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and Community Action

# DISPOSAL: The Housing Crisis in Horden's Numbered Streets

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## Authors

Professor Rachel Pain

and Julia Heslop, Emma Ormerod, Angharad Butler-Rees, Hugh Crawshaw, Hannah Davisson, Lydia Dawson, Max Fairhurst, Madalina Galin, Dan Harman, Ella Holloway, Teddy James, Alex Liu, Clara Chau Hai Qing, Frances Read, Megan Smith, Claire Somerset, Emily Sporik, Isaac Turner

in association with Horden Colliery Residents Association

Report (2016) Centre for Social Justice and Community Action, Durham University (contact [socialjustice@durham.ac.uk](mailto:socialjustice@durham.ac.uk) or [rachel.pain@durham.ac.uk](mailto:rachel.pain@durham.ac.uk))

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## Executive Summary

This research was conducted between June-December 2015 in response to concerns about a worsening housing crisis in the ex-mining village of Horden, County Durham.

### Aims:

- To identify the effects of the current housing crisis,
- To set the crisis within its wider context to understand its causes,
- To establish the assets and needs of the village,
- To make recommendations for action.

**Methodology:** The research was carried out by Durham University researchers in association with Horden Colliery Residents Association. Methods included interviews, focus groups, participatory mapping and diagramming, observation, documentary and literature analysis, photovoice and online consultation via Facebook and email. The photographer Carl Joyce conducted photo documentation on the themes as they emerged.

**Background:** In September 2015, Accent Housing Association began disposal at auction of empty houses in the numbered streets of Horden. This was undertaken without consultation with the community, in contradiction to promises that had been made to tenants over several years, and despite local plans being drawn up for a community-owned housing scheme. The disposal was permitted by the Homes and Communities Agency, and made easier by recent changes to government policy that affect social and rented housing.

### Key Findings:

- The decision to dispose of housing in the numbered streets, and the manner in which it has been executed, look set to lead to the worst possible outcomes for the community.
- Residents of the numbered streets face deteriorating condition of housing, environmental hazards, social problems including crime and disorder, fear and uncertainty about the future and value of properties, and declining community spirit. Sales at auction are very likely to worsen these problems.
- The “disposal” is not only of empty properties, but effectively of responsibility by national government and local housing agencies for the community’s continuing welfare, resilience and ability to self-help. Already one of the most vulnerable parts of the UK as a result of history and recent austerity, this disposal has historical continuity with the prioritisation of profit over people and places.
- Horden has especially strong community assets. The village has many attractions, voluntarism is strong, and Horden’s heritage is a resource rather than a hindrance, leading to strong community spirit, identity and pride. Horden is thus well positioned to build an alternative future around its housing.
- Ex-industrial areas like Horden require additional support and financial resources to help residents to protect and sustain these assets and improve life for others.

## 1. The History of Horden and the Numbered Streets

### 1.1 Horden

Horden is a village of 3,145 residents on the eastern coalfield of County Durham in North East England. Located on the coast, it is bordered to the north and south by two picturesque Denes, the villages of Easington Colliery (north) and Blackhall Colliery (south), and by the new town of Peterlee to the east. Coalmining on the Durham coast began considerably later than elsewhere in the County, only after technology had been developed that was capable of accessing the deeper seams lying beneath the outcrop of magnesian limestone on this part of the coast. Most of Horden village was built for the colliery, which was opened in 1904. By the 1930s Horden Colliery was known as the 'jewel in the crown' of the region, and the largest producing coalmine in Britain.

The mine closed in 1987 amid controversy over the reasons (geological and political) and the manner and management of the closure (Beynon et al 1991). Since then, the village has experienced social and economic problems that are typical of ex-coalfield areas (Coalfields Regeneration Trust 2015; see Box 1). Attracting less attention are the village's many assets and resources, which are outlined later in the report.



## Box 1: Horden: social and economic profile

Like many ex-coalfield regions of the UK (Foden et al 2014), County Durham's eastern coalfield area experiences higher than average rates of poverty, unemployment, ill health and disability.

