



more than 40 affordable homes in an area where many local people are

St John's Church in Keswick in the Lake District made half a hectare of land next to its graveyard that was too stony and waterlogged for burials available to the town's then newly-formed Community Housing Trust.

The land now has 11 three-bedroomed houses and the trust has gone on to build a further 30 homes in the town on other plots. The latest four – three, three-bedroomed houses and one two-bedroom house – were built on land provided by the Methodist Church on the site of a demolished church hall.

Around half the homes built by the trust are for shared ownership and the other half are let out at rents that are truly affordable in perpetuity – measured in relation to local earnings, not market rents.

Bill Bewley, the Chair of Keswick Community Housing Trust, believes that up to 200 people have been housed as a result of the trust's work so far with further potential plots of land for housing being explored.

"We are a community organisation but there is no doubt in my mind that if it had not been for the impetus from Keswick St John's we would not have gone on to build the houses that we have done," he said.

The trust was formed originally after the lack of affordable homes in the area emerged as a key concern in consultations held by Keswick Churches Together, the group of churches of all denominations in the area.

Local estate agents were reporting that more than half of the properties they sold were for second homes or holiday lets.

"Back when we first discussed this, around a decade ago, we knew that the average house price in Keswick meant that you needed an income of £75,000 a year. This was way beyond the means of most people working in Keswick," he said.

"The problem we have, particularly since lockdown, is that house prices have gone up in Keswick."

Source URL: <https://www.churchofengland.org/media-and-news/stories-blogs-and-features/how-plot-unused-church-land-helped-families-priced-out>