

Going west? Housing, migration and population growth in Cornwall



Introduction

Cornwall continues to experience severe development pressures. On the edge of most Cornish towns the JCBs are hard at work building new houses. These are often accompanied by supermarkets, hotels, parking spaces and access roads.

Helter-skelter growth is transforming the Cornish coast into a ribbon of gentrified enclaves, sacrificed to 'lifestyle Cornwall' and half empty in winter. Meanwhile inland, in life-struggle Cornwall, densely packed apartments and dreary identikit housing estates suburbanise Cornwall's old market towns. As the countryside is nibbled away, familiar landscapes vanish. And not just physical landscapes. Most new estates come with names more appropriate to the Home Counties than homes in Cornwall. In short, the Cornishness of Cornwall is under threat, a precious heritage placed in jeopardy by the onward march of the developers, most of whom seem to be based well to the east of the Tamar.

Who cares? Local campaigners do. From Lelant to Launceston groups flare up across Cornwall reacting against the latest threat. But when the battle is won or, more frequently and depressingly, lost, the new houses built and the new residents in place, the campaigners disappear, disillusioned by the process and dismayed at the way the system is rigged against local communities. Our elected representatives on Cornwall Council appear unable to stop the encroaching suburbanisation of our land. Or they actively support it, either naively believing that it will bring that long-promised but equally long-delayed material prosperity, or incapable of imagining or fighting for a more sustainable future. Meanwhile, the local media churn out the press releases of the developers and the Council's planners without raising a critical eyebrow.

But why is the great Cornish build happening? Why is Cornwall being built over at a faster rate, when we consider its resident population numbers, than anywhere else in the UK? In this document I assess the arguments put forward by those who want to push on with fast housing and population growth, and even expand it. I shall argue that the data that underlie their assertions are flawed, their assertions are unproven, their awareness of the events of the past half-century is non-existent, their 'vision' is stale, partial and uninspiring.

Their justifications for endless growth contains not a hint that endless growth might just be an oxymoron, a logical impossibility. Infinite growth is bound to come up against the constraints of finite land and natural resources at some point. Then another approach will be required. But, when their Plan A runs out of steam, those who make our decisions for us have no Plan B. Their pleas for 'more, more' are couched in a technical jargon that tries to de-politicise growth. No matter that the loudest voices in favour of high growth policies are often those who have most to benefit financially.

In practice, technical arguments are merely a smokescreen for the accumulation of capital and profits. Underlying the superficial rationale for ever higher numbers of people in Cornwall are deeper reasons why housing and population growth is the only game in the Cornish town. To understand these we have to turn to political structures centred on London and economic structures designed to facilitate accumulation at any cost. It just happens that building houses is a good way to accumulate profits and Cornwall is an excellent place in which to do it.

Yet growing numbers of people are beginning to suspect that this endless building spree cannot go on for ever. Half a century of high growth didn't solve Cornwall's economic problems in the past; half a century more of even faster growth won't solve them in the future. In fact, it locks us into a vicious circle of housing and population growth which is stacking up the environmental and cultural costs.

For a real solution to Cornwall's endemic housing crisis and the costs of the Cornish development bubble we have to transcend the narrow 'technical' debate or we're in great danger of drowning in the data. To transform the vicious circle of current growth policies into a virtuous spiral that replaces quantitative growth and accumulation with qualitative development and sustainability demands political will and organisation. Sadly, all too often at present what little 'debate' occurs around the issues of population and housing is either hijacked by the wider issue of immigration into the UK or descends into 'yah-boo, I'm more Cornish than you' name-calling. In general, it's conducted on an extremely superficial level, one where finding any substance in the smokescreen of disinformation is not that easy a task.

Moreover, despite the urgency of the issue, few coherent or credible progressive alternatives have emerged to confront the ongoing economic and political colonisation of Cornwall, a wider process of which housing and population growth is only the most visible symptom. Opposition to developer-led planning is dominated by, on the one hand, preservationist groups such as anti-wind turbine aesthetes or the Campaign to Protect Rural England [sic]. On the other hand, political groups on the conservative, English nationalist and Europhobic wing of politics offer the most vocal opposition to excessive housebuilding. Those involved in such groups are no doubt well-meaning in relation to the housing issue, but their populist rhetoric lacks depth, fails to identify the real agents of change and/or lacks a specific Cornish dimension.

What the following pages offer is a more nuanced understanding of how the juggernaut of capital accumulation works in relation to the provision of housing in Cornwall and how it produces a high rate of population in-migration and growth. Even if you don't agree with my position, campaigning groups may well find some of the data or the arguments useful in their day to day struggles with developers and their allies in Cornwall Council's planning department.

