

## **Background document BD5 EMPLOYMENT AND HOUSING**

### **B5.1 Overview**

At the heart of planning for Wye's future is the opportunity or justification for housing and jobs. The review of ABC's Core Strategy will also concentrate on these issues, especially given that, though national targets have been abandoned, meeting the demand or need for housing and jobs in the South East remains a central aim of Government as outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.

**A balance of future development** The principal economic reward for a landowner comes from the provision of new housing as the premium on house prices in Wye and the South East makes land an increasingly valuable resource. In terms of Wye's history it has been jobs that have been lost over the years, from the closure or departure of packing, farming-related manufacturing, agricultural businesses and countryside institutions to the closure of Wye College and its research related functions. The closure of those businesses meant that the land was largely used for new housing especially for older people and families.

The closure of the College meant that many jobs were lost in servicing the College, and in local commercial businesses that relied on its activity. It also resulted in a decline in Wye's population as the housing for students and staff were left empty. More recently, that housing has started to revert to family use and, as well as some former college buildings being adapted for general housing: this has led to a demographic change in favour of young families, though the number of older persons remains significant.

The College lands are a very significant part of the area available for development in and around Wye and their contribution will affect the future of the village. It is therefore vital that a balance of uses is found for them, and that they can be developed for future employment growth, not just housing.

**Expanding Ashford** Rapid expansion in the provision of housing in and around Ashford, planned over the next 15-25 years, will be meeting a range of housing demand and need, as the area has been earmarked as a centre for expansion in the South East. Current plans for the immediate Ashford area are for some 12,000 new homes in the next 15-20 years. This is a major programme meeting the needs of demographic change and migration to the Ashford area, as well as various economic growth scenarios.

Ashford's expansion has been planned to the south of the town and towards Aldington, not least because of the landscape constraints of flood plain around the River Stour and the AONB in the North Downs. This has meant that Wye, in the heart of those areas, has limited land availability for new housing. It also has limitations on traffic flow in and out of Wye, because of its historic structure, rural road access only and a frequently closed level crossing.

The 2014 ABC Strategic Housing Market Assessment indicates that land supply in and around Ashford needs to be increased to meet this projected demand. The Area Action Plan (AAP) for Chilmington Green, the first major housing expansion planned, provides a policy framework to deliver a major urban extension of up to

5,750 homes and 1,000 jobs, over a period of twenty five years. A similar major new settlement at Cheeseman's Green is also planned

The ABC Core Strategy to 2021 allocated housing to Ashford's surrounding settlements reflecting their current scale and the role they played as hubs for neighbouring parishes, as well as their appetite and capacity for housing. The review of this strategy will take a similar approach given the continuing need for land and housing. Currently there are a number of new housing developments near to the Parish that reflect this expansion - 300 houses are planned to support the viability of the development of Conningbrook Lakes as a leisure facility, with a further 100 planned adjacent to the William Harvey Hospital, both just outside the Parish boundary towards Ashford. There is housing expansion in other larger settlements principally Tenterden and Charing

**Housing Need in Wye** Whilst there is pressure for housing in Wye there is limited need - a recent 2013 Housing Needs Survey showed a need for local housing of 28 homes. A modest expansion of housing in Wye on suitable land seems the proper response to meet this. *This plan believes that this housing should be integrated into site development rather than concentrated on one site.*

**Housing Supply in Wye** A development using a garage site, Taylor's Yard, contributed 30 homes completed in 2001 and the development of Havillands on a former oil depot site completed in 2012 added 57 homes to Wye. Historically development has contributed some 50 homes every 5 years, although this is not an even pattern, and does not apply to the substantial additions made after WW2.

The Tenterden and Rural Sites DPD – 2016 allocated two housing sites, WYE1 and WYE2, to Wye for 45 houses whilst accepting the uncertainty about the future of WYE 3 the principal College sites. None of these sites has yet been developed though planning applications have been submitted for WYE 1 and 2, and a Master Plan has been prepared by Imperial College for WYE3 (July 2014).

