

HOUSING FINDINGS

1. This is a summary of the key findings from Totnes Neighbourhood Plan public consultation data in relation to housing. It draws data from Workshop 1, Workshop 2, the Housing Needs Survey and the KEVICC workshop. Both the KEVICC and Workshop 2 articulated a Vision for housing in Totnes.

1.1 KEVICC's Young people's vision for housing was as follows:

Where homes are affordable, there is less homelessness, more self-sustaining eco homes. Less second (holiday) homes.' And 'Less young people leaving the area because of lack of jobs and expensive houses.'

1.2 Workshop 2 reflected the emerging Vision for housing:

A community led town which actively delivers what local people need and want in terms of housing, public transport, green spaces, leisure facilities – independent and involved – we look to eco, energy efficient homes, and provision of truly affordable housing.

Vision for 2030

- Community-led, rather than developer-led planning.
- Local needs have priority.
- Remains a living / working town.
- Energy efficient homes.
- Choice of housing types, tenure and cost / affordability.

2. KEY FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

2.1 Totnes Neighbourhood Plan Workshop 2:

Our most recent public workshop, held at the Totnes Civic Hall on November 28th 2015 was attended by 65 people. These represented a wide variety of organisations across the community.

The following top four priorities emerged from the housing table at our second workshop.

1. Self-build community led housing
2. Affordable housing
3. Affordable housing for young people
4. Sustainable eco-homes

There were only 5 comments that requested 'no new housing'

2.2 New housing in Totnes must be based on real local need

- Affordable housing should be built for local people (young people as a priority)
- Housing should be built based on a real local need (as opposed to 'speculative building')
- Priority should be given to local people
- People do not want more new homes built for second home owners
- Social housing and affordable tenancies were specific suggestions.
- Affordable rent was also highlighted as a top priority on the economy table at workshop 2
- At our workshop with **KEVICC students**, part of their vision for Totnes 2030 was **'less young people leaving the area because of lack of jobs and expensive houses'**

There was a clear disillusionment with the current model of developers delivering affordable housing according to government definitions, and a strong desire amongst workshop participants to find other methods and models of delivering genuinely affordable housing related to local wages. Here is a sample of three such comments:

- **'There should be a statutory requirement to build truly affordable homes'**
- **'More affordable homes are needed. Not 'market led' but 'need' led.**
- **'Affordability based upon average wages of local people not % of market rate.**
- **'We need affordable housing as a priority but not as a minor percentage of developments which aim at outsiders where homes cost 500K+.'**

2.3 The development of new housing in Totnes should be community led

There were multiple comments about the need for the town to develop its' own housing outside of the mainstream developer led approach. This was also a key finding from our housing needs survey, when asked to tick yes or no, **88.16%** of respondents said that the Totnes Neighbourhood Plan should prioritise community led, brown-field site development and the development of quality housing at prices local people can truly afford.

One way of approaching this would be to **'find sites that are too small for developers but could be for self-build and cohousing'** said one attendee

- 'Community land-trusts' and 'community housing' were all suggested repeatedly: we need to **'find ways to design new housing developments that apply joined-up thinking so we can make social and affordable homes a reality'** said one participant
- Self-build housing was also mentioned repeatedly as a way to deliver affordable housing (and environmentally sustainable housing)
- Co-housing with shared facilities was also suggested (*presumably this would help make housing more affordable and require a smaller site*) as was 'co-operative housing structures'

2.4 High environment standards

- There were multiple comments about the need for high environmental standards in new homes at workshop 2. Suggestions included ‘living roofs’ ‘stilt houses’, ‘high levels of energy efficiency’ and renewables, including ‘solar’. There were also multiple general comments on high environmental standards and eco-housing without specific suggestions. **‘Permit only the highest standards of sustainable housing – not just meeting building regs. Consider embodied energy and restrict list of materials.’** said one participant.
- Our housing needs survey asked ‘if new homes were to be built in Totnes in the future, what features should they have,’ **‘high energy efficiency’** was the top answer (**83% of respondents**).
- KEVICC students also wanted to ensure energy efficiency was built into new housing developments.

2.5 Infrastructure

Concerns for the capacity of infrastructure in the town to cope with more housing were expressed. Comments included:

- **‘All developments should have a tax to subsidise public transport, new infrastructure and schools.’**
- **‘To support a growing population Totnes needs high quality secondary and primary school which is physically and educationally fit for purpose?’**
- At workshop 1 there were nine comments expressing a concern about the impact of new housing in relation to infrastructure: **‘infrastructure including roads, is crucial in planning housing developments. This needs to be factored in before any new housing is approved.’** said one. **‘No development without new infrastructure’** said another (see workshop 1 data under ‘transport’ for more examples.)