Horden is in the top 3% of the most deprived areas in England and Wales. The following overall statistics are for the two Super Output Areas that make up Horden (Coalfields Regeneration Trust 2015). On a smaller scale there is significant local variation within the village, with difficulties faced by residents most concentrated in the numbered streets area:

- 9.8% youth unemployment (2.2% England)
- 5.8% adults seeking Jobseekers Allowance (1.6% England)
- 19% incapacity benefits claimants (6.1% England)
- 14.3% Disability Living Allowance claimants (4.8% England)
- 48% of children are living in poverty (19% England)
- 37% of people have a limiting long-term illness (18% England)
- 46% of people have no qualifications (22% England)
- 49% of households have no car (39% England)

### Housing tenure:

- 46.7% owner occupied (64.1% England)
- 29.1% social rented (17.7%)
- 21.3% private rented (15.4%)
- Average house price £49,625 (£263,933)

### Recorded crime (Feb 2014-Jan 2015, number per 1000 population):

All crimes	215 (105.8 England)
Violent crimes	14.4 (14.2)
Criminal damage	23.2 (8.6)
Anti-social behaviour	104.6 (34.3)
Burglaries	31.7 (17.3)
Robberies	0 (0.9)
Vehicle crime	17 (17)

*Source: Coalfields Regeneration Trust (2015)*

## 1.2 The Numbered Streets

Today the central area of terraced housing in Horden (the "numbered streets") differs markedly to housing around the perimeter of the village, both in its appearance and in what everyday life is like for residents. A number of factors have coincided to make the problems that are typically experienced by former mining communities in the UK especially severe in Horden's numbered streets. These include changes in Government housing policy, and the decisions taken by key housing providers in the area (see next section).

The numbered streets were originally a small area of streets (First to Thirteenth Streets) in the original village centre, comprising around 1700 terraced houses built before 1920 by Horden Coal Company for mine workers and their families. The

provision of rent-free housing was a condition of employment in the Colliery. After nationalisation of the coal industry in 1947, the houses were owned by the National Coal Board. When the pit closed, some tenants bought their properties, others moved away, and some continued to rent, initially from Durham Mineworkers Homes, an organisation with Trade Union roots to whom the NCB transferred the housing stock, reputedly for £1 per house. However, DMH did not have the expertise or cashflow to maintain the properties, and by the late 1980s the stock was transferred to Bradford and Northern Housing Association, which a few years later became Accent Housing Association. As a social housing landlord, the clear expectation was that Accent would maintain the housing for the benefit of the community, which included many families, older couples and single people who had been dependent on coalmining.

Those who had purchased their homes reasonably assumed that this was an investment for their families and for the future, while the Housing Association assured housing security and maintenance for the many residents who were not able to buy and either could not or did not want to move. At this point the strong and close-knit community was both an attraction and a resource for people in Horden's numbered streets, despite the social and economic problems that followed the closure of the pit.



## 2. The Role of Housing Policy

A series of changes to national housing policy through the late 20th and early 21st century have had a severe impact on Horden's numbered streets. In broad terms, these changes are characterised by the movement of housing services from the public to the private sector, and of Local Authority provided council housing to third-sector run social housing (Housing Associations), and a reduction of controls on the market which disadvantages both renters and owner-occupiers who are on lower incomes.

**Social housing** has been most dramatically affected by tenants' Right To Buy since the 1980s, and subsequent dramatic reduction of national and local stocks of social housing. Residualisation of housing stock has followed, such that remaining social housing tends to be less desirable housing in less desirable areas, rented to those who have least choice (Ginsburg 2005). More recently, a range of measures around rent controls and security of tenure are predicted to worsen social tenancies (Harris 2016), while reducing the ability of Housing Associations to build new stock and provide added-value activities.



**Housing Associations** were originally philanthropic and voluntary sector organisations, but now have commercial as well as social objectives which inevitably come into conflict (Heslop and Ormerod 2015). HAs have tended to become larger organisations, able to source private capital and have moved away from being locally based, locally accountable, and operating on the basis of civil society values (Glynn 2009; Mullins 2010). Their ability to protect the communities they were set up to serve is increasingly constrained by national housing policy.

