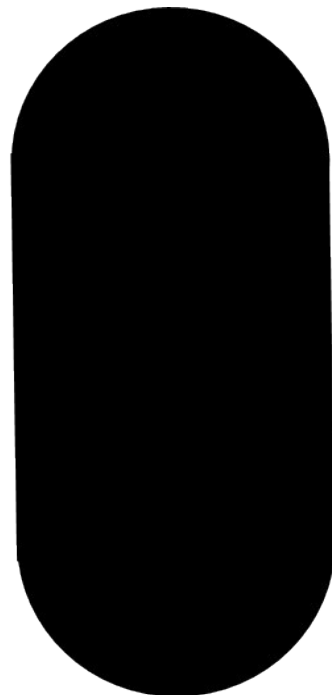
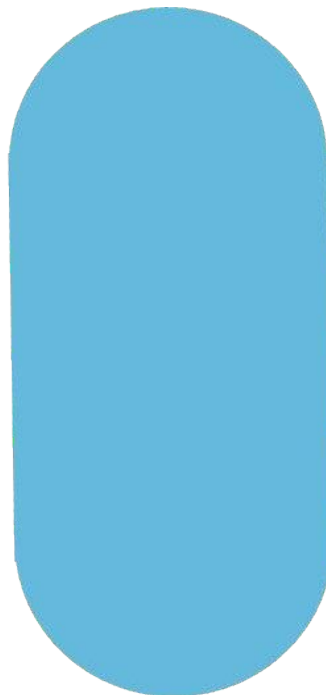


Esquire Developments Limited

**Land Adjacent to the Bull Inn, Bethersden
Local Housing Need Assessment**

March 2024



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1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

- 1.1 This Local Housing Need Assessment (LHNA) of Bethersden has been prepared by Marrons national socio-economics team on behalf of Esquire Developments Limited, in support of their proposed residential-led mixed use development on land adjacent to the Bull Inn, Bethersden, Ashford Borough.
- 1.2 The LHNA's purpose is to inform what the local housing need is for the neighbourhood plan area of Bethersden specifically, and considers this in the context of the policies of the existing Ashford Local Plan (Adopted February 2019).
- 1.3 Our assessment is embedded in the policies of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2023) which at paragraph 64 seeks to establish mixed and balanced communities, and paragraph 68 which states how an indicative housing need figure for neighbourhood areas should be established.
- 1.4 We present analysis of demographics, affordability, and housing supply data to reach a conclusion on what the housing need for Bethersden is at the current time.

Ashford Borough Local Plan (Adopted 2019) and the role of Bethersden

- 1.5 In terms of Bethersden's place and role within the wider Borough, paragraph 7.50 (page 237) of the Adopted Local Plan confirms Bethersden as a 'local centre'. These local centres are described as follows; *"there are a number of other local centres, mainly rural village centres, across Ashford, which generally provide more limited day to day top-up shopping provision."*
- 1.6 Paragraph 7.86 (page 246) moves on to state how the Local Plan *"seeks to maintain and enhance the provision of local centres in the built-up areas of the Borough."*
- 1.7 In this context it is important that adequate housing development is provided in Bethersden to ensure that existing amenities are maintained, and where possible enhanced.
- 1.8 Bethersden has a busy village hall at present with a number of regular activities including yoga, Pilates, dance fit, short mat bowls, women's institute meetings, and an art group.
- 1.9 There is also Bethersden Primary School which provides for children aged 4-11 living in Bethersden itself, but also children from surrounding villages, and Ashford town. The school currently operates below capacity.



- 1.10 A number of clubs operate in Bethersden including tennis and cricket, there are two public houses, and a post office and village store.
- 1.11 Policy HOU2 – ‘Local Needs/Subsidised Specialist Housing’ (page 204) of the Adopted Plan sets out when planning permission will be granted for local needs housing within or adjoining rural settlements identified under policy HOU3a. Policy HOU3a includes Bethersden, and Policy HOU2 states that one of the criteria is that *“The local need or requirement for specialist housing is clearly evidenced.”*
- 1.12 As the social objective of the NPPF states, the objective is *“to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations”*¹ (Our emphasis).
- 1.13 We provide the evidence of this need for Bethersden in this report.

