survey funding are Wiltshire Council and six Registered Providers of social housing (housing associations) - Aster, GreenSquare, Guinness, Stonewater, Selwood Housing and Wiltshire Rural Housing Association.

² Para 1.1, 'Purpose', *Terms of Reference for the Wiltshire Rural Investment Partnership*. Full WRIP membership: Wiltshire Council, Aster, Wiltshire Rural Housing Association, GreenSquare, Guinness, Stonewater, Selwood Housing, the Homes and Communities Agency, and the Wiltshire Community Land Trust.

- A total of 343 questionnaires were distributed to the parish.
- Everyone was asked to complete the first section of the form.
- If a household considered itself in need, or likely to be in need, of affordable housing within the next five years, it was invited to complete the rest of the survey.
- There was a below average response rate of 20.7% with 71 replies received.
- This report describes the views only of the residents who returned the questionnaires and these views may not be representative of the wider population of West Ashton.
- 2 responses were made online.

5. Key Findings

This report is divided into two parts. The first section looks at existing households in the parish in order to provide a description of the current housing in West Ashton. This section also describes the levels of new housing, if any, which would be supported by respondents to the survey.

The second section examines the households who have declared a need for new housing in West Ashton. The section begins by describing the overall need for both market and affordable housing in the parish. A financial assessment is then made in order to determine the numbers of households who have a current need for new affordable housing. The results of this assessment are summarised in the recommendations of the report (Section 8).

Part One – Households currently living in the parish

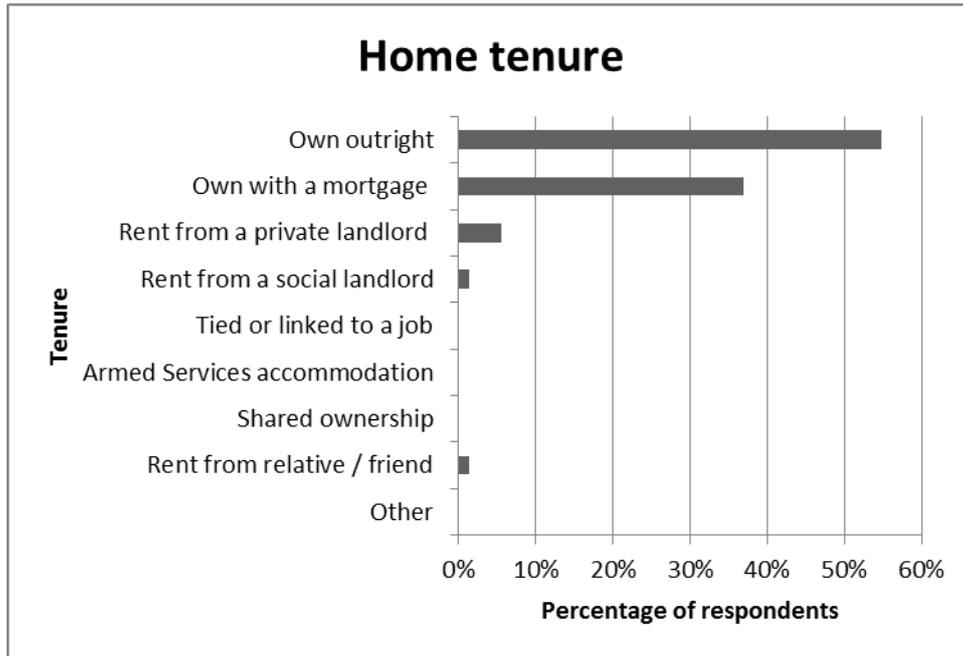
The first question asked on the survey was whether the respondents' home in West Ashton was their main home. 100% of those who replied said that it was.

The 2011 Census data for West Ashton indicates that 77.9% of households in the parish were owner-occupying, 6.6% were renting from social landlords, 13.5% were privately renting and 1.7% of households were living rent free.³

The chart below shows the tenure of respondents to the survey. The majority (91.8%) of respondents were owner-occupiers, while 1.4% of respondents were living in socially rented properties, 5.5% were renting from a private landlord or letting agency, and 1.4% renting from a relative/friend. These results indicate a bias in the survey responses toward those living in owner-occupied homes and the rest of this section should be read with this in mind.

