

Bridport Town Council: Statement of Case

Bridport Town Council is against the appeal proposals for the same reasons as given in the Bridport Town Council objection submitted on 7 November 2024 and in the Dorset Council Officer's report of December 2024.

Bridport Town Council also has new evidence to submit arising from our Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan's (BANP) ongoing 'light-touch review'. New research, in the form of a Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) Supplement¹ of August 2025 shows the changing age distribution of our local area and how it differs substantially from the national norm (please see data in the Appendix below).

1. Abnormal ageing demographic and population imbalance

1.1 The current housing market in the Bridport Area has a particularly harsh impact on low-income and younger residents. In previous decades there was a higher number of people in the younger age groups (up to 50-59). However, Bridport's location and retail/cultural offer is attractive to people retiring or for second homes, which has led to a significant increase in the 65–84 age group.

1.2 Although the country generally has an ageing population, the bias of the age structure towards older people has become abnormally excessive. The pace of ageing of the area's population is stark: the cohort aged 65-84 has expanded by 29.6% in the past decade. The HNA itself² shows that this trend is set to continue.

1.3 Conversely, there is a significant decline in all other age groups, and in particular working age residents.

1.4 The increase in the older cohort is mainly driven by incomers to the area and not by the natural ageing of the resident population. This affects the local housing crisis because the majority of incomers will have been relatively wealthy retirees who are readily able to purchase open-market homes in a limited availability market. This pushes up house prices, making it even harder for those living in the area to purchase properties (e.g. as first homes or to house larger families), some inevitably being obliged to move away to more affordable areas.

1.5 The increasing bias of our ageing population is not sustainable. It is more important to build homes for young people to prevent them leaving the area, because not to do so will be to the lasting detriment of local society.

2. Affordable/social housing crisis for younger people

2.1 The demographic imbalance is of significant concern in terms of securing the future wellbeing of the Bridport area community. We are thus concerned that the current trend of housing provision is driving a significant imbalance in the Bridport community.

2.2 The declining numbers of working age residents is connected to the failing housing market and the lack of available affordable/social housing. More open-market homes are

¹ [HNA-Supplement-V1.pdf \(bridport-tc.gov.uk\)](#)

² [Bridport Housing Needs Assessment Final Report \(bridport-tc.gov.uk\)](#)

not needed, unless to fulfil the wishes of incomers to the area. People from elsewhere who make a choice to move here should not be the driver for influencing the type and size of new homes built. Rather, measures are urgently required to re-balance the provision of housing to meet all needs not just the retirement cohort.

2.3 Although there is no shortage of homes to buy, few local families can afford one. Even to rent privately takes at least half of a typical household's income, and there are not enough properties for affordable rent. The 2025 BANP HNA and its supplement demonstrate the affordability gap for both purchasing and renting and show that at the beginning of 2025 there were over 700 households on the local authority's housing waiting list within the area. The most pressing need in the area, where lower-quartile house prices are 11 times greater than lower-quartile household annual incomes, is housing which local people can afford, whether to buy or to securely rent³. For households on typical local incomes this represents the best chance they have of being decently housed.

2.4 Many younger people are living in insecure rented accommodation or as non-dependent adults at home (~ 600⁴). These factors contribute to the departure of young and less affluent people from the neighbourhood area.

2.5 As a town we are keen to encourage new residential development to specifically attract and retain young families to support local businesses and facilities such as schools etc. Care of the elderly is a major employment industry in the area. However, there is a lack of staff in this and other keyworker industries as they struggle to recruit because working age people cannot afford to live in the area. The need for affordable homes to house the less wealthy of all ages, and crucially those key workers providing essential support services for our aged population should, therefore be a priority.

2.6 We have a finite availability of land suitable for housing and, in particular, of town-centre, brownfield, and thus sustainable land. Dorset Council is in the process of formulating a new Local Plan and has so far only identified greenfield/National Landscape sites for housing on the outskirts of Bridport with little or no public transport links, narrow highways and little or no pedestrian/cycle paths. It is, therefore, imperative to identify more town-centre sites, such as this JC Phillips site for housing development. This end of South Street is set to become a centre for care of the elderly with a new reablement centre being built at the southern end and a new range of care accommodation in other, close-by, Council-owned sites. There is therefore a pressing need for affordable town-centre accommodation for keyworkers etc to staff these essential facilities for our existing elderly. The Churchill Planning application does not include any affordable/social housing and use of this land for retirement properties will prevent its use for real housing need.

