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Rural housing: A reading list



- 1 Introduction
- 2 Government publications
- 3 Parliamentary publications
- 4 Charity, think tank and stakeholder publications
- 5 Press and blog articles
- 6 Academic publications

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Contents

1	Introduction	4
2	Government publications	6
3	Parliamentary publications	8
4	Charity, think tank and stakeholder publications	9
5	Press and blog articles	12
6	Academic publications	14

1 Introduction

People living in rural areas across the UK can face particular housing challenges, including:

- House prices are often less affordable in rural areas. In 2018, the lower-quartile house price in predominantly rural areas was 8.8 times higher than lower-quartile earnings, compared with 7.5 times in predominantly urban areas outside of London.¹ There is a concern that the Covid-19 pandemic is fuelling demand for property in rural areas, putting further pressure on house prices as people seek to move from urban areas to homes with more space and gardens.
- Options for those on low incomes seeking social rented housing are typically limited in small rural settlements. According to the Centre for Rural Economy, 12% of the rural housing stock in England is social housing compared with 19% in urban areas.²
- The supply of new homes in rural areas in England has increased in recent years. In 2019/20, there were around 17,000 additions to the affordable housing stock in predominantly rural areas, a rate of around 3.4 per existing household. Around 32,000 units of affordable housing were added in predominantly urban areas, around 2.0 per 1,000 households.³ Nevertheless, affordable housing supply in rural areas is considered to be well below housing need.⁴
- Second homes and holiday lets can exacerbate rural housing market pressures, especially in popular tourist areas. In 2018/19 around 27% of second homes in England were in the South West region.⁵

The availability of affordable housing underpins the vitality and sustainability of rural communities. A shortage of affordable housing can manifest itself in a variety of ways, including: difficulties in recruiting and retaining employees and key workers; young people and families forced to move away from their

¹ DEFRA, [Rural housing availability and affordability](#), 2 June 2021

² Centre for Rural Economy, Newcastle University, [Research Report 61: After Brexit: 10 key questions for rural policy in England](#), 2018, p7

³ Defra, Rural housing – additions to affordable housing stock, 2 June 2021

⁴ Affordable Housing Commission, [Making Housing Affordable Again: Rebalancing the Nation's Housing System: The final report of the Affordable Housing Commission](#), 23 March 2020, p128

⁵ MHCLG, [English Housing Survey 2018 to 2019: second homes – factsheet](#), 9 July 2020

local areas; overcrowding; long waiting lists for social housing; and homelessness.

This paper provides a selection of publications and articles that examine the challenges surrounding rural housing and proposals to address them.

This reading list is not intended to be comprehensive.

2

Government publications

England

Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA), [Rural housing statistics](#), last updated 2 June 2021

Government statistics on rural housing in England, including on the availability and affordability of housing in rural areas.

DEFRA, [Rural proofing in England 2020](#), 26 March 2021

This report sets out how government departments are working to ensure rural areas are taken into account in designing and delivering policies. Chapter 3 of the report covers housing.

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), [Jenrick unveils huge £12 billion boost for affordable homes](#), 8 September 2020

The Government's £11.5 billion [Affordable Homes Programme 2021 to 2026](#) provides grant funding to support the capital costs of developing affordable housing for rent or sale. It is expected to provide up to 180,000 new homes across the country, should economic conditions allow. There is an expectation that at least 10% of these homes will be in rural settlements.

MHCLG, [Housing needs of different groups: Rural Housing](#), 22 July 2019

Provides guidance on planning for the housing needs of different groups, including those living in rural areas.

Wales

Welsh Government, [Consultation on local taxes for second homes and self-catering accommodation](#), 25 August 2021

The consultation is seeking views on i) council tax premiums on second homes in Wales and ii) the criteria for classifying accommodation as self-catering, which means it incurs non-domestic rates as opposed to council tax.

Welsh Government, [Research on second homes: evidence review summary](#), 13 July 2021

A summary of findings from an evidence review on second homes. The review focuses on impacts and interventions on second homes.

Welsh Government, [Second homes: Developing new policies in Wales](#), Dr Simon Brooks, 2 March 2021

The report sets out the policy context of the second homes debate, providing an in-depth analysis of the challenges, including those related to planning, tourism, taxation and the sustainability of communities. It concludes with policy recommendations.

