

HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY

created for Woodham Walter Parish Council in June 2025 by
the Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE)

**SYNOPSIS compiled by Woodham Walter Parish
Council in September 2025**

Executive Summary

In early 2025, Woodham Walter Parish Council, in partnership with the Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE), conducted a Housing Needs Survey to gain a better understanding of current and future housing needs of local residents. **The survey achieved a strong response rate - well above the county average - and provided valuable insights into the housing challenges and aspirations within the parish.**

Key Findings

- **Local Housing Need:** 11 households indicated a need to move within the next five years, with 7 providing sufficient information to assess their needs. Most expressed a strong desire to remain in the parish, highlighting the importance of enabling local people to stay within their community.
- **Affordability Gap:** There is a clear mismatch between local incomes and housing costs, particularly for first-time buyers and those on moderate incomes. Even smaller homes remain out of reach for many.
- **Preferred Housing Types:** The most common need was for smaller, more affordable homes, particularly 2-bedroom properties. There was also interest in self-build, shared ownership, and affordable rented housing.
- **Community Sentiment:** While views on new housing are mixed, 67% of respondents supported a small-scale development (4–8 homes) to meet local needs. Many expressed conditional support, favouring modest, well-designed homes that respect the village's character and are supported by appropriate infrastructure.

Recommendation

Based on the evidence, the report recommends a small, sensitively designed development of up to 10 homes, including:

- 6 affordable rented homes (1–3 bedrooms)
- 2 shared ownership homes
- 2 open market bungalows to support local downsizing

This proposed mix reflects the diversity of need within the parish and aims to support younger residents, families, and older people wishing to remain in Woodham Walter.

1. Key Findings and Recommendations

Introduction

The results indicate strong support for modest, locally focused development. Specifically, 67% of respondents were in favour of a small-scale scheme of 4–8 homes,

primarily for affordable housing to meet local needs. In comparison, 48% supported additional open market housing.

There was broad support for housing that enables younger families to remain in the village and allows older residents to downsize. However, respondents also emphasised the importance of ensuring that any development respects the village's rural character. Concerns were raised about the capacity of local infrastructure - such as roads, amenities, and public transport - and the potential impact of larger-scale developments.

Overall, the community expressed a preference for well-designed, small-scale housing that supports the village's long-term sustainability without compromising its unique identity.

Woodham Walter Housing Types / Housing Tenure / Council Tax band / Population

Housing types in Woodham Walter as of 2021 Census compared to the national average.

Dwelling Types						
Indicator	Woodham Walter		England		Essex	
	Count	Rate	Count	Rate	Count	Rate
Detached	158	62.70%	5,368,859	22.91%	191,338	30.54%
Semi-Detached	61	24.21%	7,378,304	31.48%	197,039	31.45%
Terraced	10	3.97%	5,381,432	22.96%	124,599	19.89%
Purpose Built Flats	1	0.40%	3,999,771	17.07%	93,638	14.95%
Flats: In Converted House	0	0.00%	821,153	3.50%	6,623	1.06%
Flats: In Commercial Building	3	1.19%	197,967	0.84%	4,034	0.64%
Caravan/Temporary Accommodation	19	7.54%	99,894	0.43%	5,241	0.84%
Source: Census 2021						

Housing Tenure in Woodham Walter as of 2021 Census compared to the national and county averages

Housing Tenure						
Indicator	Woodham Walter		England		Essex	
	Count	Rate	Count	Rate	Count	Rate
Owned Outright	138	54.98%	7,624,693	32.53%	227,592	36.33%
Owned: With Mortgage/Loan	66	26.29%	6,744,372	28.78%	204,778	32.69%
Shared Ownership	0	0.00%	235,951	1.01%	5,259	0.84%
Rented: From Council	8	3.19%	1,945,152	8.30%	45,368	7.24%
Rented: From Housing Association	17	6.77%	2,060,511	8.79%	43,161	6.89%
Private Rented: Landlord/Letting Agency	15	5.98%	4,273,689	18.24%	87,593	13.98%
Private Rented: Other	6	2.39%	521,200	2.22%	12,171	1.94%
Living Rent Free	0	0.00%	30,517	0.13%	548	0.09%
Source: Census 2021						

Dwellings by Council Tax band

Indicator	Woodham Walter	England	Essex
Band A	6.58%	23.81%	8.56%
Band B	5.26%	19.49%	17.96%
Band C	18.42%	21.93%	28.69%
Band D	10.53%	15.65%	19.80%
Band E	17.11%	9.78%	12.46%
Band F	17.11%	5.20%	7.19%
Band G	18.42%	3.54%	4.76%
Band H	5.26%	0.60%	0.57%

(Source: Valuation Office Agency (VOA))

The population of Woodham Walter as of 2021 Census compared to the national average.