3. Impact on health and care services

3.1 Bridport's health and care services are already under considerable strain. This is soon to be exacerbated by a major development of 760 homes at Foundry Lea which is currently under construction. Again, this development is likely to be populated by older migrants, creating a significant increase in the population and higher demand on services.

3.2 We have only one medical centre and senior partner, Dr Andy Finucane, submitted a statement to a Bridport Town Council meeting on 25 March 2025 about the likely impact of the Foundry Lea development on health and care provision. Key points raised included:

³ See 3. Affordability of Local Housing, Fig 1, p4, [HNA-Supplement-V1.pdf \(bridport-tc.gov.uk\)](#)

⁴See 5.2 and P17 HNA-Supplement-V1.pdf (bridport-tc.gov.uk)

- An expected 10% increase in demand for services.
- Funding for additional patients lagging behind service provision.
- Concerns about Medical Centre's ability to recruit into reception, phlebotomy, HCA and administrative roles due to high housing costs.

3.3 Pharmacy services in Bridport have been significantly affected by the sudden closure of Jhoots, placing a huge strain on the two remaining pharmacies. Bridport's MP Edward Morello raised this as an urgent question in parliament, which was discussed with the Minister for Health and Social Care on 15 October 2025.

3.4 The fact that the majority of the 73 new residents of the Churchill development are likely to be migrants from elsewhere in the country with an average age of 79 years, will inevitably lead to an even greater demand on these already over-stretched services.

3.5 Churchill do not provide any care services and residents will need to arrange their own in order to live independently at home. There is a high demand for these services and the four locally based care agencies all have vacancies for care staff. Again the issue around ability to recruit staff due to shortage of suitable housing and high costs are key.

4. Surplus of retirement living homes in Bridport

4.1 A summary retirement properties listed for sale in the greater Bridport area by Rightmove, on 21 October 2025 is as follows:

- 21 retirement homes were for sale within the greater Bridport area, which represents one in eight of all 168 homes of all types which were then for sale, and a quarter of all 1- and 2-bedroom homes..
- Many have been for sale for up to 12 months. Seven reduced in price within the past four weeks. Eight have definitely been for sale for over four months.
- The asking prices range between £80,000 to £340,000 leasehold.
- 7 flats of 38 in Gordon Court retirement flats (opposite to the proposed Churchill site), built in 2022, are empty. Of these, 5 are for sale, 2 for rent and are the only retirement flats for rent in Bridport (sublet).
- The asking prices for two of the flats in Gordon Court currently for sale show heavy depreciation, 17% and 29% in three years.

Appendix

An Ageing Community

The rate at which the Bridport area's age demographic is changing is alarming. Fig 1 shows the change in the number of residents in different age bands compared between the 2021 and 2011 censuses. It shows a significant shift in age distribution with a stark decline in numbers of those under 60 and a marked increase in those within the 60-79 age bracket — 1,000 more older people in a population of around 15,000.

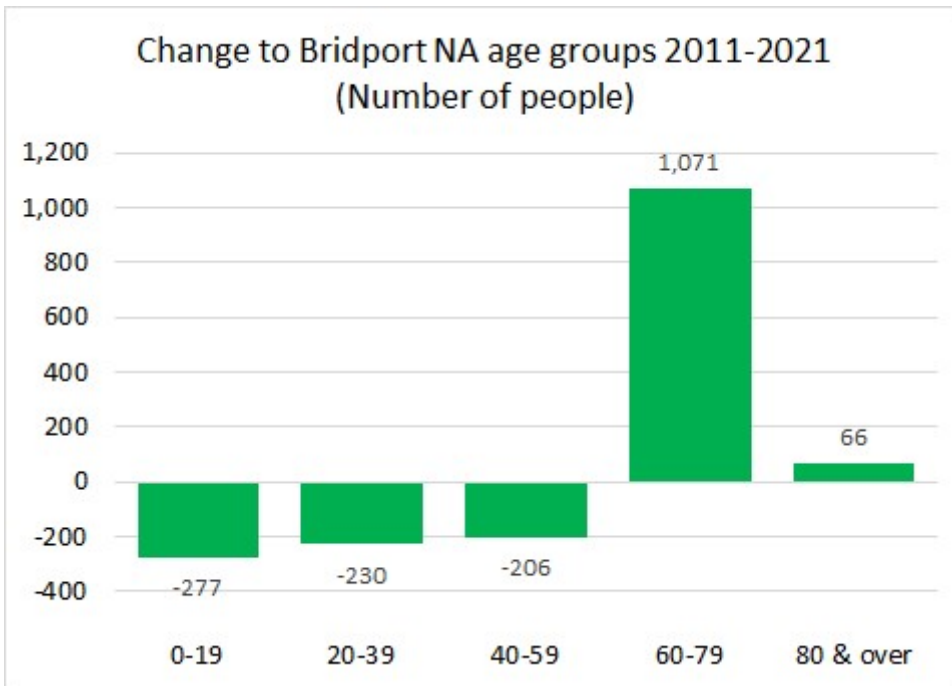


Fig 1 above - Recent change in age profile, 2011-2021 (from the BANP Housing Needs Assessment Supplement)