Bethersden Neighbourhood Plan (withdrawn in October 2020)

- 1.14 Although the Bethersden Neighbourhood Plan (BNP) was abandoned in October 2020, its content is of use in considering housing need.
- 1.15 The objectives of the BNP included the provision of *“adaptable low-density housing development in keeping with the local area and appropriate to the needs of all its residents”* and to *“Promote the retention of local amenities”*².
- 1.16 In this context the BNP stated *“The Jan 2014 Parish Survey showed a 73% support for housing growth, which is desirable to ensure a sustainable future for Bethersden, and that this should be planned to support a mixed, prosperous, and well-balanced population. This will help sustain a healthy demand for local shops, services and businesses, and a thriving future for the primary school, as well as for the many voluntary, recreational, religious, and sports organisations and activities, which are currently supported by, and offer so much to, the residents of the village.”*³ (Our emphasis)
- 1.17 The Neighbourhood Plan therefore acknowledged the importance of new housing for maintaining and enhancing the services on offer within the village, and the Parish survey showed clear support for new housing.

¹ Paragraph 8 b), page 5, NPPF, December 2023

² Page 5, Bethersden Neighbourhood Plan, 23 November 2017

³ Page 24, Bethersden Neighbourhood Plan, 23 November 2017



- 1.18 The BNP also stated *“Evidence from consultation with residents, suggests that there is a wish for the population of the parish to be well balanced, with more families attracted to live in the parish. This will contribute to the strength and sustainability of the village school, as well as other amenities such as the play school, the village hall, local businesses, and the many clubs and societies, which already enjoy healthy support in the parish. An increased number of children living in the parish will also support family-orientated activities such as parent and toddler groups, scouts and guides, and the annual Village Fete (to give some examples), all of which help to create a thriving, welcoming and friendly community for all.”*⁴ (Our emphasis)
- 1.19 The BNP confirms *“a strong and sustainable community is an important priority”* and states that one of the key objectives of the BNP is to *“Provide new housing where it meets an identified need.”*⁵
- 1.20 This should also be considered in the context of the BNP’s ‘Local Economy’ section which states *“The Bethersden Neighbourhood Plan sets out to maintain and encourage the local economy in order to support the sustainability of the community. It will support the sustainable growth of all types of business and enterprise in the Parish, rural tourism and leisure facilities that benefit local businesses, residents and visitors, and which respect the character of the countryside”*⁶ (our emphasis).
- 1.21 To achieve these objectives Policy H1 of the BNP considered that 34 additional dwellings would be required in the Neighbourhood Plan area over the 15-year Plan period.
- 1.22 We consider our analysis in the context of the Neighbourhood Plan objectives set out above.

Bethersden Housing Needs Survey 2020

- 1.23 Notwithstanding the BNP being withdrawn, a Housing Need Survey was undertaken in April 2020 and a report published in June 2020.
- 1.24 The survey had a low response rate, with only 53 of 716 surveys being returned (7.4%).
- 1.25 In this context our view is that the results cannot be reasonably considered to

⁴ Page 24, Bethersden Neighbourhood Plan, 23 November 2017

⁵ Page 25, Bethersden Neighbourhood Plan, 23 November 2017

⁶ Page 38, Bethersden Neighbourhood Plan, 23 November 2017



reflect the true level of housing need in Bethersden.

1.26 Notwithstanding this view the survey concluded as follows; *“Overall, the survey has identified a total need for 12 affordable homes, 3 of which are for older households. In addition, there is a need for 20 open market properties suitable for older households who want to downsize / move to more suitable housing for their needs, 3 of those respondents also indicated an interest in self-build.”*⁷

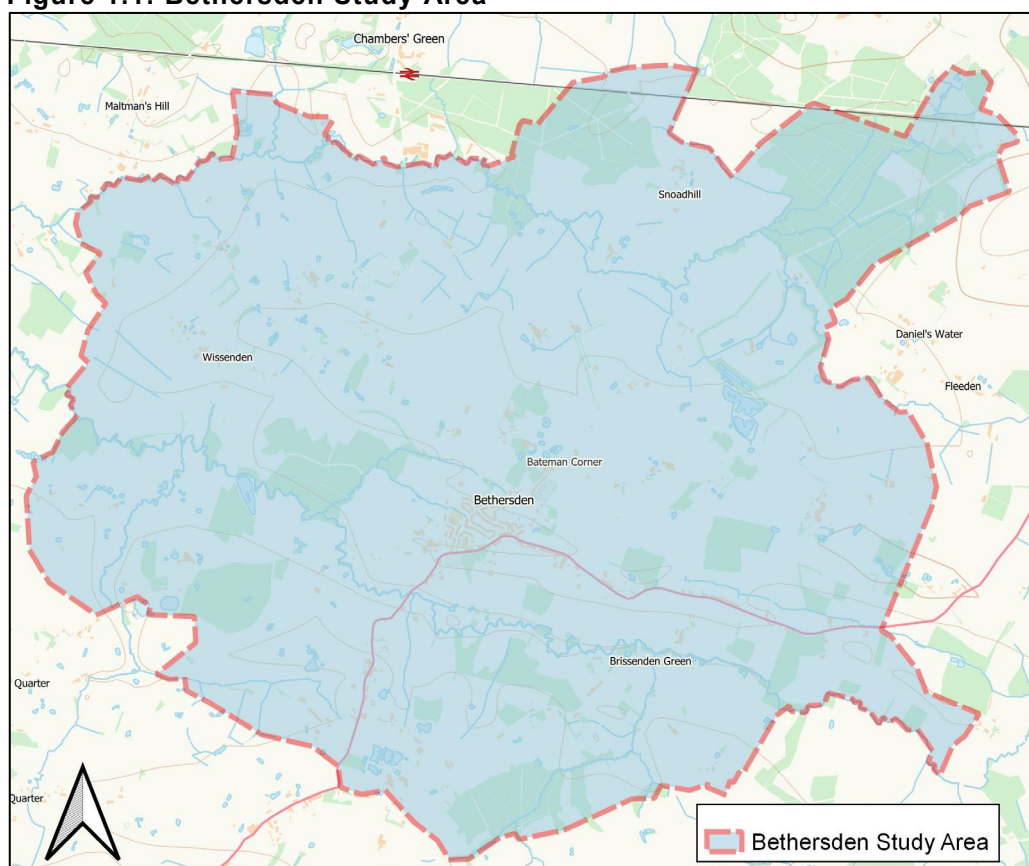
1.27 In total the survey concluded on a need for 32 homes in Bethersden.

