

Rural business perspectives on Northumberland's housing needs

Interim report

Authors: Natalie Partridge, Thao Nguyen, & Melanie Thompson-Glen

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Contact: Natalie.Partridge@newcastle.ac.uk

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1. Introduction

The availability, affordability, and suitability housing are significant challenges for rural communities and businesses. The current, standardised approach to assessing housing needs often overlooks the requirements of local workers, or those commuting long distances to rural workplaces due to a lack of nearby, affordable housing.

Commissioned by Community Action Northumberland (CAN) as part of their Rural Housing Enabler programme funded by DEFRA, this interim report explores the challenges around identifying housing needs in rural areas, with a focus on Northumberland within the national and North East (NE) contexts. It presents an overview of existing evidence and methods of housing needs assessment. Data was collected through NICRE's State of Rural Enterprise (SORE) survey, followed by five interviews with local businesses and experts, to highlight local perspectives on the housing needs of the county's workforce, and the impact of housing on rural businesses. Finally, a variety of potential solutions are explored, including examples of communities and private sector businesses assessing and meeting housing needs in their local areas.

2. Assessing housing needs

Housing needs are currently assessed by governments, local authorities, community groups and research organisations (such as universities) through a combination of data on:

- **Availability**, such as housing stock density, net additional dwellings, new housebuilding rates, or whether homes are owner occupied, private rental properties, second homes or local authority and housing association-owned social rentals.
- **Affordability**, including house prices, rents, and accommodation costs relative to average incomes in an area.
- **Suitability and quality**, primarily considering housing stock appropriateness, conditions, energy efficiency, rates of overcrowding, underoccupancy, hazards, and issues such as damp.

At a local authority level, housing needs assessments are standardised, and carried out or commissioned by county and parish councils. Local authorities are required to use the same method for assessing local housing need to inform planning decisions. The method involves use of:

[A] formula that incorporates a baseline of local housing stock which is then adjusted upwards to reflect local affordability pressures to identify [...] a minimum annual housing need figure [...] It does not produce a housing requirement figure.¹

Such housing needs assessments often present a partial picture. Challenges assessing housing needs include a need for granular data on housing composition, individuals living in a dwelling, and its

¹[Housing and economic needs assessment - GOV.UK](#)

internal condition, which can be difficult to obtain. It is also challenging to assess or estimate the need for new housing according to population growth and local economic conditions, known as “structural demand” or “new arising housing need”². This type of need is affected by changing demographics, local economic factors such as businesses expanding or seeking to grow, and the local housing market. The following sections consider this latter challenge and explore how housing needs in rural Northumberland might be assessed more roundly, to encompass the perspectives of local employers and employees.

3. Housing needs data in rural Northumberland

Taking into account limitations in housing needs assessment, this section reviews current evidence on housing needs for local workers in rural Northumberland and wider areas³. It comprises a review of existing data, both from NICRE’s State of Rural Enterprise data (covering the North East, West Midlands and South West regions) as well as other available data for the North East region or the NE Combined Authority (NECA) area, and Northumberland specifically, where possible.

The scale of housing shortage and housing affordability for rural workers in Northumberland and the North East are dual challenges for the region’s businesses. In the NECA area in 2021, Northumberland had around 160,000 dwellings, which is the second highest number of dwellings after County Durham. Northumberland also had the lowest housing stock density per hectare (0.32 dwellings per hectare, versus 1.11 in County Durham). Taking into account housebuilding, conversions, changes of property use, and demolitions in Northumberland, the net additional dwellings figures were relatively low during the period after the 2008 financial crisis. The rate has increased again since, with an average of 1,310 net additional dwellings per year from 2014/15. The rate of net additional dwellings in the NECA area was lower than England average during 2011-2021 period, but Northumberland’s rate is on par with the national average. The net additional dwellings figures in Northumberland mainly represent new build (98%) and net change of use (5%) while demolitions and net conversions reduce the rate.

The NECA area has also seen a slight decrease in the rate of public housing stock since 2009, whereas the national average has gradually increased. Local authority-owned dwellings account for around 5% of all housing stock in the NECA area. For new housebuilding in 2020/21, only 2% were local authority developments, and 11% were from housing associations.

Around 3% of dwellings were vacant in Northumberland (2021 ONS census statistics), compared to 3.4% in County Durham (Table 1). Of these, it is unclear how many are second homes, holiday homes and holiday lets, which are prevalent across the county (3,435 residential properties were registered as second homes for council tax in 2021).

²[Contrasting housing supply in Ireland, Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom](#) page 13.

³Another useful overview of the housing landscape in the NECA area produced by the New Economics Foundation in 2024 is available here: [RORE-community-housing-Final.pdf](#) in Section 3.2, page 12.

Table 1: Northumberland’s occupied and unoccupied household spaces with no usual residents

Household spaces (dwelling units)	Households (occupied dwellings)	Unoccupied household spaces (0 people in household)
159,102	146,922	12,180

Source: ONS census, 2021, in Northumberland County Council, 2024⁴

Some north Northumberland and coastal areas see higher rates of holiday homes than both the Northumberland and NECA averages, and these dwellings may remain vacant for periods of time. Northumberland County Council’s 2024 monitoring report⁵ on second homes, holiday homes, and holiday lets found that “the parishes with the greatest proportions of unoccupied household spaces, are noticeably those known to be within popular tourist areas”, such as Beadnell, North Sunderland, Bamburgh, and Embleton⁶. The report also explained that the majority of “owners (from England and Wales) of holiday homes in the county came from Northumberland itself (14.4%) and the North East of England – Newcastle upon Tyne (13.0%), County Durham (10.9%), North Tyneside (8.7%), Gateshead (8.1%).”⁷

House prices in Northumberland were also higher than in County Durham in 2021. However, house prices vary significantly across Northumberland, with parts of rural Northumberland (such as near Alnwick) having substantially higher average house prices than other rural or coastal Northumberland areas. Housing pressures can be exacerbated by the prevalence of holiday and second homes, with Northumberland County Council now requiring, in areas with high proportions of second or holiday homes (over 20%), that new planning applications for housebuilding provide primary residences only. Northumberland County Council has announced other measures such as doubling council tax for second homes from April 2025. However, the full scale of the pressures of holiday homes and lets is not known, due to limited recording of holiday lettings of housing and rooms through services like AirBnB, although conversations are underway at a national level about registration of these types of properties.

Housing quality, particularly energy efficiency, is another challenge in Northumberland, which sees low energy efficiency combined with the lowest rate of mains gas housing and the highest rate of oil-based housing. A recent survey of housing quality and decency⁸ also found that the North East region has a rate of 14% of non-decent homes, with 22% of private renting homes and 19% of local-authority homes being categorised as non-decent.

⁴ [Second and Holiday Homes and Holiday Lets in Northumberland Monitoring Report](#), page 5

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid page 5

⁷ Ibid, Page 11

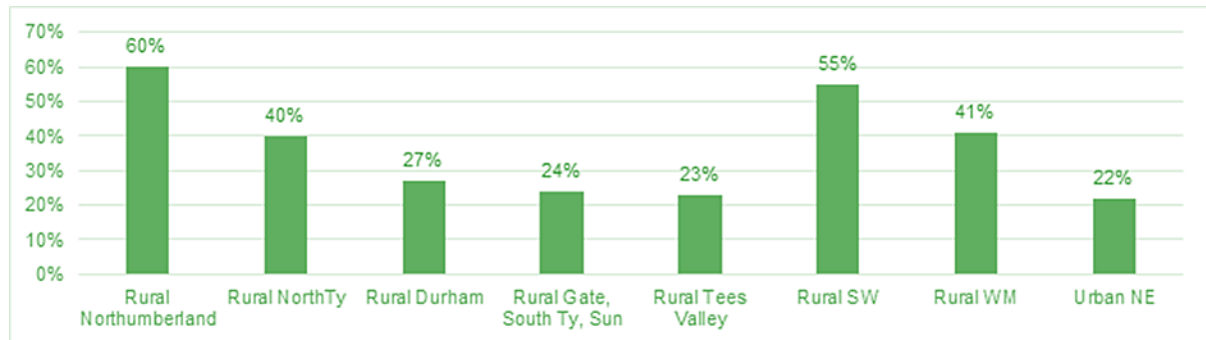
⁸ [Annex tables for English Housing Survey 2023 to 2024 headline findings on housing quality and energy efficiency - GOV.UK](#), Table 1.5

4. Housing needs and Northumberland’s rural businesses

There is limited publicly available data on the extent and implications of housing need for businesses in general, and for those in rural Northumberland in particular. This section draws together NICRE SORE data from 2023, and the findings from interviews with stakeholders and businesses in Northumberland in 2025 to present some aspects of the housing challenges affecting Northumberland’s businesses.

