

Estate Agents' Consultation

Two estate agents were approached who covered Sedlescombe Parish, one covering both sales and rentals and the other specialising in rental properties. Views about future housing development in the Parish were explored with a semi-structured telephone interview. Topics included aspects about the Parish that were attractive to potential renters/buyers, perceived market demand for property, interest in and the impact of new housing development (size of property and density of housing).

1: Sales and Rentals

The estate agent covering sales and rentals said that Sedlescombe was one of the most popular local areas to live in. It had a good reputation and as a larger village was seen as '*a bit more vibrant*' than many. The most important factor influencing market demand was the attractive village environment and the sense of community. For families, the good recreational community facilities (e.g. the sports field) were important. The proximity of good road (A21) and rail connections from nearby Battle were attractive to both commuters and the retired, offering easy accessibility to London and other parts of the UK to visit family and for holidays.

A good mix of different types of housing would all generate interest, from low cost starter homes to larger properties. There was interest from buyers in London and Surrey, some of whom were planning to commute to work and others on retiring. These buyers found higher levels of housing density more acceptable than local buyers, reflecting their experience of greater housing density in the crowded Surrey belt and London areas. As a general rule, the smaller and more select the development, the higher the property price and conversely, the larger the development, the lower the price. There was also interest from investors looking for buy-to-let properties, for short term leases ranging from 6 months to 1 year.

From the estate agent's point of view, the key factors to bear in mind when developing new housing were: (1) the sort of people we're trying to attract to the village, (2) housing in/near the centre of the village for the retired or sheltered accommodation, and (3) properties on the outskirts of the village for families and homes priced at the high end of the market. It was important not to spoil the character of the village with large-scale development, where the limited infrastructure meant this level of housing was not sustainable. He cited the recent large development of sixty-six 2, 3, 4 and 5-bedroom houses by Taylor Wimpey in the village of Buxted, Uckfield (including 19 affordable homes) as an example of how new development can spoil a village environment.

2: Rentals

The estate agent covering rentals said that there was interest in all types of property in Sedlescombe. The level of interest was constrained by the availability of properties for rent.

Sedlescombe was seen as a '*living village*' with residents working nearby, and families were drawn to its many assets including the village hall and playing fields, the primary school with

a good reputation, village shop and local pub, and the frequent commuter rail service from Battle to London.

People who were looking to rent typically had just moved to the area with a new job and rented for 1 to 2 years before buying, while those on short term contracts were not interested in buying a property.

In general, smaller scale developments (not large estates) that were sited properly, and were of the right size and type to address rental demand, would generally do very well. Blocks of flats and 2 bedroom houses with a garden were attractive to investors, and there was also a rental market for 3 or 4 (but not 5) bedroom detached houses.