1.28 As set out above, because of the low response rate we do not consider the results of the survey to reflect true housing need, albeit a very low response rate still resulted in an identified need for 32 new homes.

Bethersden Neighbourhood Plan study area

1.29 The study area we have analysed is illustrated in Figure 1.1 and reflects the area which represented the abandoned Bethersden Neighbourhood Plan area.

Figure 1.1: Bethersden Study Area



Source: Ordnance Survey

⁷ Page 3, Bethersden Housing Need Survey, June 2020



2. BETHERSDEN DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

2.1 This section of our analysis draws on the most recent demographic information available from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to build a demographic profile of Bethersden.

2.2 This process will assist in determining the scale and type of need which exists to ensure the aims and objectives of the Adopted Plan we summarised in the previous section of this report, i.e., maintaining and enhancing local centres, are achieved.

Population change 2011-2021

2.3 Table 2.1 sets out the population change experienced in Bethersden between the 2011 and 2021 Census. Table 2.2 provides the figures for Ashford Borough, Kent, and the south east region.

Table 2.1: Bethersden population change 2011-2021

	2011	2021	2011-2021	2011-2021
0-17	282	283	1	0.4%
18-24	91	99	8	8.8%
25-44	274	300	26	9.5%
45-64	470	511	41	8.7%
65+	364	476	112	30.8%
Total	1,481	1,669	188	12.7%

Source: nomisweb.co.uk

Table 2.2: Bethersden and comparison areas population change 2011-2021

	Bethersden	Ashford	Kent	South East
0-17	0.4%	5.5%	4.2%	4.2%
18-24	8.8%	-1.2%	-7.5%	-4.3%
25-44	9.5%	10.8%	6.1%	3.2%
45-64	8.7%	13.1%	7.5%	9.0%
65+	30.8%	30.2%	21.7%	21.7%
Total	12.7%	12.5%	7.7%	7.5%

Source: nomisweb.co.uk, Table, TS007 2011 and 2021.

2.4 Tables 2.1 and 2.2 shows how the population of Bethersden has changed between the 2011 and 2021 Censuses, set against growth across the wider areas in which



it is located. This provides us with some indications of where demand for housing may lie and we use the broad age groups to represent children and teenagers (0-17), students and renters (18-24), first time buyers (25-44), homeowners with equity (45-64), and retirees (65+).

- 2.5 As Table 2.1 illustrates there has been a marked contrast in the change between the 0-64 age groups and the 65+ group. Looking more closely, the child age population (0-17) has experienced the lowest growth at 0.4%, which is significantly lower than the increase across Ashford Borough (5.5%), Kent, and the south east (both 4.2%).
- 2.6 This indicates that families with children have found it difficult to locate in the Bethersden study area, possibly because of a lack of suitable housing supply, or a lack of affordability, both of which we analyse in more depth later in this report.
- 2.7 In contrast the 65+ age group has experienced a significant increase of 30.8%, marginally higher than the Borough average (30.2%) and significantly higher than the Kent and south east averages (both 21.7%).
- 2.8 Together this indicates an unbalancing of the population during the 2011-2021 period in favour of an older population. NPPF requires development to support 'mixed and balanced' communities and a continuation of this trend will not only unbalance the population of Bethersden but will make it increasingly difficult to maintain and enhance the community facilities there unless housing which encourages younger people to move into the village is provided.
- 2.9 The growth of the 18-24 (8.8%) population is significantly *higher* than the wider Borough, the County, and the region. This potentially indicates a need for housing for first time buyers or more affordable accommodation for those wanting to leave home as singles or couples.
- 2.10 The growth of the 25-44 population has experienced a similar rate of growth as the Borough albeit significantly higher than the Region with more than double the amount of growth. This suggests that Bethersden is a popular place for first time buyers and families to locate, albeit the slightly lower change than the Borough average could indicate a lack of delivery for this type of housing.
- 2.11 The 45-64 age group has experienced growth of a similar level to growth across the County and Region. However, at a Borough level growth has been significantly higher than Bethersden. This relatively large difference indicates a lack of suitable housing for this age group, who have instead been forced to move elsewhere in



