

Needs of the over 55s in rural Devon



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1. Summary of Key Findings

1. The majority of respondents to the housing need surveys aged 55 and over have no plans to move home in the foreseeable future.
2. The majority of those who do wish to move would like to stay in their current parish of residence.
3. The majority of those who are aged over 55 would like to move to a home that better suits their needs but is not designed for older people. This majority decreases as respondents age until the 86+ age band where the preference is for a specially designed home or residential/nursing home.
4. Those who are in private rented accommodation are far more likely to want to move home, to a more secure tenancy than those who own their own home or who already live in affordable housing.
5. The most important considerations for moving home are to move to a smaller, more manageable home with lower running costs and proximity to services and amenities.

2. Aims of the Report

The Rural Housing Enabling (RHE) team was established to work with communities to provide housing to meet the needs of local people, and has concentrated on providing affordable housing for those who cannot meet their housing needs in the open market.

Over the past few years the subject of older persons' housing has often been raised as an issue by Parish Councillors, and in many ad hoc comments made in community housing need surveys. This type of housing is not necessarily for those in housing need but is more likely to be of interest to those who already own a home but need to move into somewhere smaller and easier to manage with lower running costs and proximity to village centres.

Given the population projections for Devon and anecdotal evidence of older people's housing need it became clear that further evidence was needed. In 2014, a specific section of the housing need survey was introduced which concentrated on the needs and aspirations of the over 55s. This was intended to assist the RHEs in understanding the issues that face this group of people and to make communities and local authorities aware of those issues.

This report brings together data from surveys undertaken since this introduction and makes some proposals for future consideration.

3. Demographic Changes in population in Devon

Devon's population is ageing faster than the national average, due to the number of older people who move to the county for their retirement. Population projections issued by the Office of National Statistics in 2012 show that the population of people over 55s in Devon will increase at an average rate of 23% by 2034. This data is broken down by rural local authorities in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Local Authority	Percentage growth
East Devon	22%
Mid Devon	24%
South Hams	19%
Teignbridge	23%
Torrige	25%
West Devon	27%
North Devon	25%

Many of these older people will have moved away from their families so will have no family support networks available to them as they age. It is important that their housing is as appropriate as possible and can be adapted to fit their changing needs.

4. Survey Methodology

This research looked at 28 housing need surveys carried out between 2015 and 2017. These encompassed all the rural local authorities in Devon. The communities surveyed are broken down by local authority area in Table 2 below.

Table 2

District	Number of parishes
East Devon	8
Mid Devon	5
South Hams	4
Teignbridge	5
Torridge	2
West Devon	1
North Devon	3
Total	28

Full details of these surveys can be found in Appendix A.

A total of 6,196 households responded to these surveys. Of these responses, 4,486 households included a person over the age of 55. This represents 72% of the total number of households responding to the survey. The overall whole community response rate averages around the 25% mark. This indicates that the majority of people who complete the forms are over 55 so the views of this group of people are very important in shaping planning in their communities although their affordable housing need as a group may be low.

Looking at the data by local authority, it is very consistent with the only variance being South Hams with a higher than average older persons' response rate (78%) and Teignbridge with a lower than average older persons' response rate (68%).

5. Survey Results

7,085 individuals from 4,486 households answered the over 55's questions and have been included in this report.

5.1 Age of Respondents to Part 2 survey

Respondents were asked to give their age in 10 year bands. As can be seen in Table 3 below, the majority of those who replied (75%) were aged between 55 and 75.

