

Housebuilder Cussins bucks market slowdown thanks to demand for rural properties

The director of Alnwick-based housing firm Cussins says only a lack of available land is constraining growth at the firm.

Peter Cussins says the family-run business has benefited from buyers seeking rural homes on the back of the pandemic, plus a wave of people from the South wanting to escape overheated urban areas. The firm's latest accounts to the end of September 2022 – showing a 14% increase in turnover to £31.8m and operating profit of £4.2m – come in stark contrast to larger, volume housebuilders who have given a series of more downbeat updates in recent weeks in the wake of economic uncertainty and mortgage rate rises.

Speaking to BusinessLive, Mr Cussins said: “I think the secret to us effectively doing better is that we’ve concentrated successfully on getting rural developments around the edges of villages. Since Covid, the average purchaser feels that they’d rather be in a village community rather than a town.

Read more: [Former Tolent and Britishvolt workers consider legal action over redundancies](#)

“There’s been a much bigger drift towards the countryside and our sites like those in Longframlington, Wark and Ponteland have benefited from that trend – which seems to be continuing. While the levels on show houses still tend to be quite low, the quality of people coming across the door is good: they’re more serious buyers who have thought about moving and got their mortgage sorted out.

“Our success rate, given the number of visitors, is much higher than normal. It’s that sort of market. Our strategy is

to continue finding the rural sites. If the land was available we'd be expanding even faster than we are because sales have been quite good since September."

Cussins said its homes, which typically cost between £350,000 and £650,000, were attractive to second or third time buyers seeking larger gardens and more home working space. And pointing to its Ponteland site, Mr Cussins said 50% of customers were from outside of the area.

The firm, which employs about 73 people, said the planning pipeline for 2024 remained the biggest obstacle to its growth, despite a large site going ahead near Amble and more phases at its Darlington Summerson Place development. Cost inflation would likely temper margins this year, Mr Cussins said.

He added: "I think all of last year, cost inflation, which was quite heavy, was covered by selling price increases. This year, costs are continuing to rise and not being able to raise prices by the same amount, margins are likely to dip by a point or two. So, it's a more cautious market but costs are beginning to stabilise and hopefully there will be an equilibrium as the year progresses."

Mr Cussins said that while he was not "overly bullish", he thought the steady market indicated it would be a good year for the company.

Go [HERE](#) to sign up for North East business newsletters and get all the latest news direct to your inbox

READ NEXT:

- [Turnover tops £100m at Newcastle Station Hotel owner Cairn Group](#)
- [North East bill reduction firm wins Government funding](#)
- [Defence tech specialist Leonardo's ambition to grow new North East base](#)

- [Owner of Stack drinking and dining destination Danieli Group hails record year](#)
- [Read more North East business news](#)