

Most new homes in West go to incomers

BY MARTIN FREEMAN

Thousands of new homes being built in the South West in answer to the housing crisis are drawing in 'incomers' to the region

CPRE report reveals 60% of properties not sold to locals

rather than meeting local needs.

That's one of the conclusions from a major independ-

ent report on housing published today. Two-thirds of the new build properties in Devon are being bought by people

moving into the county, the research for the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) reveals.

Thousands more homes are being built than are needed and too many are on green-field sites, the 72-page report for Devon CPRE says.

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'New homes for wrong folk and in wrong place'

BY MARTIN FREEMAN

Thousands of new homes in the South West are being snapped up by incomers into the region, according to a major independent report on housing published today.

Two-thirds of the new build properties in Devon are being bought by people moving into the county, the research for the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) reveals.

Thousands more homes are being built than are needed and too many are going up on green-field sites, the 72-page report for the Devon branch of the CPRE says.

Many are too big for, and too few are affordable by, local people who need homes, the Devon Housing Needs Evidence document states.

The two new towns in the county, Sherford near Plymouth and Cranbrook near Exeter, both planned to provide an element of affordable housing, have not produced sufficient lower priced properties to rent or buy, the report produced by Opinion Research Services states.

Simply building more homes is unlikely to lower prices overall and because new houses are more expensive they can increase prices locally, the researchers add.

Dr Phillip Bratby, of the Devon CPRE, said the Government had consistently over-estimated over many years the number of new homes needed and was forcing local authorities to plan for far too many

than were required for the future.

"Despite projections for the future showing lower rates of growth in the number of new households, the Government is intent on increasing the rate of house building, with planners claiming they are homes for local people when, clearly, many are not," he said. "It's time to start building the homes that are needed in locations where they are needed, rather than the soulless housing estates that big developers

'The countryside, our most precious asset, is being destroyed'

Penny Mills, Devon CPRE

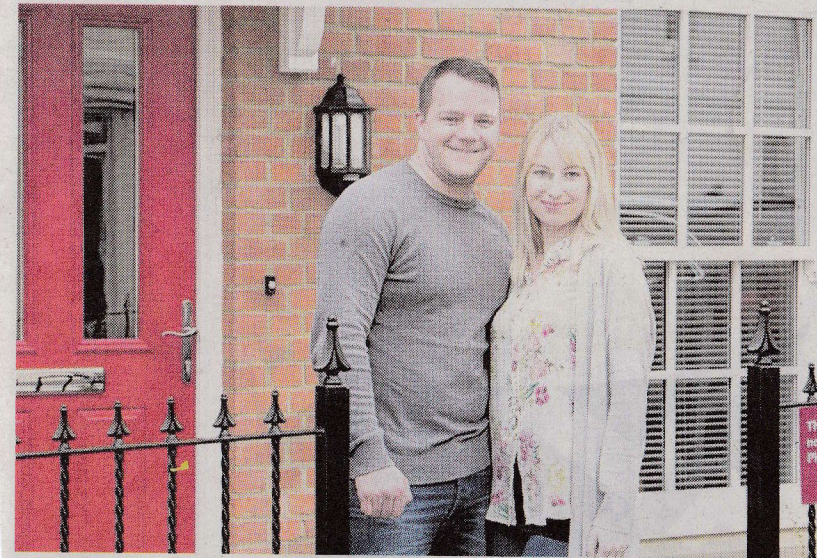
inflict on us to increase their profits."

Penny Mills, the director of the county branch of the conservation charity, said that the public should be alarmed at the scale of current and planned development which was destroying "our most precious asset", the countryside.

"People who claim to love nature, wildlife, and the environment should be concerned because of the loss of precious habitats," she said.

"Anybody who is involved in the tourist industry should be worried.

"Tourism is one of the biggest contributors to Devon's economy. Why? Because people come for the beautiful coast



Jess and Luke Mitchell are one local couple who have bought at Sherford. The pair, who were previously renting a house in Plymouth, bought their first home at Linden Homes' Sherford development by using the 'Help to Buy' scheme, and moved into their new three-bedroom house just after their wedding

and countryside, the scenery, the peace and quiet, the fresh air.

"Will they still come to see sprawling housing estates with identikit homes, an urban environment and traffic jams? I don't think so. We shouldn't be destroying our most precious asset - our countryside."

The CPRE said the key messages from the report were:

■ Far too many homes are being planned for Devon over the next ten years - an average of 4,300 is needed annually, compared to the 5,800 predicted in plans drawn up by councils.

■ Forty-one thousand new homes were provided in Devon between 2006 and 2016, while almost two-thirds of the in-

crease in the number of households in that time came from people relocating to the county. The rise in the number of homes will continue by another 43,000 up to 2026, much of it to satisfy inward migration.

