

**Housing Needs Survey
Gainford & Langton Parish
February 2026
Report compiled by Susan Tron,
County Durham Rural Housing Enabler**



Thank you to all those who replied to the questionnaire.

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Part Two – Data from those in housing need.

This information has been removed from the Summary Report to protect the identities of those requiring housing. It includes financial information, and the type and tenure of housing required. This information has been used to support the Assessment of Need and Recommendations.

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Appendix

- **Appendix 1** Site suggestions
- **Appendix 2** Rural Affordable Housing Model secondary data – commissioned by Durham RHE Programme and undertaken by ARC4. Parish Profiles of Stanhope.
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Background

Durham Community Action is recognised as the leading infrastructure organisation for County Durham; we provide advice, support and assistance to frontline groups operating in the Voluntary and Community Sector and to various communities of interest.

We operate across the whole of County Durham and enjoy national influence along with 37 other county-based organisations working across rural England to help communities to help themselves through our membership of [ACRE](#) (Action with Communities in Rural England). Our staff work closely with groups and with individual volunteers to identify their needs, help find resources and provide the support and encouragement that local people need to make things happen for themselves.

We are a registered charity (no.229119) and a company limited by guarantee (no. 309329). We are managed by a board of trustees to ensure that the organisation meets its objectives, is stable, financially sound, and is well managed. We currently have eleven trustees, all volunteers; one-third of trustees retire by rotation each year and are eligible to stand again should they wish to do so.

DCA employs a Rural Housing Enabler and Community Led Housing advisor to work with rural communities, usually through the parish council, to identify if there is a need for a small development of affordable housing for local people. This post has been funded through DEFRA'S Rural Housing Enabling Programme April 2025 to March 2026.

Context and Methodology

From October 2025 to December 2025, Durham Community Action and their Rural Housing Enabler, (Susan Tron), carried out a Housing Needs Survey in Stanhope Parish. The aim of this survey was to determine the existing and future levels of housing need for local people. The survey pack was posted to all residents which included a covering letter, a questionnaire and a freepost envelope for forms to be returned directly to the RHE at no cost to the respondent. The survey was also available on Survey Monkey so residents could complete it online. It was widely publicised on social media with three paid for adverts on Facebook.

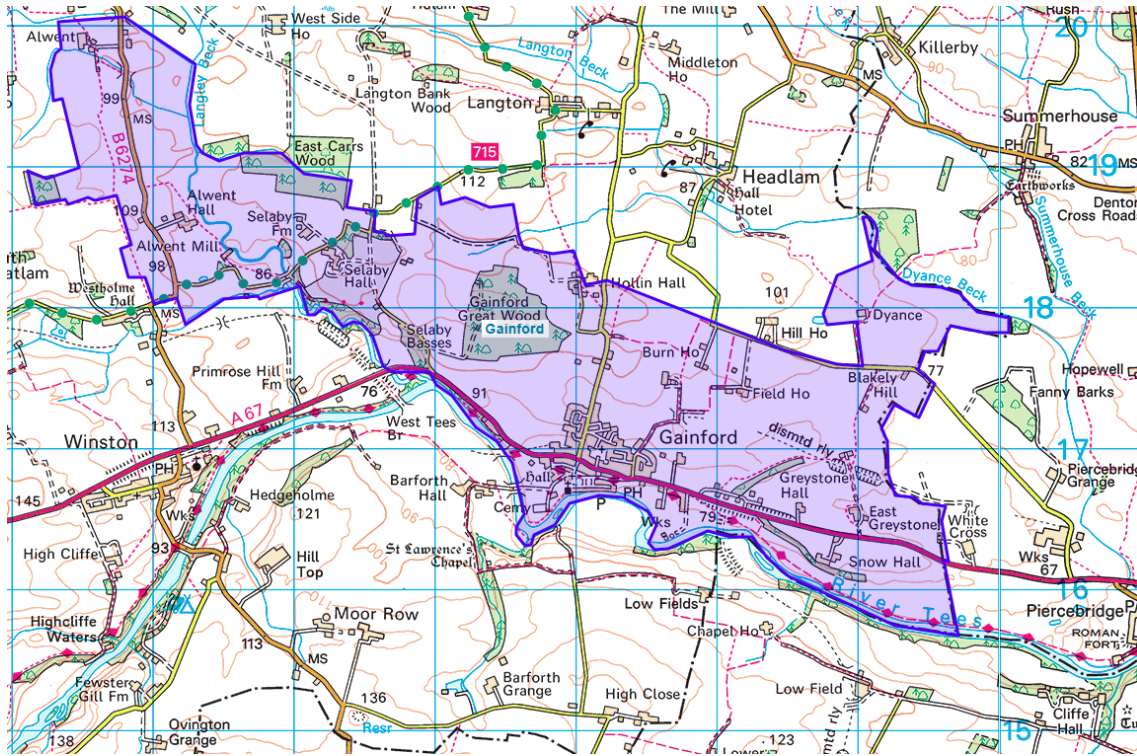
The survey was divided into two sections. Part 1 contained questions on a resident's current housing, the type of development potentially required for the area, and household composition and was to be completed by everyone regardless of need. Households experiencing or expecting to be in housing need were also asked to complete Part 2 of the survey. This gave residents the opportunity to provide more detailed information.

Additional hard copy forms were made available, on request, from the Rural Housing Enabler. The closing date for the survey was 31st December 2025.

