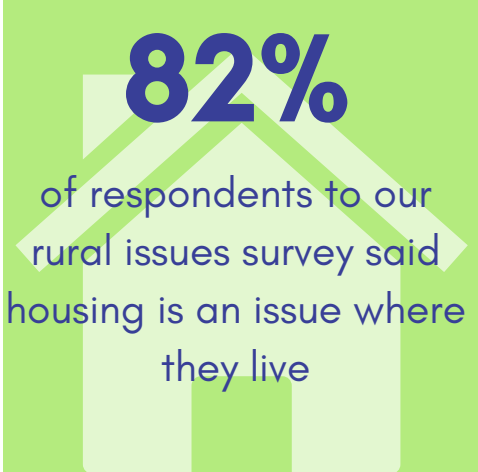


Rural Housing: The key to thriving communities

The availability of affordable housing for local people which meets their needs underpins the **sustainability** of rural communities and **mitigates against** outward migration.

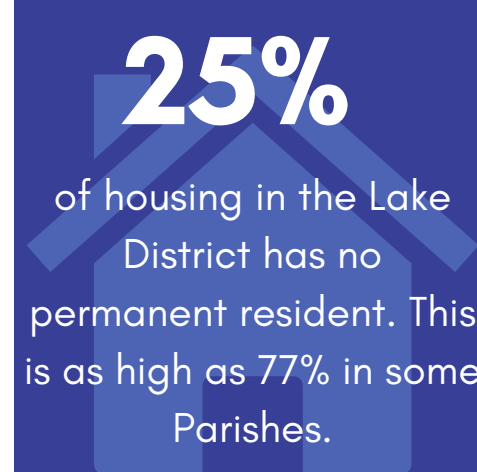
Yet, rural people in Cumbria consistently tell us:

- “Affordable housing” is not always affordable in **real-terms**.
- Second homes and holiday lets are **limiting housing stock** and **raising prices**.
- Communities are being **hollowed out** by local people moving away to find housing.
- Developers are **reneging** on affordable housing commitments.
- House building is often **insensitive** to local needs and context, with too many large homes being built and a lack of infrastructure to support them.
- **Secure, affordable long-term** rental properties are hard to come by



82%

of respondents to our rural issues survey said housing is an issue where they live



25%

of housing in the Lake District has no permanent resident. This is as high as 77% in some Parishes.



34%

of rural parishes have housing stock where the lower-quartile purchase price is unaffordable for >66% of households.

The Importance of Rural Housing

Economic Growth

“ There are no rental properties in the area – anything is used as a holiday let as it is more profitable. We are short of workers in the town, but have nowhere for them to live. Being inside the national park, it is a prime destination for retired people, which drives up house prices for purchase, but doesn't add to the working population. ”

A shortage of affordable housing is limiting business recruitment and retention of workers. High housing costs also leave less disposable income to spend locally.

- In over **1/3 of rural Parishes**, the lower-quartile house price is unaffordable (based upon 3.5x income and 10% mortgage) **for over 66% of households**. In some areas, **up to 90% of households** cannot afford the lower-quartile house price.
- For housing in the Lake District National Park, the lower-quartile earning to house price affordability ratio is **13.2**, compared to **9.2** for England as a whole.

Wider skills base. More support for local businesses. Greater economic growth.

Sustaining communities

“ Many houses in our village are second homes that are used a few times a year & mostly stand empty. These properties are preventing families from contributing to rural schools, businesses & public transport use. [...] Our village is like a retirement community as young people have been priced out of the housing stock ”

Communities are being hollowed out by second homes taking up existing housing stock and pricing local people out of the housing market. This impacts the year-round viability of shops and services and engenders a shortage of community volunteers.

- **25%** of housing in the Lake District has **no permanent resident** with some rural Parishes having as much as **77%** of housing stock in non-permanent occupation.
- It is estimated that there are **9,616 AirBnBs** in the Lake District with these being booked for only around **58% of the year**.

Improved resilience. Reduced outward migration. Greater community cohesion.

The Importance of Rural Housing

Population decline and ageing communities

“As a younger person, I am unfortunately already having to look into moving elsewhere because I simply cannot afford to live around here. It's truly disappointing because I absolutely love where I live and if I could, I'd rather stay here with my family. ”

Rural young people are leaving the area, or unable to move here due to a lack of affordable housing to buy or rent. This compounds the challenges of our ageing population, increasing pressure on sparse rural healthcare services and affecting the viability of rural schools.

