



## Ilminster Parish

# Housing Needs Survey

Conducted by

**The Community Council for Somerset**

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## Introduction

Ilminster parish is situated in south west Somerset near to the Blackdown Hills. It consists the thriving market town of Ilminster of around 5,800 inhabitants and the outlying settlement of Dowlish Ford. It is in the South Somerset District Council Authority. Ilminster has good road links, situated a short distance from the A303 (London to Exeter) and A358 (Taunton to Chard to Axminster). Within commuting distance are Taunton and the M5 motorway (around 10 miles south east), as well as Yeovil, Chard and Exeter. Crewkerne lies 7 miles south east and provides good main line rail access. There is public transport to Taunton, Yeovil, Crewkerne and Chard, and a community transport service. All towns and cities above provide employment opportunities.

In the 2011 census the population usually resident in the parish was 5,808 in 2,716 households.<sup>1</sup> At March 2018 the number of households in the parish stands at 2,892.<sup>2</sup>

House prices in the parish are high in relation to average incomes. The Land Registry records 156 sales in 2017/8 (April 2017 - April 2018) at an average price of £210,908 – the average house price in South Somerset as a whole in 2017 was £234,189.<sup>3</sup> The average income for a full-time employee in South Somerset is £26,142.<sup>3</sup> For South Somerset as a whole, the current ratio of lower quartile house price to lower quartile earnings is 7.79.<sup>3</sup> This means that owning a house is out of reach of many, particularly younger people/families wishing to remain in Ilminster parish.

50 properties are currently being marketed in Ilminster parish on the Rightmove website (24.6.18). The cheapest is a 2 bed shared ownership house for £68,000, and the most expensive £600,000 (6 bed detached house). Table 1 shows the typical prices used to measure what a resident would expect to pay for a property in the cheapest 25% of homes.

The 2011 census found 349 privately rented households.<sup>1</sup> There are currently 35 properties for rent or recently let on the main lettings websites, local press or through private agents – the cheapest is a 1 bed flat for £390pcm, and the most expensive a 4 bed terraced house for £1,500pcm. Table 1 also shows the typical prices used to measure what a resident would expect to pay to privately rent a property in the cheapest 25% of these homes.

**Table 1 – Typical property and rental levels lower quartile (cheapest 25%) for Ilminster parish (median weekly rent South Somerset is £138.46)<sup>3</sup>**

Property size	Sale price	Private rent weekly (monthly) (rounded £)
<b>1 bedroom</b>	<b>£100,750</b>	<b>£98 (£424 pcm)*</b>
<b>2 bedrooms</b>	<b>£147,500</b>	<b>£128 (£556 pcm)</b>
<b>3 bedrooms</b>	<b>£195,625</b>	<b>£166 (£718 pcm)</b>

\* all 1 bed flats – no 1 bed houses for rent

In 2011 the number of social rented homes in Ilminster parish was 383 properties.<sup>1</sup> The number is likely to have increased in the last 7 years. However, there are only currently 6 properties advertised on the Homefinder website for Ilminster parish.<sup>4</sup> These are mutual exchange only properties (open to existing 'affordable' tenants to exchange with other existing tenants). **20 social rented properties** were let via Homefinder Somerset in the year from 1 July 2017 – 24 June 2018. They attracted an average of 35 bids for each property.<sup>4</sup>

Based on the findings in this survey together with current level of Homefinder applicants, there appear to only a small number of vacancies created in the current housing stock in Ilminster parish.

It is worth noting that this Housing Needs Survey represents the findings at a set point in time. Personal circumstances are constantly changing, and the need for affordable social rented housing in the future may change.