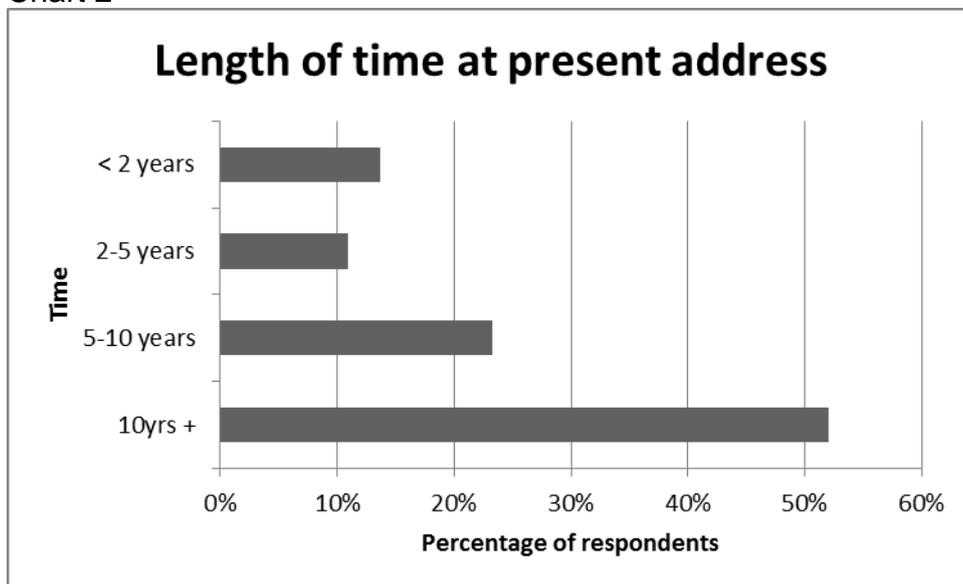
³ <http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/>

Chart 1



The chart below indicates the length of time that respondents have lived in their current home. It shows that the majority of people who responded to the survey have lived in the parish for more than ten years, which is appropriate for the high levels of owner occupation among survey respondents:

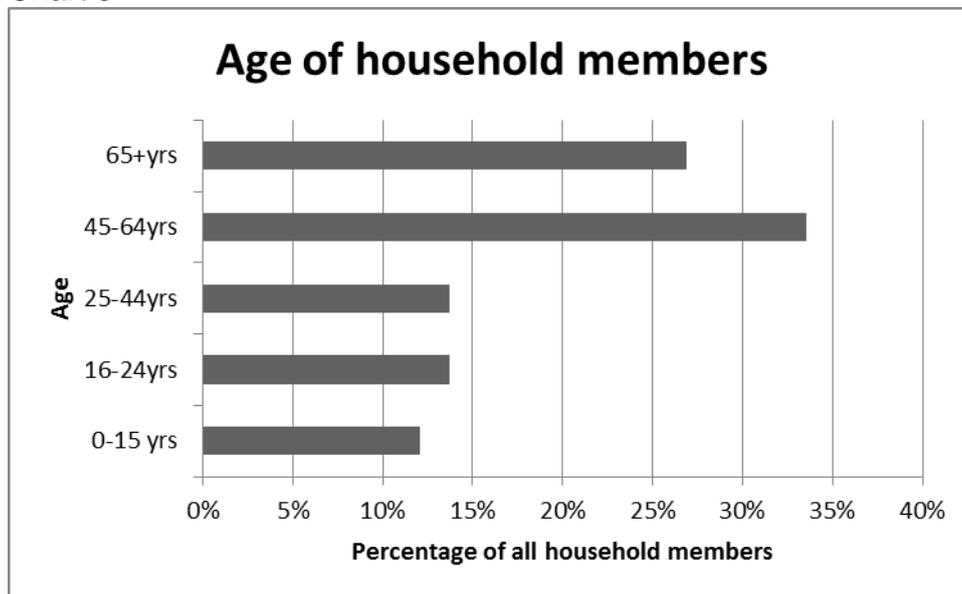
Chart 2



The majority of respondents to the survey lived in large family homes, with 13.7% of respondents having five or more bedrooms in their property. 34.2% lived in four bedroom homes, 37% had three bedrooms, 13.7% two bedrooms and 1.4% of respondents lived in homes with one bedroom.

The spread of ages recorded in the survey indicates that the majority (60.4%) of respondents' household members were aged 45+:

Chart 3



As shown in the chart above, there were significant numbers of households responding to the survey with members aged over 45 and a broader split of younger people and children aged under 16. This indicates a spread of different household types in West Ashton, from older person households with fewer members, to younger households with children.

