

The Churches Regional Commission for Yorkshire and the Humber submission to the Yorkshire and Humber Strategy Evidence Gathering

The Churches Regional Commission for Yorkshire and the Humber

The CRC has three aims: to represent the churches to regional bodies, to raise the profile of faiths, and to be partners in regeneration.

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## Workstream Two Housing and Regeneration

Key lines of inquiry

### **HR1**

Future needs

Social factors such as family break-down, more people living alone, people living longer, a rise in population due to increased migration and the changing market means that more people need housing. Past and present political decisions have also changed the landscape and affected everyone. For example, there are thousands of expensive urban flats in city centres like Leeds unoccupied, while in rural areas there is very little housing available at reasonable prices to buy or to let. Increased migration means more housing is needed. Further, the growth in ethnic minorities in some areas means different kind of housing may be required – Asian families often choose to live in extended families for example.

Research from the Commission for Rural Communities shows that the growing appeal of a move into the countryside will increase demand on an over-heated rural market where affordability is key. Also, there will be a growing number of older people in rural areas - the number of pensioners living in rural England will increase by nearly one million over the 10 years, forecasts the **National Housing Federation**. (1<sup>st</sup> Feb 2010) The federation predicts the number of over 65s living in rural England will hit 3.23m by 2020 – a rise of 907,900 (39%) from 2008. But communities would struggle to support the ageing population boom unless more affordable homes are built for families and younger people, it said.

<http://www.rsnonline.org.uk/communities/big-rise-forecast-in-rural-elderly.html>

Out of town social housing means low income families have added transport expenses. Further, this increases miles travelled – so we cannot build in the future new communities that rely on the car to get to work, leisure or shops. Instead we need to build communities where transport is less necessary because a supermarket, a health centre, a village hall/community centre/church centre and employment opportunities are nearby. Green transport infrastructure must also be considered. (see response to HR 7).

## HR2

### Access to housing, key issues

- Financial policy and bank lending, starting with problems in the USA, started a downturn which has seen a rise in unemployment and a recession in the UK. The number of repossessions in the UK in 2007 was 26,000, 40,000 in 2008, 46,000 in 2009 and expected to be 53,000 in 2010 (Council of Mortgage lenders, February 11<sup>th</sup> 2010).
- The decision to set a, 'decent housing standard,' has meant that houses that were used for temporary accommodation, are no longer available, and nor are some houses which need expensive refurbishment to bring them up to current health and safety standards.
- The requirements now in force of strict standards in every aspect of a house and the restrictions on the price of a newly built house for rent or sale has taken many, larger older properties out of use suitable for many BME clients.
- Social factors such as family break-down, more people living alone, people living longer, a rise in population due to increased migration and the changing market means that more people need housing. Past and present political decisions have also changed the landscape and affected everyone. For example, there are thousands of expensive urban flats in city centres like Leeds unoccupied, while in rural areas there is very little housing available at reasonable prices to buy or to let.
- In rural communities there has been a rise in people moving from cities to the countryside, and the buying of second homes, which has meant a demand for rural housing. Thus in rural communities housing is much more expensive than in urban areas, especially compared to the average income there. Therefore in Yorkshire and Humber the areas with the highest house prices relative to income are in North Yorkshire and the East Riding. (Regional Spatial strategy - affordability figures). These means young people cannot afford to stay where they grew up, exacerbating the problems of sustainability and viability of villages, and resulting in the closure of local facilities such as schools and shops. Young people end up moving to urban areas or staying on friends' floors.

For evidence see the report by the Commission for Rural Communities, where the government's rural advocate has warned that young people's needs must be urgently addressed to avoid a major threat to the long-term viability of country life,. Based on evidence gathered from communities across rural England, Stuart Burgess argues that deep concerns over housing, work, transport, training and social exclusion are prompting an exodus of young people from the countryside.

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Social housing accounts for 13% of the housing stock in rural areas, compared with 22% in urban places, while just 23 of England's 573 Job Centre Plus outlets are located in rural areas. More than a fifth of urban children can reach where they want to be on foot but this drops to 7% for rural residents.

The report puts forward practical solutions, including:

- Flexible planning to create more affordable rural housing
- New ways to meet employment and training needs in more isolated areas
- A renewed integrated public transport focus

See:

<http://www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/events/ruraladvocatereport2010launched>

The net result is that in all parts of the country there is a shortage of homes. There are 1m empty accommodations spaces nationally and yet according to the Local Government Association there will be 5m on waiting lists for social housing by the middle of 2010 – (two million households). The building of new homes by social landlords is at its lowest since 1947, the LGA say. The pressure is to find suitable homes for many different kinds of families.

The urban high rise developments are small apartments designed for single people. However for many single young people, they are much too expensive and for the elderly unsuitable for access as well as cost. They are not at all suitable for families. Affordable housing in rural communities is scarce. So where do those who can't afford to buy, live?

The recent Yorkshire and Humber Spatial Planning board meeting (March 4<sup>th</sup> 2010) has agreed that there needs to be further evidence gathering in three areas: waiting lists for social housing, overcrowding in all areas, and how economic circumstances and cultural changes are affecting household formation and household size, and we agree that these are key areas to explore.

## **HR7**

### **Sustainable, distinctive and high quality places**

Sustainable Development has been identified as a key aspiration of policy development. Major building projects will progress in the drive for economic recovery, and that progress is less likely to be market led than in recent years. The need for affordable housing dominates many local concerns. All are concerned about ecological and climate impacts, and though community building is now recognised as vital, there is little consensus on means. Churches which have been at the heart of many historic communities are lower in the developers' priorities but are re-emerging as defenders of "Life" values in our society.

Growing and changing communities need anchors and champions committed to the common good. Those anchors are about people and values and despite the common factor of "place" are unlikely to be generated by local authorities and political leads. Faith and other community leaders are legitimised by culture and tradition for this role and should be able to claim support from authorities, developers and funders. This is not about special pleading but about historic reflection, and an understanding of "culture". This also means that developments and large areas of new build should give thought to places of worship within them as community hubs and places for dialogue, service delivery and promotion of cohesion.

See for example the development in Bradford of a 4.5 million pounds development around a church providing a health centre, supported housing and a hub for community activities – Cottingley Cornerstone – see <http://www.cottingleycornerstone.org.uk/>. Daisies' café there provides training and employment to people with learning disabilities. Or see the development in Hull, of Hull Community Church, again a multi-million pound development where services are provided to young people, to sex workers, to parents, and furniture is recycled – see <http://www.community-house.co.uk/>. There are lots of community activities provided there including a sports hall.

Sports facilities, green spaces, culture and leisure opportunities are all vital in creating high quality places to live – see The Marmot review - commissioned by the Dept of Health (2010), and the DCMS Taking Part survey. Further, sustainable transport infrastructure is vital for people to access these facilities, especially those on outer estates, and those in rural areas.

New build developments and regeneration schemes need to provide balanced communities where schools, leisure opportunities, economic opportunities, local supermarkets, health centres and places to meet like community centres and places of worship are brought together to create sustainable local communities where there is no need to drive a car because there is no need to travel. Our definition of a high quality place to live are not simply well built houses with gardens but where there are homes and communities.