## 5.2 Jobs and homes

In balancing the pressures for new development, the Neighbourhood Plan looks to regain some of the jobs lost, many of which supported the village retail and commercial activities under threat. This economic infrastructure contributes strongly to the successful way that Wye remains an active hub for surrounding settlements, hosts many societies, attracting tourists and visitors responding to its cultural heritage and the beauty of the village and countryside.

The direction of the Plan, and in confirmation of its previous approach in the local planning exercises undertaken with the anticipated closure of the College, will be to:-

- protect the village's valuable assets of countryside, and street and building environment
- promote the growth of tourism
- protect and strengthen existing businesses, and encourage the establishment of new business activity

- retain the educational focus that has been the basis of Wye's development over 600 years
- develop Wye as a community and retail hub for local villages and settlements
- operate within the limitations of the road infrastructure but improve the management of traffic and parking
- allow a modest expansion of housing that does not damage Wye's unique environment

This reflects the results of workshops, surveys - an additional survey was done concerning the siting of a proposed Free School. The system of patch-workers, who distribute and collect questionnaires, guarantees a high (75%) and representative response (See Background document B1).

**Land supply in Wye** A careful assessment of the village's and Parish's environment, layout and uses, undertaken by a consultant employed by the Parish Council, provided the basis for identifying and assessing *areas of potential change* and the opportunities and limitations on their development. The results of this are shown in the section dealing with individual sites and in the Consultation Statement. It is clear from this assessment that WYE3 is the major means of providing land suitable for development, and that the variety of buildings on the sites provides an excellent way of providing a balanced growth plan for the village.

### **5.3 Employment and business in Wye**

In order to get a clearer picture of the employment and business position in Wye the Parish Council jointly commissioned with ABC a report from NLP on the Rural Economic position in the Ashford area. This also looked in detail at Wye. The findings of that report have helped to inform ABC's proposed allocation of business space through their Core Strategy Review in the new Local Plan. They also help the Neighbourhood Plan to look closely at future land use particularly on the WYE3 site and Imperial's other holdings where a lot of land is vacant and suitable for business and other uses.

### **5.4 The following is a summary of the NLP's report on Wye's business environment**

Wye is identified as a Tier 2 rural service centre in Ashford Borough Council's Core Strategy and the Tenterden and Rural Sites DPD. It is well connected regionally by road and rail; it is located on the South Eastern train line which provides linkages to Ashford and High Speed 1 as well as Canterbury and Ramsgate while the A28 connects Wye with Ashford, Canterbury and Margate.

#### **Economic Profile**

**i. Population** In the 2011 Census of Population, the resident population of Wye amounted to 2,282. Although, the overall population of rural Ashford has increased by 3% since 2001, the population of the Wye declined by over 5% or 130 residents between 2001 and 2011 as shown in Figure 6.1. The number of residents dropped by 136 between 2009 and 2010 showing the impact of the closure of the College, though there was a significant peak in the population in 2005. Anecdotal evidence

suggests that this was due to international students attending and residing at the College.

**ii. Labour Market** In line with trends in Ashford, Kent and the south east almost 70% of 16-74 year old Wye residents are economically active. Over 92% of the economically active population are currently in employment. The number of unemployment claimants in Wye increased by 91% between 2004 and 2013, however the actual number of claimants across the ward is low – in November 2013 there were 21. This equates to 1.7% of the economically active population, comparatively, this is lower than the proportion in Ashford Borough at 2.1%.

The resident population of Wye is well educated when compared to the wards of rural Ashford. The ward has one of the lowest proportions of residents with no qualifications at 19%. Significantly more Wye residents, at 40%, hold level 4 qualifications and above, than the residents of the other rural wards and Ashford Borough (25%).

**iii. Employment** Just under 700 workforce jobs were recorded in Wye in 2012 equivalent to approximately 5% of all jobs in Rural Ashford and just over 1% of all jobs in Ashford Borough as a whole. Employment in Wye has declined over the past decade, by around 20% between 2003 and 2012. This compares with job growth of 14% across Rural Ashford and 16% across the Borough as a whole, and is likely to partly reflect significant job losses associated with the closure of Wye College and the consequent displacement of other firms located within college premises.