NICRE’s 2023 SORE survey of rural businesses in the NECA area found that 60% of rural firms in Northumberland rated the availability of affordable housing as either ‘poor’ or ‘very poor’, a stark difference compared to 27% of those surveyed in rural Durham.

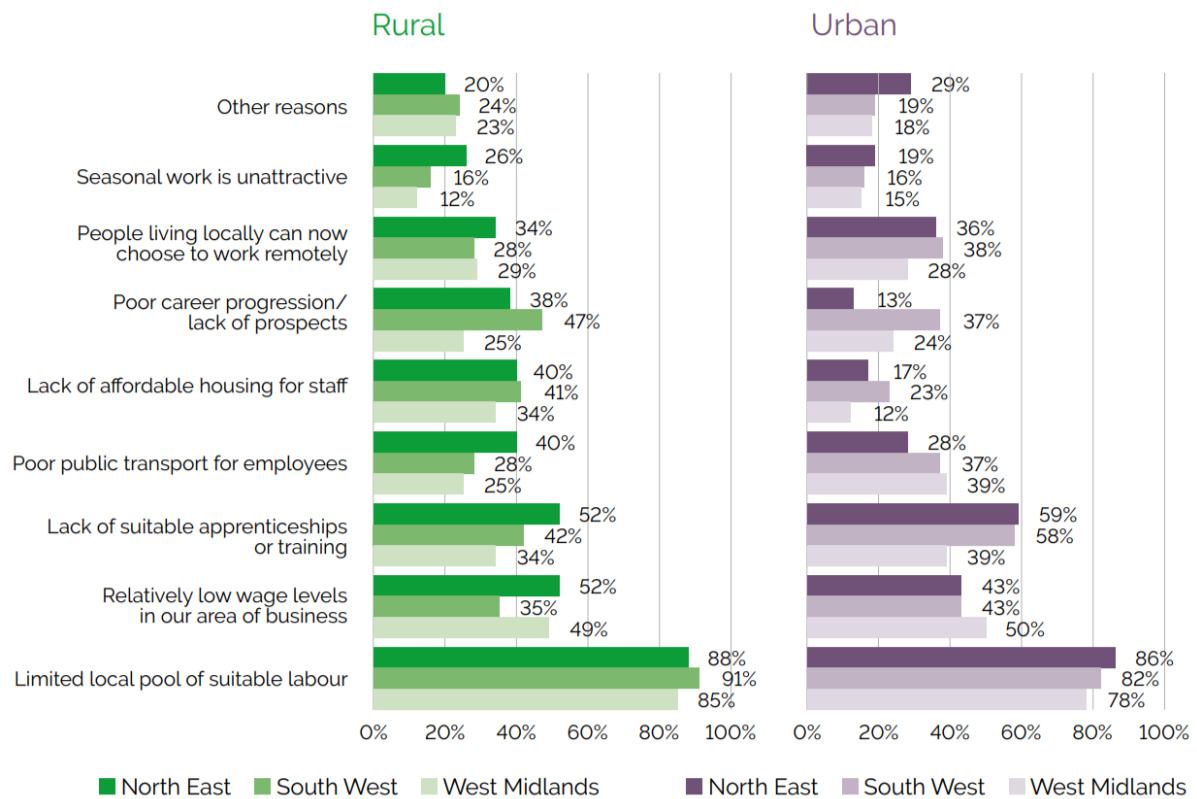
Figure 1: Percentage of enterprises rating availability of affordable housing as poor or very poor



Source: NICRE SORE survey, 2023

NICRE SORE 2023 data also suggests that a lack of affordable housing in local areas hinders firms from realising future opportunities as well as recruiting the right skills for their business. Nearly one in two rural Northumberland businesses cited affordable local housing for staff as a key barrier for their businesses. Two in five rural businesses in the North East mentioned that a lack of local affordable housing for staff hindered them from recruiting or retaining suitably skilled employees.

Figure 2: Main reasons for firms finding it challenging to recruit and retain skilled staff, rural and urban, by region



Source: NICRE SORE survey, 2023

National data highlights that rural villages, rural hamlets and isolated areas are more likely to face challenges with affordable housing, which in turn presents a significant challenge for businesses in areas like rural Northumberland. In 2022, median house prices were £130,000 in County Durham, £170,000 in Northumberland, and £178,000 in North Tyneside⁹. Northumberland has a higher ratio of house price to yearly earnings than County Durham, with housing costing on average 5x annual earnings in Northumberland, versus 3.5x earnings in County Durham. This ratio is only slightly lower than in Newcastle, where houses on average cost 5.4x average earnings.

Interviews with experts, local authorities and businesses in Northumberland highlighted some geographical ‘pinch points’ in the county where housing availability was thought to be lower, and house prices higher. Areas include coastal villages such as Beadnell and Craster with high numbers of holiday lets and second homes. Other perceived ‘pinch points’ were remote areas where there are clusters of businesses but little housing available nearby, such as Kielder, and remote parts of Hadrian’s Wall. The county’s market towns such as Hexham, Alnwick and Berwick, were perceived as having more housing availability, but insufficient affordable homes. Interviewees felt that

⁹<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/bulletins/housingaffordabilityinenglandanddwales/2022>

prohibitively high house prices and high rents in Northumberland's towns make them unattractive to staff on lower wages or on precarious contracts,

Quotation: *Representative from a Northumberland local authority*

"A number of [hospitality and tourism] employees are seasonal, which then also adds some of the pressure on housing need [...] the biggest challenge [for the visitor economy] is that it tends to be lower paid, seasonal employees that tourism businesses struggle to attract if they're not from the local area. [...] for someone to move into the area, it's very difficult on a typically a lower, living wage type salary to be able to afford something to rent."

Interviewees also reported a lack of affordable, long-term let properties in the region, impacting rural workers. Another perceived gap was houses of multiple occupancy (HMOs) for young professionals, or campus-type arrangements where rural workers could live and work in close proximity. Interviewees representing local businesses described that the majority of their team members commute to work as a result, typically by car. This in turn exacerbates staff recruitment and retention challenges for rural businesses, with interviewees feeling that their talent pool was restricted to those already living nearby, and those who are willing or able to drive to work.

Quotation: *Representative from a rural Northumberland business*

"There used to be lots of opportunities to rent on farms or estates affordably, but those have kind of gone. It's the classic case of the holiday let, if you're looking for 'I want to start my family and want to have my career, I just need a home' you can't live nearby. Even 5-10 years ago you could have found a house to rent for £500pm. Somewhere to long term rent a house just doesn't exist now, so that's the gap."

Quotation: *Representative from a Northumberland local authority*

"In a lot of those areas where the higher visitor pressure is, so where the demand is for [hospitality and tourism] staff, a lot of the properties are either already hotels, bed and breakfasts, or short-term holiday lets. [...] There's been growth, rapid growth actually, of properties that were potentially previously on the rental market that have now gone into short term holiday let functions [...] and there is no statutory registration scheme for those sorts of rental properties."

5. The roles of rural businesses in meeting housing need for local workers

Employers have long offered accommodation to workers at rural sites, such as estates, the armed forces, residential educational facilities like boarding schools, social and healthcare facilities with residential teams, and farm businesses. Businesses may also support their employees with rent contributions, or allowances intended to mitigate the cost of commuting from further away. Beyond

this, the role of rural employers, such as private sector non-farm businesses, in assessing and meeting housing need for local workers is less clear in publicly available data.

In Northumberland, there are several examples of initiatives developed by local businesses to assess and address the housing needs of their employees. Based on our discussions with local businesses and experts, housing needs assessment by businesses of their staff usually takes place in an unstructured way, and tends to occur at the point of recruitment, or through conversations with existing staff about challenges finding accommodation or getting to work. Businesses often leverage their networks or personal contacts to identify housing opportunities for current or new staff members.