Scotland

Scottish Government, [Housing to 2040](#), 15 March 2021

This strategy sets out a vision for housing in Scotland to 2040 and a route map to get there. Part 1E sets out policies to support rural and island communities.

Northern Ireland

Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, [Key Rural Issues, Northern Ireland 2020](#), 30 September 2020

This report highlights key urban/rural differences and disparities across a range of domains, including housing, and provides an evidence base to inform the future direction of rural policy in Northern Ireland.

3

Parliamentary publications

England

House of Lords Select Committee on the Rural Economy, [Report of Session 2017-19: Time for a strategy for the rural economy](#), HL Paper 330, 27 April 2019

Chapter 5 of the report discusses housing challenges in rural areas. In particular, it highlights the shortage of affordable housing and the need for sensitive, well-designed development. The report puts forward recommendations for reform based on: a coherent rural strategy; re-energised rural proofing; and a “place-based” approach which reflects the diversity of the countryside.

The [Government’s response to the Committee report](#) was published on 3 July 2019. In its response the Government agreed with the Committee’s assertion that rural proofing is important. However, the Government disagreed that developing a rural strategy would be beneficial, arguing that to do so would “risk rural areas being placed in a silo”.

All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Housing and Care for Older People, [Rural Housing for an Ageing Population: Preserving Independence](#) (HAPPI 4), 30 April 2018

This APPG inquiry report concludes that older people’s housing is neglected in rural areas. It makes a number of recommendations to increase the quality, supply and range of more appropriate age-friendly rural housing.

Scotland

Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe) Briefing Paper, [Land Use and Rural Policy](#), 19 August 2021

This briefing outlines issues and policy developments in relation to land use and rural policy in Scotland.

4

Charity, think tank and stakeholder publications

Rural Housing Alliance, [Parish Councillors' Guide to Rural Affordable Housing](#), 5 July 2021

This guide provides information for Parish Councillors on how to deliver rural affordable housing.

Rural Service Network and Rural Housing Alliance, [Spotlight on Rural Housing – April 2021](#), 6 April 2021

A quarterly bulletin highlighting a selection of current rural housing issues and opportunities.

Rural Service Network, [Revitalising Rural: Realising the Dream – Availability of Rural Affordable Housing](#), 24 February 2021

This chapter (of a larger report) highlights key issues and challenges in the delivery of and access to affordable housing in rural areas, and sets out policy asks with regards to affordable housing quotas, grant funding, community-led housing, exception sites and the proceeds from Right to Buy sales.

Community Land Scotland, [Home Delivery – Community Led Housing in Rural Scotland](#), 12 November 2020

This report highlights the work carried out by Community Land Scotland to develop affordable housing in rural communities in Scotland.

Rural Housing Scotland, [Building Our Rural Future: Manifesto for the 2021 Scottish Parliament Elections](#), Rural Housing Scotland, November 2020

This manifesto sets out the ten actions Rural Housing Scotland believe are required to enable affordable rural housing and help rural communities to thrive.

CPRE, the Countryside Charity (formerly known as the Campaign to Protect Rural England) English Rural and Rural Services Network, [Rural recovery and revitalisation](#), Pragmatix Advisory, October 2020

This report sets out the economic and fiscal case for investing in rural affordable housing to drive post-pandemic recovery.

CPRE, [Affordable housing guide 2020: How to improve the supply of rural affordable housing](#), 13 August 2020

This guide seeks to demystify the process of providing rural affordable housing. It is aimed at CPRE members and others.

Affordable Housing Commission, [Making Housing Affordable Again: Rebalancing the Nation's Housing System: The final report of the Affordable Housing Commission](#), 23 March 2020

Part 8 of the Affordable Housing Commission's final report discusses affordability in rural areas and makes recommendations.

Rural Housing Scotland, [Housing to 2040 Consultation: RHS Response](#), March 2020

This response to the Scottish Government's consultation on its Housing to 2040 Strategy is based on Rural Housing Scotland's work with rural communities across the country.

ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England), [Bitesize: Housing Policy Position Paper 2019](#), November 2019

This paper summarises rural housing issues and policy asks from ACRE.