Wye's largest sectors in 2012 were business services (16%), healthcare (14%), construction (12%) and wholesale (12%). This composition largely echoes trends across Rural Ashford and the Borough as a whole (Figure 6.5), with the notable exception of healthcare which is significantly over-represented in Wye compared with the rural parts of the Borough, and Ashford Borough in general.

In contrast, the retail, admin & support and social care sectors are under-represented in Wye. Hospitality and retail are still important employment sectors in Wye, combined they employ almost 100 workers equating to 15% of total jobs. This reflects of an expanding tourism offer and the opening of new shops and restaurants in the village. Despite the closure of the College almost 10% of workplace jobs are in the education sector: as Wye School opened in September 2013 and has the potential to accommodate up to 600 students, this proportion is likely to increase in the future.

The Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) data from 2012 shows that the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector is under represented in Wye when compared with other parts of rural Ashford and the Borough as a whole. Notably, this category does not include the processing of by-products which falls under the manufacturing sector within this data set. IDBR data (2013) indicates that circa 80 people are employed in agricultural firms in Wye.

### **Spatial Distribution of Employment**

There were over 100 businesses situated within the Wye ward, of which 90% were located within Wye village indicating a centralised local economy. This makes Wye unique compared to other settlements where the local economy is more dispersed; only 34% of all business in Rural Ashford are located within settlement boundaries. Based on the number of firms, Wye hosts 5% of all business located in Rural Ashford, this proportion increases to 13% of all firms located within the settlements of Rural Ashford. In terms of number of businesses Wye outperforms other tier 2 settlements Charing and Hamstreet. In employment terms, the settlement of Wye hosts approximately 10% of the total number of jobs located within Ashford's rural settlements. Again this proportion is greater than the proportion of workers based in Charing or Hamstreet

**i Business Demography** Over one third of registered firms in Wye perform business services, a further 10% provide IT and financial and insurance services. 11% of firms provide health and social care services while 12% of businesses are engaged in hospitality, recreation and retail.

In terms of business size 81% of employees work in small to medium sized enterprises with less than 49 employees as in Rural Ashford. Of these almost half of employees work in firms with between 10 and 49 employees while one fifth of employees work in firms with up to 9 employees. Unsurprisingly, a limited number of employees work in large firms with more than 50 employees and there are no firms that employ in excess of 250 people.

**ii Self-employment** A relevant metric to potential demand for rural start-up/small business space is the proportion of the working-age population who identify their home as their primary place of work and levels of self-employment. Home-based businesses often seek more formalised employment space or access to business support facilities as they grow and expand. There is a high proportion of home-based businesses in Wye. According to 2011 Census data, circa 215 people are self-employed in Wye representing 14% of economically active residents. This is greater than the share across Kent (11%), South East (11%) and England (10%). In the intercensus period 2001 and 2011 the number of self-employed residents increased in real terms by over 50 people equating to a 32% increase.

### **iii Functional Economic Area**

Examining commuting flows can help in defining the functional economic market area of a particular local economy. Wye is a relatively self-contained local economy, with over 40% of workers residing in the ward. Almost 25% of residents commute to urban Ashford, however, there are also strong flows to the surrounding rural wards and Weald central.

In-commuting flows to Wye are concentrated around surrounding rural wards and urban Ashford particularly Saxon Shore, Downs North, South Willesborough and Stour. In total almost three quarters of Wye workers reside in Ashford Borough.

About 7% of Wye residents commute to the Greater London Area for employment purposes; it is expected that this share has increased in the intervening period and will increase as a result of improved connectivity with the commencement of High Speed 1 services from Ashford International. This assumption is supported by Office of Rail Regulation data<sup>27</sup> which shows that entries and exits have increased substantially - in 2001 there were approximately 58,500 entries and exits at Wye Station - this increased to circa 74,700 in 2012.