<sup>1</sup> NOMIS (ONS Census 2011) (KS102EW), (KS402EW) and (KS403EW) : Ilminster [accessed 24.6.18]

<sup>2</sup> South Somerset District Council (SSDC) Electoral Register Team (data provided to CCS for survey mailing, March 2018)

<sup>3</sup> Source: Somerset County Council, Somerset Intelligence Partnership, <http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/occupations-and-earnings-november-2017> and Somerset Joint Strategic Needs Assessment – 2017 <http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/house-prices-2017/> [accessed 24.6.18]

<sup>4</sup> Source: Homefinder Somerset Website, <https://www.homefindersomerset.co.uk/> [accessed 25.6.18]

## Aims

This is the first housing needs survey to help Ilminster Town Council to better understand and meet the housing needs of Ilminster parishioners. The Town Council with joint funding from South Somerset District Council commissioned the Community Council for Somerset (CCS) to undertake this survey. This survey particularly sought to:

- Explore the views of current parish residents to help determine current and future housing needs within the parish
- Investigate the need for affordable housing for local people in Ilminster parish and for those wishing to return. The type of tenure, house size and timescale of need
- Establish opinion in relation to future housing development of affordable homes, and explore potential development sites in Ilminster parish, and parishioners' main concerns over future housing
- Establish future housing need for open market housing and housing for older people in the parish over the next 10 years

## Methodology

2,982 paper surveys were distributed to every household on the electoral role in the parish with reply paid envelopes for direct return to CCS. The survey was also available to complete online (see Appendix 1).

The survey was widely promoted through available communications channels within the parish.

In total **379 valid responses were received giving a 13% response rate (based on household data)**. 23 people indicated an affordable housing need by fully completing that part of the survey and providing their permission for their details to be discussed in confidence with the local District Council and other housing providers.

Research was conducted between 12 April – 4 May 2018.

Data from the paper surveys was input by CCS staff using secure, proprietary online survey software.

## Presentation and Interpretation of Data

The sample size is relatively small, therefore undue emphasis should not be placed on specific percentages. Where a number of respondents with a particular view, or response to a question is very low, the report will normally include a 'base' (identify the actual number of responses/opinions involved). Where figures do not total 100% this may be due to computer rounding or the exclusion of 'don't knows'.

## Headline findings

- 23 respondents indicate an affordable/social rent housing need over the next 5 years by fully completing that part of the survey and providing their permission for their details to be discussed in confidence with the local District Council and other housing providers. 9 of them would consider other affordable low cost housing options such as rent to buy, shared ownership, owner-occupied affordable and self build. They are likely to qualify for 15 x 1 bed, 4 x 2 bed, 2 x 3 bed and 2 x 4 bed homes.
- A further 24 respondents have preference for other low cost/affordable housing options over the next 5 years, such as shared ownership/equity, owner-occupied affordable, rent to buy, self/custom build and discounted market homes.
- 84 respondents are looking to buy housing on the open market over the next 10 years.
- 90 older people plan to move in the next 5 years (around 1 in 5 of them are also looking for low cost affordable housing options).

## Summary

### Demographic data:

- 379 people participated in the survey, representing 768 household members. In CCS's experience the **13% response rate** is an average response from a larger community, particularly on a single issue consultation.
- For those answering the question, the overwhelming majority of respondents live in the parish (99%). Just 2 respondents live outside the parish.
- For those answering 65-74 years olds and are the largest overall population group (20%), followed by 25-44 year olds (17%) and 55-64 years olds (15%). There are more working age people (under 65yrs: 48%) compared to those of retirement age (65+yrs: 35%). Nearly 1 in 5 households are families with children/young people aged 18 or under (19% - 69 families).
- The largest proportion of respondents live in a two person household (38% - 141 respondents). However, they are very closely aligned to those who live in a single person household (36% - 133 respondents). Around 7 in 10 of these single person households are 65+ years (95 respondents).

## PART 1: HOUSING NEEDS AND DEVELOPMENT IN ILMINSTER

- More than 9 in 10 respondents have an opinion on the **volume of housing** in Ilminster parish. The majority feel that there is enough housing in the parish (59%). The largest proportion in this group feel the current level of housing is about right (39%). For those who feel more housing is needed, the largest proportion feel a few more houses are needed (31%).



