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ENGLISH RURAL



Transforming Rural Housing: The Power of Rural Exception Sites

Insights from Research by UCL & English Rural

Introduction

- **Context:** Affordable Housing Crisis in Rural England
- **Scope:** Rural Exception Sites as a solution

Rural England is grappling with a widening affordability gap due to rising property values and stagnant wages. The urgent need for sustainable, affordable housing solutions brings us to the promise of Rural Exception Sites.





LOST!
Save Our Villages
Build Affordable Homes



What are Rural Exception Sites?

- **Definition:** Small plots on boundary of village for affordable homes. Usually 'green field'.
- **Historical Context:** Policy initiated in 1991
- **Unique Aspects:** Focus on community-driven affordability

Rural Exception Sites are small parcels of land earmarked for affordable housing in rural communities. Established in 1991, these sites offer a unique approach by focusing on local needs and long-term affordability.





Rural Exception Site

The Research Journey

- **Collaboration:** Between UCL and English Rural
- **Methods:** Surveys, Interviews, Case Studies
- **Objectives:** Understand usage, efficacy, and barriers

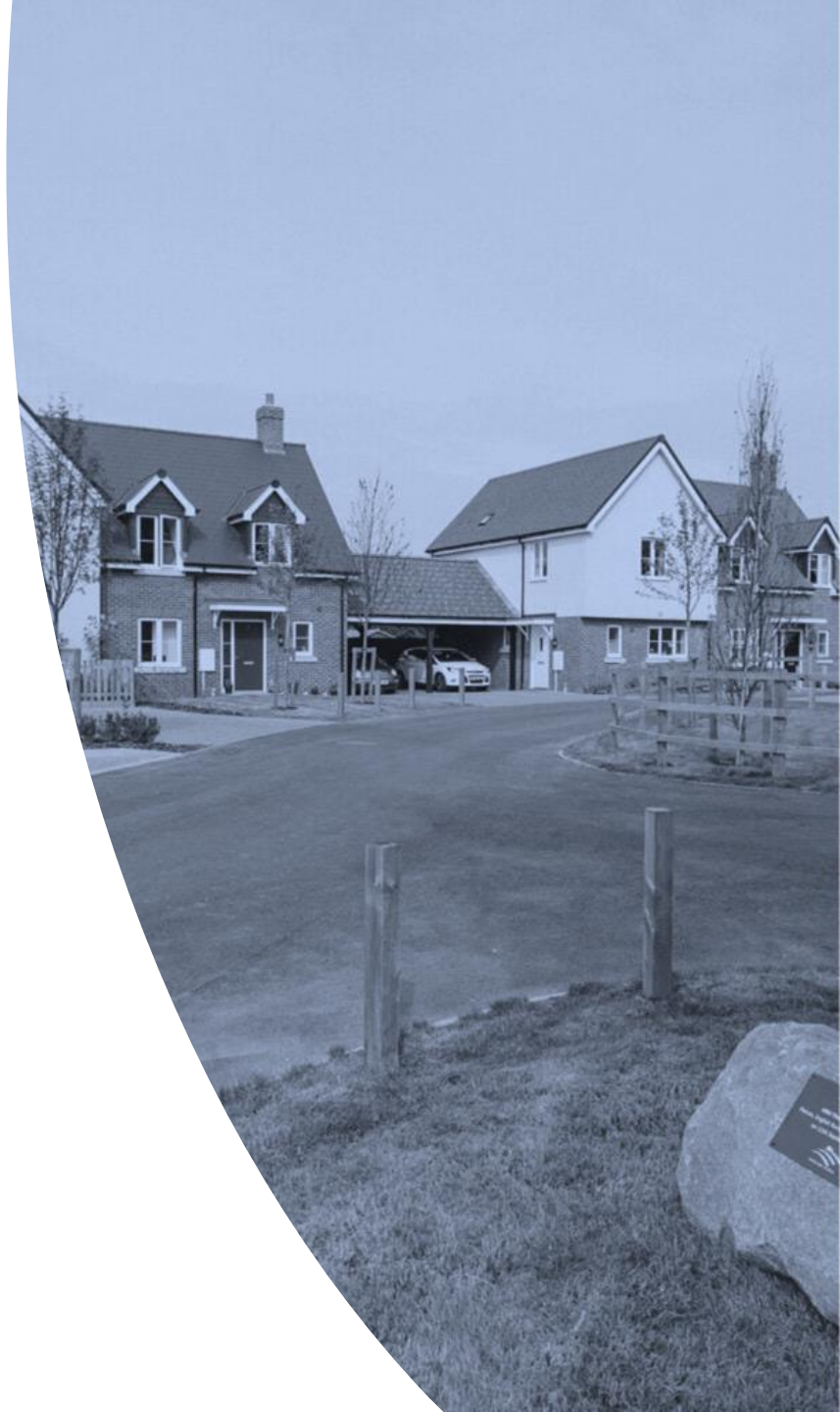
The research used a multidisciplinary approach involving social scientists, housing policy experts, rural housing associations and local councils. Objectives included evaluating the current state of Rural Exception Sites and proposing actionable recommendations.