2.6 Footpaths and cycle-paths

- **Improving foot-paths and cycle paths are part of the answer to the issue of improving transport infrastructure**
- The need for more and improved footpaths and cycle-paths was the most commented on topic at workshop 1 (receiving 33 comments). It was also highlighted as top priority on the transport table at workshop 2.
- As part of the housing needs survey, respondents were asked to prioritise amenities and infrastructure in the town and number two priority was for improvements to foot-paths and cycle-paths.ⁱ
- Cycling and walking were also a top priority for KEVICC students

2.7 Different types of dwelling

In order to deliver affordable community led housing, different sorts of building type and designs were suggested at workshop 2 including:

- Houseboats
- Container homes (this has been done in Brighton)
- Self-build plots
- Wooden cabins
- Temporary mobile homes

2.8 Small houses, high density, brown field sites:

There were several comments on size and scale of new homes needing to be small and high density:

We need **‘one and two bedroom homes/flats, high density, on brown-field sites’** said one participant. **‘The green belt needs protecting; ‘build on brown-field sites only;’** commented another. One respondent summarised a variety of key issues in one statement: **‘yes, anything that discourages the low density high value market value developer’s charter. 100~% low cost ‘local occupancy conditions’ and more community housing for rent.’** These comments are clearly supported by the priorities identified in the housing needs survey.

2.9 Use of existing housing stock

There were two comments suggesting making use of existing housing stock as part of the solution to affordable housing: **‘Bring empty properties back into use’** said one **‘what can we do with our existing affordable stock to create homes that reflect needs of local community? Conversion, loft extensions, extensions and remodelling etc.’** said another

There were only two comments endorsing the suggestion that greater housing provision for the elderly could help reduce under-occupancy.

2.10 Green spaces and housing development

There were three comments relating to the importance of mixed use green-space in relation to housing development, they were as follows:

Need **‘green-spaces, growing spaces and allotments’, ‘green-space and provision of gardens’** and **‘communal growing space and access to allotments.**

2.11 Housing design

This had only two clear references at workshop two, including one participant who emphasised **‘beauty’** in relation to new houses and another who suggested that **‘every-time a new house is built it enhances the natural environment and enriches it to.’**

2.12 Stop developers from building in Totnes

There were multiple comments suggesting we;

- stop developers from building,
- change the way they operate or
- make them work to different definitions of what's truly affordable.

Whilst we could (and have) gathered evidence about the negative impact of the current dominant development model that might help national campaigns, it is not within the powers of the Totnes Neighbourhood Plan to influence large national developers. If Totnes does deliver affordable housing using alternative models via the Neighbourhood Plan however, we could become a strong example of best practice and influence other Neighbourhood Plans and therefore potentially influence national policy.

3. Links between workshop findings – Workshop 1

3.1 Workshop 1 was attended by 150 people on July 20th, 2015 at the Mansion.

The findings from our first workshop corroborate the findings from workshop two

- The need for affordable housing was the second most commented on theme (after transport) at our first public workshop.
- KEVICC students highlighted a need for affordable housing to help keep young people in the town.
- Other priorities that emerged under the category of affordable housing was a need to build affordable housing for local people and stop second home ownership, which echoes the findings of workshop two and the HNS.
- Social housing and community housing were mentioned multiple times as potential ways of delivering affordable housing as per workshop two.
- A need for 'Eco-homes' with high environmental standards was the second most commented on topic under housing in workshop one (16 comments). As mentioned above, this was also a strong theme in workshop two and in the HNS.
- Self – build was also suggested repeatedly at our first workshop as well as the second.
- Infrastructure in relation to housing was a concern for workshop one and two attendees[T1]
- Improving foot-paths and cycle paths are seen across all of our data sets to be part of the answer to the issue of transport infrastructure in relation to new developments (and easing the current level of congestion)
- Concern around infrastructure to support new housing had more comments during our first workshop (11 comments as opposed to only 3 at workshop two). This may have been because no specific questions were asked about housing in relation to infrastructure in workshop 2.

- Building on brownfields sites (as opposed to green-fields sites) was also commented on by two participants at workshop one

4. Housing needs survey results

- 4.1 A Housing Needs Survey (HNS) was undertaken in summer 2015. Questionnaires were delivered to every household in the town with a total of over 620 responses received representing a response rate of around 16%.