Quotation: Representative from a rural Northumberland business

“We have just taken on [a new team member] six months ago and he’s renting a flat [...] and it wasn’t terribly easy to find somewhere, but I put some requests out to the business forum to see which flats were available, so he saw a few, and now he’s managed to find somewhere.”

In response to staff housing need, Northumberland businesses have taken steps such as:

- Opening additional offices in more urban areas in south Northumberland, where housing is more affordable and available, and which are more accessible by public transport,
- Implementing flexible working arrangements, including fully remote roles,
- Offering competitive relocation packages or subsidising a portion of staff rents,
- Using their networks to help identify possibilities for staff housing,
- Purchasing houses or accommodation of multiple occupancy within close proximity to the business,
- Building temporary accommodation, such as cabins and shipping containers, for temporary or seasonal staff,
- Purchasing accommodation for off-shore workers’ occasional and nighttime use, due to a lack of affordable rental accommodation and high hotel and bed and breakfast costs,
- Investing in local skills programmes and hubs, with a view to increasing access to skilled local workers who already live nearby.

For example, **The Bamburgh Castle Inn** is a pub with rooms in Seahouses, Northumberland. It is part of the Inn Collection Group, which has developed a model of staff accommodation provision across several of its sites in the north of England. The Inn Collection Group’s 'Live Inn' model offers subsidised accommodation to staff at sites in the Lake District, North Yorkshire and Northumberland. The accommodation includes all utilities and bills, bedrooms, communal facilities and kitchen, and free wi-fi.

At the Seahouses site, management staff reported a lack of affordable housing near to the coast. This negatively affected their ability to recruit staff. To mitigate this, the Inn Collection Group purchased staff accommodation within walking distance of the site. The Bamburgh Castle Inn also implemented other measures, such as protecting staff working hours in the winter months, when the inn is less busy, and supporting a car share scheme for staff that live commuting-distance away but do not drive.

Chris Ferguson at **Ad Gefrin**, a museum and distillery in Wooler, described how housing needs are assessed informally through conversations with current and prospective staff members. This revealed that there is a lack of affordable long-term rental accommodation in the area, and prohibitive housing prices mean that younger team members are unable to enter the housing market. Housing availability is affected by a high number of holiday homes and second homes in the area, and reductions in the number of suitable properties on farms and estates nearby. Chris described being “pretty much flexible on people’s working bases” to address this challenge. Ad Gefrin chose to offer flexibility to staff to work from either of their offices (Wooler and Cramlington) where their roles did not require them to be based at a particular site. They also considered purchasing housing for staff members that are required to be based in Wooler, if that was necessary to agree a position. That has not yet been required.

Marianne Whitfield, Director of Development at **MSP Ltd**, based in Alnwick, Northumberland, described how a number of staff members commute long distances rather than living locally. This was either due to a lack of available and affordable housing, or because a high number of holiday lets in the town meant that the area had become less vibrant and enticing for young professionals. Those that did want to move to Alnwick from elsewhere often struggled to find accommodation, and MSP staff members leveraged their local networks to identify suitable housing options for them.

In response to these challenges, MSP has been exploring options to develop and support a STEM and Innovation Hub in Alnwick, and described working with community members who plan to launch a Development Trust, to facilitate social and community-led housing in disused buildings on the high street¹⁰. The combination of these initiatives, it is hoped, would increase the pool of local, skilled workers in Alnwick, and make the area a more vibrant and attractive place for innovation and collaboration.

Quotation: Representative from a rural Northumberland business

““What I'd like to be able to do is when the kids that have come on placement and stuff like that from the high schools, that they see that there's actually a pathway for them [here] once they leave school, if that's what they want to do.”

Northumberland also comprises a number of estates, and housing needs assessments are often commissioned by estates and carried out consultants and parish councils. There is limited available

¹⁰Read NICRE’s report here: [Community-led housing and town centre regeneration - NICRE](#)

data reflecting Northumberland’s various estates, the quality of their housing, and the needs of their communities, employees and tenants. However, there are examples of estates in Northumberland engaging with social and affordable housing and developing solutions. For example, **Northumberland Estates** have worked with social housing providers, sold land for affordable housing, and built and managed a portfolio of rental properties across the region.

Further afield, **Chatsworth Estate** in Derbyshire and Yorkshire, developed a goal to provide 1000 local homes for local workers. This includes housing for workers on the estate, grounds and leisure sites and retail outlets, and accommodation for trainees at the on-site educational facilities. The process has involved building new homes, and replacing or redeveloping disused existing buildings, such as old barns and farmhouses. Chatsworth Estate estimates that “[a]pproximately 51% of the housing stock is let into the open rental market by the estate, with the balance occupied by those who work or have previously worked on the estate.”¹¹

Chatsworth Estate has built several new commercial properties to increase employment opportunities, and has developed objectives that engage with housing and employment in tandem. This involved measuring the economic impact of the estate, with the Chatsworth team (part of the Devonshire Group), the University of Derby, and Innovate UK working in partnership to conduct an economic impact assessment¹² for 2019-2022, which identified that 95% of Chatsworth and Bolton Abbey employees live within 30 miles of their place of work. In the Chatsworth Whole Estate Plan – September 2023, a range of joint housing-employment objectives are presented, such as providing housing for rent in villages, investment in and support for rural skills, as well as local employment in Chatsworth and tenant enterprises.

It is clear that rural businesses in Northumberland and beyond play various roles in supporting their staff housing needs, whether by providing or subsidising accommodation for staff, using their networks to identify suitable housing options for employees, or developing non-housing means of supporting and upskilling a local workforce that may already live locally, such as through innovation hubs and training. However, interviewees from Northumberland emphasised a lack of support at the local and national level for both housing initiatives, and non-housing skills development and recruitment support. Interviewees had some suggestions of types of support that would benefit local businesses. Interviewees were broadly supportive of joint ventures with community groups, local authorities, landowners and housing providers to develop housing solutions, and transport solutions, for local employees. It was also suggested that funding schemes could be made available to increase visitor economy businesses’ capacity and confidence to recruit and retain of seasonal and temporary staff, by securing a portion of staff hours in off-peak seasons for training and development. Training and skills hubs targeted at local young people were also suggested, particularly with a campus-type accommodation element.

¹¹ [chatsworth-core-estate-whole-estate-plan.pdf](#) page 88

¹² [Dev Group Econ Report-FINAL-10-October-2022.pdf](#)

6. Community-led housing assessment and provision for local workers

Housing needs of local workers can also be assessed and addressed by community-led housing initiatives, as part of broader local economic objectives and town centre regeneration plans. There are several examples of community-led housing initiatives across the UK, and in Northumberland, which were explored in our recent report on the role of community-led housing in town centre regeneration¹³. These projects are often spearheaded by local development and land trusts.

Interviewees viewed development trusts as linking organisations able to tie together community and business needs through their decisions about local housing. This was perceived as a way to avoid piecemeal solutions being developed by individual businesses.

Quotation: *Representative from a rural Northumberland business*

“The main thing is that we need to have a holistic approach to it, in the sense that, yes, housing is a massive issue, but there is housing available if people need it. It’s the same the country over, isn’t it? It’s the cost of it. It’s this, it’s that. It’s the other. [...] And we’re doing what we need to do. AlnCom are doing what they need to do, Reheat, everybody’s doing their own little bits, but if we could just combine it all together, then it would be so much more powerful. And I think that’s where I’m really excited by the idea of the [Alnwick] Development Trust, because they can be the force that pulls it all together.”

In Amble, Northumberland, community-led housing for local workers is provided by **Amble Development Trust**, who manage four affordable housing units and three retail units to support local people to live and work in Amble town centre. The scheme facilitates tenants of the community-led housing properties to start a small business in the vacant retail units. There are examples of tenants also working for Amble Development Trust, in turn contributing to economic and town centre development activities, such as through the Harbour Village small business retail units¹⁴.