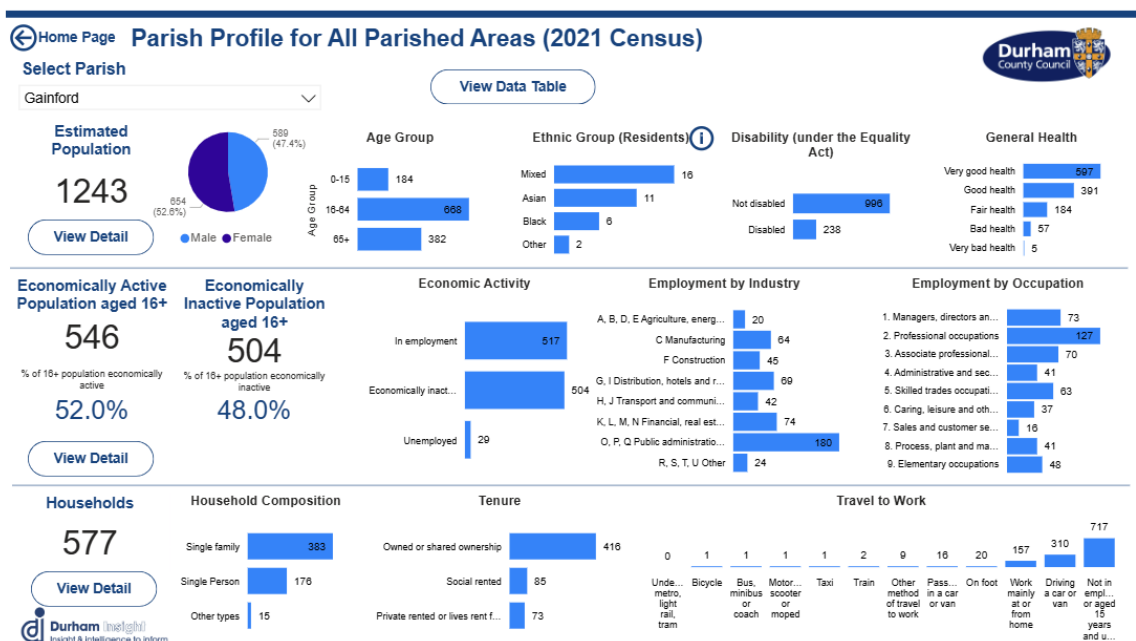
The Parish of Gainford

Gainford, County Durham, is in the North East of England, seven miles south-west of the town of Shildon, eight miles west of the major town of Darlington, 113 miles south-east of Edinburgh, and 220 miles north of London. Gainford lies just north-west of the North Yorkshire border. Gainford falls within the unitary authority of County Durham.

Gainford Parish Map



Census Data



Durham Key Options Data - 4 individuals registered: Refers to where applying households are residing (at point of registering) in a given parish.

AGED UNDER 65		Gainford			
BEDROOMS (MIN REQ)	DWELLING TYPE (PREFERENCES)				
	Houses	Flats	Bungalow	TOTAL	
1-BED	0	2	0	2	
2-BED	0	0	0	0	
3-BED	1	0	0	1	
4+-BED	0	0	0	0	
TOTAL	1	2	0	3	

BEDROOMS	DWELLING TYPE (%)			
	Houses	Flats	Bungalow	TOTAL
1-BED	0.0%	66.7%	0.0%	66.7%
2-BED	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
3-BED	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%
4+-BED	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
TOTAL	33.3%	66.7%	0.0%	100.0%

Source: Housing Register
(-) no data

AGED OVER 65		Gainford			
BEDROOMS (MIN REQ)	DWELLING TYPE (PREFERENCES)				
	Houses	Flats	Bungalow	TOTAL	
1-BED	0	0	1	1	
2-BED	0	0	0	0	
3-BED	0	0	0	0	
4+-BED	-	-	0	0	
TOTAL	0	0	1	1	

BEDROOMS	DWELLING TYPE (%)			
	Houses	Flats	Bungalow	TOTAL
1-BED	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
2-BED	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
3-BED	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
4+-BED			0.0%	0.0%
TOTAL	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%

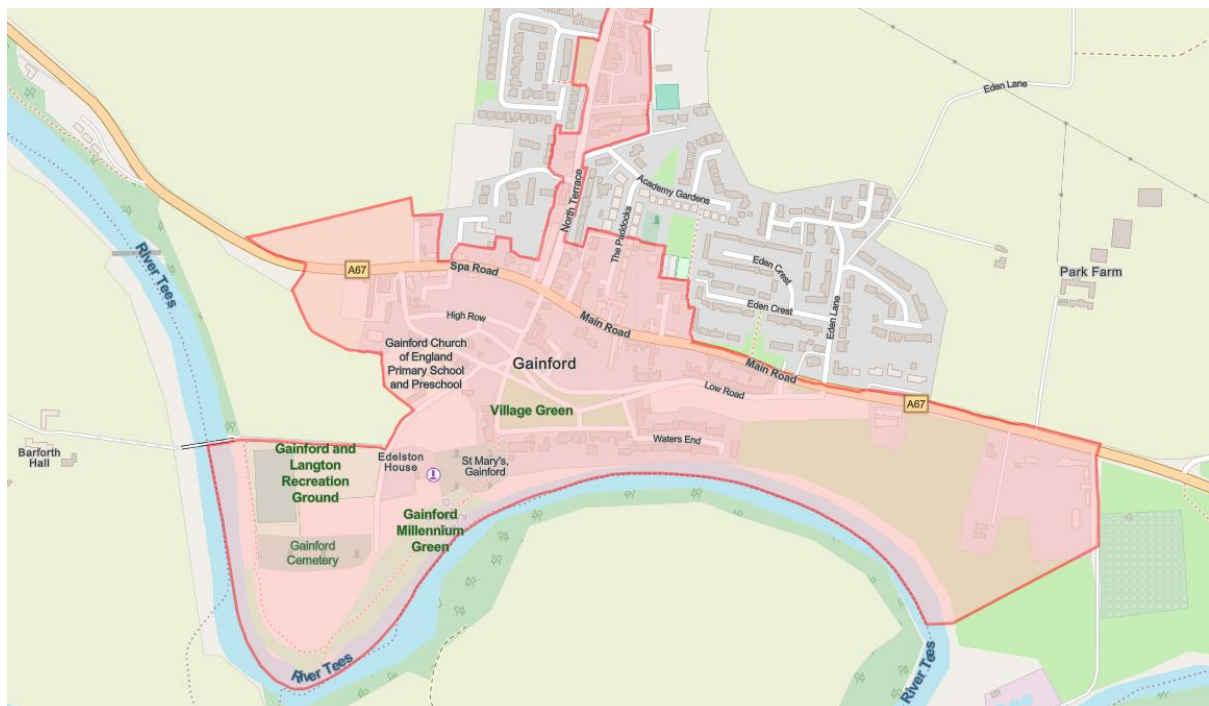
Source: Housing Register
(-) no data

Gainford Conservation Area

Conservation Areas can be de-designated from time to time however the ones shown on the DCC mapping tool are all current.

<https://www.durham.gov.uk/conservationareas>

Conservation Area designation doesn't normally preclude development however it depends upon the site and nature of development. There will be sensitivities to be aware of relating to the historic significance of the place. Conservation Area status also introduces additional planning controls for example in relation to trees and external works to buildings.



Key Findings & Conclusion

This survey had a response rate of **26% (153/577)** slightly higher than the current national average for similar activity.

The survey identified 76% support for a proposal to build rural affordable housing. This is high compared to anecdotal national figures supplied by other Rural Housing Enablers.

53% were supportive of a small development of market housing which shows alternative approaches would be welcomed.

“There are many family houses (3, 4, 5 bedrooms) occupied by single older residents due to a complete lack of 2 bedrooms modern houses/apartments in the area.

The various developments in progress or planned do not address this long standing issue. A "McCarthy & Stone" type development should be examined to address this.”

A total affordable housing need of 10 units was identified in Part 2 of the survey. This can be further broken down to 4 affordable rental properties and 6 affordable purchasing models. See Part 3 for further details.