The headline results are below and mostly echo findings from our other data:

4.2 Types of new homes and priority groups

When asked 'if new homes were to be built in Totnes in the future, which types you would consider a priority,' the top two answers were:

- **Small family homes (2-3 bedrooms)** followed by:
- **Small homes for singles and couples.**
- **83.5%** of respondents said these homes should be affordable for first time buyers.
- **81.65%** prioritised **families** as the highest priority recipients of these homes followed by singles and couples with the lowest priority group being older people. **It is worth noting that housing for young people was not given as a specific option on the multiple choice priority menu** but it did come through as a priority in workshops including the one with KEVICC students.
- **Non detached houses (semis or terrace)** were the top priority in terms of the type of housing people wanted to see.
- Small homes were also a priority for workshop 2 participants, but the emphasis seemed to be more on delivering homes for young people and single people (as opposed to families). Flats were mentioned in workshop two but were not prioritised by HNS respondents. This may be because **flats** were not given as a specific option in the multiple choice menu, '**small homes for singles/couples**' were however and so we can interpret this to mean the same thing.

4.3 Features of new homes – high environmental standards

- When asked 'if new homes were to be built in Totnes in the future, what features should they have' '**high energy efficiency**' was the number one answer (**83% of respondents**) followed by '**built to lifetime homes standards**'

4.4 Development models – community led, brownfield development and affordable housing

- When asked to tick yes or no, **88.16%** said that the Totnes Neighbourhood Plan should prioritise community led, brown-field site development and the development of quality housing at prices local people can truly afford. This is corroborated in findings from workshop two.

5. KEVICC workshop responses

Working with Planning for Real, the Neighbourhood Plan ran a workshop with 110 year 10 students from KEVICC in November 2015.

Housing was the third priority for KEVICC students (traffic and transport being number one, followed by public open spaces.)

Their vision for housing was as follows:

Where homes are affordable, there is less homelessness, self-sustaining eco homes. Less second (holiday) homes.’ And ‘Less young people leaving the area because of lack of jobs and expensive houses.’

5.1 Affordability:

- Housing in Totnes was seen as too expensive and that, for young people, the lack of good facilities meant it was an undesirable place to live.
- A view expressed by students was that more affordable, good quality homes were required to serve the needs of a variety of ages and household sizes, not just for families and old people, including **flats** e.g. for students, **housing for younger people**, and to address homelessness.
- Another suggestion put forward was that existing houses should be renovated.
- Whilst students held the view that building expensive houses should be stopped, there was also the view put forward that lowering house prices in Totnes could ruin the economy.

5.2 New Housing:

- Different groups of students / classes expressed differing views about future housing. On the one hand it was felt that there were lots of geographical locations for new housing; that building should take place on suitable areas which were accessible to public transport; that older people’s housing should be close to shops and good community facilities; and that whilst more housing was needed it should not take up too much of the open land or take over the town.
- On the other hand other groups of students were unhappy that existing fields are being built on and that no more houses should be built.

5.3 Style and Quality:

Students identified the need for quality but traditional housing and that new housing to feel “Totnes” and avoid ruining area with housing that looks too “different”. There was another

difference of view in terms of density – one view was that large estates with houses close together were not desirable, while another suggested that houses should be built close together with amenities e.g. shops, in order to save on energy and heating.

5.4 Energy efficiency:

- The view put forward by students was to find better ways to conserve energy so that there were less solar panels.

6. Business survey

When analysing data on housing needs, it is important to keep in mind findings from the business survey, which highlighted the need for better availability of premises (for various businesses uses). We therefore must consider the potential need for employment sites.

Summary of key findings Summary of key findings and priorities emerging from public consultation data – Housing

Although these key findings are under the topic of housing they closely relate to transport, the environment and the economy.

- Affordable housing needs to be prioritised for local people
- Affordable housing needs to be prioritised for families and young people
- The Neighbourhood Plan needs to be able to make its own definition of what's affordable to local residents
- Development should be community led utilising alternative models to the mainstream model of development
- Housing should have high environmental standards
- Development should take place on brown-field sites
- Smaller homes should be built (2-3 beds and flats)
- Development should be high density
- A variety of dwellings should be considered (i.e. not just houses and flats)
- Plans for new infrastructure need to be drawn up in relation the new developments
- Employment sites are also needed for the town

1. Next steps and discussion points

- Discuss what kind of housing is needed for Totnes and if/how it can be delivered through a Neighbourhood Plan? What are the pros and cons?
- Are there other vehicles to deliver this kind of housing outside of the Neighbourhood Plan?
- If we decide to bring sites forward within the NP, we need to map out and agree clear a process, timetable and budget to deliver this and make an assessment of our resources in relation to this.
- Reflect on what can't we address (i.e. preventing second home ownership, stopping development)
- How do our findings around housing relate to our economic findings?
- Write a vision and objectives for housing and the Neighbourhood Plan (workshop scheduled for February)

ⁱ The top priority was improvement in community transport and public transport