

## **Is There a Hidden Housing Need in Your Village? See What the Data Says About Your Parish**

### **Susan Tron MBE, Rural Housing Enabler**

You might not think we've got a housing crisis here in rural County Durham – but the data tells a different story.

From Teesdale to Weardale and beyond, too many local people are being priced out of their own villages. Rents are high, houses are scarce, and young people are moving away because they simply can't afford to stay. At the same time, older residents wanting to downsize are finding it hard to stay local – because the right homes just aren't available.

In fact, we've lost nearly 3,000 affordable homes across the county in the last ten years. That's thousands of people with nowhere to go. And the problem is growing – in 2017, the average number of bids on a social housing property was 4. Now? It's 44. In some parts of the Dales, it's as high as 173.

### **But new housing is coming. And we need to shape it together.**

The government has committed to boosting housing supply – and County Durham's target has increased by 53% under new planning guidelines. That means more homes are on the way. The question is: will they be the right ones for our rural communities?

That's where *you* come in.

Durham Community Action is here to help local people and parish councils understand what their area needs – and influence what gets built. As the Rural Housing Enabler, I am working with communities across the county to uncover hidden housing needs and support neighbourhoods to plan for the future.

You might be surprised by what the data shows in your area. Take Middleton-in-Teesdale, for example – 90% of residents there can't afford to rent a house at market prices. A high number of homes are under-occupied, second homes make up almost 15% of housing stock, and the need for affordable homes is growing every year.

### **Request a Parish Profile for Your Community**

If you're not sure what the housing need looks like where you live, a parish profile is a great place to start. These handy summaries pull together key local housing data to paint a picture of affordability, availability and demographic change – and they can help spark really useful conversations in your community.

I can create a parish profile for your area – just get in touch to request one. It's a simple way to get informed and start thinking about what your village needs now, and in the future.



## What else can you do?

- **Get in touch with me, Susan Tron**, to talk about housing in your parish.
- **Look at the latest data** to see what the need really is – it might be higher than you think.
- **Consider a local Housing Needs Survey** to make sure decisions about new housing reflect what your community actually needs.
- **Explore how a Neighbourhood Plan** can give you a say in shaping future development.
- **Get Real-life inspiration**

We recently spoke to *Adrian Hinchcliffe, Chair of Longhoughton Parish Council* in Northumberland about how his village recognised the need for more affordable homes and worked with others to make progress. You can watch the video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Y4AqA4OhgY>

This isn't about building for the sake of it. It's about making sure our villages remain vibrant, welcoming places where people of all ages can live, work, and thrive. Let's make sure rural voices are heard – and rural needs are met.

To learn more or to start a conversation, visit [Durham Community Action](#) or contact me directly at [susan.tron@durhamcommunityaction.org.uk](mailto:susan.tron@durhamcommunityaction.org.uk)