

Household Housing Needs Survey – answers to some FAQs

1. **Who authorised the survey? How ‘official’ is it?** The survey is authorised, commissioned and paid for by Lancaster City Council (LCC), as part of their support to our community-based organisation, Lune Valley Community Land Trust (LV CLT). LCC received central government funding in 2017 to directly support and provide financial assistance to community groups to bring forward community led developments. Its methodology, format and questionnaire has been approved by LCC.

2. **What is its purpose – what will the information be used for?** The purpose is defined on the second page of the questionnaire: "This survey is designed to:

(A) assess the unmet housing needs of those who live in the Lune Valley Community Land Trust area or have a connection to the area e.g. employed in the area but don't live there, or previously have lived in the area and wish to return; and
(B) by consulting with residents on priorities for future new build housing, if any."

The survey's timing and focus on Halton is to assist LV CLT in detailed planning for providing more affordable homes in the village. The outline Mill Lane site plan and homes mix on the LV CLT website is provisional, to get a handle on what might be provided, and what it might cost. Our scheme will not get public money grant support unless it can be justified against real demonstrated need - hence the detailed survey. So, the survey results will directly determine what we go ahead with.

But it is a general survey, which could also serve future projects to secure greater benefit for local people; these would depend on the scale of the unmet need identified.

3. **If the interest is in Halton, why is the survey going to households in surrounding parishes?**

It is being sent to some surrounding parish areas, as well as Halton-with-Aughton, because we expect that there may be households in them who have links to Halton and would like to be living in Halton but cannot afford to do so. We also recognise that there is a shortage of affordable housing in surrounding areas.

The information gained can also be used to determine need in those other parishes too; our CLT name is 'Lune Valley..', not just 'Halton..', because in time we would like to help meet needs in more parishes in the Lune Valley.

4. **Why are some of the questions so ‘personal’?** The key issue is to identify detailed housing need numbers, and affordability, or not, and eligibility for assistance; so quite personal information is needed, including on income.

5. **How can we be sure of the privacy and security of our answers, under GDPR; why do you give all responses a reference number, rather than just a post code?** The survey company, arc4, are the ‘data controller, responsible for complying with the Data Protection Act and GDPR. They respond:

- We reiterate that we have made a clear promise to respondents that we will not pass on personal data to anyone or reveal the identity of the respondent to anyone in any circumstances. Also, we will diligently protect the data. However, we accept that the

reference number can cause concern to respondents, so let me explain why the reference number is used and how we maintain confidentiality.

- We need to assign a reference number to ensure that there is no corruption of data. Data is received in paper format and on-line. The paper responses must be processed into electronic data. This is done via scanning and character recognition software. However, things can go wrong - scanner mis-feeds etc. So, there is a verification process which relies upon a reference number.
- Why is the reference number linked to an address? We emphasise that this is a postal address not a person. To comply with GDPR, respondents have a right to later rescind or amend their information. The reference number is the only way of identifying a response to comply with any such request. arc4 is the data controller, and if such a request was received the company would amend the data and if requested return the paper questionnaire. So clearly the paper questionnaire must be identifiable.
- How is the link between an address and a reference number protected? The only person that holds this information is our data protection officer and the information is held securely.
- Why would any member of the public be sceptical about personal data being shared or sold, when the company has clearly stated that this will not happen? The answer lies in the GDPR. arc4 is a social research company. Its mission is to enhance society and public policy through providing evidence. Social research is not the same as market research, which is a commercial enterprise. If arc4 were to breach GDPR it would be out of business due to fines from the Information Controllers Office (ICO, with whom we must be registered), and loss of reputation.

6. **Do we have to respond?** It is up to each household to decide to respond or not, based on their 'informed consent' – or not. arc4 asks for personal information, and the reasons for seeking this are stated in the questionnaire and cover letter. It explains what it will do with the data, and arc4 gives a categorical assurance that the data will not be shared or passed on to anyone or any other organisation. (Some company T&Cs do say that data will be shared or sold. Not the case with arc4). The respondent is given a clear choice: if you don't consent to arc4 using the data in the way it says, or are sceptical of the reasons for the survey, or do not trust the company or its clients - then do not complete and return the questionnaire.

We do urge households to participate in this research. Everyone has a right to a decent home that they can afford. Robust and credible evidence that is collected by objective and impartial researchers is crucial if this aim is to be delivered. **The deadline for returning it is 1st July.**