Those that responded had taken time and care to learn about the different types of homes and to suggest site locations that may be suitable for housing. (See Appendix 1 for Site Suggestions).

34 survey respondents identified themselves as in current housing need, of whom 27 wished to remain in the Parish or district and 24 completed Part 2.

Many respondents had taken time to leave additional comments about the general situation regarding housing and their village. The full list of comments has been kept on record and a selection used within this report to highlight key points; this helps retain the anonymity of respondents. Here we find comments regarding the need for houses for the older generation, restricting any new affordables for sale on the open market and the fact there is already new developments in the village.

Respondents also expressed strong support for family homes, homes for the young or aged and affordable homes.

“I have lived in the village since birth, and had to move away in 2019 due to giving birth to a baby and my family home being overcrowded for myself and the baby to stay there. All I really needed at that time was my family to support me with the new arrival, but due to Gainford not providing cheap enough housing and very rarely housing association homes, we had to move to Barnard Castle.”

The Parish has a high number of older people in larger houses which might indicate a need for them to downsize. This is reflected in Part 2 of the Survey by some of those indicating they have a housing need as well as a number of younger people stating they wanted to set up their first independent homes.

Most of the respondents had lived in the village all their lives showing a real, long-term attachment to the area.

Conclusion

The data collected through this survey indicates strong support and evidence for a small, affordable housing development in the Parish. **Part 3** of the report uses the data provided to predict the type of housing that might be required.

The affordable housing need identified in this Housing Needs Survey is 10 units.

This aligns with the secondary data profiles provided by ARC4 (Appendix 2), which identifies an annual housing need **of 7 units per annum** if all current data remains the same. The ARC4 data highlights the hidden needs in a Parish. From a total of 577 households **200 cannot afford renting at lower quartile rates**. This is despite 14% social housing in the village. The average bid on Durham Key Options was 48 bids per property in 2025.

A detailed Housing Needs Assessment would provide further and more detailed exploration of the specific nature of housing type and tenure required in Gainford and Langton Parish.

“Many persons have gone and move away for small home and services which have dry-up. We need new homes to down grade, new blood for get Gainford back as it was, good happy, working jobs in area plus shop p.office, bus, G.P. etc. Home is for new starters; places you can buy i.e. 50/50 owner until buy it out. Money can come back into village etc. This parish can be one, with all above.”

Housing Needs Survey Data – Part One

This section provides an overview of the responses received from everyone in the Parish of Gainford who completed a survey. A visual snapshot of findings can be found below.



HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY SNAPSHOT GAINFORD



26% of residents completed this survey

34 people identified themselves in housing need and 27 wanted to remain within the Parish



2 residents were at risk of becoming homeless and 5 people wanted to set up their first independent homes

There was clear support (76%) for a development of new affordable homes



Only 4 residents are registered on Durham Key Options

6 respondents had 2 families living at one dwelling



7 respondents knew someone that had left the area due to a lack of suitable housing



SNAPSHOT GAINFORD



2 people who completed the survey stated they needed security of tenure as a reason for wanting to move

7 required a physically adapted home



5 wanted a smaller home/to downsize

7 wanted their first independent home

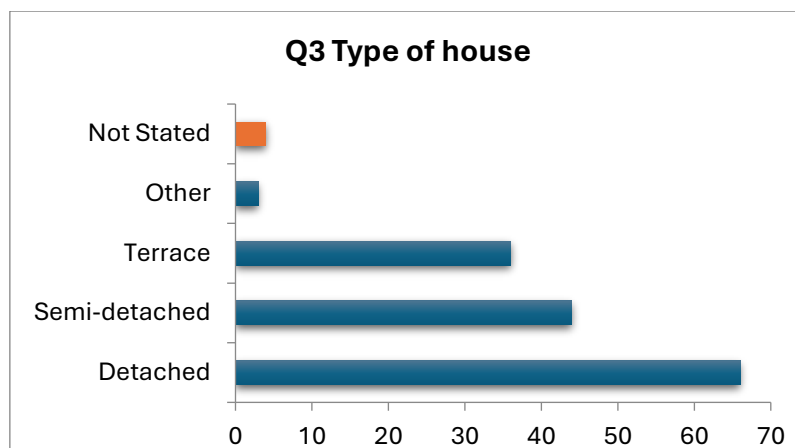
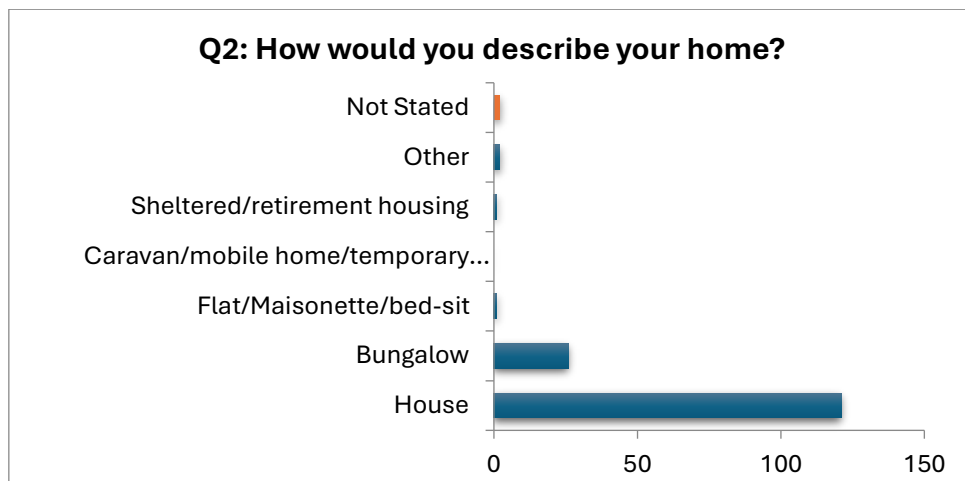
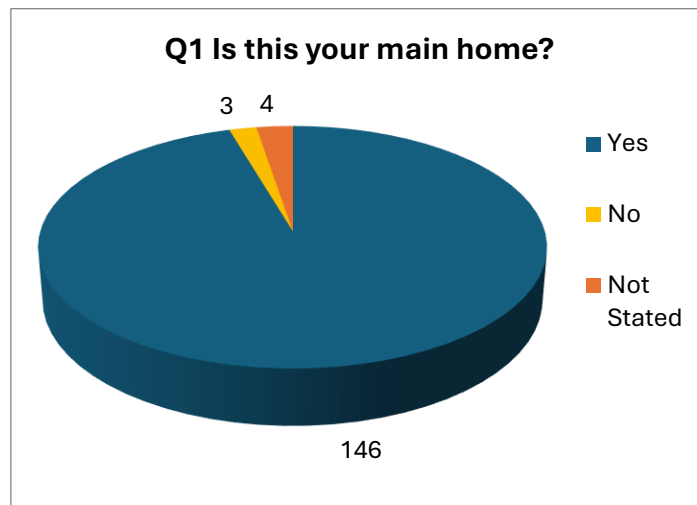