Population Composition						
Indicator	Woodham Walter		England		Essex	
	Count	Rate	Count	Rate	Count	Rate
Total Population	635	-	57,112,542	-	1,519,859	-
Males	310	48.82%	27,986,032	49.00%	740,051	48.69%
Females	325	51.18%	29,126,510	51.00%	779,808	51.31%
Population Aged 0-15	94	14.80%	10,567,635	18.50%	283,322	18.64%
Population Aged 16 to 64	343	54.02%	35,915,152	62.88%	920,233	60.55%
Population Aged 65+	198	31.18%	10,629,755	18.61%	316,304	20.81%

Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS)

In Part 1 of the survey, 16 households indicated a need to move to alternative accommodation. Of these, 7 households completed Part 2 and confirmed a desire to remain within the parish.

The responses reflect a range of housing needs and aspirations, including:

- Older residents seeking to downsize.
- Two individuals looking to establish their first or independent home.
- One household requiring a physically adapted property.
- One resident seeking to purchase retirement or sheltered housing, with sufficient assets to do so.
- Two households interested in self-build, both of whom appear to have the financial means to pursue this route.

These findings provide a clear picture of the types of housing that would best support the evolving needs of the local community.

Recommendations

- **Affordable Housing:** Based on our analysis, we recommend provision of up to six affordable rented units of mixed size to meet the needs of older residents and younger individuals seeking to establish independent homes.
- **Shared Ownership:** We recommend the inclusion of two shared ownership homes within the scheme, ideally 2-bedroom properties suitable for young professionals, small families, or older residents looking to downsize but remain within the community. Shared ownership offers a more accessible route to homeownership for those who may be priced out of the open market, while also supporting a balanced and sustainable tenure mix. These homes would help meet local demand for intermediate housing options and contribute to the overall viability of the development.
- **Open Market Contribution:** We recommend that two 2-bedroom bungalows be delivered on the open market as part of any future scheme. These homes would meet the aspirations of financially capable downsizers and could also cross-subsidise the delivery of affordable housing, helping to make a mixed tenure scheme viable.
- **Housing Register Awareness:** The Parish Council should raise awareness of the Maldon Housing Register to ensure residents are eligible for future local needs housing.
- **Community Led Housing:** Given the strong local support and interest (5 respondents keen to be involved, 14 potentially interested), a Community Led Housing project may be a viable and inclusive solution.
- **Accessible Housing:** One respondent requires a physically adapted home. Any future open market 3-bed bungalows should be designed to be fully wheelchair accessible.

2. Affordability and Local Market Context

The interpretation of housing need has been guided by local property values and applicants' financial circumstances. For example:

- The average price of a **2-bedroom home** in Woodham Walter is between **£345,000 and £475,000**, while **3-bedroom homes** range from **£575,000 to £685,000**.
- A single applicant earning **£16,000–£20,000** annually with no savings would be unable to afford a discounted market sale or shared ownership property, making **affordable rent** the only viable option.

- Even applicants earning over **£61,000 annually** would struggle to purchase a **3-bedroom home** without significant savings, due to the high deposit requirements and associated costs.

- Households seeking to downsize from **2, 4 and 5+ bedroom homes** could help free up housing stock but would require suitable smaller properties to move into.

These examples illustrate the gap between local incomes and property prices and highlight the importance of providing a range of affordable housing options that reflect real financial circumstances and household size

Recommendation

Based on the evidence gathered, it is recommended that a small, sensitively designed development of **up to 10 homes** be considered to meet the identified local need. This could include a mix of affordable rented, shared ownership, and open market properties to support local downsizing.