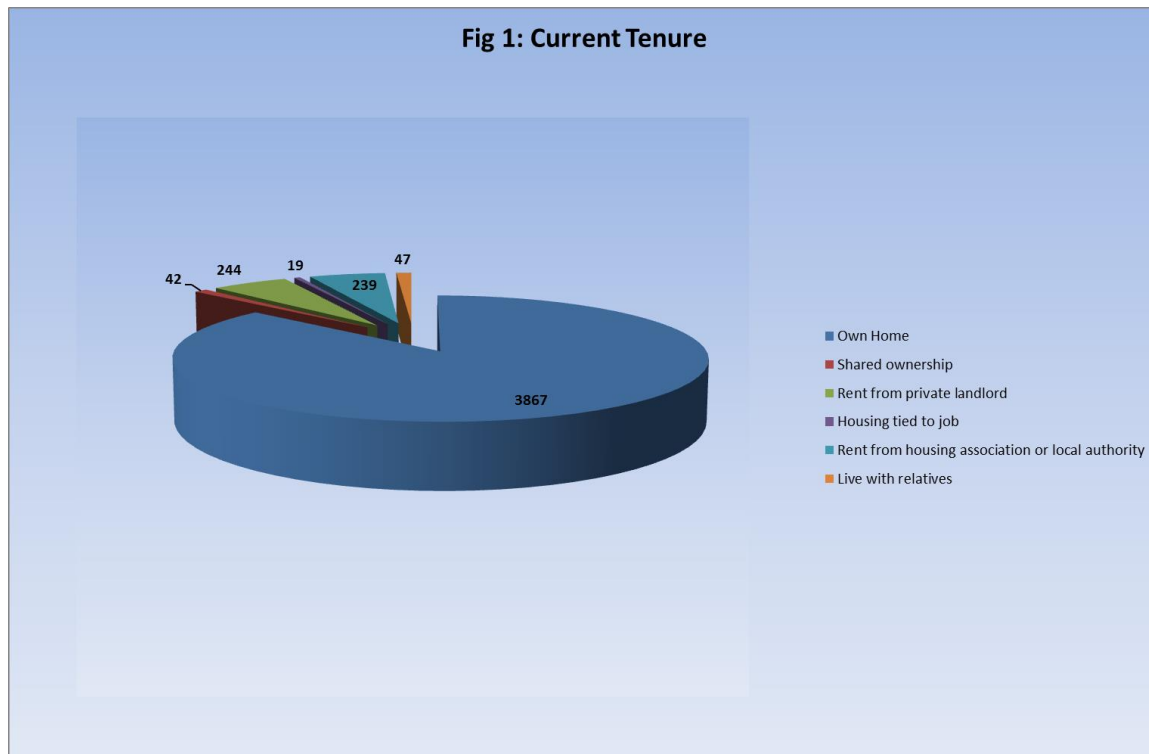
Table 3

Age Group	55-65	66-75	76-85	Over 85
Number	2572	2756	1333	424
Percentage	36%	39%	19%	6%

When looking at the data by local authority, it is generally consistent across Devon with East Devon and South Hams having a slightly larger percentage in the upper 2 age brackets and North Devon and West Devon having a slightly larger percentage in the lower 2 age brackets.

5.2 Current Tenure

Respondents were asked what type of accommodation they currently live in. The responses are shown in Fig 1 below.



As can be seen, the large majority of the over 55s who reply to the housing need surveys (86%) own their own home. The two other largest tenures are private rental accommodation (5%) and homes rented from a housing association or local authority (5%).