**iv Current Stock of Employment Space** Wye accommodates a variety of business uses, although the majority of employment space (62%) relates to industrial uses, in particular warehousing. This echoes trends across the wider Rural Ashford area, where distribution activities tend to represent an important use of rural work space. In total there is 6,630sqm of B-class floor-space in Wye.

Office space accounts for just under 40% of all B class employment space in Wye, a significantly higher proportion than the Rural Ashford average (of 14%). Meanwhile, Wye has a lower proportion of workshop space than Rural Ashford as a whole, but accommodates slightly more factory space. This confirms evidence presented thus far that businesses are primarily located within Wye village, particularly office space.

**v Vacancy** A review of commercial property being marketed in Wye in January 2014 indicates that approximately 1,338sq.m of office floorspace and 1,351sq.m of industrial floor space is currently available - this represents a 26% vacancy rate though nearly all of the space is on one site, Sidelands, Top Road, Wye.

#### **vi Development Rates and Losses**

There has been very limited B-class development in Wye over the past decade. Since 2004, 270sqm of B8 space have been constructed with minimal losses.

#### **Key Issues**

There are a number of matters that affect Wye's economy, accessibility, loss of retail and office use to residential and the protected status of much of Wye:-

- Though Wye benefits from having a train station and a good service to Ashford and London, the level crossing creates road congestion problems and lengthy closures, in part on account of the High Speed services using the line. Recent research (December 2013) surveying level crossing closures indicates closures of between approximately 4 and 14 minutes, with particularly long closures between 7.15 and 7.30am. These delays have been highlighted by most stakeholders as a particular constraint on the attractiveness of Wye as a business location. In an attempt to avoid the level crossing, traffic flows on alternative 'lanes' are greater which is placing strain on the current infrastructure. The view was also expressed that increased frequency of train services would act to improve Wye's offer.
- In addition to the College closure there has been a loss of small scale employment space, predominantly retail units in the village for redevelopment or change of use to residential uses. This can have

implications for the vitality and viability of the village centre and the availability of suitable units for small business looking to locate in Wye. This would indicate that there is a need to protect Wye from further employment land losses and the need to ensure that further development space is accommodated.

- Wye lies within the Kent Downs AONB protected landscape. There is a statutory duty to protect the character of the AONBs therefore in the Core Strategy the Council specifies that major developments will not be permitted in AONBs unless there are exceptional circumstances where a need is proven, no other sites or alternative provision are available and any detrimental impact on the landscape and environment can be moderated. Much of the village is also designated as a 'Conservation Area' as such is subject to stricter planning controls.

### Needs of Businesses in Wye

The 'Wye Business Survey' was conducted by the Wye Business Association in December 2013 to gather the views from a range of local companies located in Wye on their needs and priorities. This survey included a sample of 20 businesses that engage in a variety of activities, although are primarily characterised as smaller businesses involved in highly skilled service sectors.

A summary of the key findings is set out below, with a selection of quotes presented in Appendix 4.

**i. Business Profile** Nearly a third of all businesses surveyed described their main undertaking as being part of the consultancy sector, with a significant number also involved in retail and tourism sectors. The majority of businesses traded in the local and regional markets, and just over half traded nationally. In addition, around 20% of the businesses comprised some element of international trade. Reflecting the micro-business structure of the parish economy, nearly all of the local firms participating in the survey employed less than five workers, and were largely regarded as being highly skilled employees.

**ii. Current Business Premises** Whilst around 67% of businesses described their site within Wye as their only location, others indicated that Wye is the location of their headquarters or branches. In line with earlier evidence the majority of businesses surveyed were either based within a village centre (50%) or operating from home (35%). Almost 60% of businesses have been located in their current site for at least five years and 30% for more than fifteen years; this indicates that businesses in Wye are well established rather than new start-ups. The most important factors given for why businesses locate and remain within Wye were the accessibility to a skilled labour force, availability of suitable premises and the fact that owners tended to reside locally.

Generally, respondents were satisfied with the **location** of their sites with some 83% rating their location as either 'good' or 'excellent' in meeting their current needs. However a higher proportion of businesses were not satisfied with the **quality** of their current premises, with around 28% describing their premises as either 'poor' or

only 'adequate'. Some of the issues cited included the aging of buildings, leaking roofs and a lack of suitable insulation.