The distance travelled to work can also be a good measure of the sustainability of local housing development, as more people working locally can indicate an ongoing need for local housing. The table below shows how far people in the respondents' households travelled to work:

Table 1

Q9	Distance to work				Total
	Up to 2 miles	2 - 10 miles	10 - 50 miles	50 miles +	
Person 1	10	15	13	9	47
Person 2	6	11	14	2	33
Person 3	0	4	0	0	4
Person 4	0	0	1	0	1
Person 5	0	0	1	0	1
Total	16	30	29	11	86

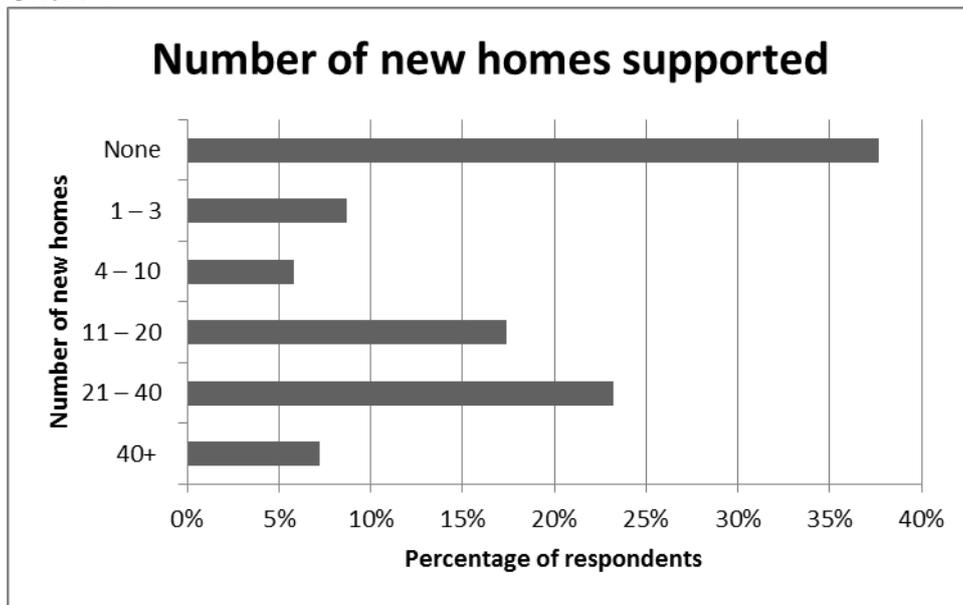
These results suggest a mixed level of sustainability for new housing development in West Ashton, indicated by the survey respondents' access to local sources of employment. While 53.5% of the households' working members usually travel less than ten miles to their place of work, 46.5% travel more than that.

Respondents were also asked whether anyone currently living in their household would need separate accommodation in the parish now or in the near future, to which 6.8% of respondents

(five households) answered 'yes', indicating a low level of sustained need for housing in the parish.

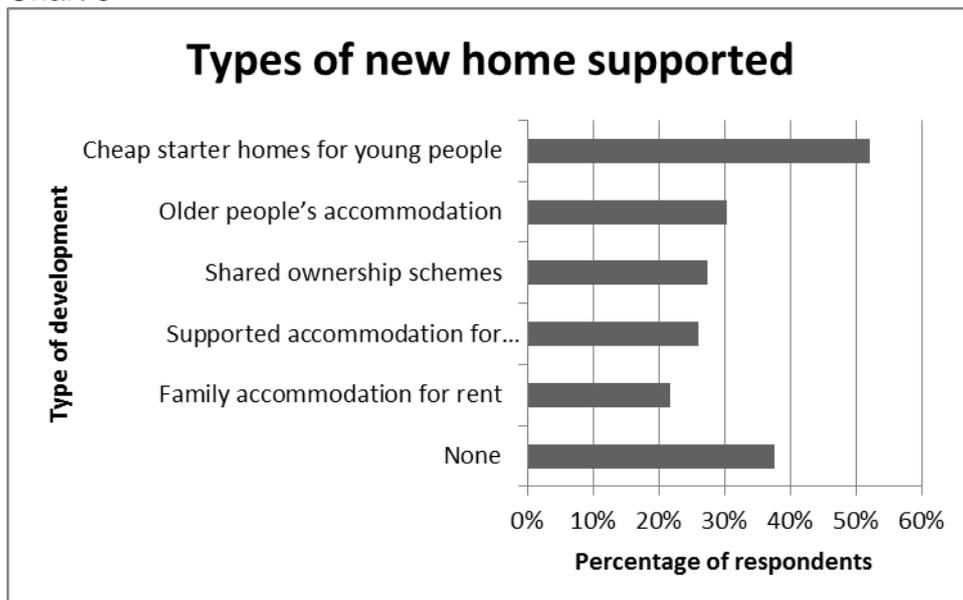
Respondents were then asked how many new homes they would support being built in the parish. A majority of respondents (62.3%) were in support of some new housing in West Ashton, with the most popular option (23.3% of respondents) being for between 21 and 40 new homes. 37.7% of respondents were opposed to any new housing in West Ashton parish:

Chart 4



Respondents to this section were finally asked what types of housing development, if any, they would support. The types of housing considered most needed in West Ashton by the survey respondents were affordable starter homes for young people (52.2%) and older persons' accommodation (30.4%). Full results are given in the chart below (more than one answer could be given):

Chart 5



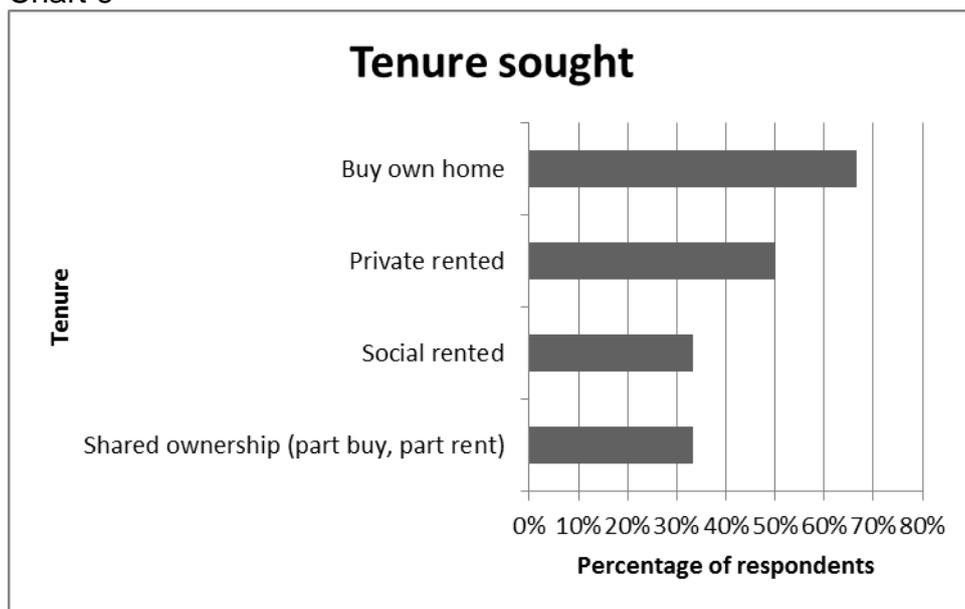
Part two – Households requiring accommodation in the parish

This section of the report looks initially at all the responses to section two of the survey in order to give a broad picture of the need for both market and affordable housing in the parish. A financial assessment and an evaluation of the current affordable housing in West Ashton are then made in order to describe in more detail the need for specifically affordable (i.e. non-market) housing.

Six respondents replied to this section of the survey, indicating their need for housing in West Ashton. The most frequent reasons given for needing to move were that respondent households were currently living in rented accommodation and would like to purchase a home.

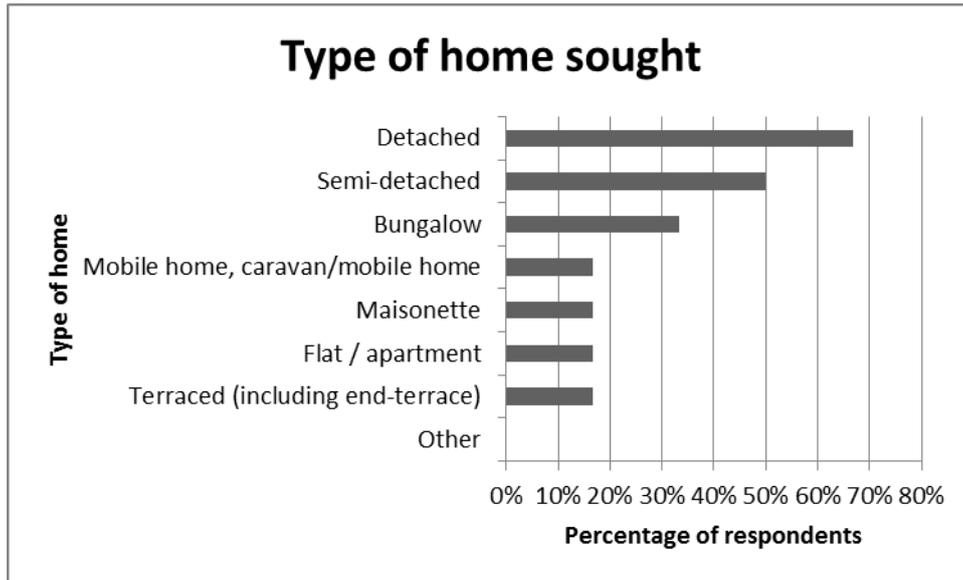
The respondents requiring accommodation in the parish were asked what type of tenure they sought. The expressed need was for all types of tenure, with buying their own home the most desired. Households could indicate more than one response:

Chart 6



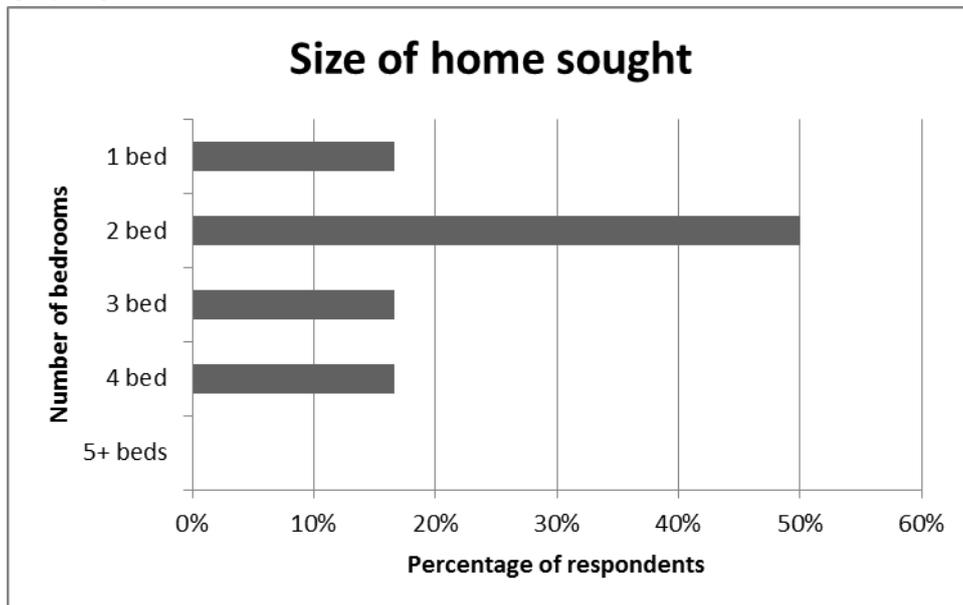
Respondents to this section were also asked what type of housing they required. The most sought-after type was detached properties. Full responses are given in the chart below (more than one answer could be given):

Chart 7



In terms of size, the most popular option was for two bedroom homes and respondents also expressed a need for properties with one, three and four bedrooms. No need was declared for homes with five or more bedrooms:

Chart 8



The respondents were then asked if there was a lack of suitable existing housing in West Ashton to meet their needs, to which all four of the six households answered 'yes'.

In order to assess the need for **affordable** housing in West Ashton, it is necessary to consider the equity, income and savings levels of respondents. Please note that due to the need to preserve the confidentiality of respondents, only a short summary of the financial assessment is presented below.

Only one of the six households responding to this section of the survey reported having equity in an existing property, and the estimated levels of savings among the respondents was very low, with only one household declaring any savings. Income levels were mixed. The median gross income bracket reported by the six respondents was £24,500-£25,999pa.

Comparing income, savings and equity levels with affordability in West Ashton suggests that three of the six households would require public assistance in order to achieve their required housing and so would be considered 'in housing need' as defined in Section 3 of this report. These households inform the recommendations of this survey for new affordable housing in West Ashton, presented in Section 8.

Of the three households not considered 'in housing need', one household did not provide sufficient detail to enable their need to be assessed. One household is considered adequately housed in their current accommodation, and the remaining household did not meet the financial criteria for low cost home ownership, these households are excluded from the recommendations of this report.

6. Affordability

In order to investigate affordability, further research has been carried out on house prices in the area.

It is possible to estimate the average property prices in the West Ashton area:⁴

Bedrooms	March 2017
1	£127,600
2	£177,100
3	£226,500
4	£330,900
5+	£433,900

Example calculation for a mortgage

Typically, a household making a single application can obtain a mortgage of 3.5 times their annual income, or 3 times annual income for joint applications. Households would generally expect to need a deposit of around 15% of the total price.