5.3 Future Housing Plans

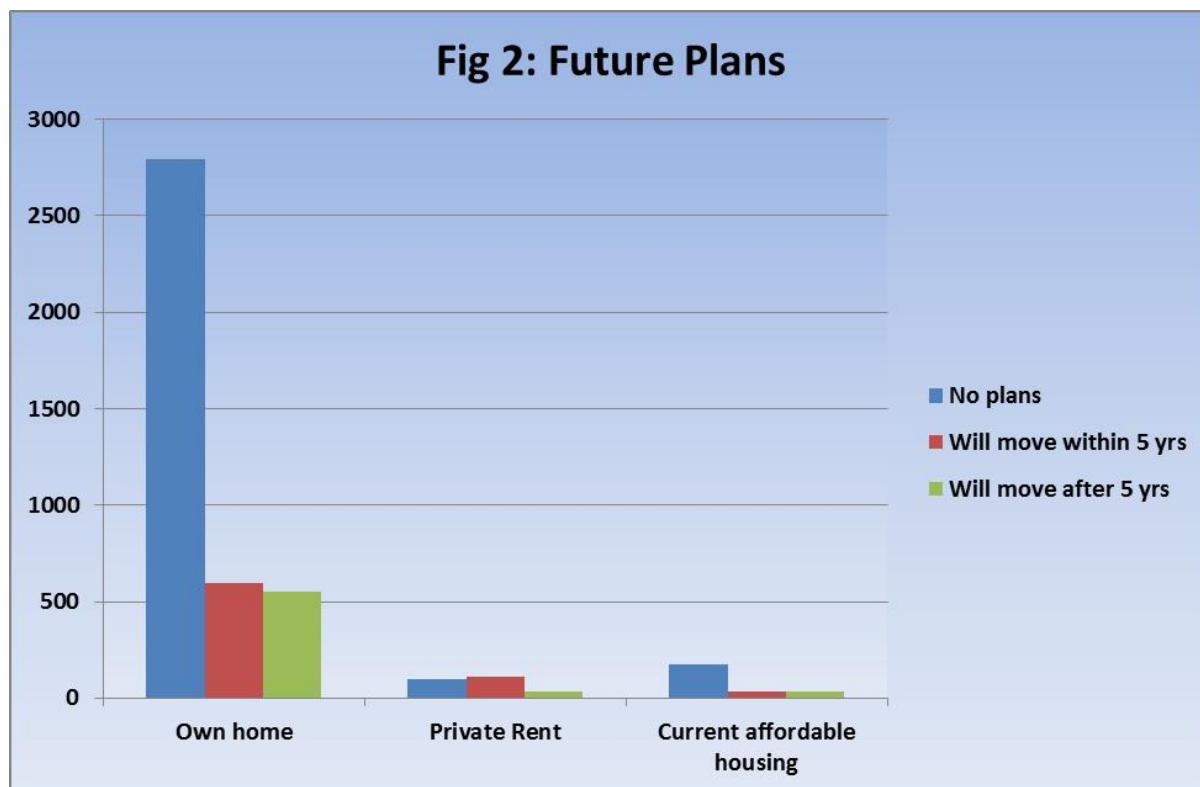
Households were asked about their future housing plans.

- 742 households plan to move within the next five years.
- 93 of these 742 households may need affordable housing.
- 610 further households expect to move after five years.
- 3022 had no plans to move at the moment.

As would be expected, the majority of the over 55s (69%) in rural areas do not intend to move home in the near future. Only 17% have the intention to move within the next 5 years and

another 14% may move after 5 years. 93 homes may require affordable housing which is only 2% of the total.

It is interesting to note that these results differ considerably by housing tenure types as shown in the breakdown in Figure 2 below.



Whilst the large majority of respondents who own their own home and who are in affordable housing do not intend to move, those in private rented accommodation are more likely to want to move.

- 71% of those owning their own home have no plans to move, whilst 16% intend to move within the next 5 years.
- 72% of those in current affordable housing have no plans to move, while 14% intend to move within the next 5 years.
- Only 40% of those living in private rented accommodation have no plans to move home, with 46% stating that they intend to move within 5 years.

This can probably be explained by the insecure nature of private leases, the high rents and sometimes poor quality of private rented accommodation which sees families moving regularly from short term lease to short term lease with no sense of security or stability.