That this is a recent shift in the age profile of our area can be seen in Fig 2 which shows how many residents there have been in each 10-year band at the last three census counts. While in 2001 the spread was relatively even up to the 70-79 group, by 2021 there had been a leap in the numbers of older people at the same time as a shrinkage of the younger age groups.

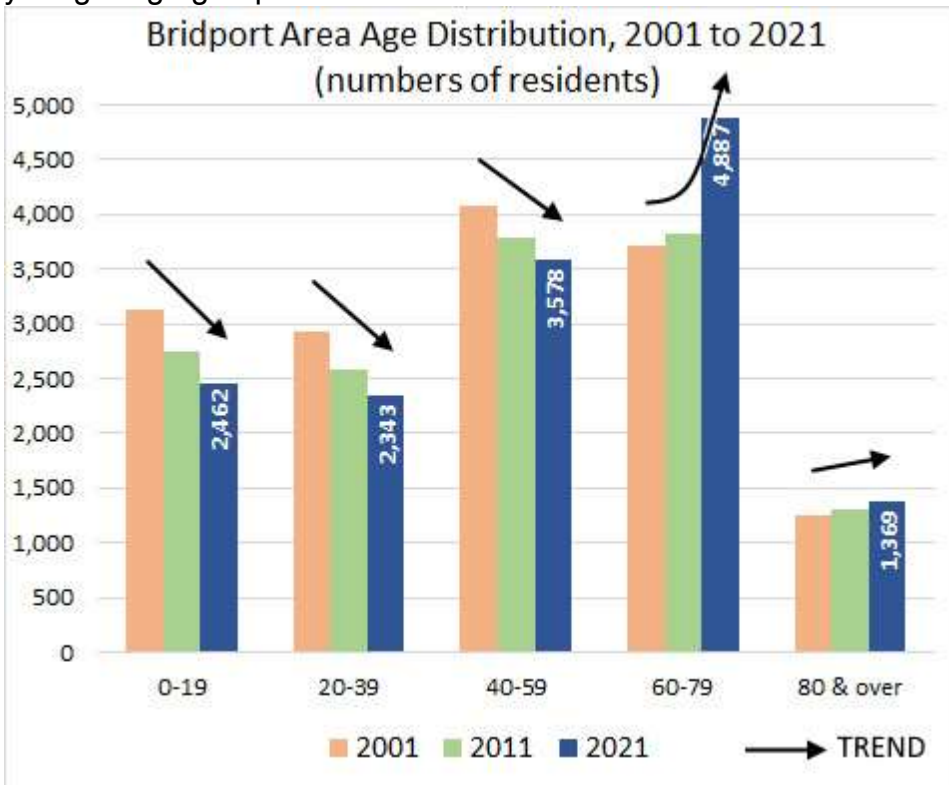


Fig 2 above - Decade-by-decade age profile change in Neighbourhood Area (from the BANP Housing Needs Assessment Supplement)

It is widely known that the overall population of England is ageing, and so some increase towards the upper end of the age spectrum is to be expected, but the Bridport Area's age profile is exceptional as illustrated in below.