Key Findings - Part 1

- **Untapped Potential:** Limited use despite policy age
- **Community Transformation:** Beyond housing

The research highlights that despite being a policy in place for over 30 years, Rural Exception Sites remain underutilised. Yet, when implemented, they hold transformative potential for communities, not just in housing but in sustaining rural life.



Key Findings - Part 2

- **Empowering Collaborations:** Stakeholder synergy
- **Stakeholder Roles:** Rural housing enablers, parish councils, planning authorities, rural housing associations

Success in Rural Exception Sites is often the result of collaboration among diverse stakeholders, from parish councils to rural housing associations. Each plays a unique role in the conception, planning, and implementation of these projects.



Key Findings - Part 3

- **Guidance for Landowners:** Incentives and motivations
- **Beyond Economic Gains:** Community well-being and planning benefits

The research emphasises that for greater landowner participation, there needs to be a range of incentives that go beyond simply economic gains to include community well-being and aiding farm business planning.



Recommendations - Part 1

- **Proactive Promotion:** Elevate in policy and media
- **Importance in Local Plans:** Strategic placement in planning documents

The research recommends that Rural Exception Sites should be given more prominence in both policy discourse and local planning documents to tap into their transformative potential for rural communities.



Recommendations - Part 2

- **Harnessing Collective Strength:** Inter-stakeholder communication
- **Role of Rural Housing Enablers:** Mediators and educators

The research suggests that the role of Rural Housing Enablers can be instrumental in bringing together different stakeholders, facilitating communication, and educating communities on the benefits of Rural Exception Sites. Opportunity from renewed national network of RHEs.



