

4 Providing housing

Policy H17: Scale of housing provision

Land will be made available for new housing until 2016 by the granting of planning permission for the following scale of new dwellings (net additions):

Annual Average Dwellings permitted during period of:

	2002 -2006	2006 -2011	2011 -2016
City of Carlisle	250	250	250
North Cumbria			
Allerdale	40	40	40
Carlisle	65	65	65
Furness and West Cumbria			
Allerdale	210	210	210
Barrow	110	110	110
Copeland	190	190	190
South Lakeland	70	70	70
South and East Cumbria			
Eden	170	170	170
South Lakeland	195	195	195

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- 4.1 The development of land and conversion of buildings for housing is an important issue that the Structure Plan has to address. Sufficient housing must be available to meet the needs of Cumbria. It requires building new homes to accommodate an increasing number of households. This is due in part to people living longer, and in smaller households. It is important that new housing is located where it reduces travel and where it can best help sustain existing communities.

Housing Land

- 4.2 Policy UR7 of the Regional Spatial Strategy requires 1170 dwellings a year to be built in Cumbria. This is below the trend of recent years. The Policy reflects the intention of the Regional Spatial Strategy to reduce the amount of people moving into Eden and South Lakeland from outside the area. It also reflects predictions that as the number of single person households stabilises, household growth will be lower in the future.
- 4.3 There is a time lag between Local Planning Authorities granting permission for new housing and house builders completing any houses permitted. A number of factors such as the level of economic activity, interest rates and land prices will influence how quickly sites are developed. As a result the rate at which houses are built is not directly in the control of the Local Planning Authority. However, the rate at which planning permissions are granted is. The latter is the key to implementing policy UR7 of the Regional Spatial Strategy.
- 4.4 In the short term existing planning permissions are likely to generate more than 1170 dwelling a year. However to achieve the Regional Spatial Strategy targets in the future, planning permissions will need to be granted for 1300 additional dwellings a year. This assumes about 10% of new permissions will not be implemented. The take up of planning permissions will require monitoring to ensure that the desired building rate is achieved.
- 4.5 An annual target of planning permissions will be difficult to meet precisely. It can be affected by the scale of development proposals being considered, downturns in the housing market or a particular need to bring forward housing land to match localised labour shortages. The annual requirement will therefore be considered as an average, to be viewed in the context of 4 to 5 year time periods and reviewed annually. Control will be needed to ensure land is available at the end of each period. Applications for very large housing sites may need to be phased and counted towards more than one year supply.

Figure 5 Recent house building activity in Cumbria

	Number of houses built (1996 to 2002)	Houses with planning permission at March 2002
Allerdale	1657	1845
Barrow	674	749
Carlisle	2022	1815
Copeland	1228	952
Eden	1284	1100
South Lakeland	2588	1431
Cumbria	9453	7892

Source: CCC Housing Land Availability 2002

- 4.6 The proposed scale of new housing in the county¹⁰ reflects the emphasis of Policies ST8-ST12 and is judged to be within the environmental capacity of the area. The focus of housing development will be the key service centres identified in Policy ST5. The allocation for South and East Cumbria is set to meet local needs in accordance with the Regional Spatial Strategy and all housing should be secured by planning condition or obligation for occupation only by people with a local connection to the area consistent with ST11. Local Development Frameworks will need to define 'local' consistent with paragraph 2.31. To protect the National Park from further expansion of open-market housing detrimental to the landscape and to the character of individual settlements, no housing allocation has been made. Within the National Park housing will only be provided to meet need in the locality, including provision by a registered social landlord, and will be regarded as additional to the annual requirement.
- 4.7 Specialised health or educational accommodation will be considered separately, under Policy L56, and will not count towards the annual requirement. Holiday accommodation controlled by planning condition or planning obligation to prevent occupation as a permanent home will also not count towards the requirement. However, any successful application to remove such conditions or variation of the obligation which results in a unit that could be occupied permanently, would count towards the annual requirement for planning permission. **Policy H17.**

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Completion rates and the take up of planning permissions will be monitored to ensure building rates are sufficiently high to meet the objectives of Policies ST8 to 11 and are broadly compatible with the Regional Spatial Strategy.

The unique characteristics of the Lake District National Park means that housing will only be permitted to meet the needs of the locality, in line with Policy ST12. No specific level of provision is set within the National Park but any permissions that are granted within the Park will not be counted against district council targets.