Further afield, in Tiree, in the Inner Hebrides in Scotland, the **Tiree Community Development Trust** (Urras Thiriodh) conducted a community housing and business needs survey with Communities Housing Trust in June 2023¹⁵. The survey was intended to shape and support a new housing project of 12-14 affordable homes. Tiree is a very remote rural area that is popular with tourists, and it is estimated that around 30% of dwellings are holiday accommodation or second homes. Tiree is also primarily made up of croft land.

¹³ [Community-led housing and town centre regeneration - NICRE](#)

¹⁴ *ibid*

¹⁵ [Tiree-Housing-and-Business-Need-Report-Final-June-2023.pdf](#)

The assessment was made up of three surveys, for existing residents, non-residents looking to relocate to the area, and local businesses. This is an example of a community-led housing initiative assessing local housing needs independently of the standard framework used by local authorities. The survey found that there is both the:

need and support for the provision of additional affordable housing in Tiree [which] evidences the fact that the area is at risk of losing crucial business and local employment opportunities if suitable housing is not provided. Providing a mix of affordable tenures of rent and low-cost home ownership, could help to attract and retain employees for businesses and sustain the community in the long term. More housing, for both permanent and seasonal workers, also has the potential to attract people with families to the area, as well as skilled workers which could alleviate the persistent recruitment issues that some of the businesses currently face.¹⁶

The Tiree Community Development Trust's direct engagement with local businesses as part of this approach found that "8 business said 'yes' to considering a joint venture to provide additional housing in the area (57%) [and] [h]alf of these businesses have employees at present with a housing need."

The resulting housing strategy for Tiree suggested that "[m]odular off-site construction was identified as both cost-effective and appropriate given Tiree's island location [...] and would complement the development of larger, denser housing projects. It would be particularly relevant for crofters who may have access to land already"¹⁷. This could present an opportunity for crofters to engage with community-led housing in two ways: (1) generating income from land used for housing projects, and (2) to benefit from the scheme themselves if they require a house on their croft land.

Similar opportunities could exist for Northumberland's businesses and landowners, and a survey of this type could be a tool to enable the county's rural housing needs to be explored.

7. Summary

In summary, the Northumberland businesses involved in this research often assess housing needs of their staff informally, during recruitment or as part of conversations about challenges moving house or getting to work. Responses to staff housing need include opening additional offices in urban areas, offering remote or flexible working arrangement, subsidising rent, offering relocation packages and purchasing accommodation for staff use. Examples include the Inn Collection Group's staff housing model in Seahouses, Ad Gefrin's flexible working options, and MSP's use of their local network to support staff members to find accommodation. Community-led housing initiatives in Northumberland also play an important role in addressing local workers' housing needs as part of economic and town centre regeneration plans. Projects like Amble Development Trust's community-led housing initiative provide affordable housing and retail units to support local workers and businesses.

Beyond Northumberland, there are several innovative examples of rural housing needs assessment and provision for local workers. Estates like Chatsworth, in Derbyshire, have integrated housing into

¹⁶ [Tiree-Housing-and-Business-Need-Report-Final-June-2023.pdf](#) pages 2-3

¹⁷ [Housing – Urras Thiriodh \(Tiree Community Development Trust\)](#), page 7

local employment strategies, redeveloping properties and providing affordable housing for workers and communities. In Tiree, Scotland, the Community Development Trust conducted a housing survey which involved local employers to develop a project for 12-14 affordable homes and assess local business interest in joint ventures for housing local workers.

Future solutions are also in development, with Northumberland businesses and authorities interested in supporting the local skills ecosystem through initiatives such as innovation hubs with a housing component, or campus-type arrangements with houses of multiple occupancy for young professionals. However, initiatives like these will likely rely on more rounded housing needs assessments which take into account business perspectives and rural, local expertise, which are not currently adequately represented in the housing needs assessments used in local planning.

8. Recommendations for future rural housing assessments

These findings point towards number of steps which could be taken to enhance existing housing needs assessments and better capture the needs of current and potential rural workers and businesses. The following recommendations could also help to identify opportunities for solutions that could be co-delivered by businesses, landowners, local authorities, housing developers and communities:

1. A mixed community and business housing needs assessment survey, similar to the approach taken in Tiree, could be useful elsewhere, including rural and more urban areas of Northumberland. Support could be made available through existing funding mechanisms to develop and test the applicability and usefulness of this type of mixed survey in areas with larger and smaller populations, and higher and lower density of businesses of various sizes.
2. Data about social and affordable housing allocations could be profiled and shared to shed light on the extent to which housing is being allocated to rural workers, and in which proportions.
3. There is an opportunity to benefit from the in-depth local knowledge of estates, institutional landlords like the National Trust and Ministry of Defence, and land development trusts across Northumberland. This could arise through an advisory panel-type group made up of these types of landowners to:
 - a. Increase understanding of housing needs on private land, estates and within development trust remits
 - b. Provide a clearer picture of the quality and sustainability of rental properties on private land, estates and within trusts
 - c. Identify affordable housing opportunities for local workers on private, estate- or trust-owned land
 - d. Explore opportunities and support for increasing the availability of long-term lettings in the county.

4. Conduct a business survey in Northumberland to understand local businesses' interest in joint initiatives to provide housing, with a view to developing a pilot project.

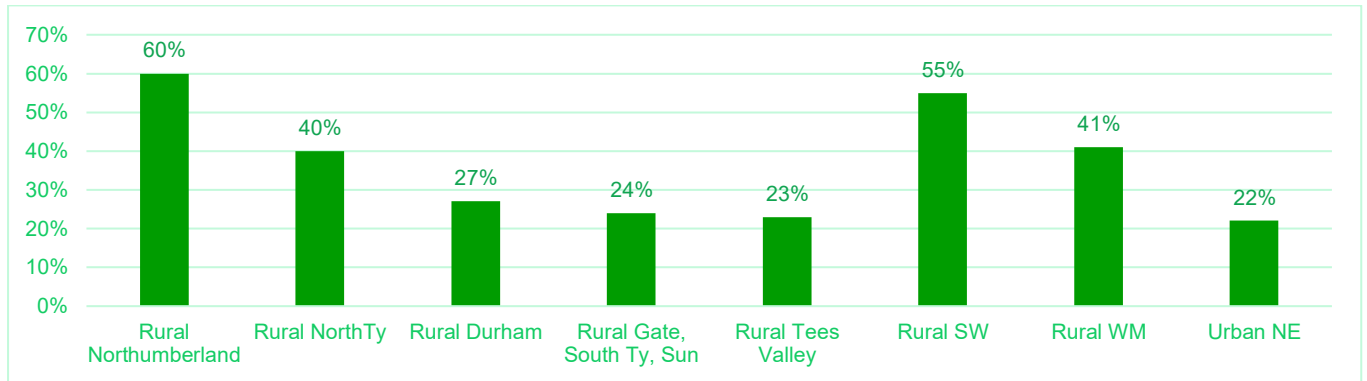
9. Next steps

This interim report forms part of an ongoing project conducted in partnership by NICRE and Communities CAN. Next steps will include:

- Further research exploring the perspectives of institutional landlords and estates on local housing for rural workers.
- A survey of visitor economy businesses about their employees' housing needs, particularly relating to the recruitment and retention of temporary and seasonal workers.
- Engagement with local authorities to understand the landscape of social housing and allocations in rural areas.
- Follow-up discussions with local businesses and interviewees to explore the topic further and share knowledge.