5.4 Type of Accommodation preferred by the over 55s

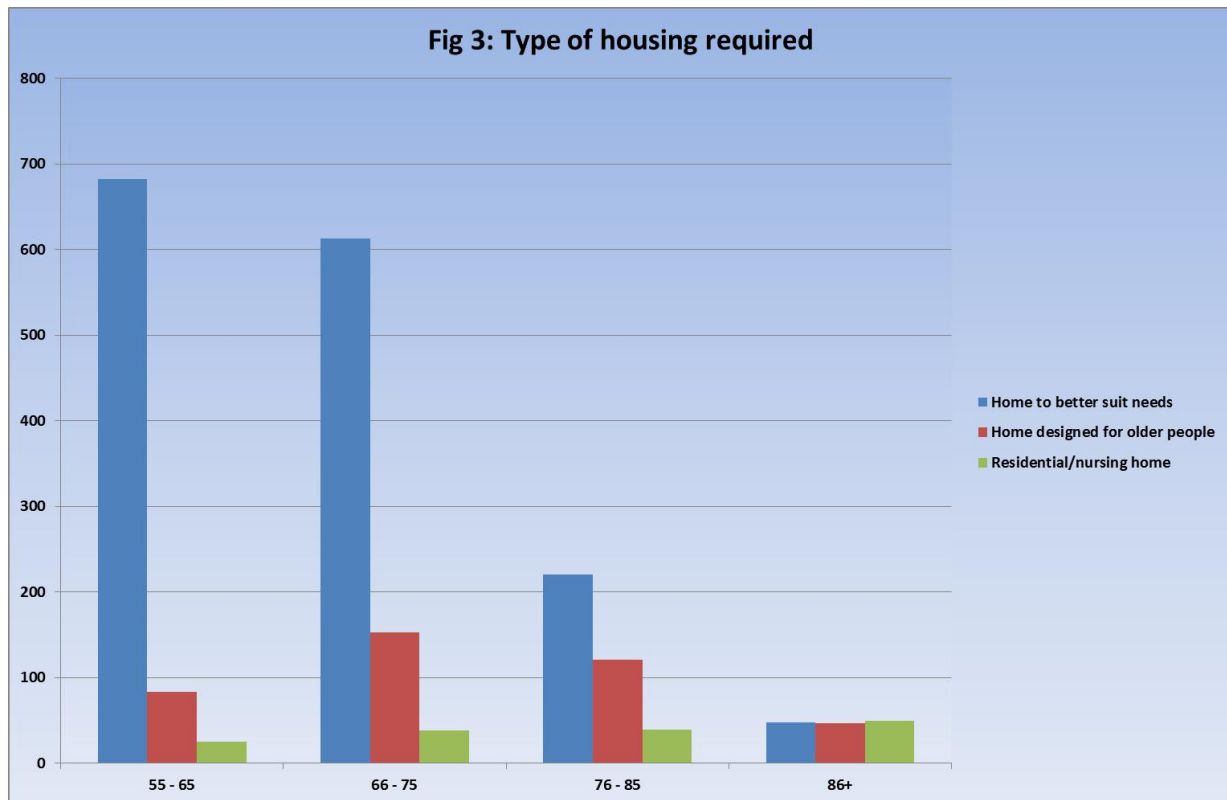
Older households were asked what type of accommodation they may need in the future. Their preferences are shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4

Type of Accommodation Preferred by Older Persons	Number
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Home better suited to needs but not specifically designed for older people	1342
Home specially designed for older people	345
Residential / nursing home	136

74% of the people who answered this question would like a home better suited to their needs but not specifically designed for older people. This reflects the age groups who are completing this part of the survey form. Many people aged between 55 and 65 are not yet at the stage where they need or want any form of supported or adapted housing in the near future. The people who are looking for specially designed housing or a nursing home are those who are in the over 75 age bandings. The breakdown by age is shown in Fig 3 below.



As can be seen from the chart, the vast majority of those in the first 2 age bandings would like a home to better suit their needs, whereas the 2 older age bands are far more likely to require a home designed for older people or a residential/nursing home. Most people aged between 55 and 65 do not consider themselves to be in need of any form of supported or adapted housing in the near future and are simply interested in having a home better suited to their needs which could include smaller, more manageable properties with lower running costs and level access rather than adapted or accessible housing.

5.5 Next Move

Respondents were asked where they would like to move to when they next move home. Their preferences are shown in Table 5 below.