You'll discover how the data are manipulated in order to present a case for a 'need' for more housing to be built in Cornwall. We are assured by our Council leaders that the 'need' to build so many houses is generated solely from within Cornwall. This is bunkum. All it shows is how uncritical many of our elected representatives are and how they cannot apply even the most cursory critical analysis to what their planning officers feed them. In reality, Cornwall Council's planners were long ago captured by the developers' lobby and share its assumptions and its discourse.

Others who rightly worry about the ongoing problems of affordability in Cornwall resort with varying degrees of reluctance to simplistic 'build more' policy solutions. Unfortunately, as I shall demonstrate below, in the absence of a raft of radical reforms of housing provision in the UK, the way housing is currently provided actually exacerbates our housing crisis in Cornwall rather than helps to solve it.

Bernard Deacon, Redruth, August 2014

1. An uncontrollable spiral: the context of population and housing growth

Houses are built for people to live in. Therefore, we would expect that the number of houses bears some relationship to the number of people. As the population of Cornwall has steadily risen since the 1960s so the number of houses has also grown. If population goes on growing then the housing stock will also have to grow. This illustrates the first way in which housing growth in Cornwall is justified. We 'need' a lot more houses because we can expect a lot more people will live here in the future. End of story. Or so we're told.

In this first section, I'll establish the context of population and housing growth in Cornwall. First, we'll discover that the long-term population growth rate in Cornwall peaked in the 1980s but in the 1990s and 2000s fell back to a somewhat lower (though still unsustainably high) level. However, we'll also discover that, despite this, the growth of housebuilding has NOT abated. It remains – relative to our population – one of the highest in the UK. We'll also see that, despite puzzling discrepancies in the way houses are counted, Cornwall Council's housing target for the next 20 years doesn't just build in this high historic trend but seems very likely to boost it.

At this point, by way of digression, I should enter a health warning. Some of the discussion in this and the following three sections is, of necessity, often detailed, sometimes dense and may in parts be impenetrable. I urge the reader to grit their teeth and persevere, as we have to understand the data and arguments presented here in order to confront the spurious claims of the developers and planners. But if you can improve on my explanatory text you're very welcome to do so. Email me your improvement and I'll then consider revising the text. You're also going to meet a fair few numbers. Don't avoid them. Numbers can be your friends. (Incidentally, all the statistics are referenced so if you don't believe me go and check them out).

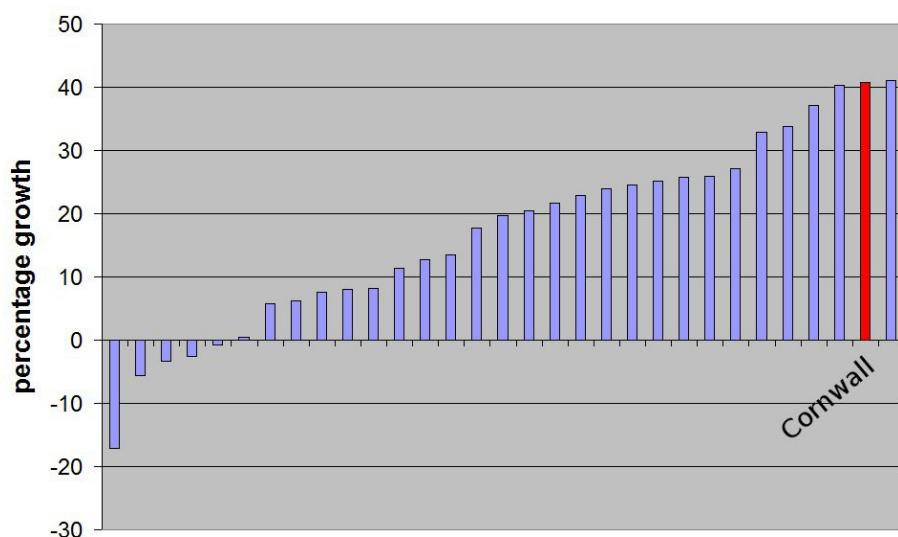
An over-crowded region

Cornwall is part of a relatively highly populated offshore island. If we compare Cornwall with similar regions across the rest of the European Union, we find that 150 of the 265 Level 2 regions had a lower population density in 2010.¹ If we exclude the

former districts of Caradon and North Cornwall, which contain the large upland area of Bodmin Moor, mid and west Cornwall enjoys a population density higher than 175, or 66% of all European level 2 regions. Cornwall is already relatively over-populated compared with the rest of Europe.

Most Cornish towns have doubled in size since 1961. Overall, the population of Cornwall rose by 57% over the last half century. This is a growth rate surpassed only by East Anglia.

