

## Park Homes

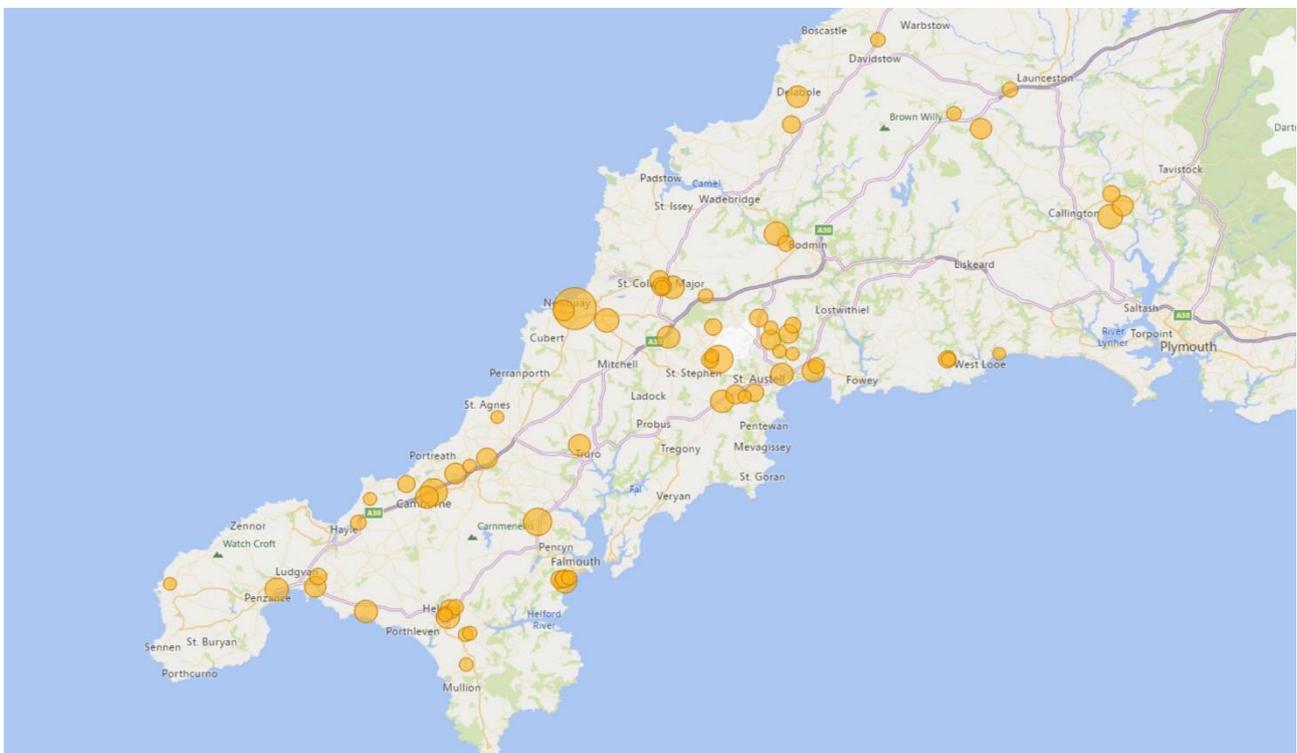
### Key points:

- As of March 2021, there were approximately 62 wholly residential park home sites in Cornwall and 10 sites with a mixture of residential and holiday home (see below map)
- These 72 sites have an estimated 3,372 homes;
- Broken down, this equates to 2,997 residential homes and 395 other uses, such as holiday homes;
- This is an 8% increase from 2,770 residential homes in May 2019 (this could be due to either new sites being registered by planning or existing sites expanding the number of pitches);
- The number of residential homes is more than double the number compared to the South West region and three times the number compared to England and Wales;
- Park homes mainly house older residents (over the age of 50) with the national picture indicating that nearly 70% of residents are over 60;

### Background

A park home is the commonly used term for a mobile home on a protected site as set out within the Mobile Homes Act 1983. A protected site is one that is required to be licensed by a local authority under Part 1 of the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 which covers most sites containing wholly residential park homes or a mixture of residential and holiday homes.

The above does not include people living in Gypsy & Traveller sites, people in campsites or other sites used for leisure purposes. For example, limited occupancy holiday homes (i.e. ones where occupants have another address where they pay their council tax) are not classed as park homes. The below map<sup>1</sup> shows Cornwall's park homes.



*The bubble size is dependent on number of park home residents on the site.*

<sup>1</sup><https://map.cornwall.gov.uk/website/ccmap/?zoomlevel=9&xcoord=152366&ycoord=31408&wsName=ccintranet&layerName=>

## Housing in Cornwall 2021 Park Homes

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Park homes can offer an attractive housing option for retired people; thus, residents tend to be older. However, the age profile of park homeowners can make it challenging for them to assert their rights if dealing with unscrupulous site owners.

Results from Cornwall Council's Park Home Residents' Survey 2019 supports the aforementioned. Though the majority of survey respondents were happy living in park home sites and how the sites are managed, when asked to identify disadvantages of living on park home sites, circa 36% survey respondents named issues relating to site owners and their management. These were:

- Having to buy electricity/gas from site owner which is expensive and often carries a surcharge;
- High and/or increasing rent and pitch fees;
- Poor site maintenance;
- Complicated/restrictive site rules which keep changing without being informed;
- Bad/unscrupulous site owners.

This is not only apparent within Cornwall, but also evident nationally. As the Government states<sup>2</sup>, 'there are many good site owners in the industry who provide a professional service to their residents and respect their rights. Sadly, their good work can be overshadowed by the unscrupulous operators within the sector'.

There are plans to introduce a fit and proper test commencing in October 2021. This test requires site owners to be a fit and proper person to lawfully operate a park home site (unless the site is exempt). To prove that a person is fit and proper, they must apply to their local authority to be included on the local register.

Aside from this, there are other issues concerning park homes. These include poor energy efficiency and a reliance on expensive fuels, such as bottled gas as opposed to being connected to the mains gas network (only 3 sites in Cornwall are connected to mains gas). Due to the older age of many park homes dwellings and the thinner walls compared with traditional 'bricks and mortar' properties, park homes are harder and more expensive to heat. Anecdotally, where an average 3-bed semi-detached property could have annual energy costs of £1,200-£1,400, the equivalent park home is likely to be higher. Moreover, the Energy Saving Trust<sup>3</sup> published mains gas at £0.0417 per unit, bulk LPG at £0.719 and bottle gas at £0.115 (about 60% more expensive).

To add to the complications about fuel supply, site owners can have exclusive site supply contracts for both electricity and gas bottles and so residents are not able to shop around for the best deal; meaning residents can be charged above the expected rate. Additionally, the national Energy Performance Certificate's (EPCs) Register do not adequately record park homes. It is only recently that park homes are recognised and classified as detached bungalows, and as a result has allowed EPCs to be lodged and interventions to be delivered. However, many people living in park homes fail to recognise the higher energy costs living in them and many still do not have EPC's.

As Cornish charity Community Energy Plus state<sup>4</sup>, 'Living in a warm home is an important aspect of keeping healthy in older age, so the higher heating costs of park homes can put their residents, who tend to be older and living on low incomes, at a greater risk of fuel poverty than those living in conventional built properties'.

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<sup>2</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/749771/Park\\_homes\\_Review\\_Government\\_response.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/749771/Park_homes_Review_Government_response.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/about-us/our-data/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.cep.org.uk/who-we-are/our-funders-and-partners/>