## New Open Market Housing

- Around 1 in 5 respondents would be interested in **buying a newly-built/converted open market home** in Ilminster parish the next 10 years (22% - 84 respondents). Around a quarter of them also answered the affordable housing section of the survey, seeking low cost housing options.
- For those indicating a **timescale for moving**, most would move in the next 5 years; 16 of them would like to move as soon as possible, 20 of them in the short term (2 years) and 21 in the medium term (5 years). 25 respondents plan to move in the next 5-10 years.
- Of those providing a response, **most would like to downsize to a smaller more manageable home**. Although this is very closely aligned with those wishing to move to a larger property, or who are renting and would like to buy their own property.
- **Houses** are preferred by the sizeable majority. While around 1 in 3 would like a bungalow. The preference is split equally between **2 bedroom and 3 bedroom properties** with 2 in 5 respondents in each case looking to purchase this size property.
- An enclosed private garden and a garage are the **top property features**. The **maximum price** respondents are prepared to pay is over £500,000. However, most would be looking to spend less than £250,000 (67%).

## Housing Need of Older People

- Nearly 1 in 4 respondents would be interested in **moving to a purpose-built or converted older people's home** in the next 10 years (24% - 90 respondents). Again some of these respondents also answered the affordable housing section of the survey, seeking low cost housing options.
- The large majority would **like to move** in the next 5-10 years (71%).
- A large number of respondents want to **move to remain independent** (86%). While just under half would like to be closer to shops and amenities or to move to a smaller home to downsize. Around 2 in 5 will be looking for a home that is on one level, or that is adaptable for medical reasons.
- Most respondents are **looking for a home to buy** (66%), while just under 1 in 4 would look for a home to rent. Only a small proportion are looking for an affordable home to rent, a residential nursing home or a or a shared ownership property.
- The large majority would like to move to a **two bed home**, and most respondents have a strong preference for a **bungalow**.
- 33 respondents anticipate the need for **special adaptations** in their future property (37%), most needing a wet room/ adapted sanitary ware and grab rails. Overall, of those answering the question, most feel they could remain in their current home if adaptations were made (68%).
- Most would be **looking to spend** less than £200,000 on a new older people's home (58%- 38 respondents).

## PART 2: AFFORDABLE HOUSING NEEDS

### Affordable/social rent respondents

- All 23 respondents indicating a need for affordable social rent housing in the next 5 years (including 1 parent completing the form on behalf of their teenage son), provided signed permission to discuss their case further with South Somerset District Council and other housing providers. 9 of them would also consider other low cost housing options such as shared ownership, rent to buy, owner-occupied affordable, self build etc. However, some are unlikely to be in a position to afford all the alternative options they have chosen (6 respondents).
- The breakdown of homes they would be likely to qualify for is **15 x 1 bedroom homes, 4 x 2 bedroom homes, 2 x 3 bedroom homes, 2 x 4 bedroom homes.**
- 6 respondents **already rent properties from a Housing Association** or another social rented sector landlord.
- All 23 respondents **live in Ilminster parish** – 14.5 years being the overall average length of residency for the 21 providing that information. 10 have family members living in the parish, and 7 respondents work in the parish. 21 respondents clearly meet the **local connection requirements**. The remaining 2 respondents appear likely to meet the requirements as they stated addresses in the parish, but further clarification would be needed.
- The majority of respondents who need affordable social rented housing are **single person or 2 person households** (16 respondents).
- It would appear from the information provided on income and savings **all 23 affordable/social rent respondents would not be able afford to buy a property on the open market in Ilminster parish.**
- **Homefinder status** – although 8 respondents indicate that they had applied to Homefinder – the County’s choice based lettings system, on checking the data, **just 4 respondents have a current application**. All the other respondents looking for social rent properties are not registered on Homefinder Somerset (19 respondents). If the current Homefinder Somerset register applicants are combined with those in this survey, the total **could be 114 applicants overall** seeking affordable social rented housing in Ilminster parish (90 who have Ilminster addresses). Table 2a below compares the respondents to this survey with the existing applicants on the Homefinder register. While Table 2b on the next page compares both these people requiring housing with the total number of properties let via Homefinder in Ilminster parish in the last year (1.7.17 – 24.6.18).

**Table 2a – Homefinder Somerset Ilminster first choice parish vs. Ilminster Housing Needs Survey respondents**

HOMEFINDER SOMERSET EXISTING APPLICANTS (at 25.5.18) (71 applicants have an Ilminster Postcode)				Ilminster Parish Housing Needs Survey 2018 – respondents NOT on Homefinder N.B. HOMEFINDER BANDS ARE CCS GUIDELINES NOT CONFIRMED BY HOMEFINDER/HOUSING TEAMS		
No of beds	Bronze	Silver	Gold	Bronze	Silver	Gold
1 bed	24*	14	5	12	1	-
2 bed	18	18	1	4	-	-
3 bed	1	8	2	2	-	-
4 bed	1*	1	1*	-	-	-
5 bed	-	1	-	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>-</b>

\* 4 survey respondents already on Homefinder (1 Gold – 4 bed, 3 Bronze – 1 x 4 bed, 2 x 1 bed).