Figure 1: Population growth by region, England and Wales, 1971-2011



(Source: Census, 1971-2011)

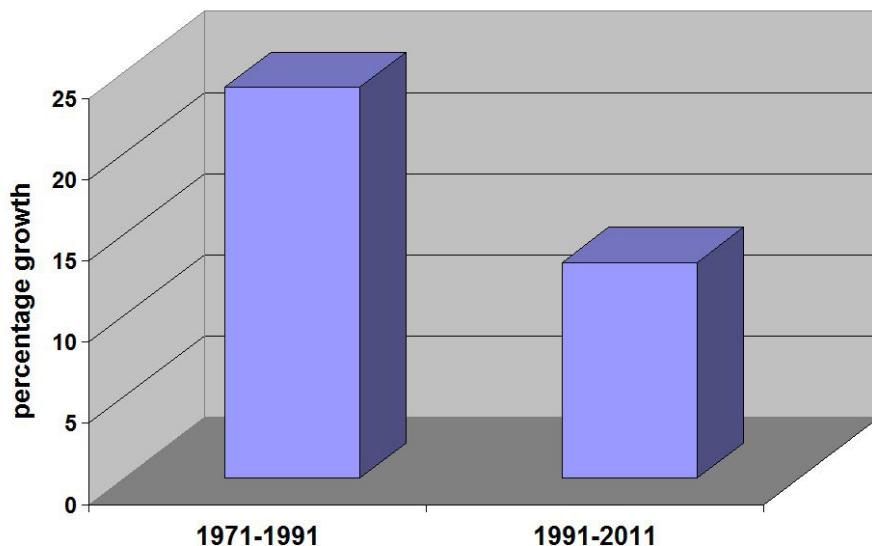
But a falling population growth trend

However, the overall picture hides a significant contrast between the first 20 year period (1971-1991) and the second (1991-2011). From 1971 to 1991 no UK region grew as fast as Cornwall. After 1991, population growth in Cornwall slowed down considerably, from 24.1% in the first 20 year period to 13.4% in the most recent. Nine other UK regions saw a faster population rise from 1991 to 2011 than Cornwall.

Nonetheless, because of the rapid growth in the 1970s and 80s, Cornwall's population growth of 40.7% over the whole 40 year period was still exceeded only by East Anglia. Meanwhile, the population of England as a whole rose in the same period at only a third of the Cornish rate - at 13.9%, while the Welsh population grew by just

11.3%. Nonetheless, **since the 1980s the rate of population growth in Cornwall has slowed considerably.**

Figure 2: Population growth in Cornwall, 1971-91 and 1991-11

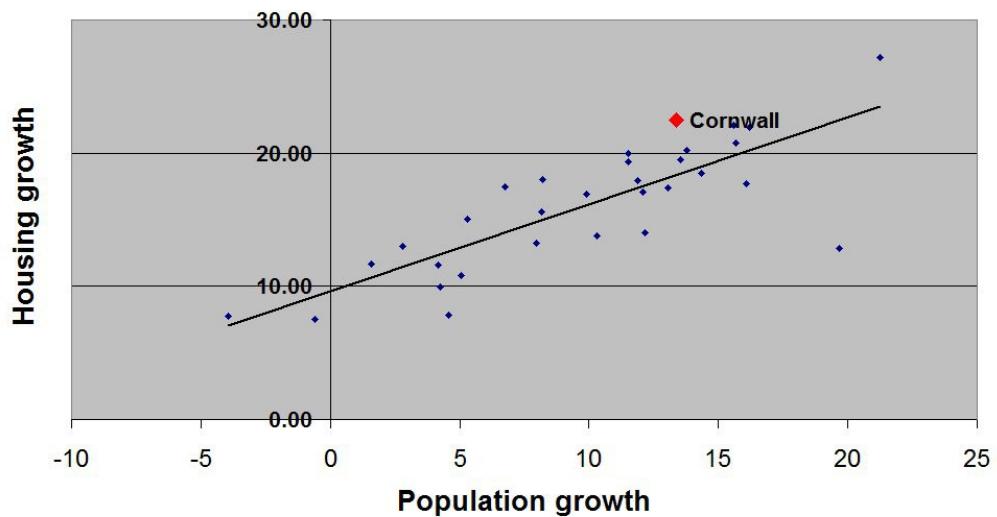


(Source: Census, 1971-2011)

Ramping up housing growth in Cornwall

Over this same period, Cornwall's housing stock has grown even more rapidly - almost doubling from 146,000 household spaces (separate dwellings plus apartments and flats) in 1971 to almost 259,000 in 2011.² As we might expect from the profile of population change, the first 20 year period, from 1971 to 1991, saw the bulk of this growth. However, while Cornwall's population growth ranked tenth highest among UK regions in the most recent 20 year period, strangely enough its housing growth was second highest, surpassed only by Lincolnshire. But in Lincolnshire population grew by 21.2% in this period, whereas in Cornwall growth was less, at 13.4%. **In Cornwall the number of houses built was therefore greater in proportion to its resident population than in other regions.**

