

Matter 8 - Housing

Policies DMH1 and DMH11: Affordable housing is a key issue for us, and our representation explains that we are unhappy with the DMP's overall approach to affordable housing. We elaborated further on this in our response to the proposed modifications.

A new report by CPRE and Shelter, *Viable Villages*, focuses on the problem of viability assessments being exploited by developers to undermine delivery of affordable homes. To quote from that report (p.6):

'While the media and political narrative reflects concerns about the affordability of housing in England's towns and cities, in rural areas the crisis, exacerbated by specific rural economic conditions and dynamics, is passing unnoticed in the outside world. The cost of living is often higher, with more expensive housing on average and lower wages. This means that the average cost of a home is 7.6 times average annual earnings in rural areas, compared with a ratio of 6.5 in urban areas. Such a dearth of affordable housing is having a significant knock-on effect on the social fabric of rural life. Due to the sheer cost of housing, many young people and families are badly and expensively housed, and many are priced out of rural communities entirely - forced to move away from friends, families and jobs. This impacts on the vibrancy of rural communities and the sustainability of their local services, leaving many villages as enclaves for often wealthier, older people who own their homes outright or may even be second home owners.'

'To make matters worse, new development in rural communities is not alleviating this problem. The way land is bought and traded in the UK means that speculative developers building to the top of the market will almost always win sites, while leaving unmet the housing needs of those requiring lower rents or house prices.'

We are currently looking more closely at the specific issues these problems raise for National Parks. The most important point to stress here is that in the Peak District, the Core Strategy policies make clear that the sole purpose of open market housing is to actively enable enhancements to the National Park, which must include meeting affordable housing need. There is no target for open market housing. Therefore, development management decisions on market housing must be able to assess whether the resultant affordable housing is sufficient in quality and quantity and, quite simply, if a good enough scheme is not viable then it should not go ahead.