the Borough or outside of the Borough.

- 2.12 The older population is increasing across the country, however the analysis above suggests the unbalancing of the population between young and old is more acute in Bethersden than in other areas.
- 2.13 Unless enough housing is provided to allow people of working age to move into Bethersden the spending power of the village's population across a range of existing amenities will lessen, making it more difficult for these amenities to be maintained and/or enhanced in line with the Local Plan policies.

Occupancy Rating (Bedrooms)

- 2.14 The occupancy rating of properties in Bethersden can help us to understand the extent of which homes are overcrowded or where they are under-occupied.
- 2.15 Table 2.3 considers the occupancy rating of households in Bethersden, Ashford, Kent, and the south east region as recorded by the 2021 Census.

Table 2.3: Proportion of households in each occupancy (bedrooms) category, 2021

	Occupancy rating (bedrooms) of +2 or more	Occupancy rating (bedrooms) of +1	Occupancy rating (bedrooms) of 0	Occupancy rating (bedrooms) of -1 or less
Bethersden	48.8%	30.3%	18.7%	2.3%
Ashford	39.9%	33.2%	23.5%	3.4%
Kent	36.8%	33.8%	25.9%	3.6%
South East	38.1%	32.4%	26.1%	3.4%

Source: nomisweb.co.uk (Table RM099, 2021 Census)

Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding'

- 2.16 The data in Table 2.3 reveals a significant proportion of homes in Bethersden were under-occupied at the time of the 2021 Census, equating to 79.1% of all homes. This compares to 73.1% across Ashford, 70.6% across Kent and 70.5% across the South East region.
- 2.17 This indicates the under-occupancy of family sized homes in Bethersden is more acute than in the wider Borough, particularly in larger family housing, evidenced by the significantly higher proportion of under occupancy in the +2 category above.
- 2.18 Given the higher population increase in older age groups in Bethersden identified



above, these under-occupied properties are more likely to be in older age groups in the town compared with the other comparator areas.

- 2.19 This indicates a lack of alternative housing options close to Bethersden for the later living population if they wish to downsize.
- 2.20 Table 2.4 shows how the different categories for under-occupancy have changed between the 2011 and 2021 Censuses.

Table 2.4: Change in the % of households in each occupancy category, 2011-2021

	Occupancy rating (bedrooms) of +2 or more	Occupancy rating (bedrooms) of +1
Bethersden	11.5%	5.9%
Ashford	10.8%	7.8%
Kent	9.7%	3.3%
Southeast	9.9%	3.1%

Source: nomisweb.co.uk (Table TS052, 2021 Census, and QS412EW, 2011 Census)
Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding

- 2.21 Table 2.4 only serves to emphasise the under-occupancy issue in Bethersden compared with the wider Borough, the County, and the Region. The data shows how the number of households with an occupancy rating of +2 or more has increased at a faster rate in Bethersden than the Borough, Kent and the south east.
- 2.22 This is key because this aligns with the high comparative population growth in the older age group we have identified earlier in this report, and in summary shows how there has been a significantly higher increase in Bethersden in larger under-occupied households.
- 2.23 These are likely to be in larger family sized homes and explains the comparatively low increase in the 45-64 age group in Bethersden. A continuation of this trend will be damaging for local services in the village, inhibiting the ability of working age people to move into the area and support local amenities.

Number of Bedrooms

- 2.24 The number of bedrooms in households is a useful indicator of where need may lie, and we have set out the number of bedrooms by households in Table 2.5 below.



