

CONISTON AND TORVER COMMUNITY LAND TRUST

A Community Interest Company
Company No. 7978653



Assessing the required level of Local Need Housing in a Lake District Community

Introduction

It is fundamentally important to ensure Lake District communities can be maintained as vibrant, sustainable villages.

Clearly, allowing a certain number of Local Need Homes to be developed in a community is desirable and in many cases essential for the future viability of the community. Local Need Homes will allow those who move to the area for employment to set up a home and become part of the community.

However there are also a number of risks involved with this type of development if proper control is not applied. Relying on the normal planning process may not give sufficient control and some form of formal assessment may be necessary. These points have been considered by the Coniston and Torver CLT and a summary of the CLT's feelings is given below

- The necessity for Local Need Homes is paramount. Even if sufficient affordable housing is provided (as being attempted in Coniston), the number of permanent residents will continue to fall.
- A key reason for encouraging 'in-comers' into the community is to retain the number of permanent residents, maintain the level of local services and to ensure essential services that are operated by volunteers are also maintained.
- However the potential for an uncontrolled housing free-for-all to develop is clearly a risk. A community-operated scheme may be the best means of effective control.
- Present housing stock, free from occupancy controls, is often out of the price range for those wishing to move into a Lakeland village. Clearly allowing the new-build of Local Need Homes is the best solution, both for control of occupancy and from the point of view of potential 'in-comers'.

Calculating the number of Local Need Homes required is a challenge as this number is not '*people dictated*' but '*community-need dictated*'. The Coniston and Torver CLT is establishing a formula for identifying a level of Local Need homes based on these criteria. This is described below.

A possible formula for estimating the number of Local Needs homes

Villages such as Coniston rely on many voluntary organisations that provide essential services. For Coniston these include:

Coniston First Responders
Coniston Retained Fire Service
Coniston Carers
Coniston Mountain Rescue Team

At the present time, in Coniston, all these organisations are running at below-ideal numbers of volunteers. The situation for each is shown on the bar-chart below (Appendix 1). The degree of the shortfall in these organisations might be a useful indicator of the level of requirement for Local Need Homes.

Other local services can be put in serious risk when the number of residents fall. A key one are village primary schools where falling numbers of pupils on the rolls are of great concern to rural communities. Assessing this shortfall may be the most accurate method for assessing the Local Need Home requirement for communities that have a primary school.

Using data on school numbers below the school subsistence level will be the most accurate way of measuring the requirement for Local Need Homes.

Conversion of data

The method for converting the data of school numbers below safe targets into the numbers of new Local Homes required will be a challenge. Formula will have to be carefully reviewed. As a 'first attempt' the CLT has used two published UK statistics:

- Average number of children per family:-
1.8 in 2010; 1.6 in 2012.
- Number of family households with children between the ages of 4 to 11 years:-
22% of total households.

(Note: these relate to the National Average)

Currently Coniston primary school needs six additional pupils to return the numbers to a safe level. Using the statistics above this would require approximately 13 new Local Homes established within the village to give a statistical average guarantee of providing 6 extra pupils for the primary school.

At the present time families who live within the South Distinctive Area of the National Park, and who meet other criteria, are able to purchase a Local Need home in Coniston. We wish this to be extended to allow families moving to the expanding industries of Low Furness to occupy Local Need homes in the parish.

Next stage

The following are the next-step action points:

- Confirm the validity of the demographic statistics used above.
- Review the data and proposals with the National Park Head of Partnership and Spatial Strategy.
- Discuss the proposals with other communities that have shown an interest.
- Develop a strong lobby to extend the permitted area for occupancy of Local Homes in Coniston to South Lakes and Barrow.

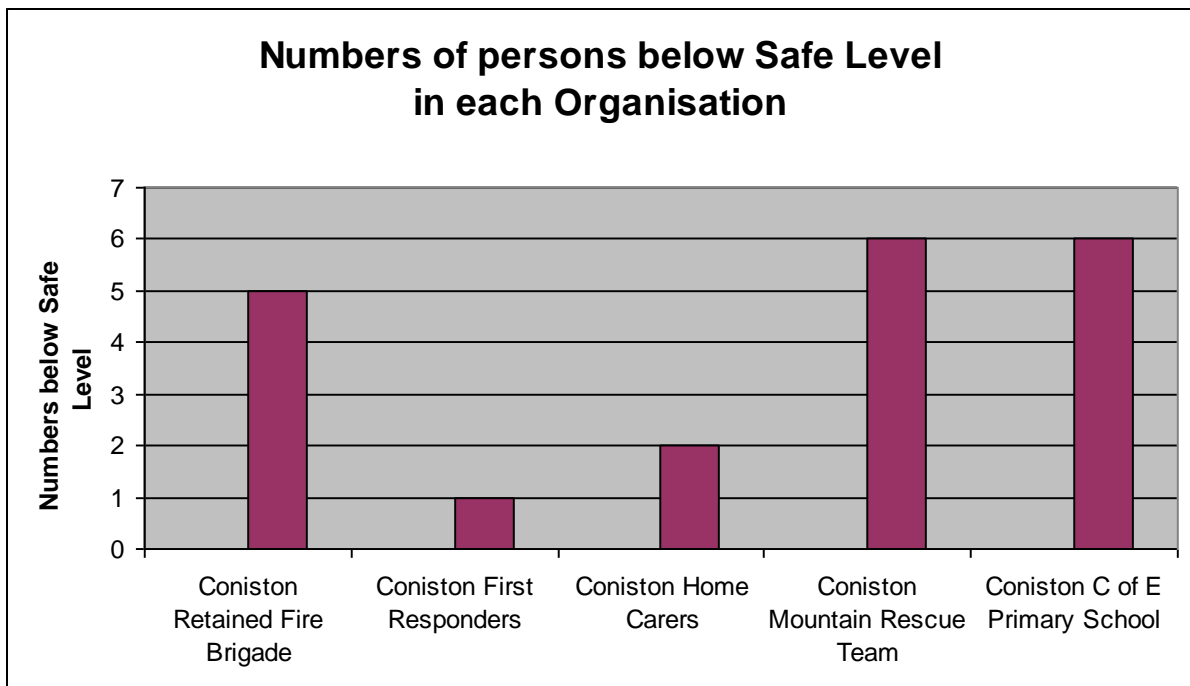
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Coniston and Torver CLT.

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APPENDIX 1



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