# Horden’s collapsing property market fuels rise in illegal cannabis farms



In a stark reflection of the socio-economic challenges facing many coastal towns, Horden in County Durham has emerged as a focal point for criminal activity, particularly through the establishment of illegal cannabis farms. With an average house price of just £52,000—drastically below the national average of £268,319—Horden's affordable property market has become a magnet for gangs seeking to exploit the area's economic vulnerabilities.

Horden's plight is underscored by its stark post-industrial landscape, remnants of a once-thriving community that flourished when the Horden Colliery was operational until its closure in 1987. The village, home to approximately 7,000 residents, has seen many shops shuttered and homes abandoned, creating an environment ripe for crime. In recent years, criminal gangs have increasingly targeted these vacant properties, converting them into makeshift cannabis farms. Norman Bayles, a local resident who has witnessed the transformation of his hometown, conveyed his frustration, stating, “People come from London… and set up cannabis farms. It was like The O.K. Corral.” The rise in drug-related crime has not only altered the daily lives of locals but has also created a climate of fear and uncertainty.

In 2021, police discovered a cannabis farm containing thirty plants at a local address, following a crackdown on criminal activity. The operation also led to the seizure of untaxed vehicles, highlighting how these illicit undertakings exploit both the community's economic hardships and its law enforcement capabilities. A year later, a similar operation uncovered over 100 cannabis plants, deepening concerns within the community about safety and law enforcement's ability to combat these issues.

The situation in Horden is not isolated. Across County Durham, there is a notable disparity in property values, with areas like Horden presenting significantly lower prices compared to the rest of the region, where average house prices are around £171,097. Such economic conditions attract not only potential homeowners seeking affordable housing but also nefarious elements drawn to the prospect of running illegal operations in a less scrutinised environment.

Local shopkeeper Levent Aydinc lamented the worsening state of affairs, expressing concern over the influx of “bad people” and the presence of drug addicts. With a growing sentiment that the police response may not be sufficient, many residents fear for the future of their community. Despite the pervading crime and disorder, those who remain in Horden are resilient, striving to reclaim their village from the grip of criminal gangs.

Engagement from law enforcement continues, but the challenge is significant. The discovery of extensive cannabis operations in surrounding areas, such as a recent bust of a large-scale operation in Ferryhill, underscores the scale of illicit drug production across the region and the continual struggle faced by authorities. As Horden attempts to reclaim its identity, the concerted effort between community members and law enforcement will be crucial in addressing the root causes of crime that have taken hold of this once-vibrant seaside village.

Horden's situation serves as a poignant example of how local economies, shaped by historical economic shifts, can present opportunities for both legitimate investment and criminal exploitation. With the average property price lowering further, the risk that Horden could slip deeper into lawlessness looms larger, igniting a call for action among community leaders and residents alike.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraph 1: 1, 4, 5
2. Paragraph 2: 1, 5
3. Paragraph 3: 2, 3
4. Paragraph 4: 4, 5
5. Paragraph 5: 1, 3
6. Paragraph 6: 6

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.sunderlandecho.com/news/crime/police-discover-thirty-cannabis-plants-at-horden-address-and-seize-two-vehicles-in-local-crime-crackdown-3243496> - In May 2021, police in Horden, County Durham, discovered a cannabis farm containing thirty plants at an address on Warren Street. During the operation, officers also seized two untaxed vehicles and issued speeding penalties to several drivers. The crackdown aimed to address local crime concerns and involved collaboration with Durham County Council to inspect business premises. This incident highlights the challenges faced by the community due to criminal activities exploiting the area's economic vulnerabilities.
3. <https://www.sunderlandecho.com/news/crime/enquiries-under-way-after-over-100-cannabis-plants-discovered-in-horden-3692079> - In May 2022, police in Horden, County Durham, discovered over 100 cannabis plants and associated growing equipment at an address on Twelfth Street. The operation led to the seizure of the plants and equipment, with investigations underway. Residents are encouraged to report any information about cannabis farms to the police. This event underscores the ongoing issues with drug-related crimes in the area, affecting the community's safety and well-being.
4. <https://www.rightmove.co.uk/house-prices/horden.html> - Rightmove's data indicates that Horden, County Durham, has an average house price of £64,361 over the past year. The majority of properties sold were terraced houses, averaging £58,161, while semi-detached properties averaged £91,230. This information reflects the affordability of housing in Horden compared to national averages, which may attract individuals seeking lower property prices, potentially including those involved in illicit activities.
5. <https://www.rightmove.co.uk/house-prices/county-durham.html> - According to Rightmove, County Durham has an overall average house price of £171,097 over the last year. Terraced properties sold for an average of £110,893, semi-detached properties for £159,115, and detached properties for £290,023. These figures highlight the economic disparities within the region, with areas like Horden offering significantly lower property prices, which can be exploited by criminals seeking affordable locations for illicit operations.
6. <https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/23910871.one-biggest-cannabis-farms-region-found-ferryhill/> - In November 2023, police discovered one of the largest cannabis farms in the region within an abandoned bingo hall in Ferryhill, County Durham. The operation spanned four floors and contained over 2,000 cannabis plants. Four men, aged between 23 and 30, were arrested on suspicion of producing a Class B drug. This significant find underscores the scale of illicit drug production in the area and the challenges law enforcement faces in combating such operations.
7. <https://www.varbes.com/house-values-sold-prices/sr8-4jf> - Varbes provides detailed property sales data for Horden, County Durham, including addresses like Dene Terrace. For instance, a property at 5 Dene Terrace sold for £50,000 in October 2024, and another at 6 Dene Terrace sold for £55,000 in January 2020. These figures illustrate the low property values in the area, which may attract individuals seeking inexpensive locations for illicit activities, such as setting up cannabis farms in vacant properties.