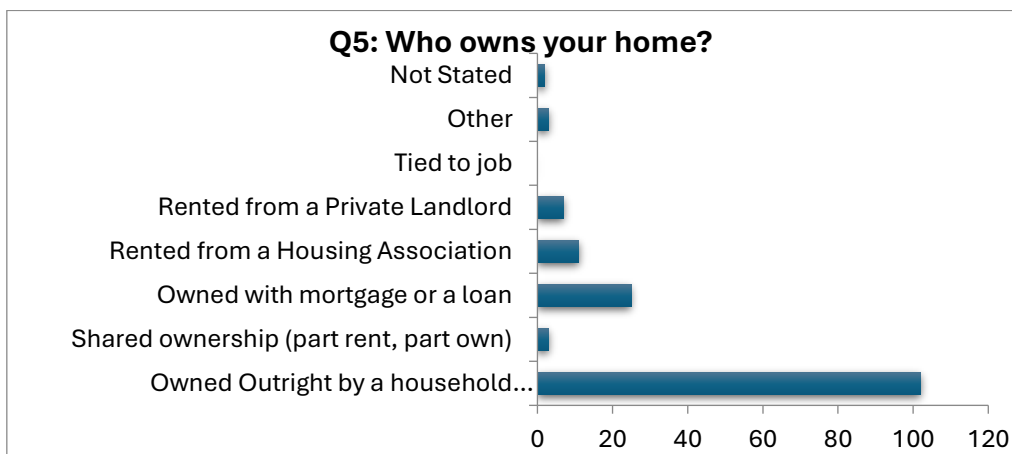
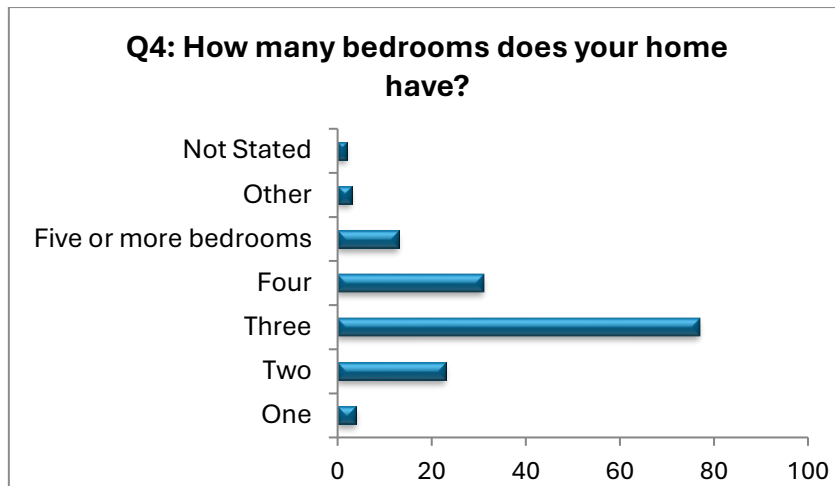
0 were interested in Self Build plots

Overcrowding in Gainford affects 1%, opposed to 1.6% in County Durham

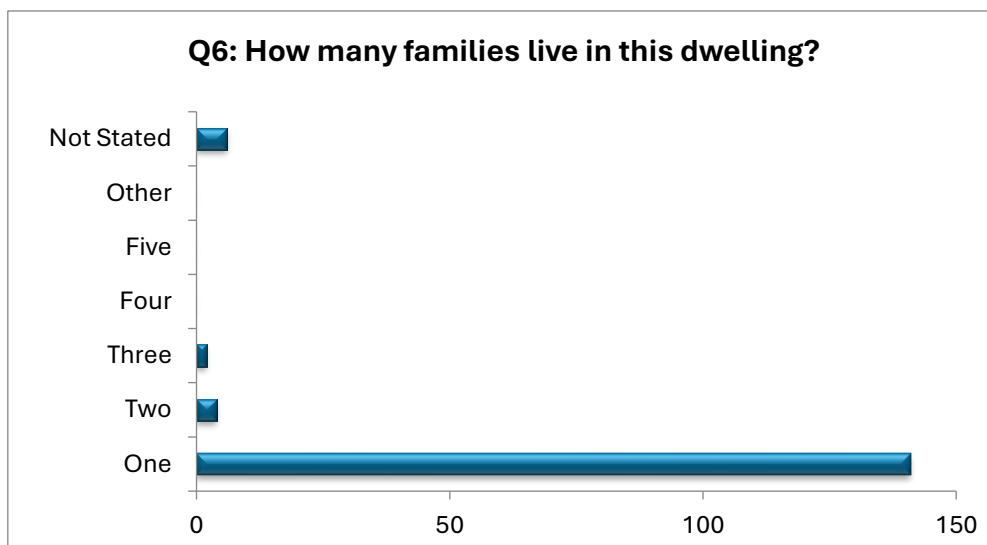


Housing Needs Survey responses: Everyone who received a questionnaire were asked to return Part 1 of the Questionnaire – Part 2 was optional. The numbers correspond to the numbers replying and this can differ per question.

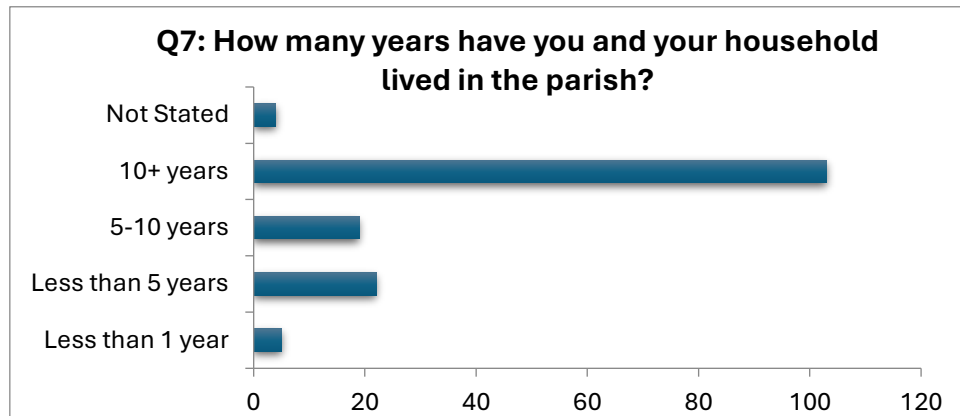




Q6 Six People stated there was more than one family living in their dwelling suggesting that there may be some degree of overcrowding.



