# Shameless gangs exploit low property prices in Horden to establish cannabis farms



Shameless gangs are exploiting the dramatically low property prices in Horden, a former mining village in County Durham, by transforming abandoned shops into cannabis farms. The average house price in Horden is a staggering £52,000, significantly below the national average of £268,319, with two-bedroom terraced homes available for as little as £9,000. This rural locality, often touted as one of the cheapest places to live in the UK, is now grappling with a rising tide of drug-related crime, leaving residents frustrated and desperate for change.

Norman Bayles, a long-time resident, lamented that Horden feels neglected as criminals seize opportunities in the wake of its declining economy. “People come from London. They rent or buy because houses are cheap here, then set up cannabis farms,” he stated. His sentiments echo broader community fears, as families contend with increasing violence and drug use. A recent incident saw a man jailed for over three years for involvement in a cannabis farm hidden within a disused shop. Just two years ago, rival gangs clashed violently in the village, culminating in a shocking "weekend of terror," which left communities rattled.

Horden is emblematic of a larger trend seen in various parts of the UK where dwindling economic prospects attract cutthroat criminal activities. Once a thriving community supported by the Horden Colliery, its closure in 1987 triggered an exodus of residents in search of job opportunities, leading to an alarming one in ten homes now standing empty and boarded up. According to local data, the village is among the top three per cent of the most deprived areas in England and Wales, with rampant unemployment and a lack of investment contributing to pervasive social issues.

Recent statistics indicate that Horden's crime rate is among the highest in the North East, with approximately 178.9 incidents per 1,000 residents. Residents feel besieged not only by drugs and antisocial behaviour but also by a perceived lack of effective policing. Shopkeeper Levent Aydinc noted a growing sense of hopelessness, stating, “There are so many drug addicts. Bad people are coming in. I don’t think the police do enough.”

In response to these rising crime levels, initiatives have been launched to improve safety and revive the local economy. Part of the Home Office's £25 million Safer Streets Fund is focused on securing homes through free security measures, including boarding up empty properties in Horden. These efforts aim to enhance the streets' safety and detain criminal activity, though many locals remain sceptical about their long-term effectiveness.

As the village struggles to reclaim its identity, it is also contending with incoming residents, including homeless families from London, which adds pressure to an already strained housing market. Absent landlords and a dearth of investment, combined with these demographic shifts, complicate the path to revitalisation.

For those who have lived in Horden all their lives, the transformation from a bustling community to one overshadowed by drug crime is disheartening. Though there are calls for redevelopment and community support, the vision for Horden’s future remains uncertain as residents yearn for their village to return to its former glory.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2055983/uk-seaside-town-cheapest-britain> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/24476863.data-shows-one-ten-homes-horden-currently-empty/> - An article from The Northern Echo reports that one in ten homes in Horden, County Durham, are currently empty and boarded up, leaving residents feeling 'forgotten' and left behind. The former mining town is in the top three percent of deprived areas in England and Wales. The closure of the mines in 1987 led to people moving away to find work, resulting in numerous boarded-up houses and a sense of neglect in the community. Local leaders advocate for redevelopment to improve the area.
3. <https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/24437430.nine-most-dangerous-areas-county-durham/> - The Northern Echo highlights that nine areas in County Durham, including Horden, are ranked among the 'most dangerous' locations in the North East. A study by Churchill Support Services revealed that Horden has a crime rate of 178.9 per 1,000 people, with 6,807 offences reported. The study considered factors such as antisocial behaviour, violent crime, and shoplifting, placing Horden eighth in the list of most dangerous areas in the region.
4. <https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/19190487.fighting-crime-boarding-houses-horden-darlington/> - An article from The Northern Echo discusses efforts to combat crime and vandalism in Horden and Darlington. As part of the Home Office’s £25 million Safer Streets Fund, homes in Horden are being secured with free home security measures, including boarding up empty properties. These measures aim to deter criminals and address issues like burglary and antisocial behaviour. The initiative also includes environmental improvements to make streets more attractive and safer for residents.
5. <https://www.channel4.com/news/bedroom-tax-durham-horden-ninth-street-accent-housing> - Channel 4 News reports on the impact of the 'bedroom tax' on Horden, Durham. Residents estimate over 200 properties are empty, with some streets having more vacant homes than occupied ones. The closure of the colliery in 1987 led to an exodus of residents seeking work elsewhere. The article highlights the challenges faced by the community, including high unemployment and a lack of investment, contributing to the decline of the area.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2024/dec/31/families-sent-durham-town-from-london-horden-homeless> - The Guardian reports on the influx of homeless families from London to Horden, Durham. Families are being offered private tenancies in the area under the threat of eviction from temporary accommodation. The article discusses the challenges faced by these families and the community's response to the increased demand for housing. It also highlights the strained resources and the impact on local services and infrastructure in Horden.
7. <https://www.chroniclelive.co.uk/news/north-east-news/how-picturesque-durham-village-became-18479966> - Chronicle Live describes how Horden, a picturesque former mining community in County Durham, has become a haven for drug dealers and criminals. The article details the decline of the village following the closure of the colliery in 1987, leading to high unemployment and social issues. It discusses the role of absentee landlords and the lack of investment in the community, contributing to the area's transformation into a hotspot for criminal activity.