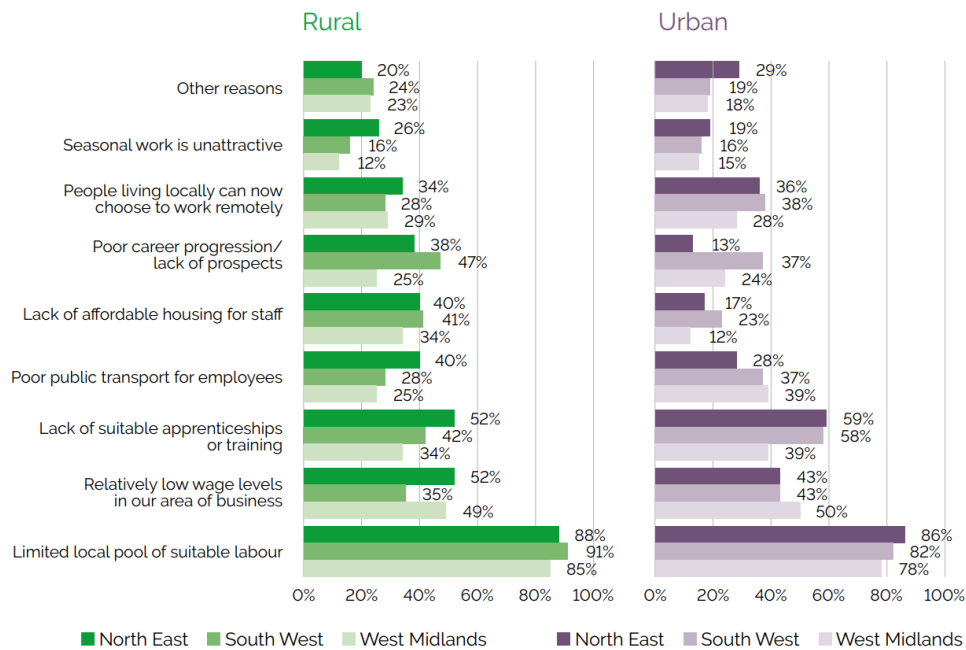
Annex I: NICRE State of Rural Enterprise survey data

Figure 1: Percentage of enterprises rating availability of affordable housing as poor/very poor



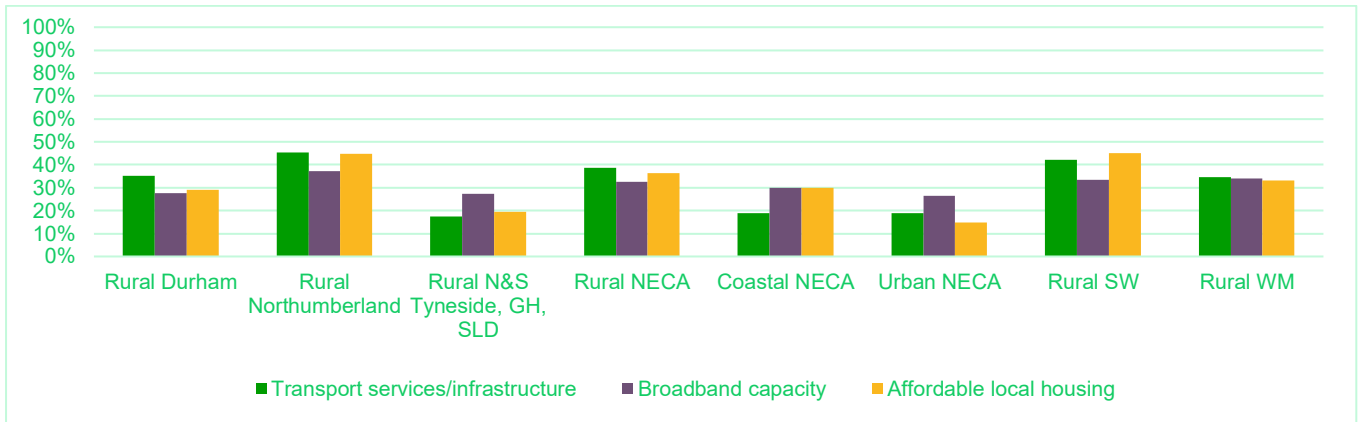
Source: NICRE SORE survey, 2023

Figure 2: Main reasons for firms finding it different to recruit or retain skilled staff, rural and urban, by region



Source: NICRE SORE survey, 2023

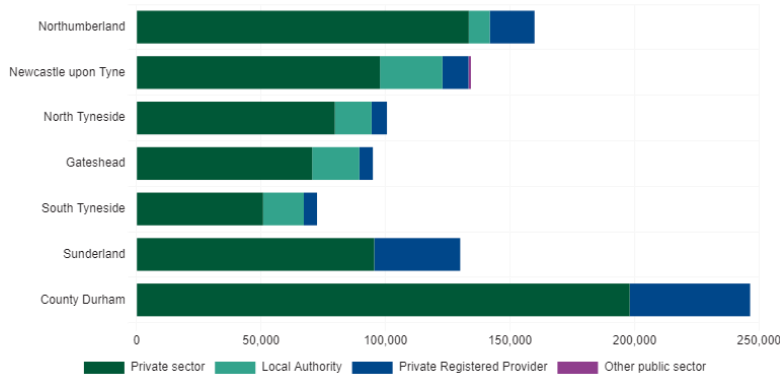
Figure 3: Barriers to businesses realising future opportunities



Source: NICRE SORE survey, 2023

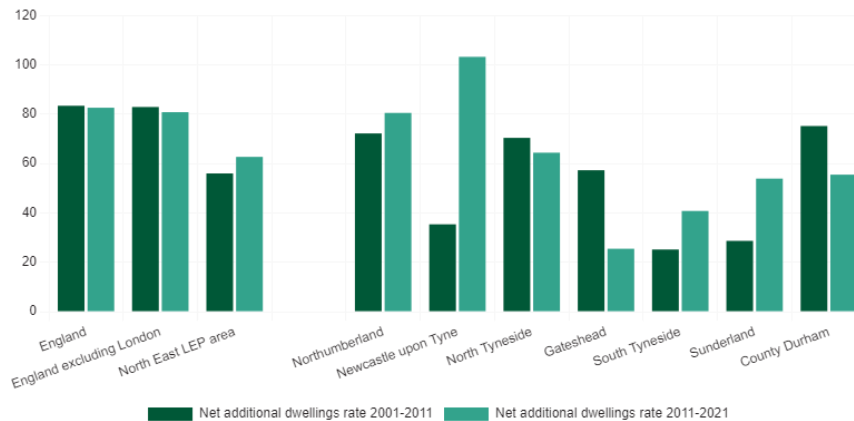
Annex II: NECA evidence hub housing data