CPRE, [Redefining Affordability – a CPRE Briefing](#), 18 July 2019

This briefing challenges the definition of 'affordability' found in the 2018 National Planning Policy Framework and proposes a new definition linked to local incomes.

Royal Town Planning Institute in Wales (RTPI Cymru), [Rural Housing Delivery in Wales: How Effective is Rural Exception Site Policy?](#), January 2019

This is a summary of research commissioned by RTPI Cymru to understand the role and use of rural exception site policy in Wales.

IPPR, [A new rural settlement: Fixing the affordable housing crisis in rural England](#), 2 July 2018

This report outlines a series of policy solutions to deliver affordable homes in rural areas.

Rural Housing Alliance, [5-star plan for rural housing - annual review 2018](#), July 2018

The 5-star plan for rural housing presents an ambition from housing associations to increase the supply of well-designed affordable rural homes.

[A manifesto for affordable rural homes](#), National Housing Federation, June 2018

This manifesto was developed in collaboration by the National Housing Federation and Rural Housing Alliance. It outlines their vision to ensure ‘everyone living in a rural area lives in a quality, affordable home’.

CPRE and Shelter, [Viable villages closing the planning loophole that undercuts affordable housing in the countryside](#), R Grayston and R Pullinger, March 2018

This report provides an assessment of the use by developers of viability assessments which, it is argued, are used to minimise the delivery of affordable housing in rural communities.

National Housing Federation, [Affordable housing saving rural services: rural life monitor 2017](#), 13 November 2017

This report illustrates how building affordable homes in rural areas can help to maintain vital services for local communities.

IPPR, [Right To Home? Rethinking homelessness in rural communities](#) IPPR, 10 July 2017

This report explores the issue of homelessness in rural areas.

5

Press and blog articles

[Rural residents missing out on vital local services due to surge in barns turned into homes without planning permission](#), Local Government Association, 28 August 2021

[Enabling people to live in rural areas](#), The Irish Times, 3 August 2021

[The pandemic property boom is pricing locals out of the British countryside](#), The Guardian, 1 August 2021

[Planning debate](#), Rural Services Network, 12 July 2021

[Finding a Place to Call 'Home': What More Can be Done to Plug the Rural Housing Gap?](#) by Jessica Sellick, Rural Services Network, 28 June 2021

[The Guardian view on second homes: put main homes first](#), The Guardian, 21 June 2021

[Rural house prices in England and Wales rise twice as fast as in cities](#), The Guardian, 20 June 2021

[Housing market: Are second homeowners really pricing locals out?](#) BBC Wales, 22 May 2021

[How do we build more homes in the countryside?](#), The Times, 12 May 2021 (subscription required)

[House prices rise as Covid sparks rural relocation](#), BBC, 18 November 2020

[Rural homelessness in England rises by 115% in past two years](#), The Guardian, 28 October 2020

[Affordable rural homes are essential for prosperous communities](#) by Martin Collett, National Housing Federation, 28 September 2020

[Open letter: Save the Highlands and Islands from an 'economic clearance'](#), Source Direct, 7 September 2020

[Living communities – the case for rural social housing](#) by Chris Hinchliff, National Housing Federation, 13 August 2020

[Rural housing and the pandemic: looking to the future](#) by Lord Best, National Housing Federation, 9 July 2020

[Social housing waiting lists grow for over half of rural councils](#), CPRE, 10 March 2020

[Young families are 'frozen out of rural housing market'](#), Herald Scotland, 13 September 2019

6

Academic publications

Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, [Out of the woods? Lessons from the United States on tackling rural homelessness](#), Rory Weal, September 2020

This research report compares responses to rural homelessness in England with the United States. It includes policy recommendations for central and local government.

[Housing and Employment: A Survey of Rural Residents' Experiences and Opinions](#), Countryside & Community Research Institute (University of Gloucestershire), June 2019

The survey asked rural residents their views about local house building, what type of housing should be prioritised and how well the housing market operates.

[The Precarity of Young People's Housing Experiences in a Rural Context](#), McKee, Hoolachan & Moore, May 2017

This paper highlights the additional housing challenges faced by young people in rural areas compared to young people living in urban areas. These include struggling to find stable and well-paid employment that would allow them to meet their housing aspirations.

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