**Private rental housing** has become more important for those on lower incomes, as social housing stock diminishes and house prices have risen at a rate that excludes many from ownership. Housing standards in the private rented sector can be very poor, especially in older terraced housing (Mullins and Murie 2006). 1 in 3 fail to meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard, and housing conditions are currently worsening. Housing insecurity on short term contracts is growing. Recent changes privilege speculative landlords by further removing responsibilities from them (Dorling 2014). In January 2016, a majority of MPs voted against a Labour amendment to the Conservative government's Housing and Planning Bill that would have ensured that rented accommodation is fit for human habitation. The private rented sector is thus effectively propped up by the government, and through housing benefit, in order to stimulate continued market demand and house price growth (Heslop and Ormerod 2015). In all of these changes, it is tenants who are losing out.

**The North-South divide** - these changes to housing provision have a stark geography. Concentrated deprivation, empty properties and low/falling house prices are especially found in ex-industrial areas of the North. Recent cuts under welfare reform since 2009 have had further damaging effects on access to housing in these areas. The benefit cap, two-year 'flexible tenancies'

for social housing tenants, the bedroom tax, and 'affordable rent' which allows housing associations to charge up to 80% of market rates – all of these recent changes increase insecurity, tenant transience and homelessness, driving tenants out of all but the lowest cost areas (Heslop and Ormerod 2015).

Nationally, this raft of housing policy measures has the effect of concentrating housing security and wealth for places and people that are already advantaged, and compounding housing insecurity, poor housing conditions and fragmenting communities among the places and people that are already the most vulnerable. Recent government policy has significantly worsened the gap between the housing markets of the North and South in the UK (Dorling 2014), and currently proposed changes in the 2015-6 Housing and Planning Bill will continue this trend. The 'housing crisis' looks very different in the North and South, but it is the latter that gets most attention (Heslop and Ormerod 2015).

The numbered streets of Horden have been affected by many of these policies and processes. The experience of the community here shows, more than anywhere, the damage that these macro level policy changes can create.

However, in Horden, specific decisions taken by local housing providers have also significantly worsened the situation. Together, national and local decisions about housing have created a crisis in the area, constituting a further assault on a community already under siege. Unless urgent action is taken to halt further damage, recent decisions about housing management and stock in Horden look set to create the worst possible outcomes for residents.

## 3. The Current Housing Crisis in Horden

The current housing crisis has roots in this longer term history after the pit closure in 1987, but has accelerated rapidly in the last few years.

### 3.1 The role of Accent

As the largest owner of housing in the numbered streets, Accent Housing Association has had significant influence on the social and environmental fabric of the area. It is believed by residents, local councillors and Council housing officers to have failed to invest in the numbered streets or to maintain properties adequately over many years. In 2010, Accent announced that it would undertake a programme of renovation of its Horden stock in the numbered streets. £15 million was promised to the village as a whole, initially including £7 million to be spent on the numbered streets. Tenants were sent letters in which they were told they would be visited to consult on what repairs and modernisation were needed (e.g. renovated kitchens and bathrooms). Such changes would bring housing up to the Decent Homes Standard for public housing. One effect of this promise was that the Local Authority (at that time Easington District Council) did not invest in the area by applying to national and European funding programmes that were available at the time (since discontinued). Accent's tenants, who had been increasingly discontent, and their neighbouring owner-occupiers and private landlords and renters in the numbered streets, looked forward to their homes and the area improving.

### 3.2 Housing disposal

However, the promised consultation, investment and renovations never happened. The bungalows elsewhere in Horden that Accent renovated cost more than expected, and so the housing association chose not to invest in the numbered streets. Early in 2015, Accent announced the withdrawal of funds earmarked for regeneration of housing, saying that the homes could not be let due to low demand (Northern Echo). Further, in February 2015 Accent announced that it planned to dispose of all its empty houses (220 houses) in the numbered streets. In June, the Homes and Communities Agency, a government body with responsibility for regulating social housing providers in England, gave Accent permission to dispose of these unoccupied properties on the open market. Tenanted housing could also be sold once tenants had voluntarily vacated (Homes and Communities Agency 2015). Despite its own duties as a public body, the HCA set no stipulations on the conditions of sale (for example, they could have stipulated that private buyers were to live in or let the houses, which would necessitate renovation, or that they join the Council's accreditation scheme).