Some 22% of those participating in the survey also indicated they did not have **enough floorspace** to meet their existing needs, with the majority (90%) considering up to 1,000 sq ft of additional space as necessary for meeting growing needs suggesting that future expansion will be of modest proportions. While one business thought they would potentially need up to 10,000 sq ft of additional space, no other respondents believed they needed more than this.

Respondents provided a relatively mixed view of the prevailing **condition of the commercial property market** in the Parish, with 30% believing there are enough premises in the local area, 35% not believing there are enough and 35% not sure about the matter. A lack of suitable premises and range of rental levels in Wye were however identified as some of the key obstacles for local businesses in pursuing greater levels of development within the Parish (see Figure 1.2). In addition, many of the comments in the survey highlighted the negative impact of poor access into the village on promoting local business development.

### Future Growth Plans

Only 22% of respondents reported that they were considering expanding their business over the next five years. However when questioned about the potential scenario of expansion, almost 60% thought that they would need an alternative site to accommodate any future growth requirements. In addition, some 75% of respondents indicated that they would prefer to remain within the Parish of Wye if relocation did become necessary. Only a few local businesses would consider moving to the urban areas of Ashford (15%) or another village centre within the Borough (5%) if they were required to relocate in the near future.

**i. Wye as a Business Location** The most common factors that businesses cited for why they are located within the Parish of Wye include:

- access to a local labour force that comprises highly skilled workers;
- availability of suitable commercial premises that meet existing business requirements; and
- pleasant rural environment where many business owners choose to live and work locally.

Responses from the business survey highlighted the small business and highly skilled character of the local economy in Wye, with businesses also tending to be long-established members of the community. Nearly all surveyed businesses were located either within the village or at home, and were generally satisfied with their premises. While only a limited number are expecting to expand in the near future, a key takeaway from the survey is the need to supply good quality sites for both existing and future business needs.

In addition to this, the rural village requires the necessary infrastructure to promote business development and ensure the attractive rural character remains in the local area.

As part of the Neighbourhood Plan process, a household survey was conducted in October 2012 which included questions relating to Wye as a business location. The majority (64%) of respondents felt there should be further business development in Wye and 75% were of the opinion that future businesses should be located alongside existing business. Over 55% of respondents stated that new homes should include provisions for home-working. When questioned about the types of businesses Wye needs, education, childcare and agricultural and land based businesses were deemed most necessary by residents. Almost three quarters of respondents viewed superfast broadband as important or very important.

### **Conclusions of the NLP report**

The key conclusions of the report are:-

- a. The population of Wye has declined falling by 5% since 2001; the demographic profile is also ageing, nevertheless a high proportion of residents are well-educated and economically active and there is a low level of claimant unemployment. In combination this may lead to labour force shortage in the future, though recently some unoccupied dwellings from the college have been reoccupied and new homes are planned.
- b. The Wye local economy has contracted since the closure of Imperial College London, Wye campus. The number of workforce jobs in Wye declined by around 20% between 2003 and 2012 and currently represents approximately 5% of the total number of jobs in rural Ashford. The largest sectors were business services, healthcare, construction and wholesale while agriculture, tourism and retail also made a meaningful contribution to the local economy.
- c. The local economy in Wye is relatively self-contained and centralised with 90% of business located within the settlement, the economy is also characterised by small to medium sized enterprises and higher than average levels of self-employment and home working. These attributes require specialised employment floor-space requirements.
- d. There is a range of B-class employment space located in Wye including industrial and office space, yet there has been limited new development over the past decade. Vacancy rates are comparatively high but nearly all (over 90%) of the vacant space currently being marketed comprises the converted Wye College premises at Sidelands. This might indicate that the demand for additional space within the settlement is relatively low. However, contrary to this assumption, feedback from the business community communicated that there was insufficient 'move on' space available in Wye to accommodate potential future expansion of existing firms and that a latent demand for new employment space does exist – it simply has to be the right type of space. It has been established that the prospective use of WYE 3 is key to the future economic growth in Wye.