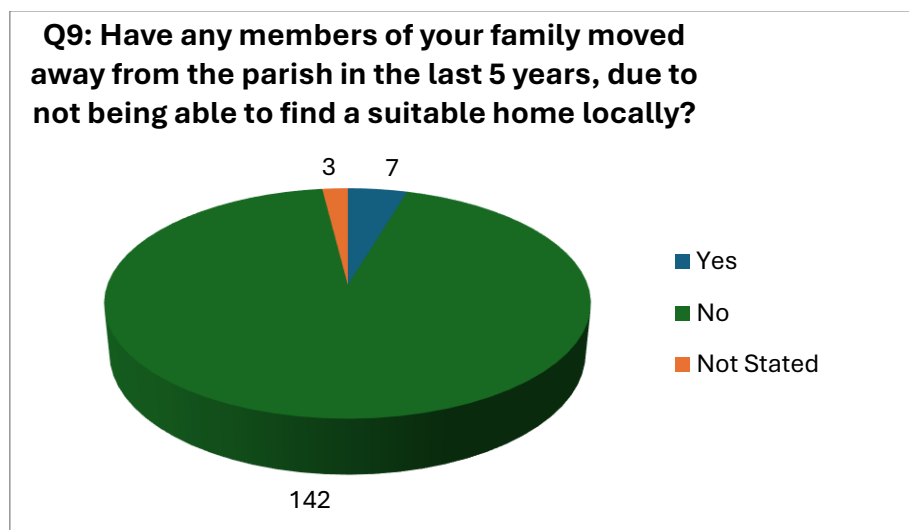
Q7 The majority of people had lived in the area for all of their lives and given the average age of the respondents this was quite some considerable time.



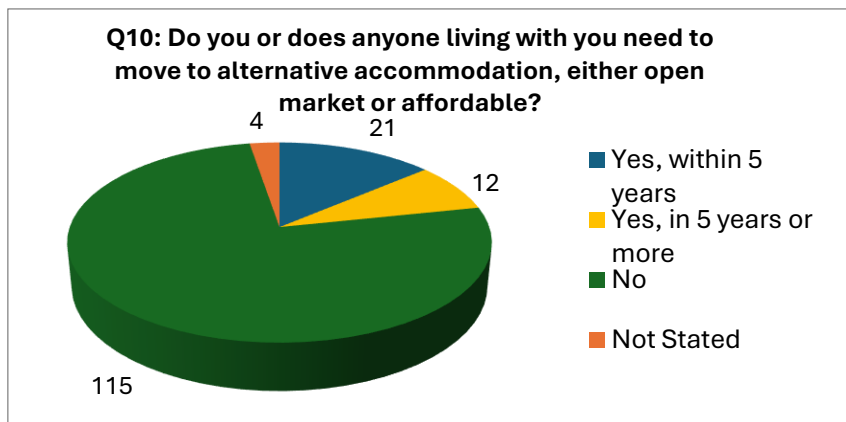
Q8 Age of respondents. This area is populated by predominantly older people shown by the age profile of respondents which could affect the future sustainability of an area.

“There is little opportunity for housing for retired people. Any bungalows for sale do not usually reach the market, they are snapped up before anyone has the chance to see them.”

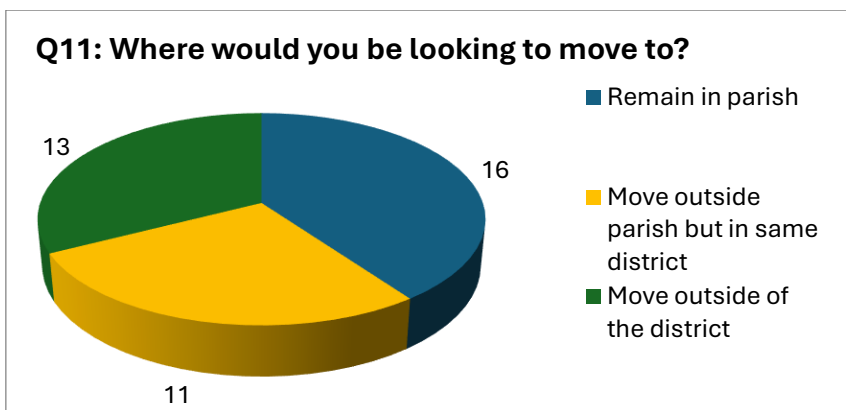
Q9 There was concern that this survey would not reach the people that had previously moved away from the area due to a lack of suitable housing. This question goes some way to picking this issue up with 5% (7 people) of respondents being aware of someone who had left the Parish for this reason.



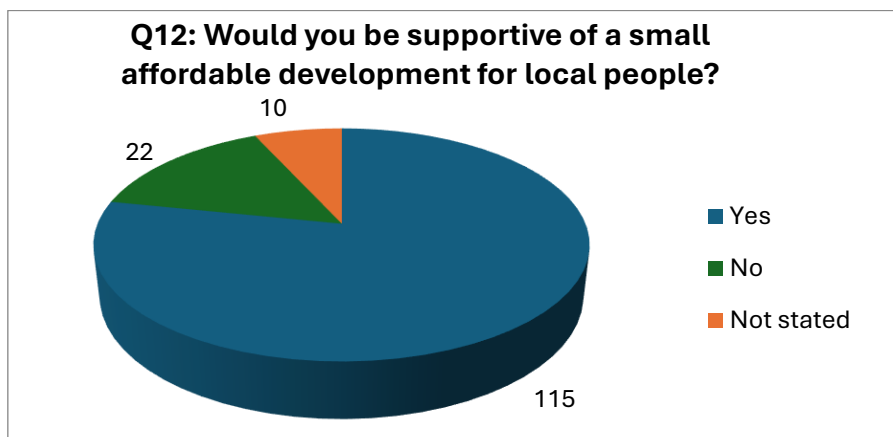
Q10 32 (21%) of respondents identified a need to move accommodation. Of this 21(14%) needing to do so within 5 years and 13 (8%) in more than 5 years. Only those wanting to move were asked to complete this question.