However, Accent point to their investments and regeneration of bungalows in Horden, and parts of neighbouring Blackhall. Accent's position is that their withdrawal from the numbered streets is on the basis of lack of demand; they say they cannot afford the current upkeep of the empty properties of £600,000 per year (Hilditch 2015).



This is a circular argument, given that Accent have not maintained and enhanced the housing as promised which would make it more attractive for existing and new residents. Many residents believe that this plan to withdraw from the area existed long before this time, and argue that the disinvestment in housing in the numbered streets is much longer term. Accent's Chief Executive, who appeared on Channel 4 early in 2015, blamed the situation on the bedroom tax (Jenkins 2015). The 2013 Bedroom Tax introduced by the Coalition Government which, while it has some very negative effects, is likely to play only a minor part in the decline of the numbered streets area. The property's interior shown in the Channel 4 feature was well-kept, and not at all representative of the state of the empty properties.

Also in 2015, local MP for Easington Grahame Morris called in Parliament for a comprehensive revival plan, criticising Accent for its long term mismanagement and 'chronic lack of investment' over at least a 10 year period. In a wholly inadequate and ill-informed response, Government Housing Minister Brandon Lewis reply pointed to Accent's homesteading scheme which is not located in Horden (White 2015).

### 3.3 Alternative community plans

In the meantime, the community had been drawing up plans to improve the numbered streets area and address the problem of empty properties. Horden Colliery Residents Association is an award-winning community association set up in 2006 to protect the interests of tenants in the numbered streets. When Accent announced disposal of its housing stock, HCRA established Horden Community Housing Trust, a private limited company aiming to 'provide or assist in the provision of housing for persons in necessitous circumstances, primarily in the "Horden Numbered Streets" area' (HCHT 2015). The aim was to acquire and bring some of the housing into community ownership (through homesteading or a similar scheme), working with public and private bodies including the Coalfields Regeneration Trust to improve the area. Both Accent and HCA were aware of these plans before beginning disposal of stock, but they did not consult or work with the Residents Association, or the Council who were keen to support alternatives. Nor did Accent stipulate any conditions on sales or delay selling so that plans could be made, that would protect the area and community.

### 3.4 Auctions

Instead, in September 2015, Accent began disposal at auction of empty properties in the numbered streets. There was no consultation with residents, local councillors or the Residents Association, despite Accent being aware of the likely opposition and also the existence of alternative plans. While the HCA's permission allows Accent to begin sales to establish the market value of the properties, auctions are continuing well beyond this point – six auctions have taken place (see Box 2). Accent's position is that it is 'difficult to value' the housing, and that they had received 'local advice' to place the houses into auction (letter from Executive Director of Accent to Grahame Morris MP, 2 September 2015).

The speed has been alarming. By the end of January 2016, 94 houses had been sold at 5 auctions at an average price of £15,476. It is, of course, difficult if not impossible for local people to buy these houses to live in themselves, as very few are in a position to buy at auction. Instead, buyers at auction are often speculative investors, who may have no intention of letting properties or who may become absentee landlords focused on maximum profit from letting to benefits claimants (Lodge 2015).

#### **Box 2: Outcome of auctions of empty properties in Horden**

104 properties sold at five auctions to date

Average price £15,476

Total generated for Accent from disposal to date £1,634,753

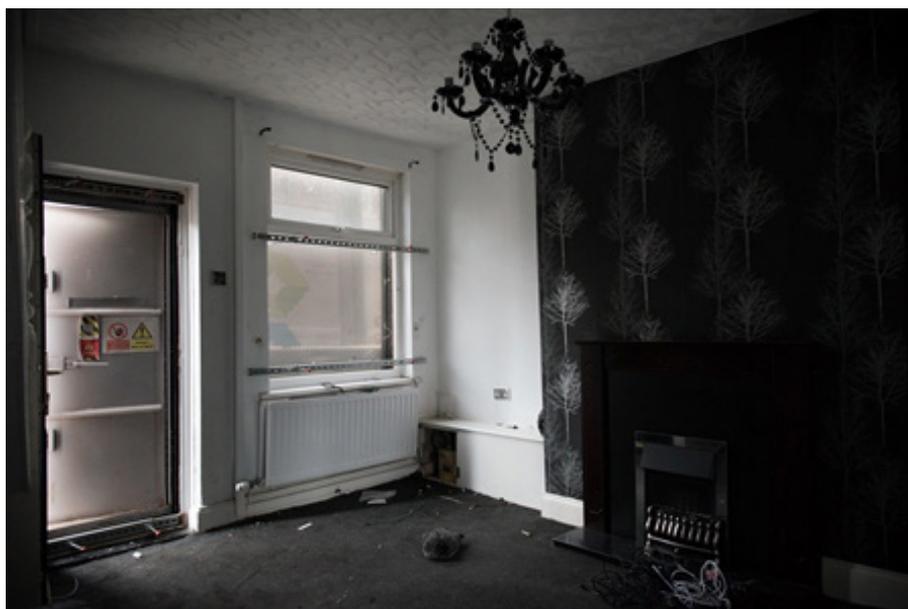
Data from auctions on 29.9.15, 3.11.15, 16.11.15, 16.12.16, 28.1.16, 2.2.16.