An indicative mix could include:

- **1 x 2-bed bungalow (Open Market)** to support downsizing and release larger family homes.
- **1 x 2-bed house (Open Market)** to support downsizing and release larger family homes.
- **3 x 1-bed homes (Affordable Rent)** to meet the needs of single applicants with limited income.
- **1 x 2-bed homes (Affordable Rent)** to meet the needs of small families or couples with limited incomes.
- **2 x 3-bed homes (Affordable Rent)** to meet the needs of larger families with limited incomes.
- **1 x 1-bed house (Shared Ownership)** for financially eligible young adults seeking a first home.
- **1 x 2-bed home (Shared Ownership)** for financially eligible small families or couples.

This recommendation reflects the diversity of need within the parish and aims to provide a balanced, inclusive housing mix that supports residents at different life stages. It is also aligned with the community's preference for modest, well-integrated development that respects the rural character of the area.

3. Support for Development

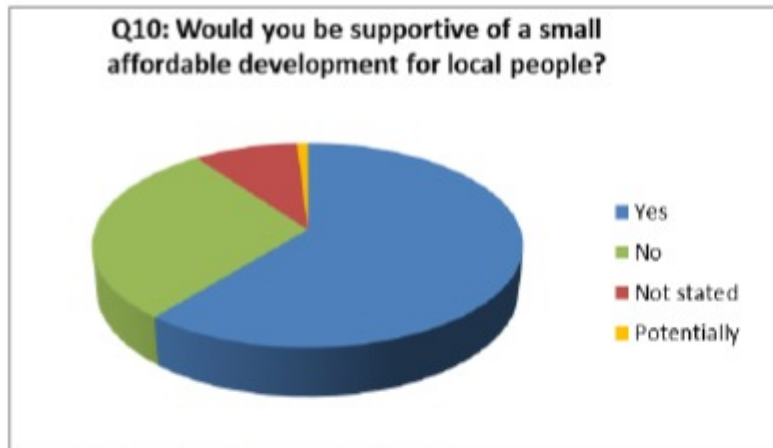


Figure 14: Small affordable development

Sixty-seven respondents (61%) would support a small development (typically 4-8 homes) of affordable housing for local people, thirty-two (29%) would not be supportive, one (1%) would be potentially and ten respondents (9%) did not answer the question.

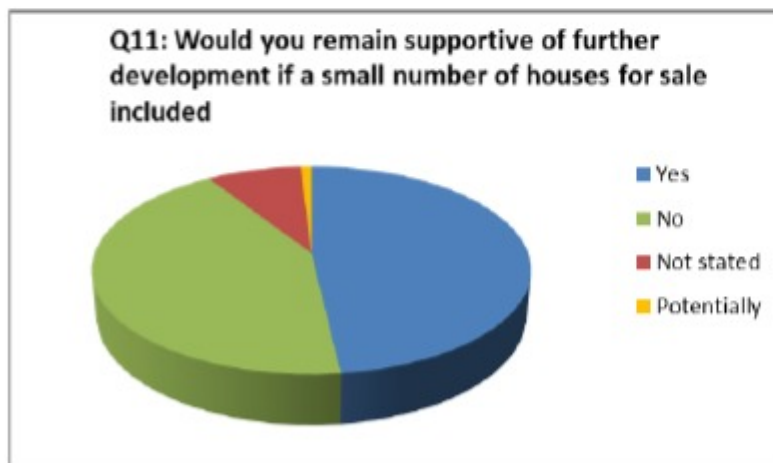


Figure 15: Small affordable development which included a small number of homes for sale

Fifty-three respondents (48%) would be supportive of a development of affordable homes which included a small number for sale on the open market, forty-seven (43%) would not be supportive, one (1%) would potentially be supportive and nine (8%) respondents did not answer the question.

Q12: Would you be supportive of a development of housing for sale on the open market?

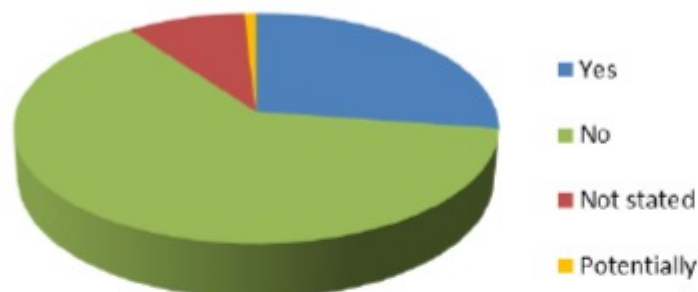


Figure 16: Further developments of open market housing

Thirty respondents (27%) would support further developments of housing for sale on the open market whilst the majority, sixty-nine respondents (63%), would not be supportive. One (1%) stated they would potentially be supportive whilst ten respondents (9%) did not answer the question.