- e. There are three attractions to siting business in Wye:-
- access to a local labour force that comprises highly skilled workers
  - availability of suitable commercial premises that meet existing business requirements
  - pleasant rural environment where many business owners choose to live and work locally.
- f. There are three constraints to the development of businesses in Wye:-
- accessibility by road due to the delays at the level crossing. There is relatively little that can be done about this with Network Rail's programmes (automatic barriers but more trains) unlikely to reduce the delays, and improvements in car access with new roads or wider rural roads not compatible with AONB constraints.
  - loss of retail and office use to residential reflecting the high prices that housing fetches in Wye
  - the protected status of much of Wye that limits land availability and the appropriateness of development.

### 5.5 The Neighbourhood Plan Approach

The Neighbourhood Plan addresses these issues with the following overall policies and detailed clauses:

1. The opportunity of WYE 3 should in part be used to provide business expansion and employment
2. The strengths of Wye should be harnessed to new employment growth, in particular its beauty, and the high level of self -and consultancy businesses in Wye and the availability of broad band at an acceptable level.
  - a. Tourism should be encouraged with the provision of a visitor centre, cycle paths and the opening of historic buildings.
  - b. Small office and other premises B1 should be approved
    - to allow existing businesses to grow
    - to attract new business
    - but** - the conversion of retail and office premises to residential should be prevented where possible to preserve the existing stock
  - c. In view of the problems of traffic access, but the value of the rail services, business that does not rely on lorry and car access to a significant degree, only should be accepted.

The Parish Council has formulated a vision that:

- *Wye should remain a distinct settlement with definite boundaries.*
- *It should retain a balanced community **providing some local employment** and should not become purely residential.*
- *Any development should respect the rural landscapes around it, so that it retains its rural character.*
- *The environment should continue to make the community feel safe.*

- *The vibrant community should continue to enjoy many activities.*
- *Any changes should respect Wye's history and its historic buildings, but should enable most of the needed facilities and amenities to be provided in the village.'*

Despite being a Tier 2 settlement there are a limited number of locations in the settlement that could accommodate growth without impinging on the AONB with the exception of the WYE3 site. But it is widely acknowledged that inadequate infrastructure acts as a barrier to development in Wye; the capacity and condition of the access routes in combination with the traffic management problems associated with the railway level crossing limits the settlement's potential to accommodate rural economic growth.

## **5.6 Housing in Wye**

**Demographics** The Census data for 2011 is the latest information on a comprehensive basis available for Wye. Some information was also collected as part of the Neighbourhood Plan Survey at the start of the Plan preparation process in 2012.

The Census, called when the College buildings and residential units were empty, showed a decline in the population of 5%. Hence the data is skewed at this moment, though it is essential in understanding the make-up of the base permanent residents of Wye, and the structure of dwellings. It has not picked up the gradual new beneficial use of empty buildings. The most recent trends from anecdotal information and evidence from schools and youth groups, shows an increase in young children from Wye at the Primary School and less inwards migration of children from Kennington. Similarly the numbers in youth groups has surged especially for younger children. This trend is consistent with young families moving into Wye and one member commuting to London for work via the High Speed Train, and the rapid flow of extension to houses planning applications allowing extra bedrooms and living rooms particularly on 1950/60s houses. It is likely that this trend will continue and that any new family housing will attract this sort of household through their price advantage.

Overall there is a preponderance of older persons 15% aged 75 or over of whom half live on their own, and 12% between 65 and 74 of which 25% live on their own. Anecdotal information reports older people moving into bungalows attracted by Wye's safety and its commercial and social facilities. It is also likely that this trend will continue, and that smaller dwellings provided will attract this migration into Wye.