Source: Horden Colliery Residents Association

For these reasons, the auctions are widely and rightly seen as the worst possible outcome for the community, and to be driven by only one consideration: maximising financial gains for Accent (Morris 2015). Given that Accent were originally gifted the housing in the late 1980s, and have earned rent on each house for over 25 years, and in light of claims of disinvestment over the past decade, the sums made at auction to date are a significant gain (see Box 2). Housing Associations are primarily social housing providers, with a duty to protect the interests of low-income tenants. Indeed, Accent's stated 'Vision' is 'improving homes, improving communities and lives', and their 'Values' include 'become a trusted advocate of the individual and the community' and 'in making decisions we always take into account our customers' views and put ourselves in their position' (Accent 2016).

But when Accent claim that selling all empty homes at market value is 'in order to make sure that the social asset is protected' (letter from Executive Director of Accent to Grahame Morris MP, 2 September 2015), they refer to their own assets, rather than the community's. If Accent continues to dispose of the remaining empty houses in Horden, the amount they earn will run into millions.

Tenants of Accent were keen not to blame local Accent staff on the ground in the village, who are regarded as helpful. The strategic decisions taken have been directed by Accent's Executive Team and Board, which is based outside of the North East. Whilst certainly operating in constrained circumstances because of deleterious changes in Government housing policy, there were alternatives to both the strategy and the way it has been operationalised that would be considerably less harmful to Horden. Accent showed no signs of having paused to discuss or consider alternative options with residents. This neglect has continuity with its longer term actions regarding the numbered streets area and tenants.



### 3.5 Future plans

In light of this fast-moving situation the Residents Association, working with local councillors and housing officers, are adapting their response in order to protect the community in the numbered streets as far as possible. What happens next will depend on a number of factors: whether the auctions continue; who has bought the properties being disposed of, their plans and commitment to the community; Accent's cooperation in returning proceeds back to the community; additional fund-raising; and so on.

From the community research, clear recommendations have emerged, and these are outlined at the end of this report.

In the meantime, Accent has agreed to transfer one of the empty properties in a poor state of repair, 54 Seventh Street, to the Coalfield Regeneration Trust. The Homes and Community Association has permitted this house to be transferred at below

market value. The CRT plans to repair and use the property (the 'Hub House') for the benefit of the community. While this is a positive step, it is one house set against the 104 sold so far: its approximate value of £15,000 is set against current auction sales to of £1,634,753 (i.e. less than 1% of the income generated by Accent since September 2015).

## 4. Horden Community Views

In the face of this urgent housing situation, it is important to note that there has been no community consultation to inform the actions taken by Accent and supported by the Housing and Communities Association, and no support for these actions from either the local councils or the community.

The research reported here undertook a needs and assets analysis of Horden (see Mathie and Cunningham 2002). The research findings identify the need for an alternative plan and future for the numbered streets that is informed by the priorities, needs and assets of the community of Horden. This section reports on the experiences and views of the many residents and different sections of the community who were consulted in the research.

### 4.1 What are the current issues for residents?

The issues that concern residents of the numbered streets are:

There were approximately 360 **empty properties** by summer 2015. Many of these have been empty for some time, and are in a bad state of disrepair, which has knock-on effects on neighbouring properties.