Q13: Would you be supportive of a Community Led Housing project?

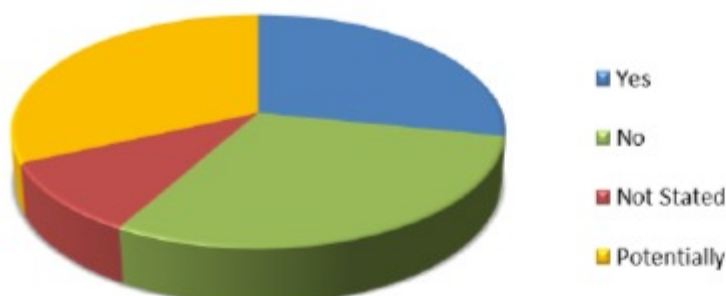


Figure 17: Community Led Housing Scheme (not for profit)

Thirty-one (28%) respondents were supportive of a Community Led Housing Scheme (not for profit). Thirty-three (30%) were not supportive. Thirty-five (32%) stated potentially whilst eleven (10%) people did not answer the question.

Q14: Would you be interested in being involved in a Community Led Housing project?

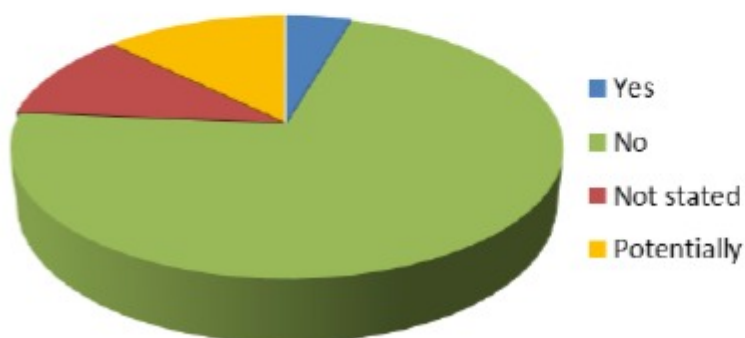


Figure 18: Personally involved in a Community Led Housing scheme

Thirty-nine respondents (13%) would be interested in being personally involved in a community-led housing scheme whilst two hundred and fifty-eight (83%) would not be interested. Fourteen people (5%) did not answer the question.

4. Summary of Community Feedback

Community Sentiment

The feedback reflects a community that is both thoughtful and divided on the issue of new housing development in Woodham Walter. While some residents express openness to carefully planned growth, particularly to support younger families and maintain the village's vitality, others are concerned about preserving the rural character, avoiding overdevelopment, and ensuring that any changes align with local needs and infrastructure capacity.

The following themes emerged consistently from community feedback, highlighting both support and concern around future development:

i) Infrastructure Limitations

Several residents raised concerns about the village's capacity to support additional housing. References were made to the limited availability of public transport, the absence of local shops and healthcare facilities, and the already congested A414 were all cited as constraints.

ii) Protecting the Rural and Environmental Character

Woodham Walter's rural charm and surrounding countryside are clearly valued by the community. Many respondents expressed a desire to avoid development that would impact views, encroach on productive farmland, or alter the village's natural setting. Several residents emphasised that the village should remain a distinct, Arcadian settlement, and not risk becoming a suburb of Maldon or Chelmsford.

iii) Concerns About Overdevelopment

There is a noticeable concern about the scale and impact of potential development. Some residents feel that the village already has sufficient social housing, while others worry that any new development could lead to overcrowding or fundamentally change the character of the village. There were also concerns that development could lead to urban sprawl, joining Woodham Walter to nearby towns and eroding its identity.

Several respondents stressed that any new homes should be modest in scale and located within the existing village footprint to avoid unnecessary expansion.

iv) Affordability and Housing Mix

While some residents believe the village already has enough affordable or social housing, others highlighted the need for more flexible and accessible housing options. Many called for smaller 2- and 3-bedroom homes that younger people could afford to rent or buy, as well as single-storey homes for older residents looking to downsize. There was also support for enabling annexes or extensions to support intergenerational living.

Several respondents expressed a desire to see housing prioritised for families with strong local ties, and for development to help maintain a balanced, multi-generational community. However, others cautioned that housing should be based on demonstrable need - not simply on demand - and that any new provision must be sensitive to the village's character and limitations.