Figure 4: Local housing stock by tenure in the NECA area



Source: NECA evidence hub¹⁸

Figure 5: Net additional dwellings rate over 2001-2021

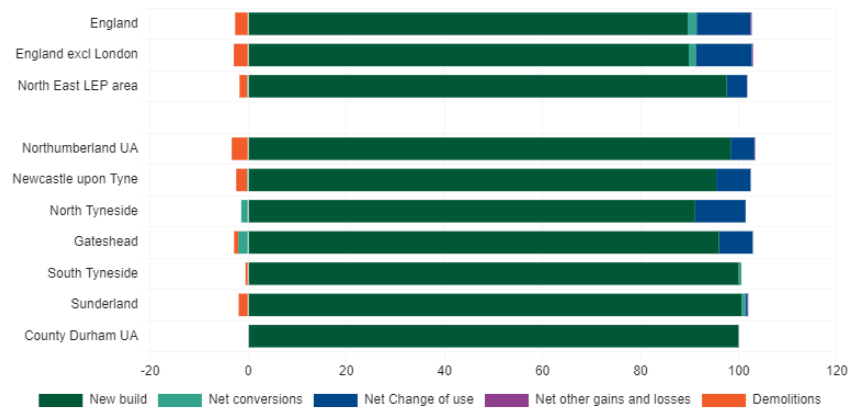


Source: NECA evidence hub¹⁹

¹⁸ <https://evidencehub.northeast-ca.gov.uk/report/housing-and-housebuilding>

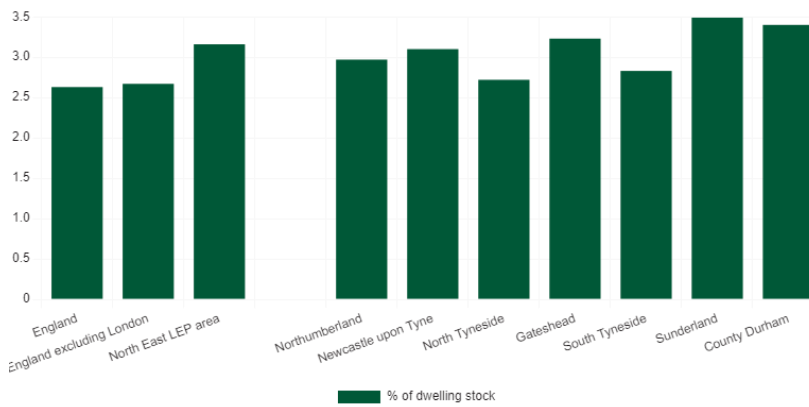
¹⁹ *ibid*

Figure 6: Net additional dwellings by type in 2021



Source: NECA evidence hub ²⁰

Figure 7: Rate of vacant dwellings in 2021



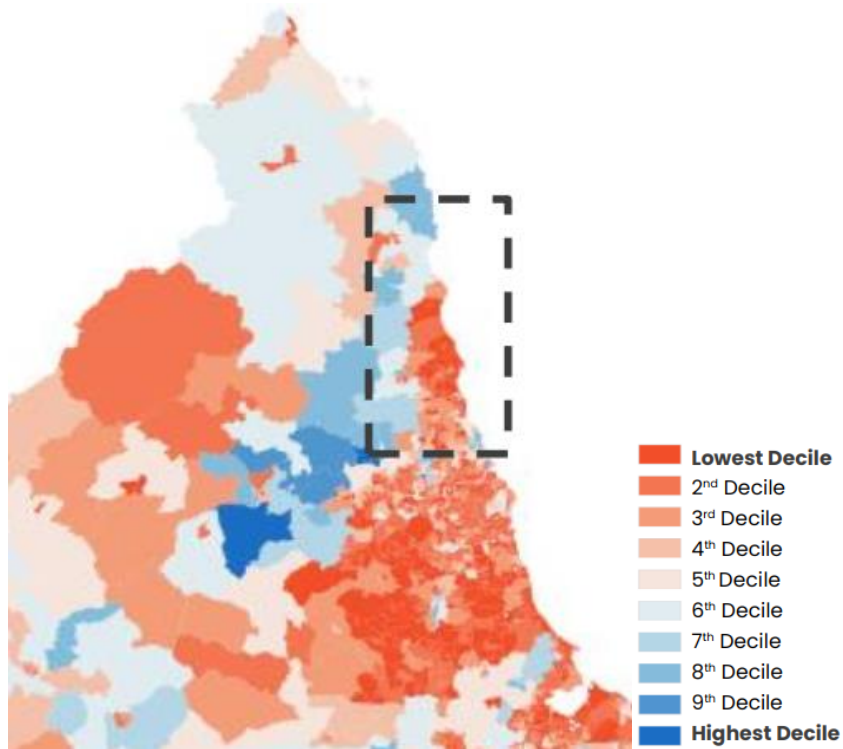
Source: NECA evidence hub ²¹

²⁰ <https://evidencehub.northeast-ca.gov.uk/report/housing-and-housebuilding>

²¹ *ibid*

Annex III: National housing data

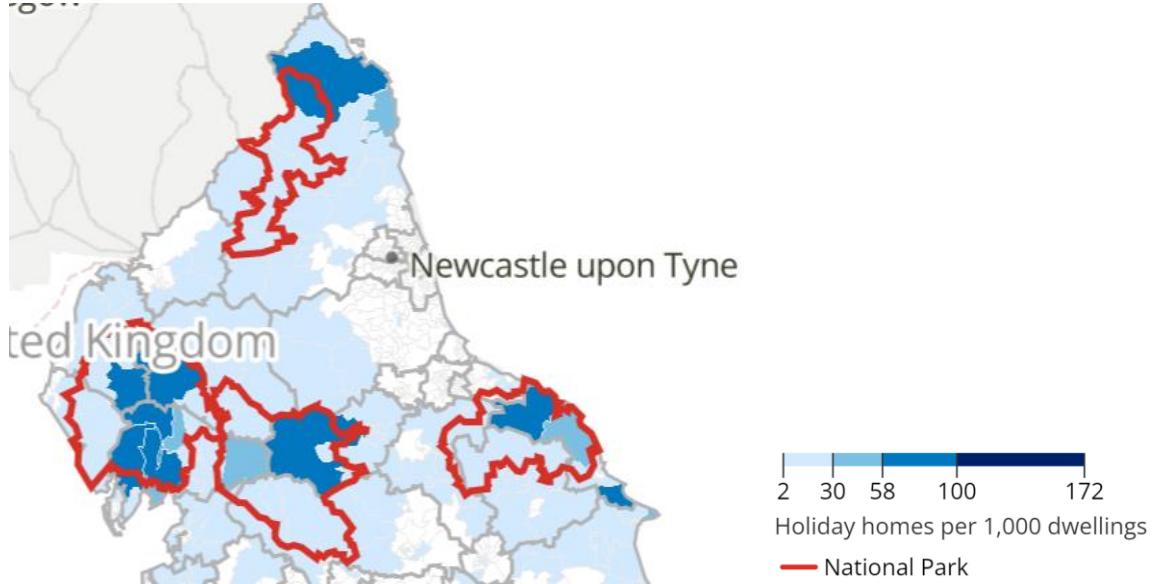
Figure 8: Median house prices in the North East of England



Source: Onward analysis, 2023²²

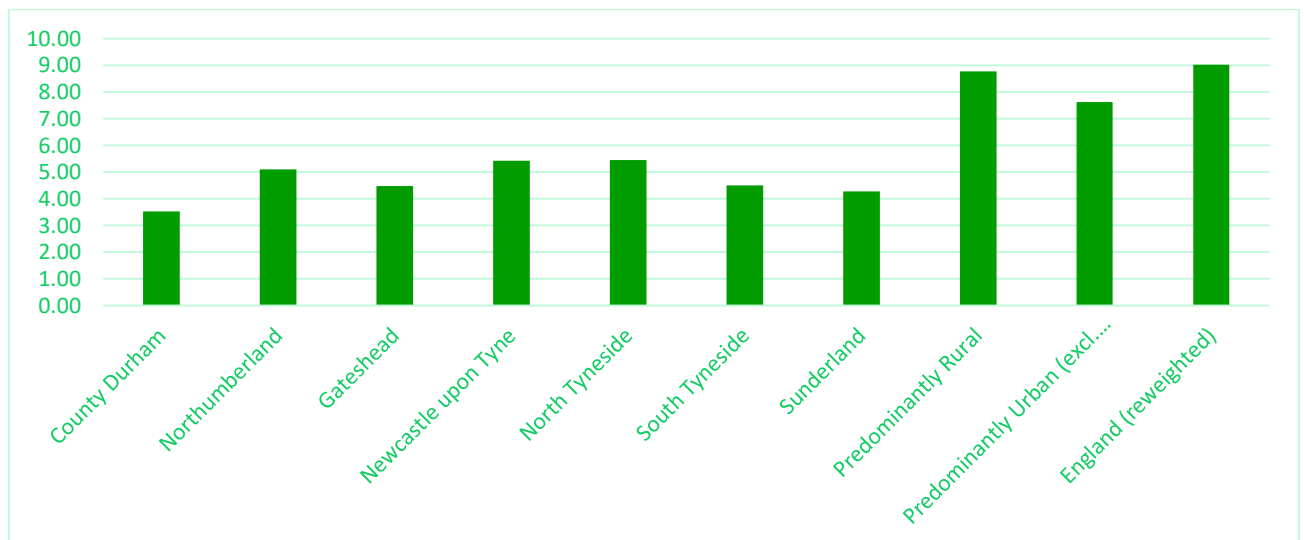
²² <https://www.ukonward.com/reports/troubled-waters-coast-in-crisis/>

Figure 9: Location of second addresses used as holiday home



Source: ONS 2021 census²³

Figure 10: Ratio of lower quartile house price to lower quartile gross annual residence-based earnings, 2022



Source: NICRE analysis of data from DEFRA Rural Digest

²³<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/articles/morethan1in10addressesusedasholidayhomesinsomeareasofenglandandwales/2023-06-20>