Policy H18: Targets for the recycling of land and buildings

During the period 2002 to 2016 at least 50% of housing constructed in Cumbria should use previously developed land and buildings. To achieve this, the following local targets will apply to planning permissions granted in the period 2002 to 2016:

	%
City of Carlisle	65
North Cumbria	
Allerdale	40
Carlisle	40
Furness and West Cumbria	
Allerdale	70
Barrow	85
Copeland	70
South Lakeland	50
South and East Cumbria	
Eden	30
South Lakeland	50

4.8 A priority for the location of new housing is the effective reuse of existing buildings and previously developed land in accordance with the sequential approach outlined in Policy ST3. Targets¹⁰ for the recycling of land and buildings have been set across the county. These take into account the availability of previously used land identified in Urban Potential (Capacity) Studies and the National Land Use Database. The targets apply to planning permissions granted from the 1 April 2002. When set against the contribution arising from sites already with planning permission at 1 April 2002, they are in accord with the target in Policy UR4 of the Regional Spatial Strategy that at least 50% of all new housing in Cumbria should use previously developed land and buildings.

4.9 To meet these targets Local Planning Authorities are required to:

- review existing greenfield allocations to make sure that these are necessary and that suitable previously developed land could not be identified in preference;
- secure policies that manage the release of land and ensure that decisions on planning applications, including the renewal of permission, give preference to existing buildings and the reuse of previously developed land;
- consider whether other measures such as land reclamation and compulsory purchase are necessary to ensure that previously developed land is brought forward and is suitable for development; and
- achieve higher densities than in the past in order to maximise the potential of previously developed land and minimise the take up of greenfield sites.

4.10 Not all existing buildings or previously developed land will be suitable for housing development. Sites inconsistent with Policies ST5, ST6 and ST7 will not be given priority over more sustainably located green field sites. Other factors, such as the site's nature conservation value, will also need to be considered. Where development of green field land is required, Local Authorities may wish to consider whether such sites should be allocated for affordable housing or 'eco' housing to reap the benefit of reduced site development costs.

4.11 Planning Policy Guidance Note 3 'Housing' excludes land and buildings in agricultural use from the definition of previously developed land. In the past the conversion of former agricultural buildings to dwellings has made an important contribution to the housing stock in Cumbria. It has also brought many traditional buildings, which contribute to the distinctive character of the landscape, into beneficial use. Whilst the reuse of appropriate agricultural buildings located within the settlement boundaries of key service centres or towns and villages identified within Local Development Frameworks for housing will be acceptable, consistent with the sequential test outlined in Policy ST3, they will not count towards the targets for previously developed land. **Policy H18.**

Affordable housing

4.12 Research¹¹ on house prices relative to local incomes across the county has shown that in many areas access to affordable housing is increasingly difficult for many local people. A problem is the high cost of housing in areas such as the National Park and South and East Cumbria relative to average incomes. This means that those people who would normally be in a position to purchase a home of their own find they are unable to do so. It also makes it difficult for social housing providers who have to compete with private house builders to acquire available housing sites and properties.

4.13 Where, outside the National Park, local surveys demonstrate a lack of affordable housing, Local Development Frameworks will require developers on sites of more than 0.4 hectares or in developments of 10 or more dwellings, to provide a proportion of dwellings on the site for affordable housing for local people. Where considered necessary to achieve targets set out within the plan, lower thresholds should be incorporated by the Local Planning Authority in the Local Development Framework. This is likely to be required in South and East Cumbria. This proportion can be significant where there is clear and up to date evidence of need. This policy applies to both housing sites allocated in Local Development Frameworks and to windfall housing proposals assessed against normal planning policy. Small sites in rural areas that would not otherwise be considered for housing may be released for affordable housing as an exception to normal planning policies. Such housing will need to be in keeping with its surroundings and development of the site should not harm other interests of acknowledged importance. Housing provided in this way will be expected to meet a demonstrated local need.

4.14 Local Development Frameworks should not prescribe a particular form of tenure for affordable housing but they will need to set out the arrangement for ensuring that any houses provided should remain available to meet affordable and local needs in perpetuity. Local Development Frameworks will need to define how affordability and local needs will be assessed through references to such factors as level of incomes and their relationship to house prices or rents, rather than a particular price or rental level. Locality will also need to be clearly defined in a manner that will not prevent beneficial development. This is normally by reference to a cascading system. For affordable housing this usually begins by reference to people in the immediate village/town or parish and then tiers outwards. See also paragraph 2.31 which addressed local occupancy in South and East Cumbria.

Policy H19.

Policy H19: Affordable housing outside the Lake District National Park

Affordable housing to meet proven local need will be provided through:

1. the provision of an element of affordable housing as part of residential or mixed use development of sites of more than 0.4 hectares or 10 or more dwellings,
or
2. the development of affordable housing in rural sites considered an exception to normal planning policy contained in Local Development Frameworks

Adequate arrangements must be made to ensure that the housing remains available on an affordable basis for local people in perpetuity.