**Table 2b – Homefinder Somerset Potential Overall Housing Need: Homefinder property lets in the last year vs. Ilminster Housing Needs Survey respondents and current Homefinder applicants**

HOMEFINDER PROPERTY LETS (1.7.17 – 24.6.18)		ILMINSTER HNS SURVEY	CURRENT HOMEFINDER APPLICANTS (71 with Ilminster addresses)	Potential overall need
No of beds	Total let	Total respondents*	Total applicants	
1 bed	11	13	43	56
2 bed	7	4	37	41
3 bed	2	2	11	13
4 bed	-	-	3	3
5 bed	-	-	1	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>19*</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>114</b>

\* EXCLUDES 4 survey respondents already on Homefinder (2 x 4 bed, 2 x 1 bed).

## Observations which will require verification from South Somerset District Council Housing Officers

There are currently 95 applicants choosing Ilminster parish as their preferred place to live on Homefinder Somerset. Of these, only 4 have responded to this survey. This leaves 19 further respondents to this survey indicating an affordable housing need (of which 5 respondents are already Local Authority/Housing Association tenants).

**Overall, the 23 respondents would be likely to qualify for 15 x 1 bed, 4 x 2 bed, 2 x 3 bed and 2 x 4 bed homes.** Based on the information provided, there is 1 respondent in the high priority housing need (Gold band), they are already registered with Homefinder. There is 1 respondent who may qualify for intermediate level need (Silver band) on the basis of their medical needs. The remaining respondents looking for social rented properties are likely to be placed in the Bronze band if choosing to apply to Homefinder (3 are already registered).

Given that just **20 social rented properties were let in Ilminster in the last year**, and that there are currently 6 properties advertised on the Homefinder Somerset website (mutual exchange properties only open to existing 'affordable' tenants to exchange with other existing tenants). There appears to be only a small number of vacancies created in the current housing stock in Ilminster. Although the researcher understands from speaking to the SSDC Strategy Housing Development Team that there are a number of applications for housing development pending for the parish, which would be likely to increase the number of affordable homes for social rent in the parish, were they to be progressed.

### ALL RESPONDENTS who answered Part 2 Affordable Housing Needs (including affordable social rent)

- 1 in 3 respondents are looking for affordable housing in the next 12 months (33% - 15 respondents), with a similar number looking to move in the next 3 years (30%). 5 of these respondents would like to be **housed now**. 4 of them are looking for a social rented home, however only 1 of them is currently registered on Homefinder Somerset. The other respondent in this group is looking for a shared ownership or owner-occupied affordable home.
- Most respondents had **multiple reasons for needing to move** to affordable housing. There is no majority, or an outstanding single reason for these respondents needing to move. However, **those currently without their own home are the largest group** e.g. living with parents or in someone else's home and those who will be leaving home and unable to afford to rent (22% overall – 10 respondents).
- Most respondents answering Part 2 of the survey **rent in the private sector** (50% - 23 respondents)

- **Renting from a Housing Association or other social rent landlord** is the main preference for most respondents (50% - 22 respondents). Owner-occupied affordable homes (37%) and shared ownership/equity homes (35%) are both popular choices with respondents. While around 1 in 4 would consider a rent to buy housing option (26%).
- Most have a **preference for houses or bungalows**, the smallest proportion would like to be housed in a flat.
- The outstanding majority of all the respondents answering Part 2 **live in the parish** (98% - 46 respondents), and just under half of them have **close family ties** (47%).
- It would appear from the current information provided on income, savings and assets **that many respondents would struggle to afford to buy a property on the open market in Ilminster parish.**

**It is also worth noting that this Housing Needs Survey represents the findings at a set point in time. Personal circumstances are constantly changing, and the need for affordable social rented housing in the future may change.**