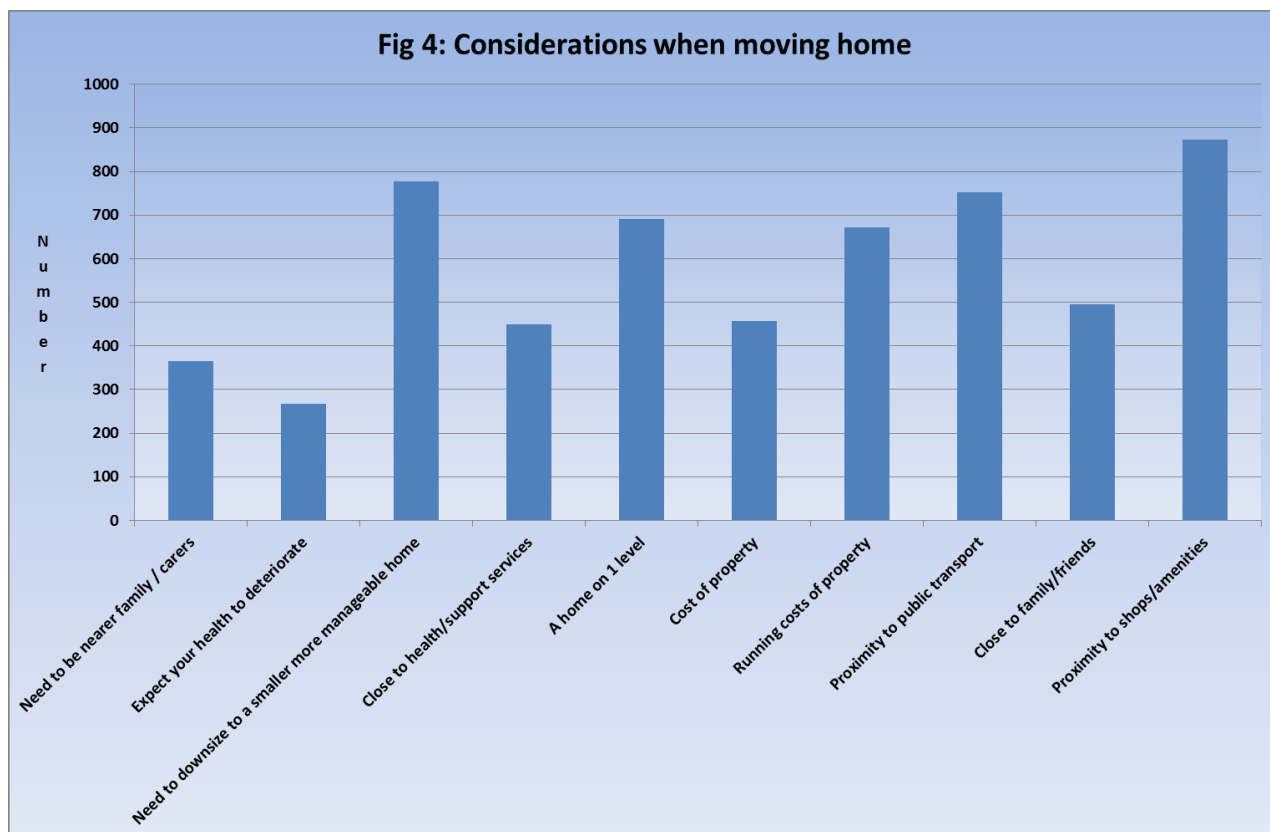
Table 5

Location of next move	Number
Remain in parish of residence	1551
Move elsewhere in local authority area	492
Move elsewhere in Devon	340
Move away from Devon	232

60% of people would like to remain in their parish of residence if they move home. As many rural communities do not have suitable accommodation for older people, this is another indication that provision needs to be made in rural locations for older persons' housing.

5.6 Considerations when moving home

Respondents were asked what their considerations and needs would be when next moving home. The top consideration was proximity to shops and amenities followed by the need for a smaller, more manageable home and proximity to public transport. A property on one level and lower running costs were also popular reasons to move.



6. Key Findings

1. The majority of respondents to the housing need surveys aged 55 and over have no plans to move home in the foreseeable future.
2. The majority of those who do wish to move would like to stay in their current parish of residence.
3. The majority of those who are aged over 55 would like to move to a home that better suits their needs but is not designed for older people. This majority decreases as respondents age until the 86+ age band where the preference is for a specially designed home or residential/nursing home.
4. Those who are in private rented accommodation are far more likely to want to move home, to a more secure tenancy.
5. The most important considerations for moving home are to move to a smaller, more manageable home with lower running costs and proximity to services and amenities.

7. Recommendations

1. Any housing development in a rural parish should take the needs of the over 55s into consideration and recognise that they have specific needs around adaptability and accessibility and form a large percentage of rural populations.
2. When considering cross subsidy, the needs of the over 55s should be taken into consideration, particularly when looking at tenure and house types for the cross subsidy homes. Bungalows or houses that are accessible and adaptable for future need would ensure that any older persons that wished to downsize or move into more manageable accommodation would have somewhere available to move to even though they might not have an affordable housing need.
3. Consideration should be given during the planning process (through s.106 agreements or local lettings plans) to allow open market local connection housing for this group which would allow open market homes to go to local people.