# CPRE warns rural affordable housing crisis worsens with rough sleeping surpassing London rates



The countryside charity CPRE is intensifying its appeal to the government to urgently redefine affordable housing in light of what it describes as a severe housing crisis plaguing rural England. Recent findings from CPRE indicate that rates of rough sleeping in some rural regions now surpass those in major urban centres. Alarmingly, their research from 2023 identified twelve rural local authorities with rough sleeping rates exceeding the national average and standing at seven times higher than those in London.

In its call to action, CPRE asserts that despite a reported 70% increase in the construction of so-called affordable homes since 2012, this statistic obscures significant regional disparities and is undermined by an inadequate definition of "affordable." The charity argues that many of these homes remain financially inaccessible for ordinary families. Specific regions like the North West and South West have even seen declines in affordable housing construction, with decreases of 6.2% and 8.9%, respectively. Concurrently, social housing construction has plummeted by 32% over the same period, with a mere 2,831 social homes built in rural England last year. Compounding this issue, the waiting list for social housing in rural locales has swelled to approximately 300,000 people, suggesting a backlog that would take an estimated 82 years to resolve at current building rates. In the South West alone, nearly 65,000 individuals are still on waiting lists, despite a 33% reduction in numbers since 2012.

CPRE believes that the new Planning and Infrastructure Bill offers a crucial opportunity to revolutionise affordable housebuilding. To address what it refers to as "an extreme disparity" between rural rents and house prices, CPRE is advocating for a statutory definition of affordable housing that aligns with average local incomes, rather than market rates. Furthermore, the charity insists on ambitious, legally binding targets for genuinely affordable and social-rented homes in every new development, coupled with accountability measures for developers.

Paul Miner, head of policy and planning at CPRE, emphasised the critical need for action, arguing that a failure to address the crisis could significantly disrupt rural communities and contribute to their decline. In November 2023, CPRE underscored this urgency in a report detailing the chronic shortage of genuinely affordable housing, stating that soaring house prices and stagnant wages, exacerbated by the rise of second homes and short-term lets, are crucial factors driving the crisis. This has culminated in a staggering 89-year waiting period for social housing under current construction rates.

The report further highlights that rural house prices have escalated at nearly double the rate of urban areas over the past five years, while wages in these communities have stagnated, leading to a 40% increase in rural homelessness and a current waiting list for social housing estimated at 93 years. These alarming statistics illustrate the need for immediate government intervention.

In February 2024, CPRE launched a dedicated campaign focusing on building support for rural affordable housing. This initiative aims to mobilise public backing for redefined affordable housing metrics that reflect local incomes. Given the escalating issues of homelessness and prolonged waiting lists for social housing, CPRE’s push for ambitious targets for social housing construction is gaining traction. The call also includes measures to curtail the rise of second homes and short-term rental properties, which have intensified the housing crisis for local residents.