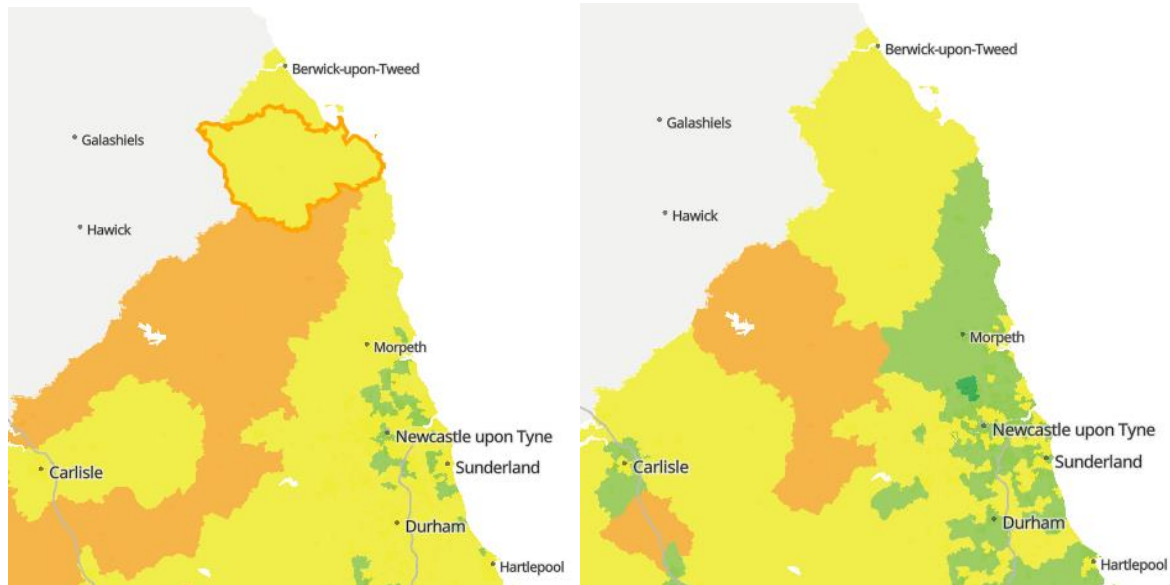
Annex IV: National energy efficiency of dwellings data

Figure 11: Energy efficiency of dwellings in your area

Median energy efficiency score for new and existing houses and flats/maisonettes, Middle layer super output areas (MSOAs), England and Wales up to March 2023

Of existing houses (left)

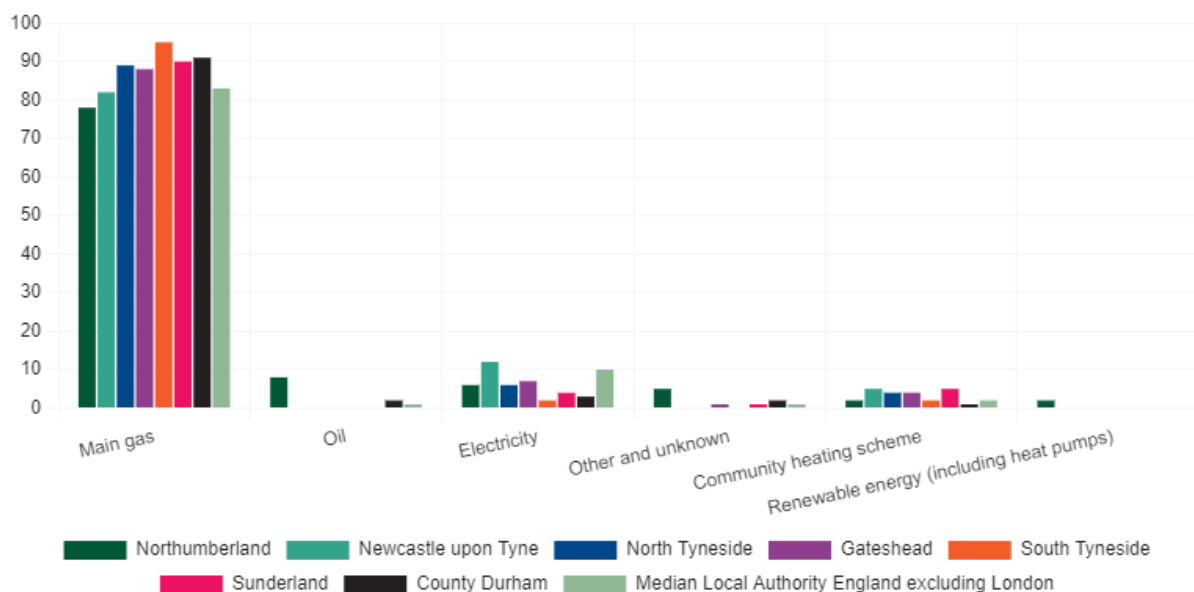
Of all types (right)



Source: ONS data, 2023²⁴

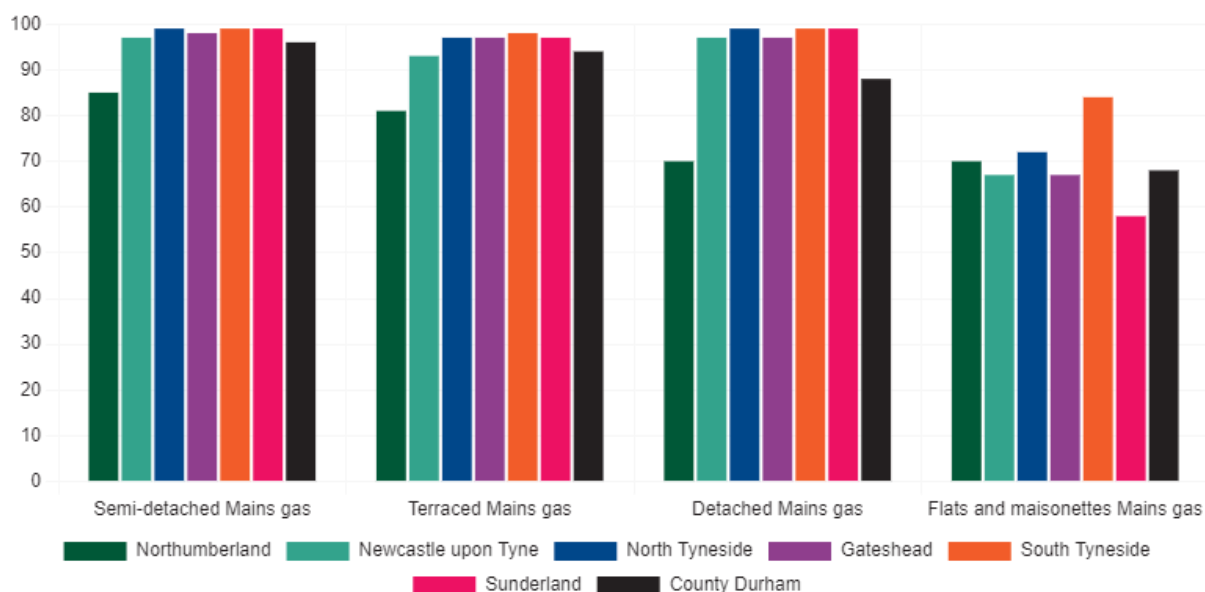
²⁴<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/articles/energyefficiencyofhousinginenglandandwales/2023>

Figure 12: Main fuel type or method of heating used in central heating, NECA regions



Source: ONS data, 2023²⁵

Figure 13: Mains gas used in central heating by house type, NECA regions

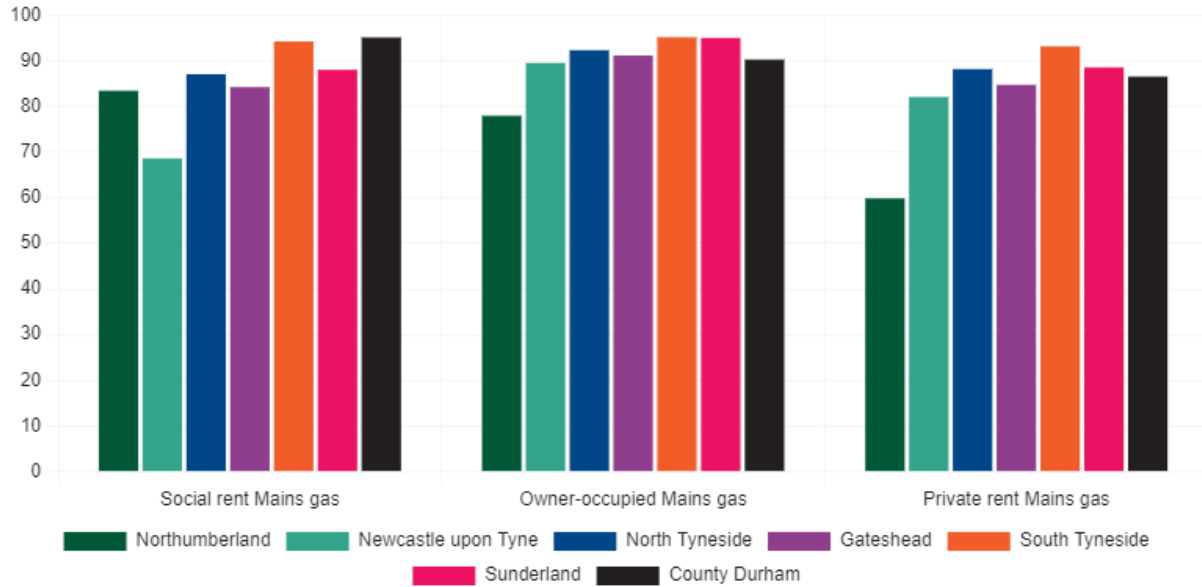


Source: ONS data, 2023²⁶

²⁵<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/articles/energyefficiencyofhousinginenglandandwales/2023>