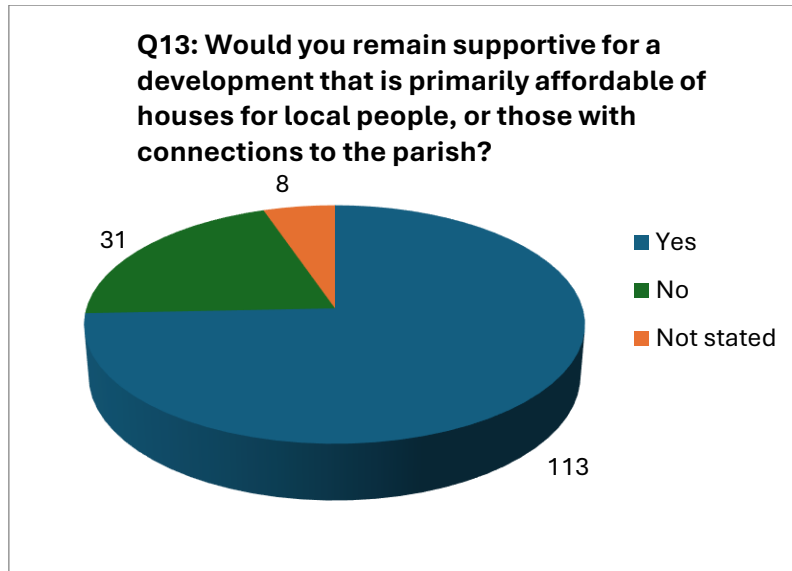
Q11 Respondents only answered this question if they answered yes to Q10. Not all people in housing need wanted to remain within the Parish but 16 respondents (40%) did, with another 11 (28%) wanting to remain in the same district.



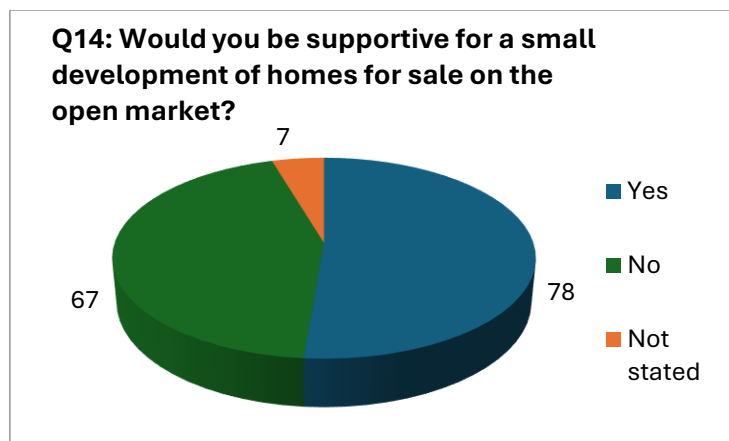
Q12 This Survey was an important opportunity to ask respondents for their views on whether they would be supportive of a small development of affordable homes for local people, if a need was identified. This was answered by 143/153 respondents with an overwhelming 76% in favour.



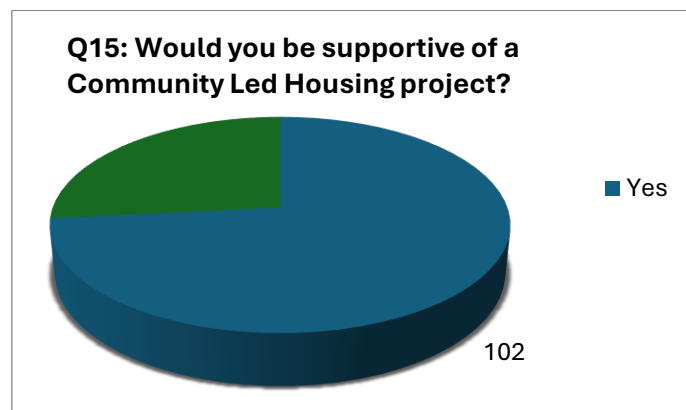
Q13 There was also strong support for primarily affordable housing developments with 75% in support. This might enable a Housing Association to cross subsidise affordable homes with a small number of open market housing, should their business model allow this.



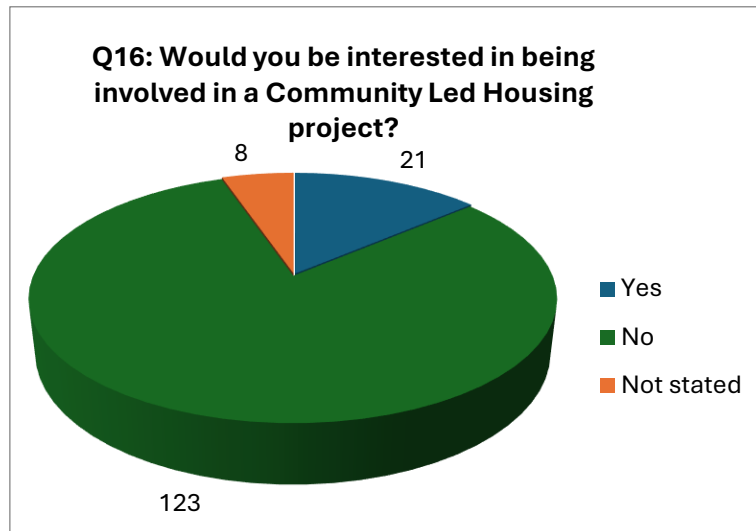
Q14 The support for market housing in the area was also strong at 52%.



Q15 The concept of community led housing was met with 67% response rate in favour.



Q16 21 (14%) respondents would be interesting in becoming involved with a community led housing project should the opportunity arise.



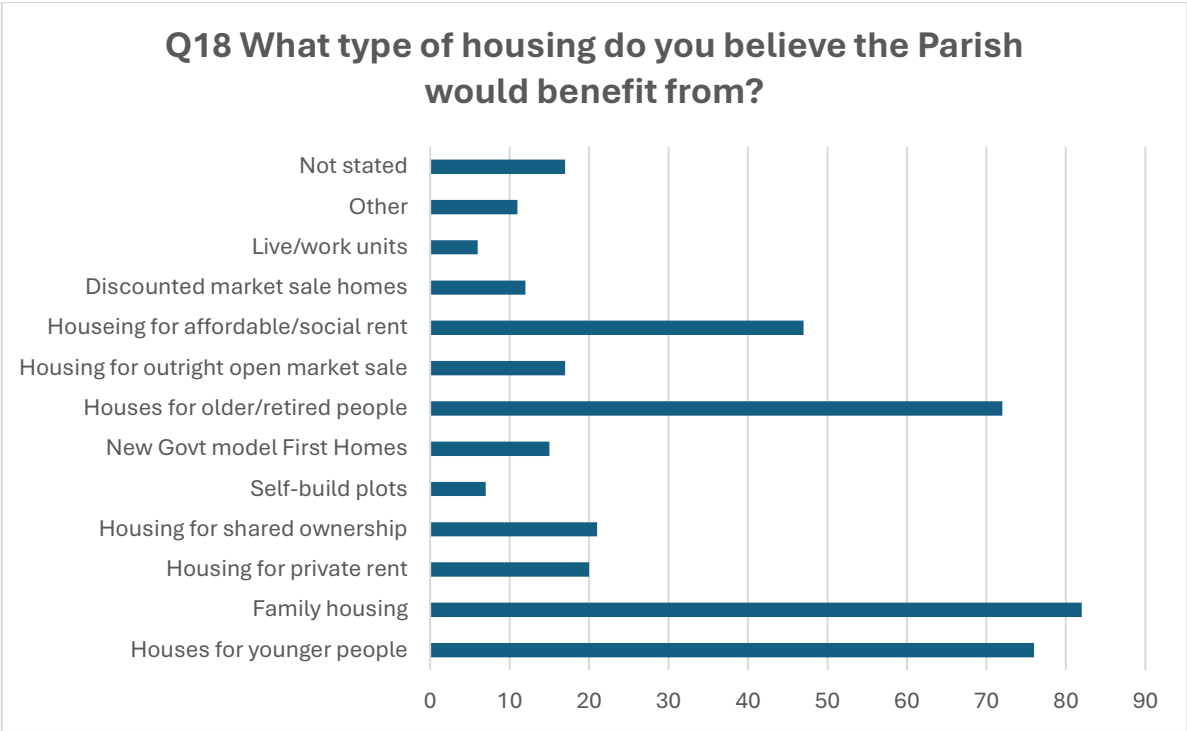
Q17 This question asked respondents to suggest suitable locations where a small rural development could be built. These suggestions can be found at **Appendix 3, Site Suggestions**.