■ Most homes planned for Devon over the next ten years will be built on greenfield sites. Although brownfield building is encouraged in planning blue prints, insufficient restraint is placed upon "green field first" planning.

■ There is a need for affordable housing, or housing with occupancy restrictions, especially in rural areas, to encourage younger local households and those on low incomes who work locally to stay.

■ Most new homes are unaffordable to young households

and too many are large "executive" houses. Affordability problems are made worse by low average earnings and a significant number of second homes across the county, either for holiday lets or "buy to rent" investments.

■ Many rental developments in Exeter and Plymouth are for students and are high-density.

Dr Bratby said: "It's high time our local planning authorities began to take stock of what local communities really need - genuinely affordable homes on brown-field sites wherever possible."

The full report will be revealed at a seminar in Tiverton today attended by Sir Hugo Swire, the MP for East Devon.

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How two new towns are shaping up

The Devon CPRE report concludes that the long-term targets for affordable accommodation in the county's two new towns are far too low.

Cranbrook near Exeter is planned to have 25% of homes affordable and Sherford near Plymouth is supposed to have 20% in that category. The two towns, currently part-built, will have a total of 13,350 homes between them.

In the first phase at Cranbrook, 328 homes built were affordable, the report says.

Part of the problem is that new homes are generally more expensive than older houses.

Average new-build homes are £39,000 (18%) more expensive compared to all properties.

Lower-quarter new build properties are £44,500 (27%) more expensive compared to all homes.

The average two-bedroom house price at Cranbrook for sale in September 2018 was £199,995 and in Sherford was £212,472, while the average three-bedroom house at Cranbrook cost £245,995 and in Sherford was £273,475.

In the county as a whole, a "comparatively" large proportion of homes is vacant or taken as second homes – up to 9% in some areas.

Companies own lion's share of land in region

The lion's share of land in the South West belongs to corporate bodies and companies, a new breakdown of who owns Britain has revealed.

Corporations and companies own almost 20% of the region's land and buildings, according to Search Acumen, a property data firm that has spent the last few months collating data from the Land Registry to build a picture of who owns England and Wales.

County councils and other local authorities own a further 10%, the report

reveals. Breaking the statistics down to individual landowners shows the Ministry of Defence, the National Trust and the Royal Family are the three biggest landowners by acreage across the region. The MoD tops the list, with 2.1%, the NT with just over 2% and Her Majesty the Queen with 1.3%. In acreage it means defence accounts for 128,054 acres, the NT for 119,507 and the Royal Family 78,172.

Andrew Lloyd, managing director of Search Acumen, said: "Increasing access to

property data is dramatically improving our understanding of land ownership across the country.

"The insights it reveals can have important implications and benefits for planning and development in both residential and commercial markets on a local level, from housing to infrastructure projects."

Comparing regions shows the South East has the largest area of land under domestic corporate and commercial ownership.

All new homes should be built to meet local demand

Local homes for local people might be the slogan of developers as they seek planning permission to build on green field sites in the beautiful but often unaffordable Westcountry.

Yet a study by the Campaign to Protect Rural England today shows that far from meeting the needs of the region's population, thousands of new homes going up in the South West are being snapped up by incomers. Two-thirds of the new builds in Devon are being bought by people moving in, with thousands more homes than are needed to meet local needs being constructed, according to the conservation charity.

It's a suspicion that many people have long held, as they have watched communities expanding out of all recognition through massive house-building programmes. And far from bringing down prices by increasing supply to meet a fixed level of demand, the consequence of much of the new build – offered on the open market – is to push up prices because many of the homes are large and costly "executive" houses.

The building bonanza has also prompted a rise in the number of properties bought for investment purposes, to be used as second homes or let on the holiday rental market.

The CPRE, with this exhaustive and detailed

report, is demonstrating what many have long feared, that the Government has over-estimated demand for new homes for local people and instead created properties that serve as a draw for those outside the region.

Penny Mills, director of the Devon branch of the conservation charity, is right when she says the public should be alarmed at the scale of current and planned development. In fact, many of them have been alarmed for some time. It is, she says, destroying "our most precious asset", the countryside. "People who claim to love nature, wildlife, and the environment should be concerned because of the loss of precious habitats," she said. "Anybody who is involved in the tourist industry should be worried."

There is, undoubtedly, a housing crisis but building properties that are largely unaffordable by young working families on Westcountry wages doesn't solve it – it may actually be making it worse. Counties like Devon, with limited infrastructure, a finite ability to create new jobs and with vital public services under pressure, don't need to bring in more people with the lure of new housing that looks, by the standards of London and the South East, to be "good value."

It is time for a re-think to ensure new building matches demand in the region.