Table 2.5: Proportion of households by bedroom size, 2021

	1-bed	2-bed	3-bed	4+ bed
Bethersden	7.3%	25.3%	32.6%	34.7%
Ashford	8.1%	25.5%	40.6%	25.8%
Kent	10.6%	27.5%	39.0%	22.9%
South East	11.6%	25.9%	37.5%	25.0%

Source: nomisweb.co.uk (Table TS050, 2021 Census)

- 2.25 The relevance of this data needs to be considered in the context of the occupancy analysis set out above. Bethersden has a combined proportion of 3 and 4+ bed housing combined in 2021 (67.3%) which is marginally higher than the wider Borough (66.4%), Kent (61.9%), and the South East (62.5%).
- 2.26 The proportion of 4+ bed properties in isolation is significantly higher than the Borough, Kent, or south east, and as we have identified above the proportion of properties where at least 2 bedrooms are under-occupied is also comparatively higher. This indicates a lack of these larger 4+ bed properties coming back onto the market.
- 2.27 Also the 3-bed category is much *lower* than the Borough average, indicating that 3-bed may be in demand to balance the population more, and perhaps explaining the lack of growth in the 45-64 age group.

Demographic summary

- 2.28 The key points to note in respect of demographic analysis and what this means for housing need are as follows:
- Bethersden has experienced significantly lower growth 2011-2021 in the child age population than across the Borough, Kent, and the south east. This indicates difficulty for younger families to locate in the village;
 - Furthermore the 65+ population has grown at a faster rate than the Kent and south east averages;
 - This higher than average growth, combined with a significant increase in larger under-occupied properties in comparison to the wider Borough, Kent, and the south east indicates a distinct lack of family sized housing;
 - This has led to a lower than average growth in the 45-64 working age group in Bethersden meaning people in this age group have probably had to look elsewhere for suitable accommodation.



-
- 2.29 If these trends continue it will become increasingly difficult for the population of Bethersden to maintain the viability of existing amenities in the village and align with the policies of the adopted Local Plan to maintain and enhance local centres, and the objectives of the (withdrawn) Neighbourhood Plan which sought to maintain a thriving and vibrant community with a well-balanced population.
- 2.30 A continuation of the stagnation of the child age population will make it more difficult to maintain the primary school in particular, and a lack of new housing of the right size and type will make it difficult to draw in a demographic capable of keeping clubs, pubs, and the village shop viable.



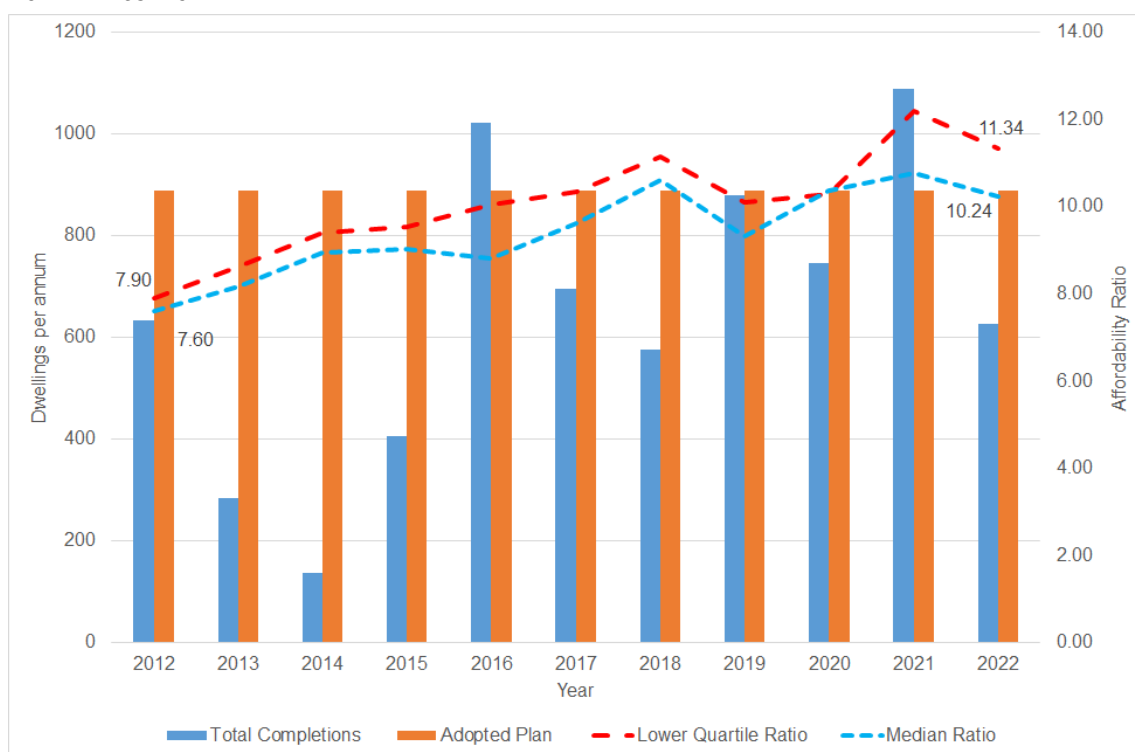
3. HOUSING AFFORDABILITY IN BETHERSDEN AND ASHFORD BOROUGH

3.1 The affordability of housing is a key consideration and one which currently applies in the calculation of minimum housing need for local authorities, using the 'standard method' set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). In this section of the report we consider the affordability of housing in Ashford Borough and at the more local level in Bethersden.