“St Peter’s at Gainford needs developing ASAP.”

“So many houses being built are large executive houses, even though more affordable homes are needed. Too many expensive properties are taking the place of "affordable" homes, at what price are houses more affordable. Also, more bungalows are needed for elderly or infirm people, also this parish has one shop & one public house and nothing else, we are at least 8 miles in any direction from a town, the doctors’ surgery would be unable to cope with extra patients, we have a small school.”

Q18 This question highlights the type of housing people felt would be required in the area. People could tick more than 1 answer for this question. 76 selected housing for younger people was a required, and 82 selected family houses were needed. Houses for older people 72, scored highly as did houses for affordable rent, 47. This requirement for housing is also reflected in the responses to Part 2 of the survey.

“A retirement village type complex would be ideal, there are countless examples of large houses in the village which would be ideal family houses, with single or dare I say it OAP couples - we are getting towards that!!”



Q19 Respondents were then asked to record any comments anonymously in the text box provided. The comments are held by Durham Community Action to preserve the anonymity of the respondents but have been included as a snapshot in this report. These were wide ranging and encompassed views on issues such as the need for bungalows to protect any new affordable homes for local people, demands on existing infrastructure.

“Housing for elderly would naturally free space for those coming from below.”

This is the end of Part 1 of the Survey.

Part 2 of the Survey is confidential and contains personal information. Only those who considered themselves in housing need were to fill in this part of the survey. Information contained in Part 2 was used to produce the recommendations in Part 3 of this report.

PART THREE: Assessment of Affordable Housing Need & Recommendations

Assessment of Need

Analysis has been carried out to assess the requirement for affordable housing from the information provided by the respondents in Part 2. The assessment of need outlines the preferred accommodation type and tenure. Whilst analysing the results to form recommendations, practical considerations are also considered, such as the current age of respondents and their financial situation.

Durham Key Options Letting Policy states that “*to ensure good management of the housing stock, we will allocate certain properties only to people who meet certain criteria.*” This could affect the number of bedrooms a household would be allocated.

As previously stated, **34 respondents** stated they had a housing need, **24** went on to complete all or part of Part 2 and **wished** to remain in the parish.

A total affordable housing need of 10 units was identified in Part 2. This can be further broken down to **4 affordable rental properties and 6 affordable purchasing models.**

This correlates very closely with the ARC4 RAHM secondary data contained in the Parish Profile (Appendix 2) which detailed an annual affordable need of **7 units per annum for Gainford and Langton Parish.**

Rented Affordable Housing Need

Four types of rented affordable needs were selected and the breakdown is below.

Type of Accommodation	No of Bedrooms	Additional needs	When required to move?
Bungalow	2	Yes not stated	Now
Bungalow	2		Now
Bungalow	2	Heart problems	2-5 yrs
Any	1	Supported living	Over 5 yrs

From people identifying a need for **rented affordable housing**:

- All currently rent from a Housing Association.
- 1 needed a physically adapted home.
- 1 could live independently with care from parents if he was able to live in the village.
- 3 were one person households.
- 1 would be claiming housing benefit.

This indicates a strong need for affordable housing.

Need for Discounted Market Sale (6)

1 person identified the need to purchase a discounted market sale; 2 people wanted First Homes Schemes and 3 indicated Shared Ownership all of whom live in the Parish currently and would need to be assessed for a mortgage.

Type of Accommodation	No of Bedrooms	Additional needs	When required to move?
House	2	No	Now
House SO	2		Now
House	1		2-5 yrs
House DMS	3	No	Now
Flat	1		2-5 yrs
Any	3		Now

Reasons to move shared by respondents:

- Need a larger home.
- Need a secure home.
- 4 want to set up first independent home.
- 2 threatened with homelessness.
- 1 living in Private Rented with damp issues that affects their health.

Housing Register- Durham Key Options (4)

Only 4 households that completed Part 2 of the survey are currently on Durham Key Options (the local authority **housing register**). We would recommend that the Parish Council raise awareness of the need to be on the register amongst the residents of the parish, for them to be considered for any affordable housing schemes in the future.

The table below summarises the preferred tenure type selected by each respondent who gave sufficient information to be reviewed and the recommendations of tenure based on the responses within the survey data provided.

Reviewed & Recommended tenure of those stating they have a housing need (24)	
Type	Number
Open Market	11
Rent from Housing Association	4
Discounted & First Homes Scheme	3
Rent from a private landlord	0
Self Build	0
Shared Ownership	3
Not stated	3
Not enough information	0

Appendix 1: Site Suggestions

Respondents suggested a range of potential sites for housing development. A popular suggestion was:

- St Peters

Others expressed concerns about building on green fields or about spoiling natural views and pressure on existing services.

List of Site Suggestions (duplications removed)
St Peter's at Gainford needs developing ASAP
St. Peter's site. Comment for Q14: only if affordable/1st time buyer properties
Depends how you define small, but the St Peters site would accommodate some. Most infill sites in Gainford have already been built on, so sites around the outer edges of the existing settlement would seem to be the only answer.
St. Peter's. Gainford Hall - land across from the new Raby development
Land to North of South View - site of disused tennis court & adjacent paddock.
Former St Peter's site Raby Development to include a community-led housing scheme/affordable homes/social housing
Logically maybe alongside the current Raby Estates development, but I'm unaware of the land ownership situation
By the allotments on site of demolished school
A huge field out the back of Balmer Hill towards Ingleton was previously considered by a developer but denied due to heavy influence from those living in Balmer Hill, requesting it not to be built. If a new development for the same site was suggested with it being stressed it's for local people only to buy/rent, I think Balmer Hill neighbours may be more considerate. Another good location would be the field in front of Gainford Hall owned by Raby Estates, or the old St Peter's site.