Policy H20: Housing in the Lake District National Park

Within the Lake District National Park housing development will only be permitted where the development is of a scale and type which is designed to contribute to the identified housing needs of the locality and:

1. it is secured by condition, or legal agreement for occupation only by local persons, or
2. it comprises a scheme to provide social housing whereby occupancy is secured, in perpetuity, to local persons in housing need, being a scheme usually promoted by a registered social landlord.

The term 'housing development' includes the provision of dwellings resulting from the conversions of residential and non-residential buildings and new dwellings resulting from sub-division of dwellings.

Policy H21: Allocation of sites within the Lake District National Park for social housing

Within the Lake District National Park sites will be identified for social housing to meet an identified need where:

1. they are appropriate in scale to an established community, and
2. their development respects the landscape setting, character and form of the larger settlements or villages to which they relate.

Permission will be granted for the development of sites identified under this policy only for schemes whereby occupancy is secured, in perpetuity, to local persons in housing need, being schemes usually promoted by a registered social landlord.

Housing in the Lake District National Park to meet local needs

4.15 House prices are determined by a variety of external factors. The problem of affordable housing is acute in the Lake District, where extensive house building would have an unacceptable impact on the landscape. Consequently, a special suite of policies has been designed with the aim of maintaining and strengthening local communities threatened by an acutely distorted local housing market. The first of these policies ensures that all new housing is for occupation by local persons. This includes new dwellings in the open countryside for which there is a proven and essential need (normally for a worker in agriculture) which cannot be met in any other way. 'Local' will be defined in the Local Development Framework and linked to residency or employment in the area. In order to ensure housing is of a scale and type to meet the identified needs of the locality it will be essential that both price and occupancy are controlled. The Lake District National Park Authority is currently preparing a Supplementary Planning Document of Demonstrating Housing Need, which explains the implementation of this policy. **Policy H20.**

4.16 The second of these policies is designed to ensure that an adequate supply of social housing is available to meet identified local needs. To direct developers to suitable sites and to encourage private sector owners to bring them forward, it is proposed that sites exclusively for social housing should be identified in the Local Development Framework. **Policy H21.**

4.17 The above approach should not rule out the development of social housing on other sites if a local need for it has been identified. Social housing is housing of an adequate standard which is provided to rent (or on shared ownership or shared equity basis) at below market cost for households in need by local authorities or registered social landlords. In each case the local need would have to be sufficient to justify any negative impacts of the development. **Policy H22.**

Housing renewal

4.18 The majority of housing needs will be met by the existing housing stock. It is important that it is in a fit condition and meets modern requirements. Compared to much of the region the quality of housing in Cumbria is generally good with below average vacancy levels.

4.19 There are, however, isolated problem areas of housing that are either unfit or in locations where there is no longer a demand. Unless there is a net gain, any housing replaced would not count towards the housing requirement identified in Policy H17, but should be of a design and type to meet current needs and secure regeneration and confidence in the area. In some circumstances the replacement of cleared housing may not be appropriate and in these instances consideration of other alternative uses including amenity space will be necessary. Where clearance or redevelopment results in a net loss of housing, Local Development Frameworks should use the windfall housing gain that so arises to support regeneration activity and to better balance housing markets. Local Development Frameworks may in addition need to manage the housing requirement identified in Policy H17 to encourage renewal.

4.20 Within Furness and West Cumbria and parts of the City of Carlisle there is a significant supply of older terraced housing, but this is increasingly bypassed as purchasers favour new homes. As a consequence some older property is becoming difficult to sell or is becoming disused. In many cases these buildings are a valuable resource. Their contribution to the character and heritage of an area needs to be fully evaluated. Clearance may not be an option and initiatives to bring property back into beneficial use should be encouraged. This could include refurbishment for social housing or promoting alternative business uses compatible with a living environment. It will also be important to manage the release of land for new housing to avoid the market becoming oversupplied. Good housing is particularly important to regeneration in Barrow-in-Furness and West Cumbria. To retain existing residents and attract new people into the area it is necessary to be able to offer them housing choice in both older property and new houses. **Policy H23.**

Policy H22: Exception sites within the Lake District National Park

Within the Lake District National Park permission will be granted for housing development on land which would not otherwise be released for housing only for schemes designed to provide social housing where occupancy is secured, in perpetuity, to local persons in housing need, being schemes usually promoted by a registered social landlord.

Policy H23: Housing renewal

Measures to improve the existing housing stock through housing refurbishment, renewal, and clearance will be supported particularly within the City of Carlisle and Furness and West Cumbria. Clearance will be undertaken where there are problems with housing that is unfit, beyond economic repair, life expired, unsuitable for modern living, in areas of extremely low demand or it is necessary for the better functioning of local housing markets or the overall improvement and regeneration of an area.

Housing scheme in Grasmere
Photo by Lake District National Park Authority