A rise in **unregulated private letting** in recent years. Durham County Council has an accreditation scheme, but under recent Government changes to housing policy this cannot be enforced. This has led to the declining condition of some privately let housing (see below), and a more transient population which undermines community spirit. Furthermore, there are concerns about a growth in absentee speculative landlords who do not vet tenants, and an associated increase in anti-social behaviour, crime and drug abuse.



Concerns that social housing tenants are not subject to **background checks**. Accent are partners in Durham Key Options, an agency which links up tenants with available social housing. Many housing providers using this site have local letting policies that allow, for example, priority to be given to tenants with local links, or stipulate 'good neighbour' agreements. However, Accent does not have a local letting policy on any of its housing stock.

Many residents report **fear of crime** for themselves and their families.

**Environmental problems** including vandalism, rat infestation and fly-tipping, originate from abandoned empty properties but affect many neighbouring houses.

**Very poor outer condition** of some housing, including boarded up houses, broken doors and windows, and graffiti.

**Very poor interior condition** of some housing, because of a lack of investment, upkeep and repairs by landlords.

Unacceptable **delays in vital repairs** by some private and social landlords.

**Health concerns** over damp housing and the presence of asbestos.

Owner-occupiers believe that the **value of properties** is falling fast: some are in negative equity, and all fear their houses would be hard to sell if they wanted to move.

A **state of uncertainty and worry** over the future of the housing and the numbered streets area, which reinforces the decline in the area. The lack of information and communication provided by major landlords heightens this uncertainty.

Many residents report concern about **fragmenting community spirit** as a result of the current housing situation described above.

#### **4.2 What are the community assets and resources?**

The village and community of Horden have many positive aspects that suggest an alternative regeneration strategy is worthwhile. The assets and resources of Horden and the numbered streets, as identified by residents, are:

**Location** – The numbered streets are located in the centre of Horden, with good access to local shops and services, the parks, sports facilities, churches and the beach.

**Scenery and natural heritage** – Horden Dene and Castle Eden Denes, bordering the village to the north and south, are picturesque and popular with walkers. The 10-mile stretch of coastline that includes Horden beach has been cleaned up and conserved by Durham Heritage Coast Partnership. As well as sweeping views, expanses of sand and dramatic cliffs, the coast now boasts a long-distance footpath, signage, and information on its industrial heritage. It has both Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Special Areas of Conservation owing to the resurgence of fauna and flora that are unique to the Magnesian limestone environment. Older residents recount the use and value attached to nature by mining families, and young people today are aware of the coast's beauty and value.

**Railway station** – There are current plans to bring Horden's railway station back into use, which will make commuting easier from the village and allow more visitors.

**Welfare Park** – This Victorian park has been redeveloped, featuring formal gardens, a playpark, and its most recent addition 'The Marra', a 9-foot statue by Ray Lonsdale installed in 2015 to commemorate Horden's coalmining heritage. The Park also houses Horden Colliery Heritage Centre, a community-run initiative that opened in 2009, and the Vintage Tea Room downstairs which opened in 2015. Horden also has several other green spaces that are popular with residents.

**Sports facilities** – Residents are proud of the village's football, rugby and cricket teams. The facilities are well kept, and considered a good resource by young people and their parents.

**Shops and services** Horden has a good range of local shops and services which is seen as a major positive feature of the numbered streets.

**Churches** - While in line with national trends weekly church attendance has fallen, Horden's churches and associated spaces still attract significant numbers and are viewed as very important to the community. Church services and activities allow the mixing of people of different ages, and drop-in clubs at the Ark and the Salvation Army Hall offer volunteering opportunities for residents. These are provided for free to everyone regardless of faith.



**Memory and history** - Many residents have strong ties to the village, including the numbered streets area for those who lived there in the past. For older and middle-aged people in particular, the streets are tied to fond memories of the past. Young people as well as older residents see the village's rich heritage as a resource, rather than a hindrance - it continues to be a source of identity and pride, and undoubtedly strengthens community spirit and the level of volunteering in the village (see Box 3).