Unsuitable Sites/ other comments
Difficult to suggest here. The village centre is largely a conservation area. The materials used in building would require a sympathetic approach in building design
Two developments happening already. No room for further development
Site are already waiting to be built on why not renovate properties stood empty in Middlesbrough/Teesside
No - at present housing development taking place at edge of Gainford on Spar/Winston Road and a further development expected on site of St. Peters on entering Gainford from Piercebridge.
There's a lot of rural empty fields around Gainford, also toward pierce bridge and also Winston and Staindrop but I don't know who owns it.

Appendix 2: Parish profile



Parish Profile: Stanhope

This is a snapshot of affordable rural housing needs drawn from secondary data.*
A more detailed Parish Profile report is available from our Rural Housing Enabler.

£464

Average monthly rent in this area (2019–2023).
The income required to afford it would be **£22,272**.

£448

Maximum local housing allowance someone can claim for housing in this area for a typical two-bed home.

Holiday homes in the area



Social rented homes

Strong indicators of affordable housing need

12.3%

under 16 years

85.4%

under occupied

31.1%

over 65

Medium indicators of affordable housing need

62.9%

3+ bedrooms

32.6%

struggling renters of working age

43.5%

retired in poor health

45%

cannot afford buying at market rates

New affordable homes needed

Stanhope has an affordable housing requirement of **20 homes** to be **built per year**.



*Using ARC4 Rural Affordable Housing Needs Model & Rightmove data.
www.durhamcommunityaction.org.uk | Produced February 2025

Appendix 3: Letter to Residents



July 2025

**Housing that is affordable for those with a strong local connection,
(live, work or have family), to Stanhope Parish**

Dear Stanhope Parish Community,

I am writing to you in my role of Rural Housing Enabler for Durham Community Action as it is widely recognised that people living in rural communities face real difficulties finding affordable homes in the villages where they grew up, now work and want to live or return to live in.

Alongside local people, I am working with parish councils, local authorities, registered providers (usually Housing Associations), businesses and organisations across County Durham to understand what the housing needs are in rural areas and how people in those communities can be supported to stay close to their networks, places of employment, or education.

Durham Community Action is a registered independent charity supporting communities throughout County Durham since 1935 and we have a great deal of community engagement experience. We are funded by DEFRA (Government Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs) to undertake Housing Needs Surveys and establish if there is a need for different types of housing within County Durham's parishes.

I need your help to carry out a review of housing needs in Stanhope Parish.

Surveys are a vital part of the Housing Needs Survey process, so it is important we receive as many responses as possible, from different members of the community to get the full local picture. Maybe you or someone you know, or someone your organisation supports wants to take their first step on the housing ladder, to rent a property close to their place of work, training or just downsize without leaving their community but are finding it hard to do so?

This is your chance to tell us what you think, and we welcome your views whether you have a need for alternative or affordable accommodation yourself or not so please take a few minutes to complete the attached Housing Needs Survey and return it in the Freepost envelope provided, by **30 September 2025**.

Alternatively, you can complete the survey online using this link:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/RK82LP7>

Or by scanning this QR code using your phone



Affordable Housing is defined by the government as housing for sale or rent provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the open market.

The survey findings will be analysed by the Durham Community Action and only anonymised, aggregated results will be included in the final report.

Please note that all your responses and personal information will remain strictly confidential within Durham Community Action and will not be shared wider.

If you have any questions about the form or would like additional forms to share with your friends, family or colleagues, then please contact Susan Tron, Rural Housing Enabler on 07496461998 or by email at susan.tronmbe@durhamcommunityaction.org.uk

Thank you for taking part.

Yours sincerely,

Susan Tron

Appendix 4: Key Terms



Key Terms - Affordable Housing

The following tenures come under the current government definition of Affordable Housing in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Tenure	Definition
Rented - Housing Association	Housing rented through a Housing Association that is lower than local market rents. This can be “affordable” rent (80% of market rent) or “social” rent (40-60% of market rent) depending on viability of the scheme and grant funding available. This type of housing is much more secure than private rented housing.
Shared ownership – Housing Association	Part rent/part buy. This allows first time buyers/non-homeowners who cannot afford 100% ownership of a home to buy a percentage of it; rent is also paid to the Housing Association for the part they do not own. A smaller deposit is required than buying a full market cost home. It is necessary to be able to obtain and afford a mortgage, if required, on the share that is bought. (NB the maximum share a buyer can own on a Rural Exception Site scheme would be 80%; this prevents the home being sold onto the open market and keeps it available for local people in perpetuity)
Discounted market sale	The property is sold at least 20% lower than local open market values. When the homes are sold on, the discount remains in place for new buyers in perpetuity. For eligibility you must not already own a home and your income should not exceed 45% of the discounted sale price of the property. It is necessary to be able to obtain and afford the mortgage on the property.
First Homes	The government’s new flagship discounted affordable sale model which has just been launched. Minimum discount of open market value will be 30%, although Local Authorities have discretion to increase discount to 40% or 50% should there be evidence to support this. The percentage discount is kept in perpetuity. Strictly for first time buyers only, with a household income of no more than £80,000 outside London. Buyers must have a mortgage / home purchase plan covering at least 50% of the discounted purchase value. The First Home must be the buyer’s main residence, and restrictions on lettings apply. The value of First Homes, after the discount has been applied, will be capped at £250,000 outside London. Price caps only apply on the initial sale.

Other Housing Tenures

Open market housing	Housing that is open for anyone to purchase at the full market value for the area.
Private Rented	Property owned by a landlord and leased to a tenant. The landlord could be an individual, a property company or an institutional investor. Market renters occupy the properties under a tenancy agreement and pay market rents.

Self-build / Custom Build	<p>There are various types of self-build. Most commonly, the buyer acquires a serviced plot of land on which to either build their home themselves or use a contractor.</p> <p>Custom build is access to a serviced plot where a home is built and is then finished off by the purchaser using a menu of options.</p>

Rural Exception Site	<p>A plot of land abutting the development boundary, well connected to services & facilities with the aim of providing affordable local needs housing in the village. This land will only receive planning permission for affordable housing with a local connection in perpetuity. It is an “exception” to the development sites detailed in the local plan. A small amount of open market may be permitted, only if required for cross subsidy. Only suitable for parishes with a population of 3,000 or less.</p> <p>*This planning policy is only applicable to parishes/hamlets of less than 3,000 residents*</p> <p>Development is restricted in size/ tenure to the need identified.</p>
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Community Led Housing	<p>Community Led Housing is where local people join together to look at housing issues in their local area.</p> <p>Anyone can start, volunteer and deliver a community led housing project. If you think a change is needed in your community, you can lead that change. Find our more here: https://www.durhamcommunityaction.org.uk/community-led-housing</p>
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