

Dear Planners,

Part1 Section 2. A spatial portrait

A look at Pendle today

Housing

2.16 There are approximately 41,000 dwellings in Pendle and 88.6% are owner occupied or private rented. The largest proportion of homes are terraced properties, built during the industrial revolution. The borough has the highest proportion of dwellings in Council Tax Band A in Lancashire at 60.9% in 2023.

2.17 Average property prices are lower than the national average at £157,060 in 2023. Prices vary significantly across the Borough with the cheapest properties being in the urban areas of the M65 Corridor. But affordability is an issue. The current affordability ratio of 4.81 is below the national average and is influenced by high demand in the rural areas, the limited variety of housing stock and relatively low wages.

2.18 Delivering new housing is a significant challenge. Large areas of the borough are designated as Green Belt and many areas of open countryside are valued for their landscape character and importance for biodiversity. The development of Greenfield land, both within and adjacent to our urban areas, is not viable without third party intervention, and previously developed (Brownfield) land is largely unviable.

COMMENT:

"There is no mention of the number of empty houses and properties in Pendle which should be available to renovate or convert to eco standards and for them to be included in the targets for new housing."

Part 4. Spatial strategy Directing growth and development

SP01: Presumption in favour of sustainable development

COMMENT:

"To be truly sustainable, the large number of urban empty houses or empty converted properties in Pendle should be included to meet housing needs, particularly for those on low incomes who can only afford to rent as seen by the high number of people on the Council's Social Housing Waiting List. Otherwise, they are a wasted resource, which only adds to the deprivation and blight of town centres"

Part 6. Social

Improving our prospects and quality of life

Directing growth and development

Building better homes

DM20: Housing requirement and delivery

DM21: Design and quality of housing

DM22: Housing mix

DM23: Affordable housing

DM24: Residential extensions and alterations

DM25: Residential conversions

COMMENT:

"As far as I can see none of the above policies take into account

the large number of empty houses and empty converted properties in Pendle which could help the Council achieve its targets for new houses, which the Planners admit is going to be difficult to achieve."

"As Planners are unable, under current Housing Regulations, to include empty renovated housing and converted premises in the targets for new houses in Pendle in the Local Plan, I have written the following letter to the Pendle Executive and the Pendle MP urging them to lobby the Government to change the Housing Regulations to include empty renovated housing and converted premises in the targets for new houses, together with the attached Rationale, which provides evidence of the Benefits such a change in Policy would bring to Pendle, particularly in fostering Social & Economic Regeneration":

"Dear Executive and Officers

I am writing to you to request that Pendle Council lobbies the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to reform its Planning Regulations to include renovated empty properties in the targets for Pendle of between 148 and 162 new dwellings per year.

These targets will be difficult to meet unless renovated properties are included. Nearly 900 homes were standing empty and abandoned across Pendle in November 2024. converting empty business, shop and office premises to meet housing needs in deprived town centres should also be included in the targets for new housing.

The rationale for this change in this Housing Policy and the many benefits which would accrue, including the Social and Economic Regeneration, are outlined in the attached detailed Briefing Paper. This change is supported by the Climate Emergency Working Group, Pendle Climate Action Group and the Skipton East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership Executive. In addition, I will be responding to the Consultation on the Draft Local Plan in the Housing Section, by suggesting that they include this change of Policy.

Furthermore, I will be asking the Pendle MP to lobby the Government to change the Housing Regulations nationally, as the Housing Minister has admitted that the Government will struggle to meet the national target of 1.5 million new homes in England over the next five years."

Yours hopefully

Dave Penney

Member of the Pendle Climate Emergency Working Group

Member of Pendle Climate Action Group

Member of SELRAP Executive



INCLUDE RENOVATED EMPTY PROPERTIES IN NEW HOUSING TARGETS

Pendle Council, the Pendle MP and Constituents should seriously consider asking the Government Ministry of Housing, Community and Local Government to amend their Targets on new housing to include renovated empty properties for housing for the following reasons:

According to LCC official figures, there were 1,533 vacant dwellings out of a total dwelling stock of 41,230 in Pendle in 2023 (3.7%) compared with nearly 900 homes standing empty and abandoned across Pendle in November 2024.

Most of these empty homes and premises are located in areas of urban deprivation. Renovating empty dwellings and converting other premises in Pendle to eco-standards would be cheaper than building new houses and help to reduce the carbon footprint.

Such a Policy would lift the blight in our town centres and help towards social and economic regeneration of deprived urban areas in association the Nelson Town Deal which should include converting empty business, shop and office premises to meet housing needs in our town centres since there is less need for them with more people working from home and shopping online or in larger outlets.

These empty affordable renovated houses and converted premises should be reserved solely for rented social housing as there were in July 2024 over 1.2 million households in England on the social housing waiting lists with many households on North West (Pendle: 944; Burnley 891; Hyndburn: 793; Blackburn with Darwen: 2,559).

This Policy would help meet the Government new housing targets for Pendle which stand between 148 and 162 new dwellings per year.

In the Local Plan, the Council is having to identify sites to build these new homes, which will be too expensive for most local people to buy or even rent because Pendle has the lowest wages in the country. The latest national average cost of a new home has soared to four times the earnings or wages of households.

Some of this new housing may have to be located on greenfield sites away from town centres with access to public transport and local services, which will increase the carbon footprint and biodiversity loss. Owners, already facing increasing inflation, cost of living and higher mortgages, would also need a car, if insufficient brownfield or 'grey' sites are not available nearer to town centres.

Evidence shows that Skipton East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership, in developing its Business Case for reopening the railway between Colne and Skipton, found that rail connectivity is the main driver for Social and Economic Regeneration in many deprived communities along the route of the railway with are a lot of empty properties accessible by foot to rail and bus public services. Residents would not require a car as they could easily access local services and leisure facilities as well as education and training opportunities and jobs in industry further afield. The proximity to Public Transport would help to reduce the carbon footprint and improve the health and wellbeing of residents in our Town Centres.

The Government admits it will struggle to meet the national target of 1.5 million new homes in England over the next five years. Including renovated empty properties will help to achieve this target as long as the Government gives powers and resources to Local Authorities to renovate them, which Pendle Council could do through its joint venture with the Developer, Pendle Enterprise and Regeneration Ltd (PEARL).

This evidence clearly demonstrates that renovated vacant houses and converted premises should be included in the overall targets for new houses if housing needs are to be met.

Dave Penney

Member of Pendle Climate Action Group; Pendle Climate Emergency Working Group;

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December 2024

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