If an average two-bedroom property sold in West Ashton cost £177,100 then a household may require £26,565 as a deposit. Annual household income would have to be at least £43,010 for a single applicant or £50,178 for joint applicants. The Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings indicates that the gross annual median income of employed persons in Wiltshire in 2015 was £21,469.⁵

- It would be unlikely that a household would be able to purchase a property in this parish without a large deposit, some equity in an existing property or a substantial income.
- First time buyers would generally struggle to meet the criteria necessary for obtaining their own home.
- In some cases intermediate housing (shared ownership or low cost market housing) would be a suitable option, whilst in other instances affordable rented accommodation would be appropriate.

⁴ House price estimates from the Mouseprice local area guide to the BA14 postcode area, www.mouseprice.com/area-guide/average-house-price/ . Please note that the BA14 postcode covers a wider area than West Ashton parish and that there may be significant internal variation in house prices.

⁵ Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, 2015, resident analysis. Gross annual pay of employed persons resident in Wiltshire, www.nomisweb.co.uk . Note that while the mortgage calculation refers to household income, i.e. to the combined income of all persons in the home, the ASHE figure refers to individual income.

7. Summary

This survey's recommendations (see Section 8 below) concentrate on those households who are unable to afford accommodation on the open market.

This is just a quarter of the research needed for this assessment: the Housing Register of Wiltshire Council, the local Strategic Housing Market Assessment and the advice from allocation staff who manage the Register must also be taken into account.

- In March 2017, there was one household on the Wiltshire Council Housing Register seeking affordable accommodation in West Ashton parish: this household did not complete section 2 of this survey. One household completing section 2 of the survey stated that they were on the Wiltshire Council Housing Register, but no record of them was found. The household on the register is seeking a 4 bedroom affordable rented property. Any full assessment of housing need in the parish must take account of the Register.⁶
- The 2011 Census recorded twenty social homes in the parish.⁷ These properties represent 6.6% of the total housing in West Ashton, which is lower than the Wiltshire affordable housing average of 14.7%.⁸
- The social housing in West Ashton had a 5% re-let rate in the past year: from the first to the fourth quarter of 2013/14, only one social home was re-let in the parish.⁹
- The low levels and turnover of social housing in the parish suggest that **none** of the households responding to section two of this survey and in need of affordable accommodation could meet their needs through accessing the existing social housing of the parish.
- Three of the households responding to Section 2 of this survey stated that private rented housing would meet their housing needs, and two of them described a lack of suitable accommodation for their needs in the parish and it is notable that while West Ashton has a sizeable proportion of privately rented homes (13.5% of the total parish stock), the turnover of these is low and rents are generally higher than the LHA. These households are not included in the recommendations of this report for new subsidised rented homes, but the lack of availability of low cost privately rented homes in West Ashton does indicate a need for an open-market or mixed tenure development in the area.

⁶ Wiltshire Council, Housing Strategy, live tables.

⁷ Table QS405EW, 2011 Census: Tenure – Households, English parishes / Welsh communities.

⁸ Table QS405EW, 2011 Census: Tenure – Households, local authorities in England and Wales.

⁹ Wiltshire Council, Housing Strategy, live tables.

8. Recommendations

This survey's recommendations concentrate on households unable to afford accommodation on the open market.

The following indicates the minimum need over the next three years for new affordable housing development in the parish, based on the responses to the survey. Please note that this report provides a description of the affordable housing need only of those who responded to the survey, and as such cannot accurately estimate the total affordable housing need in the parish. As described in Section 7, the survey is only a quarter of the evidence required to fully assess housing need in the parish. Wiltshire Council's Housing Register, the Strategic Housing Market Assessment, and the advice of allocation staff who manage the Register **must** also be taken into account in properly determining local housing need.

Subsidised rented housing ¹⁰

- 1 x one bedroom home
- 1 x three bedroom homes

Shared ownership / discount market homes¹¹

- 2 x two bedroom homes

Sheltered housing for older people

- None

¹⁰ Please note that recommendations for numbers of bedrooms in subsidised rented properties are where possible made in line with the 'family size' criteria implemented as part of the Housing Benefit changes by the 2012 Welfare Reform Act.

¹¹ Please note that recommendations for numbers of bedrooms in shared ownership/discounted market properties are based on the number of bedrooms wanted by respondents, applicants can purchase the size of home they are able to afford.