Ashford Borough

3.2 Figure 3.1 illustrates the change in the median and lower quartile affordability ratios across Ashford Borough compared with the housing requirement of the Adopted Local Plan and net housing completions since 2011/12.

Figure 3.1: Affordability Ratio Change & Housing Completions in Ashford Borough, 2011/12 to 2021/22



Source: Ashford Borough Council Annual Monitoring Reports and ONS

3.3 As Figure 3.1 illustrates, Ashford failed to deliver its housing requirement in the first four years of the Plan before exceeding it in 2015/16. The only other year in which the requirement has been exceeded is 2020/21. Overall the Council have



only delivered 72.3% of their housing requirement over the 2011/12 to 2021/22 period.

- 3.4 This lack of delivery against requirement has resulted in a long-term trend of worsening affordability. The median affordability ratio has increased by 35% since 2011/12 to 10.24 in 2021/22. The lower quartile ratio has increased by 44% over the same period, to 11.34 as of 2021/22.
- 3.5 As of 2022 a resident with a median salary would need 10.24 times that salary to afford a median priced home. A resident with a lower quartile salary would require 11.34 times that salary to afford a lower quartile priced home.
- 3.6 To put this in context, Ashford's lower quartile house price increase since 2011/12 is the 11th highest of 64 local authorities in the south east region.
- 3.7 Furthermore the ratios are significantly higher than the England average (median 8.28, and lower quartile 7.37).
- 3.8 This only serves to emphasise the acute affordability constraints in the Borough brought about in part due to the lack of delivery against the housing requirement of the Local Plan.

Sub-Borough Analysis of Housing Affordability

- 3.9 The ratio of median house prices to net annual household income (equivalised) before housing costs, by property type is available at sub-Borough level for the years 2014 and 2018.
- 3.10 The smallest area of geography this data is available at is Middle Super Output Area (MSOA) which is the next level of geography up from the Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) reflecting the Bethersden Neighbourhood Plan area in Figure 1.1 of this report.
- 3.11 Notwithstanding this there are 14 MSOAs within Ashford and this provides us with robust evidence of affordability in sub-markets of the Borough.
- 3.12 The MSOA in which Bethersden is located includes the settlements of Shadoxhurst, Stubbs Cross, and Woodchurch, alongside a small section of Great Chart on the far western edge of Ashford.
- 3.13 The 14 MSOAs and their median affordability ratios are shown in Table 3.1. They



are ranked by their median ratio as of 2018.

MSOA	Median Ratio
Ashford 002	12.35
Ashford 014	11.01
Ashford 001	10.90
Ashford 013	10.77
Ashford 011	10.64
Ashford 010	8.67
Ashford 004	8.46
Ashford 012	8.33
Ashford 008	7.88
Ashford 006	7.83
Ashford 003	7.52
Ashford 009	7.16
Ashford 005	6.54
Ashford 007	6.47

Source: Housing affordability ratios for middle layer super output areas, England and Wales, year ending March 2018, ONS, 19 March 2020

- 3.14 As Table 3.1 illustrates, the median ratio was 8.33 in 2018 when the last MSOA level affordability ratios were collected.
- 3.15 Given the intervening period since the 2018 ratios, these are expected to have increased. Notwithstanding this a median ratio of 8.33 means housing ownership would have been beyond the majority in 2018.

Sub-Borough Analysis of House Prices

- 3.16 The lack of affordability in Bethersden and Ashford Borough as a whole is further emphasised by more recent **house price data** published as part of the ONS' 'House Price Statistics for Small Areas' (HPSSA) series, the most recent of which (September 2023) published median house prices for the year ending March 2023 and lower quartile prices for December 2022.
- 3.17 HPSSA dataset 46 provides median house prices by Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) in England and Wales. This is a more local area of geography than the MSOA data used for the affordability ratios and reflects the area used in our demographic analysis, i.e. the Neighbourhood Plan area.
- 3.18 There are 78 LSOAs across the Borough. As of December 2022, the lower quartile house price in the Bethersden LSOA illustrated in Figure 1.1 of this report was



£410,000. This is the 9th most expensive LSOA of the 78 LSOAs in Ashford Borough.

3.19 However in terms of median house price, the LSOA is the 2nd most expensive in the Borough, with a median price of £795,000 as of March 2023.