There is little overcrowding or sharing of housing in Wye less than 1%, but the Parish Council asked Ashford to undertake a Housing Needs Survey. This was completed in 2013 and its results are included in the conclusions that set the scene for appropriate policies. The PC has also undertaken a comprehensive questionnaire to understand the views of the community which included housing

and its future development in Wye. Again the results of this are included in developing policies for Wye till 2030 and beyond. The Tenterden and Rural Sites Development Plan until 2016 commits to 45 new homes on two identified sites in Wye – WYE1 and WYE2, including some social housing. The Plan also anticipated some more housing on the college grounds WYE3, if no educational use could be found. None of these developments have yet taken place though plans and applications have been submitted.

**The stock and tenure of housing** Wye has a rich architectural heritage, with buildings dating from medieval times up to good examples of modern housing from the 1950s onwards. Most housing in Wye (66%) is owner-occupied but there are also two important social housing developments at Little Chequers and Churchfield, but where tenure has diversified as a result of the right to buy. 18% of households are in social housing and 18% in private renting. It is likely that the social rented figure is declining in spite of the Havillands development supplying 17 social rented housing. While the private renting is increasing. Nearly all the owner-occupied housing consists of houses, and the flats in Wye were mostly built on Council estates and flats only amount to , the impact of the right to buy has meant a greater variety of stock in that sector now. In addition there is private renting of its ex-student and staff housing by Wye College and some units of right of buy are also rented. There are also Almshouses and an old person's home, and thus Wye has a very balanced stock.

Houses in the village are generally in good condition, but private housing is now subject to continuing modernisation and especially adaptation and extension often on change of ownership. Thus the stock of larger housing is increasing. The Social rented Council and housing association stock has been improved and repaired. The flats used for mature students by the College have recently been refurbished and been privately rented. The remaining empty housing in Wye is likely to be replaced or refurbished for family housing or smaller flats.

**New housing** The newest housing development, Havillands, is just complete. It has 57 homes, including 17 for social housing.

Two sites that were allocated in the DPD for future housing development have now reached the planning application stage. The Parish Council as part of the NP preparation has consulted widely on the sort of development thought appropriate on the sites, and these comments and development proposals have been submitted to the developers and Ashford Borough Council. The new developments are likely to produce some 50 or so units by 2016/7.

With the closure of Wye College the stock of College housing held for staff and students has largely been released for general use, and it is anticipated that further buildings will be released for housing within and outside the key WYE3 site, especially on the High Street and at Wolfson House. The Parish Council has estimated that these change of use additions to general housing stock may amount to 40 units. Other windfall sites using unused land within the parish may produce a further 20 units over a period of ten years.

A SHLAA was undertaken by Ashford Borough Council in 2013 as part of their preparation for a review of Core Strategy and in addition to known sites a new site was proposed for at least 50 units adjacent to WYE 2. Given the problems of access to WYE 2 it is not easy to see how this site can be developed so extensively if at all. The Neighbourhood Plan also sees this proposed development as an inappropriate incursion into the AONB.

As far as new development is concerned therefore it is likely that WYE 3 presents the likeliest and major means of increasing the village stock outside the windfalls and changes of uses described above.

**Housing Need** A Housing Needs Survey in 2009 recommended up to 21 new social housing units by 2016, although no site has yet been firmly identified for them. This survey was updated by the *Parish Council* with ABC in 2012 and the size of need was not significantly changed - 28 to 2030. The possible previously identified Exception Site WYE13 is not thought appropriate for housing development as it extends the boundary of the village towards the Downs and was not resubmitted in the SHLAA. The Council would prefer to see exception housing provided as integral to other developments rather than on a single site. It is expected that land on Wye3 could be used for this housing with an appropriate allocation policy. A housing allocation covenant or condition could enable this.

The Council also recognises the need to provide a variety of tenures in new developments if possible, including social housing as there is a shortage of affordable housing - the waiting list held by ABC shows that ..... The Council believes that social and exception housing should be interspersed with other housing tenures in new developments.

**Housing Demand** There is strong demand for houses in Wye, particularly from young families and the elderly, because of its attractive environment and good rail connections and there is a significant premium on house prices (estimated by local agents as 25%). The elderly can find security and all facilities within a village. Commuters to London are increasingly attracted to Wye with its good schools and quality housing, and fast London rail link. This latter trend has already drawn in young families and started to balance the growing elderly slant to the population, though of course it also may mean that the young from Wye on family formation will be competing for increasingly expensive properties, or forced to leave the village. The rapid extensions to existing stock, often after purchase, show the financial drive towards Wye ownership.

