

# Case Study

May 2023



**ACTion**  
with communities  
in cumbria

## Brampton Rural Housing Society



*New homes at  
Halton Lea Gate when  
built in the 1930's*

### Affordable Homes run by the community

**Brampton Rural Housing Society was set up in 1926 to support workers in the area who were losing their jobs in agriculture (owing to mechanisation) and also their accommodation where this was tied to the work.**

**True to its history, the Society continues to provide good quality affordable housing in 2023, for people living and working in Brampton and neighbouring parishes.**

### Background

Originally called Brampton Public Utility Society, in 1998 the Society changed its name to give a modern reflection of the housing services provided. At the same time, Brampton Rural Housing Society (BRHS) became a registered charity.

BRHS built over 100 houses in Brampton and the surrounding villages in the years between the wars. Immediately after the war, 50 houses were built in Cotehill, for workers at British Gypsum's Cocklakes works.

As a charitable housing association - not a Registered Social Landlord - the Society exists for public benefit rather than private profit. Income is generated by rent charged for housing. This money is ploughed back in to the maintenance and improvement of BRHS homes. No money is routinely received from public funds, other than occasional grants which are available to landlords generally.

In the last few years, there has been falling demand for rental properties outside Brampton. The decision has been made to sell off some properties in the outlying villages and to invest in more homes in Brampton and to upgrade the existing housing stock, making these homes as warm and energy efficient as possible.

### What is the Society doing now?

BRHS holds 156 properties currently. With its social mission in mind, the Society looks to grow and improve the housing offer it is able to make locally to meet the needs of the local community.

The Society negotiated to take on 8 newbuild properties at the Winchester Place development in Brampton, from developer Story Homes. These are now occupied by current tenants who wished to move, and new tenants are being drawn from the waiting list to fill the vacated properties.

In 2022, the Society's Board also made an agreement with Carlisle City Council (now Cumberland Unitary) to bring empty properties in Brampton and Hallbankgate back into use for social rent. This is a challenging but exciting way for the Society to deliver more homes for local affordable use, without the need to build from scratch.



*Well kept, spacious  
homes and gardens  
are important to  
tenants*

## What has been achieved?

- A 23 year old eco-home shows that the Board has never been afraid to be forward thinking in its approach to building and upgrading property.
- By working well with the Local Housing Authority BRHS has become a trusted partner and can instigate dialogue on opportunities to develop its work and property holdings, to meet local need.
- BRHS has a waiting list of over 60 people who hope to secure a home with them. This is testament to their reputation as an excellent local landlord, with well-managed and maintained property.
- Rent has been maintained at a truly affordable level across the range of properties - £85 per week on average. Keeping property affordable is a key driver, particularly with the current cost of living challenges.

## The Learning

BRHS has been running for almost a hundred years, accruing a wealth of knowledge and good practice in delivering and management of local affordable housing.

Their strictly charitable approach prioritises the needs and interests of the community, their tenants and prospective tenants. With a minimalist staff team, organisational overheads are kept very low indeed. All money raised through rent payments or property sales is carefully re-invested.

- Involving tenants in the work of the Society is crucial. The Board welcomes tenant members and has supported resident representation for many years.
- Keeping property well maintained through Covid restrictions was challenging, but with excellent communications and reliable local contractors, routine tasks have been delivered and planned upgrades made.
- The demand for affordable housing will continue to outstrip supply. The Society has a local allocations policy which prioritises people with local connections through family or work commitments. This is very much valued by the community.
- Having a fair and transparent allocations property, affordable rent and well-maintained property means that people trust the Society to continue providing a good service, meeting the needs of local people.
- The older properties in the Society's holding remain popular with tenants because they are spacious, well built and have generous garden space.

Individuals may join the Society if they live in the Parishes of Brampton, Burtholme, Carlattan, Castle Carrock, Cumrew, Cumwitton, Farlam, Geltside, Hayton, Irthington, Kingwater, Midgehole, Nether Denton, Upper Denton, Walton, Waterhead and Wetheral.



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## Want to know more?

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