By rallying communities to engage in the affordable housing movement, CPRE is not only spotlighting the dire state of rural housing but also empowering individuals to advocate for necessary change, ensuring that locals have access to housing they can afford. With the government now facing increased pressure on multiple fronts, the ongoing dialogue surrounding rural housing reform is more essential than ever for the sustainability of these communities.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraph 1: [[1]](https://todaysconveyancer.co.uk/cpre-demands-action-rural-housing-crisis/)
2. Paragraph 2: [[1]](https://todaysconveyancer.co.uk/cpre-demands-action-rural-housing-crisis/), [[2]](https://www.cpre.org.uk/news/our-report-housing-crisis-poses-threat-to-survival-of-rural-communities/)
3. Paragraph 3: [[1]](https://todaysconveyancer.co.uk/cpre-demands-action-rural-housing-crisis/), [[4]](https://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/unravelling-a-crisis-the-state-of-rural-affordable-housing-in-england/)
4. Paragraph 4: [[1]](https://todaysconveyancer.co.uk/cpre-demands-action-rural-housing-crisis/), [[5]](https://www.cpre.org.uk/explainer/our-rural-affordable-housing-campaign-explained/)
5. Paragraph 5: [[2]](https://www.cpre.org.uk/news/our-report-housing-crisis-poses-threat-to-survival-of-rural-communities/), [[4]](https://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/unravelling-a-crisis-the-state-of-rural-affordable-housing-in-england/)
6. Paragraph 6: [[5]](https://www.cpre.org.uk/explainer/our-rural-affordable-housing-campaign-explained/), [[6]](https://www.cpre.org.uk/news/cpre-launches-campaign-to-build-support-for-rural-affordable-housing/)
7. Paragraph 7: [[4]](https://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/unravelling-a-crisis-the-state-of-rural-affordable-housing-in-england/), [[6]](https://www.cpre.org.uk/news/cpre-launches-campaign-to-build-support-for-rural-affordable-housing/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://todaysconveyancer.co.uk/cpre-demands-action-rural-housing-crisis/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.cpre.org.uk/news/our-report-housing-crisis-poses-threat-to-survival-of-rural-communities/> - In November 2023, CPRE released a report highlighting the acute shortage of genuinely affordable housing in rural England. The report reveals that over 300,000 people are on waiting lists for social rented housing, with current construction rates leading to an 89-year backlog. Factors contributing to the crisis include record house prices, stagnating wages, and an increase in second homes and short-term lets. The report calls for the government to redefine 'affordable housing' to link directly to average local incomes and to set ambitious targets for social rented homes.
3. <https://www.cpre.org.uk/news/new-definition-of-affordable-homes-could-slash-rural-rent-prices-by-up-to-a-half/> - In July 2019, CPRE advocated for a new definition of 'affordable' housing to better align with local incomes in rural areas. The current definition, which sets rents at 80% of market rates, often remains out of reach for many low-income families. CPRE's proposed changes could lead to significant savings for rural households, with potential rent reductions of up to 50% in some areas. The organization emphasizes the need for rent prices to be based on income rather than inflated market costs.
4. <https://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/unravelling-a-crisis-the-state-of-rural-affordable-housing-in-england/> - CPRE's 2023 report, 'Unravelling a crisis: the state of rural affordable housing in England,' examines the causes and impacts of the affordable housing shortage in rural communities. The report highlights that rural house prices have increased at nearly twice the rate of urban areas over the past five years, while rural wages have stagnated. It also notes a 40% rise in rural homelessness over five years and a 93-year waiting list for social housing at current construction rates. The report calls for urgent government action to address these issues.
5. <https://www.cpre.org.uk/explainer/our-rural-affordable-housing-campaign-explained/> - In February 2024, CPRE launched a campaign to build support for rural affordable housing. The campaign aims to address the chronic shortage of genuinely affordable housing in rural England, which has led to increased homelessness and long waiting lists for social housing. CPRE calls for the government to redefine 'affordable housing' to reflect local incomes, set ambitious targets for social housing construction, and implement measures to control the proliferation of second homes and short-term lets that exacerbate the crisis.
6. <https://www.cpre.org.uk/news/cpre-launches-campaign-to-build-support-for-rural-affordable-housing/> - In March 2024, CPRE launched a campaign to build support for rural affordable housing. The campaign aims to address the chronic shortage of genuinely affordable housing in rural England, which has led to increased homelessness and long waiting lists for social housing. CPRE calls for the government to redefine 'affordable housing' to reflect local incomes, set ambitious targets for social housing construction, and implement measures to control the proliferation of second homes and short-term lets that exacerbate the crisis.
7. <https://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/affordable-housing-guide/> - CPRE's 'Affordable Housing Guide 2020' provides practical guidance for communities seeking to promote affordable housing. The guide covers frequently asked questions, explains the key players involved, demystifies the process, and offers advice on how individuals can get involved in bringing affordable homes to their local areas. It aims to empower communities to take action and ensure that local people have access to homes they can afford.