Whilst it is possible to plan to meet local need it is hardly possible to try to meet a very specific price-dominated demand with sufficient supply. This is especially so when the capacity for new development is limited by the constraints on the village, and the rapid expansion of Ashford is designed to take up growth in the South East. What is more realistic is to accept a need for larger properties as well as other sizes, and to allow new housing that still respects the merits of the settlement.

### 5.7 Housing layout, design and density

The development of **Havillands**, the most recent new development in Wye in 2008, though providing good housing, was a serious missed opportunity to develop appropriately designed housing on a brown field site near the village. In spite of the publication of the Village Design Statement, and a detailed development brief prepared by the Parish Council, the housing was approved and built ignoring this advice, in a style that did not complement the village, in a way that interrupted an important view from the village towards the Downs and in an arrangement of dwellings and parking that bears no relation to previous extensions to Wye, but is rather in the mould of an urban extension. This unsatisfactory decision has at least in part given rise to the need for a Neighbourhood Plan that allows further development but within a proper context. Though the housing units are well planned they have done damage to the architectural and landscape heritage of Wye

The Principles adopted in the Neighbourhood Plan give some guidance on the design and numbers of new housing, with the Village Design Statement remaining a key basis for guiding future development. The proposals have been developed in a manner that allows some flexibility where contextual influences might generate higher densities based on studies of plot widths, garden sizes and housing typologies. These can be taken as Wye-type environments, recognisable as part of the village. Density guidance has been applied to the assessment of Areas of Potential Change, from 20-30dph, responding to existing densities but ensuring efficient use of land.

**Tenure** The NP surveys indicated a wish to see more affordable housing provided, but integrated into new housing developments with other tenures. The Ashford SHMA indicates a need for private rented housing as well as other tenures.

**Future Supply** Possible numbers of additional housing units according to density and design have been assessed in order to see whether in looking at a future to 2030, Wye is fairly following the guidelines of the current DPD, ABC's guidance as it approaches its Core Strategy Review and in the light of advice in relation to Neighbourhood Planning given by the Government, and finally the NPPF's view that further development should be considered.

Overall indicative numbers of new houses including **all areas of potential change** in the village are set out below:

	NP proposals to 2030
Change of use	40
WYE1 <sup>a</sup>	27
WYE2 <sup>b</sup>	25
WYE3	50
Windfall including rural sites <sup>c</sup>	20
Total	162

<sup>a</sup> Planning application under consideration December 2014

<sup>b</sup> Planning approved 20-08-2014

<sup>c</sup> Eight dwellings already proposed on the Old Brickworks site Naccolt. Permission for one change of use on the east side of the road, was granted October 2014.

This increase in housing of 162 units amounts to over 15% growth in the number of dwellings over a period of 15 years 2015-2030 or about 50 every 5 years. This reflects the recent growth in the Wye housing stock since the 1990s.

There may be further housing development outside the village in former agricultural business units in the countryside, though the DPD and this Plan would not support this, national policies are more encouraging of this sort of change. Though much of the surrounding rural land around the village is AONB there are locations where new housing could be accommodated. It is anticipated that this might allow a further 15 units over 15 years. It is also recognised that beyond 2030 there may be further pressures on housing in the area that may allow further development, but it is hoped this would be at a similar permitted rate.

It is recognised that this is a small contribution to the overall housing needs in and around Ashford but it takes into account the use of land to provide more employment as well as the suitability of the development of housing given infrastructure, landscape and heritage constraints. *There is no requirement in ABC's local plan for the parish to contribute high numbers of houses.*

**Phasing** Phasing of new development will be essential in order to ensure that the village does not lose its character and that growth is organic. It would be wise to consider housing being developed in 5 year slices of 50 units. This target would allow some viable business relocation to be planned releasing land for housing.