

Holwell – potential housing growth targets

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Housing Stock and Prices, and Key Population Statistics

The 2011 Census records 160 households and 171 household spaces in Holwell parish. There are no communal establishments. The vacancy rate (6.4%) is lower than the West Dorset average, although slightly higher than the national average.

The Census data tells us that, in Holwell, the most typical dwelling size is a 3 or 4 bedroom property, which together account for just under 70% of the total stock. Only about 1 in 5 homes are 1 or 2 bedroom properties.

About 70% of households are 1 or 2 people households, so many of the homes are under-occupied according to the census data. The average household size is 2.3 persons. Households are 'older' than the average for the area, with very few residents in their 30s, although there are a reasonable number living here in their 20s. About 1 in 5 people say that their day to day activities are limited by a health problem or disability. There is also a high reliance on private car as reflected in the car ownership levels (with only 4.4% of households without a car, and more than 60% of households having 2 or more cars).

About three-quarters (74.4%) of the housing stock is owner-occupied, which is higher than both the district and national average. Although the number of private rented properties is slightly higher than typical for Dorset, there were very few (6.3%) affordable public rented properties at the time of the Census.

Land Registry data on house sales for Holwell indicates that typically about 4 dwellings get bought and sold every year. The average house price is about £380,000 (based on data over the last 5 years, which is a slight increase on the previous report), with sold prices ranging from £240,000 to £2.5million.

There is little historic data available on rental prices, but a wider area based-search on DT9 (which includes Sherborne) when the plan was first drafted in 2018 showed rents at around £685 pcm for a two bedroom property, and £785 pcm for a 3 bedroom property.

Housing need information

As at October 2016 the Housing Enabling Officer confirmed that there were 3 households with a local connection to the area on the District Council's Housing Register. As of October 2017, this figure had dropped to 2 households with a local connection. At that time, there were also households registered in need with a local connection to the adjoining parishes – in October 2016 the total was 16, which included households from Bishops Caundle (6), Folke and Alweston (4), Glanvilles Wootton in North Dorset (2), Lydlinch in North Dorset (4) and Pulham in North Dorset (2). In October 2017 this figure had reduced to 13 households, and it was noted that Bishops Caundle was actively progressing an affordable housing scheme (which was subsequently approved).

As at July 2020 Dorset Council informed us that there were 2 households with a connection to Holwell on the Dorset Home Choice register, one requiring 1 bedroom home, and one requiring 2 bedroom home. This does

not include households in adjoining parishes (which was considered in the approval of the Crouch Lane affordable housing scheme).

Another indicator of local need is the number of potentially ‘concealed’ households recorded in the 2011 Census. This shows 4 households as falling outside the normal categories for standard household types. At 2.5% of all households this was lower than average, and also lower than the previous 2001 Census (6 households). The household composition data also shows slightly lower than average number of families with dependent children, and older persons, which may indicate that either the available housing types or local facilities and services do not cater as well for their needs.

11 responses to the 2016 household questionnaire (which had a 74% response rate) told us that someone in their household may be looking for accommodation in Holwell in the next 5 years – this was mainly children of existing families needing affordable types of accommodation (either to rent or to buy).

Discussions held with local estate agents at that time¹ indicated that the key statistics broadly reflect their understanding of the local market, and that Holwell remains a popular area, and as such there is no upper limit where the provision of new homes would be likely to exceed market demand. Requests typically reflect a stronger demand for 2 bedroom homes and for bungalows / annexed accommodation for older residents.

Housing supply

As of 31 March 2017

With the introduction of permitted development rights for the conversion of agricultural barns to housing, and the recent approval of an exception site for affordable housing, when the first draft of the plan was being developed, there were currently 20 dwellings with planning consent.

- WD/D/14/002191 - Sandhills Farm, Stock Hill Lane, Holwell (3 dwellings)
- WD/D/15/002295 - land at Crouch Lane adjoining the Pre-School (14 dwellings – as 100% affordable housing)
- WD/D/16/002059 - Watkins Farm, Watkins Farm Access Road, Holwell (1 dwelling)
- WD/D/17/000081 - Barn At Lower Elsworth, Crouch Lane, Holwell (1 dwelling)
- WD/D/17/001369 - land adjacent Hill Street Farm, Stony Lane, Holwell (1 AOC dwelling, replacing the previous outline permission WD/D/16/001963)

As of 31 March 2020

Of the above extant consents, 6 have since been recorded as completed since 2017:

- WD/D/14/002191 - Sandhills Farm, Stock Hill Lane, Holwell (3 dwellings)
- WD/D/16/002059 - Watkins Farm, Watkins Farm Access Road, Holwell (1 dwelling)
- WD/D/17/000081 - Barn At Lower Elsworth, Crouch Lane, Holwell (1 dwelling)
- WD/D/17/001369 - land adjacent Hill Street Farm, Stony Lane, Holwell (1 AOC dwelling, replacing the previous outline permission WD/D/16/001963)

This leaves the Crouch Lane affordable housing site WD/D/15/002295 (where work has started) plus the following new permissions as extant consents:

- WD/D/18/002618 - Westbourne, Fosters Hill (2 dwellings, 1 demolished = 1 net gain)

¹ Morton New and Symonds and Sampson, January 2017

- WD/D/19/002775 - Cornford Hill Farm, Cornford Hill (2 dwellings, one of which has been amended under a subsequent application 20/001027)

Summing to 17 extant consents in total. Then plus an additional 3 sites as allocations in the Neighbourhood Plan (not including the affordable housing reserve site)

- Site between Roseacre & Newhaven, Fosters Hill;
- Plot adjacent to The Rectory, Pulham Road
- Site adjacent to Gunville House.

