

Dear Sir,

Since its foundation ten years ago, Keswick Community Housing Trust (KCHT) has built 41 affordable properties for rent and part ownership by the people of Keswick who have been increasingly priced out of the housing market. We are rightly proud of this achievement and grateful for the support we have received from the local community.

One of our hopes when we set out on this endeavour was to replace those properties being lost to the town as second homes and holiday lettings. We, like many of your readers, have been dismayed to learn that since 2017 the number of self-catering holiday units with a CA12 postcode has increased by around 400 (Keswick Reminder – 2 October 2020). KCHT has only managed to replace 10% of the properties lost in the last three years.

To give an example: in The Seams property usage has changed dramatically over the last 20 years. In 2001, it comprised 10 properties: of these 7 were lived in, 1 was a second home and 2 we are not sure about. Today, only 3 are lived in, 6 are holiday cottages and 1 is a second home. These properties were ideal for single people, young families and people who wanted to downsize. Their change of use has changed the nature of the small local community as well as depriving locals of much needed accommodation. This sort of change, which has been repeated in many other areas of the town, can only drain Keswick of its viability and vitality.

KCHT has decided that, as well as continuing to look for opportunities to increase the affordable housing stock for local people, it must do what it can to limit the loss of properties to the holiday market and to ensure that those who are currently breaking the rules regarding use of their properties are stopped from doing so. We intend to lobby individuals, groups and statutory bodies, near and far, to ensure that rule breakers are brought to task and that the rules governing change of use are obeyed. We applaud the Planning Authorities intention of publishing a list of properties with S106<sup>1</sup> agreements on them, and the Town Council's intention of identifying and following up breaches of these agreements. We will be reporting any suspicions we have of where rules around holiday lettings are being broken and would encourage fellow Keswickians to do the same. If they pass on any such suspicions to us, we are prepared to follow up their concerns and contact the authorities when we think there is good reason. We would also ask that holiday letting agencies ensure that the properties they are letting out do not have restrictions placed on them that prohibit such use.

By working together in this way we can ensure that Keswick remains a town in which there is a flourishing, vibrant local community in which young families can afford to live and bring up the next generation.

Bill Bewley,  
Chairman KCHT

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<sup>1</sup> Planning obligations, also known as **Section 106 agreements** (based on that **section** of The 1990 Town & Country Planning Act) are private **agreements** made between local authorities and developers and can be attached to a planning permission to make acceptable development which would otherwise be unacceptable in planning terms.