3.20 These house price statistics emphasise the lack of affordability in Bethersden which makes it very difficult for those who wish to live there, a factor identified in the 2020 Housing Need Survey which stated *“High property prices and a predominance of privately-owned homes means that some local people are unable to afford a home within the parish. At the time of writing the report the cheapest property for sale in the parish was a 2-bed semi-detached bungalow for £300,000; to afford to buy this home a deposit of approximately £45,000 would be required and an income of £72,857. To afford to rent privately an income of approximately £23,800 would be required to afford the cheapest property found available to rent in the parish which was a 1-bedroom apartment (retirement complex) bungalow for £595 pcm.”*⁸ (Our emphasis)

Summary

3.21 In summary the key points to note from this section are as follows:

- Housing completions have failed to match delivery in the Borough in nine of the first eleven years of the Adopted Plan period;
- Completions have only been 72.3% of the requirement over this period;
- A lower quartile and a median priced home cost over 10 times a lower quartile and median salary in the Borough;
- The lower quartile house price increase in Ashford since 2011/12 is the 11th highest of 64 local authorities in the south east region;
- As of 2018 a median priced property in the MSOA which includes Bethersden cost 8.33 times a median salary. This is likely to have increased since 2018;
- The median house price in the Bethersden Neighbourhood Plan area (£795,000 as of March 2023) is the 2nd highest of 78 LSOAs in Ashford Borough;
- The lower quartile house price in the Bethersden Neighbourhood Plan area (£410,000 as of March 2023) is the 9th highest of 78 LSOAs in Ashford Borough.

⁸ Page 3, Bethersden Housing Need Survey, June 2020



4. HOUSING NEED AND DELIVERY IN BETHERSDEN

Introduction

- 4.1 This section of our report considers the amount of housing which has been delivered in Bethersden. In this context we then consider what the indicative housing need is for the town moving forward.

Housing Delivery in Bethersden since 2011/12

- 4.2 Ashford Borough Council's (ABC) Annual Monitoring Reports (AMRs) are only available for 2017/18, 2018/19, 2019/20, and 2020/21 on the Council's web site. However some AMRs can be found via a web search.
- 4.3 These documents and evidence of housing completions in Bethersden from the now abandoned Bethersden Neighbourhood Plan⁹ indicate that from the start of the Adopted Ashford Local Plan (2011) until 2020/21, there had been 30 completions 2011-2021.
- 4.4 It has not been possible to obtain completions data for the 2021-2023 period in Bethersden through publicly available information, however the Council's most recent Five Year Housing Land Supply Update paper (July 2021) indicates that 19 dwellings will be completed between 2021 and 2026.
- 4.5 So, in total since 2011 and until 2026 the evidence indicates completions/planned completions of 49 dwellings (30 completions and 19 planned) in Bethersden.

Housing Need in Bethersden

- 4.6 For our assessment of overall need we follow the methodology referred to in paragraph 105 of the Neighbourhood Planning section of Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).
- 4.7 This involves the consideration of any Adopted Local Plan, and where this was adopted before the introduction of the Standard Method for assessing minimum housing need in 2019, also considering need based on the Standard Method.

⁹ Page 10, Bethersden Neighbourhood Plan 2015-2030, 23 November 2017



4.10 The first step in the PPG approach is to determine the population in the Neighbourhood Plan area, and what proportion this is of the local authority area.

4.11 The 2021 Census is the most recent data source available for this purpose, having been published in late 2022.

Table 4.1: 2021 Census Population

	2021 Census Population	% of Borough
Bethersden	1,670	1.3%
Ashford	132,747	100.00%

Source: ONS

Calculating indicative housing need for Bethersden

4.13 As we have established above, the 2021 Census recorded 1.3% of Ashford's population as being located within the Bethersden Neighbourhood Plan area illustrated in Figure 1.1.

4.14 To provide an indicative housing need figure we can then apply this percentage the most recent housing need and requirement figures.

4.15 The scenarios using the method endorsed in PPG results in need of 219 dwellings for Bethersden, 2011-2030, based on the Adopted Local Plan housing requirement (16,872 dwellings 2011-2030).

4.16 An alternative scenario using the NPPF's standard method for calculating minimum housing need results in 236 dwellings for Bethersden 2011-2030.

4.17 The guidance suggests that outstanding housing commitments (planning permissions that have been granted but where construction is still underway or has not begun) should not be discounted from the housing need figure until they are completed.

4.18 There have been 30 completions since 2011 in Bethersden and subtracting these completions would mean the outstanding housing need to 2030 is between 189 and 206 dwellings for Bethersden.

4.19 Even if we were to discount the 19 dwellings expected to come forward by 2026,



there would remain a need for between 170 and 187 dwellings in Bethersden.