With the addition of the allocations, this now sums to a housing supply of 20 consents / allocations in total.

Considering the past rate of development

Dorset Council also consider there would be an additional windfall supply through conversions, based on the past average (2014 – 20) of 7 dwellings over 6 years, or 1.1 dwellings per annum.

Considering Holwell’s contribution to the overall housing need in the area

The latest published figure of the objective assessment of housing need across the adopted Local Plan area (West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland) is 800 dwellings per annum. This is based on the Indicative Local Housing Need (December 2020 Revised Methodology) published 16th December 2020.

If the development strategy was simply to distribute the projected housing need across the area, on a pro-rata basis, the potential ‘target’ for the amount of development within Holwell parish would be:

$$800 \times \frac{\text{Holwell household in 2011 (160)}}{\text{HMA households in 2011 (72,921)}} = 1.75 \text{ dwellings (26 dwellings over 14 years)}$$

However this method of assessing need takes no account of the overall sustainability of the area in terms of the Local Plan’s strategic objectives to achieve a sustainable pattern of development, which would suggest a lower target would normally be appropriate.

Considering the emerging Dorset Council Local Plan housing target

The draft Local Plan (which was published for consultation in January 2021) suggests an indicative housing figure for the Holwell Neighbourhood Plan area of 35 homes, for the period 2021 – 2038. This is based on the extant consents (although this is calculated as 17 rather than 16, as it erroneously includes a site in Bishops Caundle), the unconsented Neighbourhood Plan site allocations (3) and a windfall target of 15 dwellings (based on the past windfall rate projected over the period 2024 – 2038).

Translating this to the current Neighbourhood Plan period (2017 – 2031) would result in a proportion housing target of:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|----|
| – Completions (2017 – 2021) | 6 |
| – Extant Consents | 17 |
| – NP allocations | 3 |
| – Windfall (2024 – 2031) | 8 |

Considering Local Opinion

The household survey (2016) showed that most people (73% of respondents) agreed that we should have some housing, and 25% of respondents considered starter homes/small family homes the main need. There wasn't a strong consensus on how many homes, 36% wanted no increase other than that offered by Local Plan, 25% wanted between 1 and 5 properties, 20% between 6 and 10 properties and 19% more than 10 properties. So it is safe to say that only a few (less than 20%) wanted more than 10 homes.

With the approval of the Crouch Lane appeal, the current supply already goes beyond the level of growth that most residents had indicated they would be prepared to accept. As such, any further housing would be seen as contravening the current remit provided by the local community.

A further consultation was undertaken in Summer 2017. At this stage a similar question was asked (given the intervening approvals) – ie should any more homes be built (apart from conversions and rural housing exceptions sites (if a future need were to arise)), with possible options of up to 3, 6 or 10 custom build houses. The response to this second consultation indicated.

Max # of Custom Build Houses Acceptable	As % of those responding:
(a) conversions and rural housing exceptions sites only	40%
(b) conversions and RES plus up to 3 custom build houses	22%
(c) conversions and RES plus up to 6 custom build houses	16%
(d) conversions and RES plus up to 10 custom build houses	22%

Based on a weighted average, the responses suggested that there should be support for 3 or 4 new build homes in addition to rural housing exceptions sites and possible conversions.

Sustainability

Two recent planning decisions have both commented on the sustainability of Holwell.

In the Crouch Lane appeal (ref 3154493, February 2017) the Planning Inspector acknowledged that “Holwell has few services, facilities and employment opportunities, with limited access to public transport connections to nearby larger settlements” but went on to consider provision in nearby settlements, concluding that “there are a range of services and facilities in Bishops Caundle including a primary school, public house and restaurant, a garage, a village shop and Post Office as well as a village hall, with public transport links to larger towns. There are also more limited services facilities in King’s Stag. Both villages are a relatively short car journey from the appeal site.” On this basis he came to the view that “future residents’ reliance on the private car for most of their shorter journeys would be significantly offset by the valuable role that the proposed development would have in sustaining the local services and facilities in the nearby settlements. In my view, the proposed development would therefore reflect the approach of locating housing where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities, including locating development in one village to support services in a village nearby, set out at paragraph 55 of the Framework. It would also reflect the guidance in paragraph 29 of the Framework, which recognises that the opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions may be more limited in rural areas.” Since that time the public transport links have been withdrawn.

More recently the replacement of the barn at Lower Elsworth has come under scrutiny (ref 17/0081, March 2017) – with an officer recommendation for refusal over-turned by the Planning Committee. Slightly contrary to the appeal decision, the officer stated that Holwell “is remote from any larger towns or villages, the nearest town is Sherborne approximately 5 km to the west.” And he went on to conclude that “While it is possible that the proposal could meet some of the requirements contained in the NPPF for social need in terms of being located next to a Nursery School where it could help support this facility, with the very limited facilities and services other than the school to meet basic daily needs available in Holwell, the addition of even 1 dwelling would be unsustainable.” One of the reasons given for differing from the appeal decision was that the site was more isolated (being on the far side of the nursery school) and as such could be considered to be isolated, and would set a precedent that potentially would be harmful to the countryside around the village.

Conclusions and recommendations

For the period 2017 – 2031, the existing supply comprises:

- Completions (2017 – 2021) 6
- Extant Consents 17
- NP allocations 3
- Windfall (2024 – 2031) unknown (but potentially approx 8 @ 1.1dpa)

Taking into account the limited sustainability of the settlement and the wishes of local residents, the Neighbourhood Plan does not need to identify any additional sites through this review.

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