5. Suggested Locations for Development

Suggested locations demonstrate that, while cautious, the community is not closed to the idea of new housing. There is a clear preference for small-scale, well-integrated development that respects the village's character and infrastructure. The emphasis on infill, proximity to the village centre, and avoiding disruption to views and farmland reflects a thoughtful approach to growth – one that prioritises sustainability, community cohesion, and local need.

6. Potential Benefits of New Housing

While many residents expressed understandable concerns about infrastructure, overdevelopment, and preserving the village's rural character, several thoughtful and conditionally supportive comments highlighted how new housing - if carefully planned - could bring meaningful benefits to Woodham Walter. These insights reflect a recognition that modest, well-designed development could help meet the evolving needs of the community, particularly for younger families and older residents. In addition to these community perspectives, new housing could offer broader benefits that positively impact the parish:

i) Modern Infrastructure

A small rural housing development can act as a catalyst for upgrading essential village infrastructure. This could include enhancements to sewage and drainage systems, improved broadband connectivity, and the integration of modern utilities. These upgrades would not only support new homes but also deliver lasting benefits to existing residents, helping to future-proof the village and improve overall quality of life.

ii) Growth That Benefits Everyone

Welcoming a small number of new residents, particularly those with strong local ties, can help sustain village life. Affordable rural housing is often prioritised for people already living or working in the parish, or with close family connections. This ensures that development supports the existing community, not replaces it.

A modest population increase can help keep local businesses viable, maintain essential services, and secure the future of valued community facilities.

iii) Inclusive and Affordable Living

Smaller, more affordable homes could provide vital housing options for young families, older residents looking to downsize, and those on lower incomes. This would

support a more balanced and inclusive community, helping local people remain in the village.

iv) Sustainable Living & Lower Household Costs

Modern homes are typically built to higher environmental standards, using a “fabric first” approach that prioritises insulation, airtightness, and energy efficiency. These features not only reduce the environmental footprint of the village but also help lower energy bills for residents—reducing the risk of fuel poverty and supporting long-term affordability.

By investing in sustainable design, rural developments can contribute to broader climate goals while improving quality of life for both new and existing residents.

v) Enhanced Community Amenities

Where viable, particularly in slightly larger schemes, new development could include shared spaces such as green areas, play spaces, or community facilities. These features can foster social interaction, support wellbeing, and enhance the overall sense of community.

vi) Inclusive Access & Vibrant Communities

Improved transport links can significantly benefit specific groups, particularly younger families and older residents, by making the village more accessible and connected. Better connectivity not only supports independence and wellbeing but also encourages greater use of local services and amenities. This, in turn, helps create a more vibrant, socially active community where facilities are better used and more sustainable in the long term.

vii) Alternative Housing Needs

Some residents proposed creative solutions such as annexes or extension to existing homes, allowing for intergenerational living and enabling families to remain close while adapting to changing needs.

7. Balancing Community Concerns with Local Housing Needs

The Housing Needs Survey for Woodham Walter has identified a clear and genuine need for affordable housing, particularly among younger families and older residents who wish to remain in the village. Many residents recognise that modest, well-designed homes could help sustain the vitality of the parish by enabling local people to stay close to family, contribute to the community, and support local services such as the school.

At the same time, community feedback reflects a strong desire to protect the parish’s rural character and to ensure that any development is sensitive to the village’s scale, infrastructure, and environmental setting. Concerns were raised about limited public transport, the lack of local employment and services, and the potential for overdevelopment to erode the distinct identity of Woodham Walter.

While views on new housing are mixed, there is a notable openness to carefully planned development—particularly where it prioritises local need, avoids large-scale sprawl, and is located within or adjacent to the village core. Many residents expressed support for smaller 2- and 3-bedroom homes, including single-storey dwellings for downsizers, and emphasised the importance of retaining a balanced, multi-generational community.

This report outlines both affordable and open market housing options. Should a scheme move forward, it will be essential to continue engaging the community, the Parish Council, the housing association partner, and the local authority in open and transparent discussions. These conversations should focus on the size, tenure, and design of any proposed development to ensure it reflects the values and aspirations of Woodham Walter residents. With thoughtful planning and continued dialogue, there is a real opportunity to deliver homes that meet local needs and strengthen the future of the parish.