**Community spirit** - Many residents have local networks of family and friends, on whom they rely not just for social contact but often for practical support, e.g. childcare for parents, shopping for people who are housebound. Many older residents reminisced about the strength of community spirit in the past, and residents of all ages feel that the same sense of community and solidarity continues in the present day, although it is facing a major challenge related to the housing situation in the numbered streets. A minority of residents feel community spirit has declined in the last 3-10 years, largely attributing this to the housing issues described above. However, the numbered streets area still has strong micro-communities and inter-generational support is evident. Many residents are passionate about preserving community spirit in the face of hardship.

**Voluntary sector** - Horden has a vibrant community sector, and many residents volunteer because of their commitment to improving life for others (see Box 3).

### **Box 3: Horden's community and voluntary sector**

Horden has many active community organisations and community-developed initiatives. Prominent examples include Horden Colliery Residents Association, Horden Heritage Centre, and Horden Young Citizens Project, as well as a range of clubs and drop-ins open for older people, children and young people, and parents of young children.

However, in recent years, welfare reform and severe financial cuts to Local Authority budgets and the voluntary sector are having a substantially greater impact in former mining communities than the UK as a whole (Foden et al 2014).

While coalfield communities are still defined by assets of 'a strong community spirit and a dense network of family and social ties' (Foden et al 2014, 28), they require extra financial support to cope with the array of social and economic problems they experience.

Horden, then, has significant assets and resources. The plans for community-led housing that were being drawn up in 2015 by Horden Colliery Residents Association are a prime example of this. However, as elsewhere, in the last few years funding to realise this type of regeneration is harder to come by.

#### 4.3 What do residents think should be done about the numbered streets?

Residents want to see **empty houses occupied**, not lying empty. Most favoured this outcome, although a minority felt that some of the housing should be demolished.

Residents believe it is important that occupants should be either owner-occupiers or tenants who have been vetted through greater and effective **regulation of private and social landlords**.

Houses should be **repaired and maintained** by those who buy them, so that living conditions meet Decent Homes Standard.

Improvements are needed to the **external environment**, including repair of damage, removal of graffiti, cleaning and removal of rubbish.

Measures to **increase security**, reduce crime and fear, and action on anti-social behaviour.

**Returning confidence to the area** is key to making people want to stay, to attracting new residents, and to the stabilisation of house prices. The current disposal of housing, added to the transience of some residents, means that community spirit is declining.

Residents also talked about '**putting Horden back on the map**' through investment in housing, the redevelopment of the railway station and improvement of bus links to allow commuting, and attracting visitors to Horden's natural and industrial heritage. Young people highlighted the need for local employment, as some wanted to stay in Horden but felt they would need to move.

**Residents' ideas for the 'Hub House'** include creating a centre for advice about housing and other welfare issues, a community safety and policing hub, and a management and training centre for community-led redevelopment of other houses. This means halting further sales on the open market to allow and agencies working together to support community-led schemes.



## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

### 5.1 Conclusions

- The decision to dispose of housing in the numbered streets, and the manner in which it has been executed, look set to lead to the worst possible outcome for the community.
- The “disposal” is not only of empty properties, but effectively of responsibility by national government and local housing agencies for the community’s continuing welfare, resilience and ability to self-help.
- Horden has especially strong community assets. The village has many attractions, voluntarism is strong, and Horden’s heritage is a resource rather than a hindrance, leading to strong community spirit, identity and pride.
- Ex-industrial areas like Horden require additional support and financial resources to help residents to protect and sustain these assets and improve life for others.

### 5.2 Recommendations

- Halt sales at auction with immediate effect. Allow time for alternatives to be developed for the numbered streets, that have the support of the community and their best interests at heart.
- Accent and other social and private landlords should work with the community, Durham County Council and other bodies to find locally managed alternatives that prioritise the interests of tenants and the wider community.
- Accent should gift a substantial share of the profits made to date on housing disposal to a fund managed by Horden Colliery Housing Trust, so that this can be reinvested in the community (for example, regeneration of the area, provision of services from the Hub House).
- Any further sales should be subject to stipulations that new owners must join Durham County Council’s landlord accreditation scheme, and must vet new tenants. Such schemes have reduced voids and crime in nearby areas.
- Those buyers who have recently purchased housing at auction have a moral responsibility to respond to community concerns and bring the housing stock up to decent homes standard.

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For more information: [rachel.pain@duham.ac.uk](mailto:rachel.pain@duham.ac.uk)