- Cumbria has fewer young people aged 20-24 (**4.7% vs. 6.0%**) than the national average. **31%** of people in Cumbria will be **aged 65+ by 2043** compared to **24% in England**
- Approximately **30%** of housing stock in rural areas is made up of 1 or 2 bedroom dwellings, compared to **39%** across England and **34%** in Cumbria.

Lower youth outward migration. Talent retention. More skilled workers.

Health and Wellbeing

“We would like to downsize and stay in the area but there is no suitable quality affordable housing at all. ”

A lack of affordable accessible and/or smaller properties prevents older residents from downsizing into safer and easier to maintain properties leading many to develop health conditions as a result of living in unfit housing.

- 1.47 million northern homes are considered non-decent, with over **1/3** of these housing over-60s residents.
- **1 in 5 older people** in the UK are trapped in their current homes because of a shortage of accessible housing.
- The annual cost to health and social care services from falls associated with poor or unsuitable housing is estimated to be **£1.2 billion**.

Improved wellbeing. Reduced strain on services. Enhanced healthy ageing.

Five ideas for ACTION

We are asking all mayoral candidates to commit to ensuring that local people can afford to live in the communities where they work, contribute and belong.

1

Ensure new housing developments meet community needs.

Prioritise developments which support local people to stay in their community.

2

Address empty and non-permanent dwellings.

Use statutory powers to monitor, regulate, and restrict housing which is not in permanent occupation.

3

Build more rural affordable housing.

Prioritise the development of truly affordable housing for local people.

4

Include a rural housing chapter in the Spatial Development Strategy.

Make rural housing delivery a core commitment so smaller rural areas do not miss out.

5

Integrate rural expertise into decision-making bodies.

Draw upon existing expertise and services to build policies which genuinely benefit rural communities.

Ideas for ACTION

Ensure new housing developments meet community needs.

- **Build more 1-2 bedroom homes:** Ensure new developments contain an adequate number of smaller properties including 1-2 bedroom starter homes as well as single-level, and accessible accommodation to help older residents downsize out of underoccupied and unsuitable family-sized homes.
- **Enforce local occupancy clauses:** Ensure local occupancy clauses do not block locals who have temporarily left an area to pursue an opportunity (e.g., leaving for a graduate scheme for 3 years) from returning to their community.
- **Rural infrastructure guarantee:** Align future housing developments in rural areas with investment in infrastructure, energy, and connectivity to ensure communities can support new development and remain sustainable.

Address empty and non-permanent dwellings.

- **Impose Article 4:** Prevent holiday lets from being created without planning approval. Use these powers to regulate the number of holiday lets in an area to prevent the hollowing out of communities.
- **Introduce a register for holiday lets:** Introduce a mandatory licensing and registration scheme for short-term lets.
- **Annual impact reporting:** Monitor and report annually on the impact of holiday-let registrations and second homes on housing supply to enable measures to be taken in affected areas and their effects to be quantified.
- **Increase taxation on second homes:** Raise council tax premiums on second homes to disincentivise buyers and bolster investment in new and improved social housing.
- **Bring empty homes back into use:** Ensure Empty Homes Programmes are properly resourced and supported by the Mayoral Combined Authority to support local authorities to identify and return empty and/or derelict properties back to permanent occupation, increasing housing stock without requiring further development land.

Ideas for ACTion

Build more rural affordable housing.

- **Prioritise affordable and social housing:** Deliver 10% of new social and affordable housing (including social rent, affordable rent, shared ownership, and first homes) in small rural areas to ensure rural areas are not left out.
- **Redefine 'affordable':** Adopt a definition of affordable housing based upon lower-quartile local earnings, rather than market price to ensure local people are not priced out of 'affordable' builds because of price inflation.
- **Close the loopholes:** Tighten conditions and improve viability assessments so that developers are prevented from reneging on affordable housing commitments once planning permission has been given.

Include a rural housing chapter in the Spatial Development Strategy.

- **Dedicated rural targets:** Allocate specific targets for rural housing delivery to ensure growth is evenly spread across the county.
- **Realise the potential of Rural Exception Site policy:** Where rural affordable housing can be built on small, unallocated sites to meet local needs this should be recognised as an important contribution to meeting housing targets.
- **Support community-led housing:** Use the Spatial Development Strategy to establish a Rural Housing Investment Fund. This will support community-led housing schemes and land trusts through grant funding to deliver affordable homes, protected for future generations

Integrate rural expertise into decision-making bodies.

- **Work with the Rural Housing Enabler Service:** Draw upon the invaluable expertise and service offered by Rural Housing Enablers to understand the needs for affordable housing in a community and unlock rural exception sites.
- **Include rural advisors on Combined Authority boards:** Invite rural representatives to join Combined Authority boards to ensure policies and decisions are effectively rural-proofed.