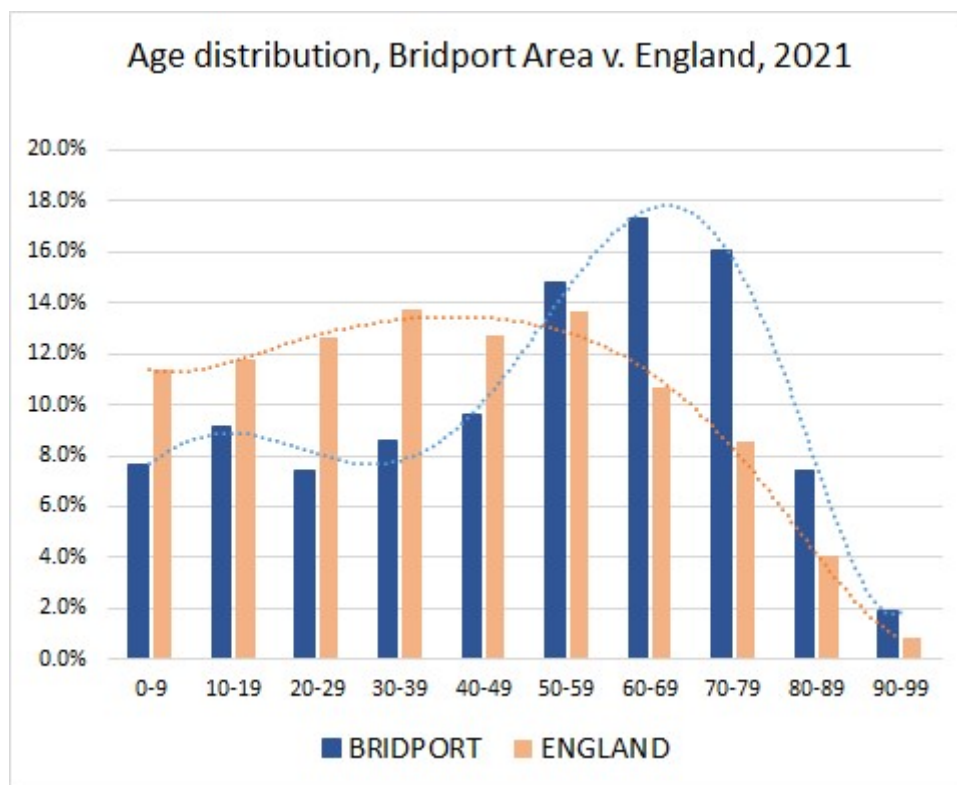


Fig 3 above - Comparison of national age profile with Neighbourhood Area (from the BANP Housing Needs Assessment Supplement)

Between 2001-11 there was a decrease in younger adults, 25 to 44, but an increase in adults 45 and older. Ten years later, this trend has become embedded as a large upsurge in people of retirement age, but a decrease in every one of the younger age bands. The shift in the age profile of residents can be seen in the alternative view of the same original data shown in the Figure below, this time in 10-year age bands as per figure 3 on page 5.

The 65-84 age group incomers impact the housing market prices and availability in a harmful way. It will be difficult to recover from this, since the higher prices become embedded as the new norm.

The AECOM HNA⁵ states:

Para 5.3.3 — ‘The proportionate decline in the younger population, particularly those aged 0-44 (representing the bulk of working age adults and families with young children), may present a future challenge to the balance and vibrancy of the local community and economy.’

Para 6.5.10 — ‘...it may not be considered prudent to prioritise the potential demand from older people to the exclusion of other groups, such as those in need of Affordable Housing, young families and others.’

Para 4.5.14 — Affordable Homes Shortfall — estimates the need for Affordable Homes of all types is 68-69 per year.

⁵ [Bridport Housing Needs Assessment Final Report \(bridport-tc.gov.uk\)](http://bridport-tc.gov.uk)

Adding to the case for an increase in supply of smaller, cheaper properties is the relatively large number of nominally independent young adults still living in the parental home. The 2021 ONS census identified these households, making it easy to calculate how many there are in the Neighbourhood Area. If they are unable to find somewhere locally, then the likelihood is increased that they will leave the Bridport Area and further depress the number of residents in the younger age groups.

Household composition	2021	
	number	%
Total: All households	7,181	
Single family household: Married or civil partnership couple: All children non-dependent	322	4.5
Single family household: Cohabiting couple family: All children non-dependent	38	0.5
Single family household: Lone parent family: All children non-dependent	245	3.4
Total, households with all children non-dependent	605	8.4

Source: ONS Census 2021, Table TS003

Section 8 of the HNA supplement includes ONS projections which show the annual rate of rise of population to be only 0.52% (around 70 people, of all ages). The Churchill Homes will thus be only for migrant retirees, which is contra-evidence for housing need for this demographic.

To further emphasise the inaccessibility of housing and the need for maximising the need for new affordable/social housing, the Figure below shows what level of household income is needed to access different categories of housing in the Bridport area. The message from the figures is that all open-market homes, whether new or not, require the buyer to have above-average household income. More damagingly, this applies to almost all private rented properties too, which comprise half of the rented property stock of the NA⁶. In particular, it illustrates that in order to retain young, single people starting out on their own on a low to modest income, social rented homes are needed as a major part of the solution.

⁶ See Table 4.2 [Bridport Housing Needs Assessment Final Report \(bridport-tc.gov.uk\)](https://bridport-tc.gov.uk)