²⁶<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/articles/energyefficiencyofhousinginenglandandwales/2023>

Figure 14: Mains gas used in central heating by type of occupancy, NECA regions

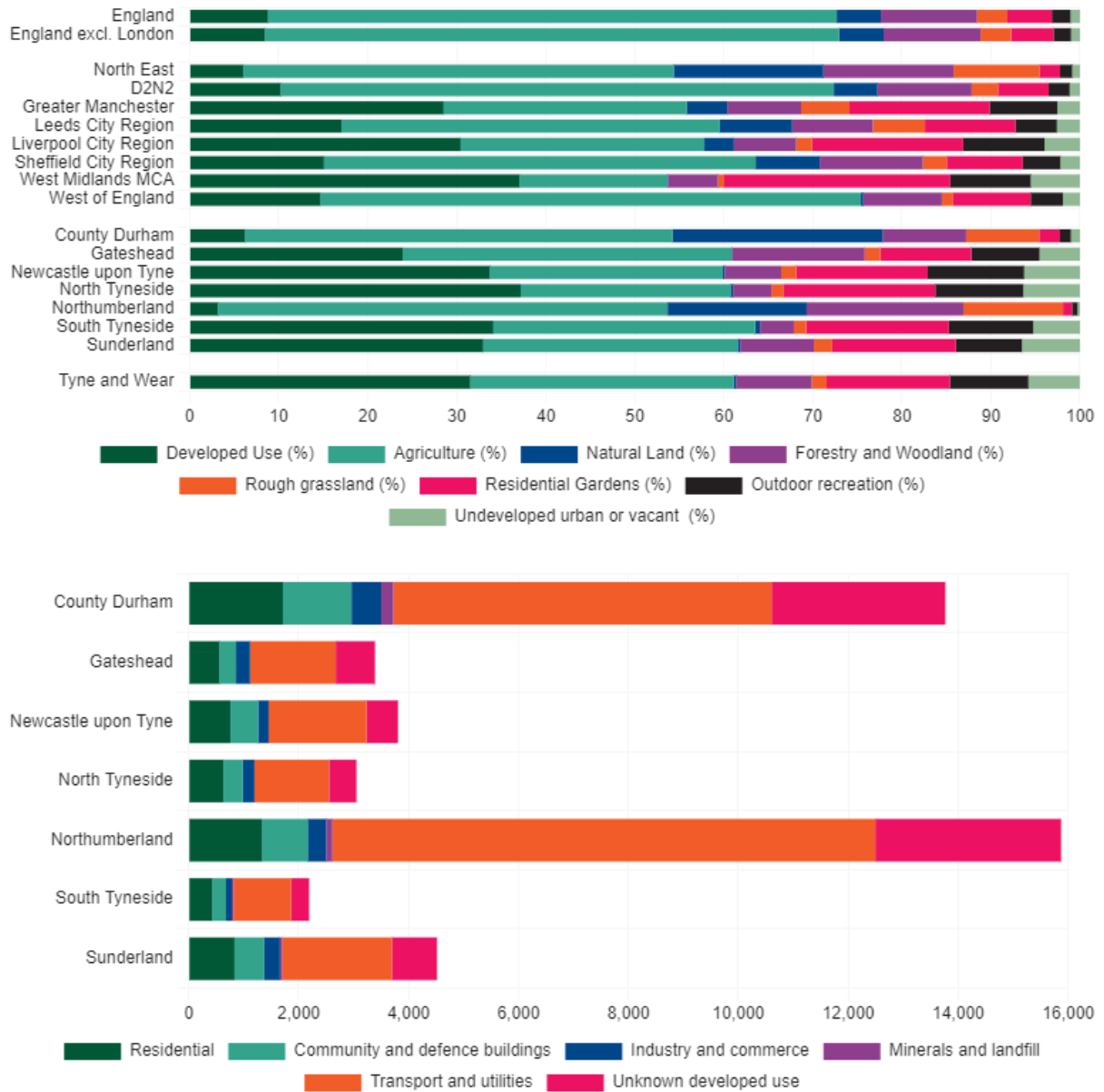


Source: ONS data, 2023²⁷

²⁷<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/articles/energyefficiencyofhousinginenglandandwales/2023>

Annex V: Land use data

Figure 15: Land use across NECA areas with national comparisons



Source: NECA evidence hub²⁸

²⁸ <https://evidencehub.northeast-ca.gov.uk/report/land-use>

Annex VI: Northumberland housing policy

Northumberland local plan: Policy HOU 8²⁹

Policy HOU 8

Isolated residential development in the open countryside

1. The development of isolated homes in the open countryside will only be supported where:
 - a. There is an essential and clearly established need for a full-time rural worker necessary to meet the operational needs of a rural business to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside, and where it can be demonstrated that:
 - i. The business is financially sound and viable with a clear prospect of remaining so, the activity and landholding units concerned having been established for at least three years and been profitable for at least one of those last three years; and
 - ii. The functional need could not be fulfilled by any existing dwelling on the landholding unit or any other existing accommodation in the immediate area, which is suitable (including by means of refurbishment or appropriate extension) and potentially available for occupation by the workers concerned; or
 - b. It represents the optimal viable use of a heritage asset, or represents appropriate enabling development to secure the future of a heritage asset(s); or
 - c. It re-uses redundant or disused buildings and enhances its immediate setting; or
 - d. It involves the appropriate sub-division of an existing residential dwelling; or
 - e. The design is of exceptional quality, in that it is truly outstanding or innovative, reflecting the highest standards of architecture, and would help to raise the standards of design in rural areas, and it would significantly enhance its immediate setting, and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.

²⁹ [Northumberland-Local-Plan-Adopted-March-2022.pdf](#) page 140

Policy ENV 5 Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty³⁰

“When assessing development proposals affecting the AONB particular considerations will include:

- a. The sensitivity of local landscapes and their capacity to accommodate new development, including temporary structures such as caravans and chalets;
- b. Intervisibility between the AONB, the seascape and the landscape beyond, including the Kyloe and Cheviot Hills;
- c. Interdependency between the special qualities of the landscape and the marine and coastal environment, including the internationally and nationally important nature conservation sites and associated ecosystems, geology, species and habitats; and
- d. The need to sustain and, where appropriate, enhance:
 - i. The significance of heritage assets, including any contribution made by their setting;
 - ii. A sense of remoteness, wildness and open views and dark skies;
 - iii. The natural functioning of the coastline; and
 - iv. A clear distinction between settlements and open countryside.

3. As far as possible, it will be recognised that the AONB is a living, working area by allowing small scale development where it does not impact on the AONB's special qualities including those in criteria (2) a. to d. above. In particular, in assessing development proposals, consideration will be given to the extent to which the development:

- a. Adds to the availability of permanently occupied and affordable housing to meet local needs;
- b. Supports the growth and diversification of the rural economy through the expansion of existing businesses and the development of new businesses; and
- c. Supports the tourism aims set out in part 1 of Policy ECN 15, within the constraints set out in part 2 of that Policy.

³⁰ [Northumberland-Local-Plan-Adopted-March-2022.pdf](#), pages 202-3

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