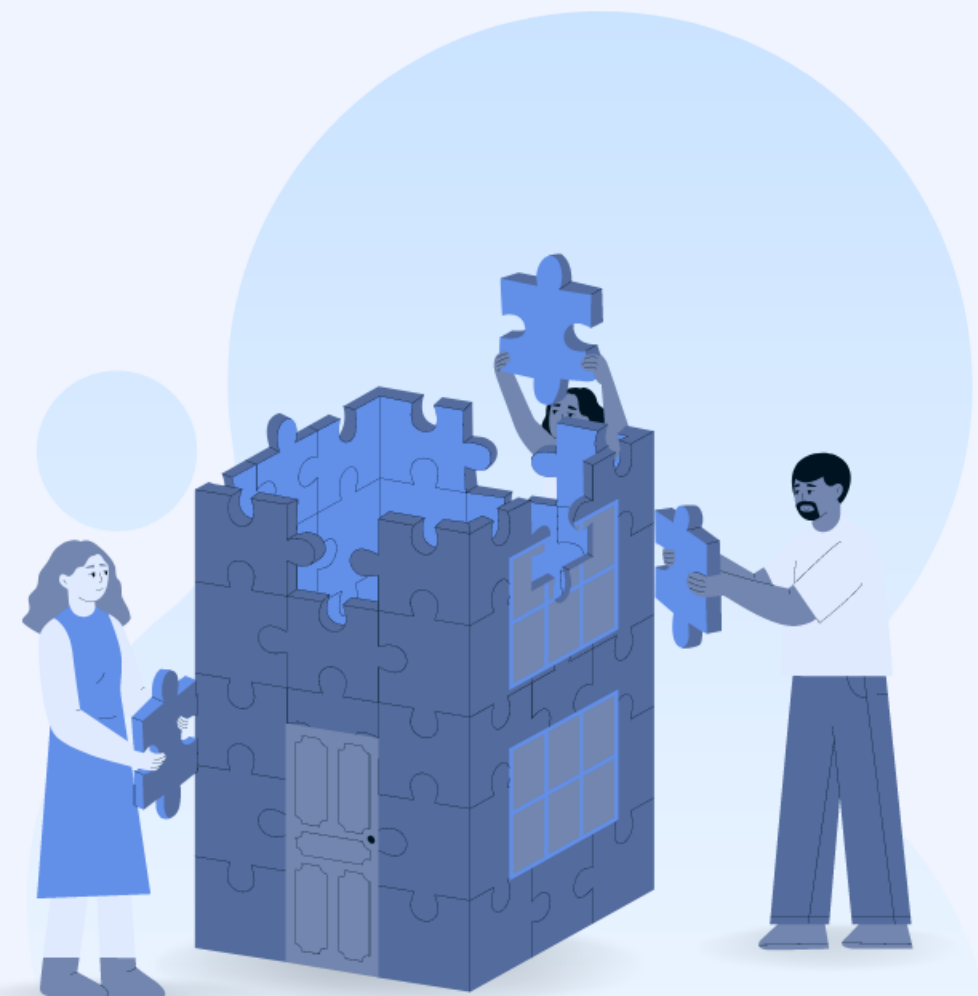
Recommendations - Part 3

- **Igniting National Discourse:** Need for policy-level discussions
- **Policy Directions:** Clearer guidelines and frameworks

For Rural Exception Sites to truly become a cornerstone of rural housing policy, a nationwide dialogue is needed. Policymakers should provide clear directions and frameworks for implementation.



THE POWER OF RURAL EXCEPTION SITES



Getting good information to parish councils

To have a consistent and positive approach to supporting RES development in Local Plans and supply every parish council with up-to-date information about the RES policy and how it works in their area, so that they understand the role they can play and the process.



Understanding what makes RES different

Train Rural Housing Enablers and similar roles with the expertise necessary to convey how RES sites are different and can help to provide an extension of the already existing community.



Promoting 'good design'

Produce a good design that showcases positive RES development to counter local stigma around what new homes will look like, and how they will affect the character of already existing communities.



Qualifying landowner incentives

Bring together a taskforce to develop guidance on incentives permissible on RES developments, beyond that for cross-subsidy and from this publish additional guidance to qualify the incentives that can be used to encourage landowners to release land, framing these in a way that is transparent, reasonable, and proportional.



Better use of Rural Exception Sites through a national programme

Through political commitment there is better promotion and use of more effective policies for delivering RES with an ambition that each rural settlement in England delivers a proportionate development of affordable homes.

Concluding Remarks

- **Summary:** Reiteration of key findings and recommendations
- **Call to Action:** Engage, educate, act

In conclusion, Rural Exception Sites offer a promising but underutilised avenue for solving rural England's housing crisis. It is crucial for all stakeholders, from policymakers to local communities, to engage, educate themselves, and take action based on these research findings.



Thank-you & Questions

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