4.20 The two scenarios are summarised in Table 4.2.

Table 4.1: Bethersden Neighbourhood Plan area housing need

	Dwellings per annum for Ashford Borough	Bethersden's 2021 Census population as a % of Ashford Borough	Bethersden Housing Need per annum	Total Need over Plan period 2011-2030	Need minus completions (30) since 2011	Minus planned delivery in Bethersden (19 dwellings)
Adopted Local Plan	888	1.3%	11.5	219	189	170
NPPF Minimum Need	956		12.4	236	206	187

Summary

4.21 In summary the approach we have set out in this section illustrates an outstanding need for at least 170 dwellings in Bethersden by 2030, even if proposals for future development are completed as planned. If we only include completions to date this figure rises to at least 189 dwellings by 2030.



5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The purpose of this technical report has been to consider housing need in the Neighbourhood Plan area of Bethersden, Ashford Borough.
- 5.2 As part of this we have considered housing need and delivery over the course of the adopted Local Plan period (2011-2030).
- 5.3 We have also considered the 2021 Census and how the demographics of Bethersden have changed since the 2011 Census and whether the continuation of demographic trends experienced over this period are likely to support the emerging Local Plan's aims and objectives for Bethersden which is classified as a 'local centre'.
- 5.4 The assessment has also considered the aims and objectives for Bethersden as set out in the Adopted Ashford Local Plan and the (withdrawn) Bethersden Neighbourhood Plan.
- 5.5 Despite a Housing Needs Survey being published in 2020 we do not consider its 7.4% response rate to adequately reflect housing need for the Bethersden area, albeit this low response yielded a need for 32 homes. It also identified the acute affordability constraints in the area.
- 5.6 The evidence contained in this report shows there to be an outstanding need for housing in Bethersden up to 2030, despite what has been delivered since 2011 and what is planned to be delivered by 2026.

Demographics

- 5.7 The factors identified in our demographic analysis section highlight some concerning trends which, if they continue, will inhibit Bethersden's ability to ensure existing services and amenities in the village remain viable.
- 5.8 Bethersden's child age population has stagnated since 2011, compared with growth across the Borough, Kent, and the south east. This indicates difficulty for younger families to locate in the village, and will put pressure on the Primary school which is already operating below capacity.
- 5.9 Furthermore the 65+ population has grown at a faster rate than the Kent and south east averages. This higher than average growth, combined with a significant



increase in larger under-occupied properties in comparison to the wider Borough, Kent, and the south east indicates a distinct lack of family sized housing.

- 5.10 This has led to a lower than average growth in the 45-64 working age group in Bethersden meaning people in this age group have probably had to look elsewhere for suitable housing.

Affordability

- 5.11 Housing completions have failed to match delivery in Ashford Borough in nine of the first eleven years of the Adopted Plan period. Completions have therefore only been 72.3% of the requirement over this period.
- 5.12 A lower quartile and a median priced home cost over 10 times a lower quartile and median salary in the Borough. The lower quartile house price increase in Ashford since 2011/12 is the 11th highest of 64 local authorities in the south east region.
- 5.13 As of 2018 a median priced property in the MSOA which includes Bethersden cost 8.33 times a median salary. This is likely to have increased since 2018.
- 5.14 The median house price in the Bethersden Neighbourhood Plan area (£795,000 as of March 2023) is the 2nd highest of 78 LSOAs in Ashford Borough. The lower quartile house price in the Bethersden Neighbourhood Plan area (£410,000 as of March 2023) is the 9th highest of 78 LSOAs in Ashford Borough.
- 5.15 These affordability issues provide further barriers to housing for many people in Bethersden, and new housing is needed to alleviate these issues.

The number of homes needed in Bethersden

- 5.16 The shortfall in housing provision across the Borough is also reflected at the local level of Bethersden. Since the start of the Adopted Plan period there have been 30 completions of which we are aware of. A further 19 are planned to come forward by 2026.
- 5.17 These completions and planned delivery fails to address housing need in Bethersden as Table 4.1 in the previous section of this report illustrates.
- 5.18 Our analysis uses a method for calculating housing need for Neighbourhood Plan areas such as Bethersden, and shows an outstanding need (once completions have been taken account of) for at least 189 dwellings in Bethersden, 2011-2030,



when considered against the adopted Local Plan housing target. This increases to at least 206 dwellings when the NPPF's standard method for calculating minimum housing need is used.

Conclusion

- 5.19 This report has shown a clear need for additional housing in Bethersden to address acute affordability constraints and demographic trends which threaten to undermine the adopted Local Plan aspirations for local centres such as Bethersden, and the aims and objectives of the Bethersden Neighbourhood Plan.
- 5.20 Based on our analysis there is an outstanding minimum requirement for between 189 and 206 homes in the village to 2031.