Figure 3: Housing growth and population growth by region, 1991-2011

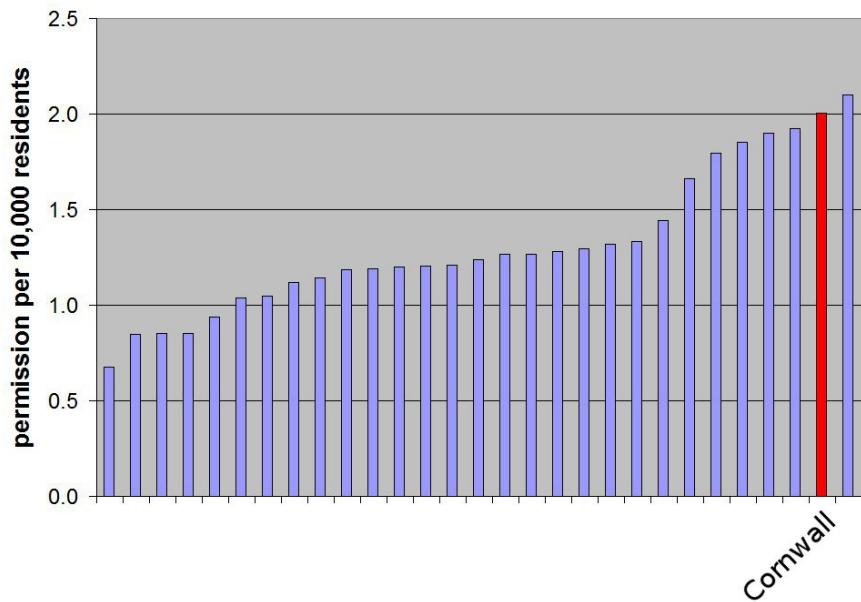


(Source: Census 1991 and 2011)

This is illustrated by the above scattergram. Cornwall appears as an outlier above the trend line, showing that the number of houses built relative to population was higher than the norm. Most regions cluster closer to the trend line, the principal exception being London.

A falling population growth rate since the 1980s should lead us to expect a falling rate of housebuilding. In contrast, many more houses seem to be being built in relation to our population than are being built in other regions. Current data inform us that Cornwall attracts a larger number of applications for 'major residential developments' (defined as developments of more than 10 houses) in relation to its resident population than other places. In the year ending September 2013 2.0 such applications were granted permission to build for every 10,000 resident population in Cornwall, compared with just 1.2 permissions for every 10,000 people in England. As its relative environmental attractiveness deteriorates, Cornwall may no longer be appealing to so many in-migrants but it attracts more than its fair share of developers.

Figure 4: Major residential planning applications granted in relation to population, English/Welsh regions, 2012/13

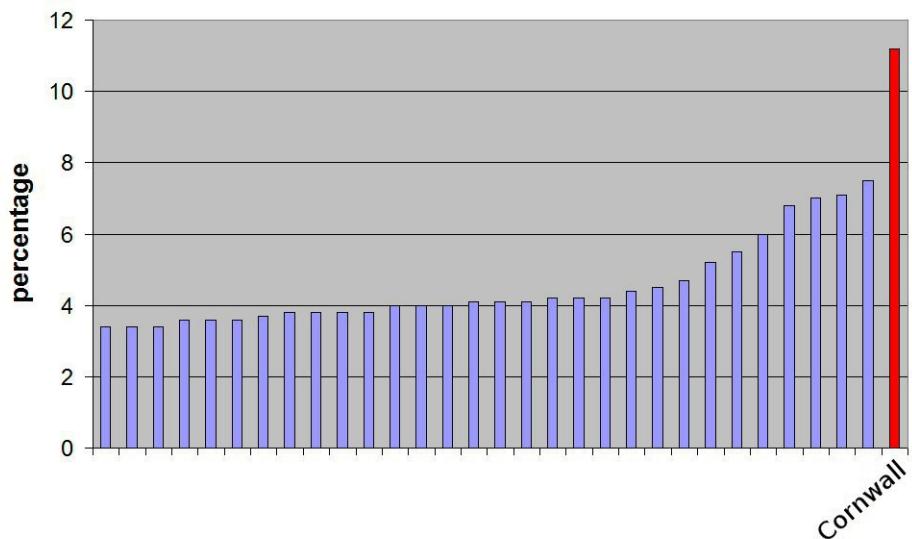


(Source: 2011 Census and DCLG (Department for Communities and Local Government) Live Table 136)

Only Cumbria had a higher rate of planning permissions for major housing developments in 2012-13 in relation to population. Cumbria shares with Cornwall a relatively high (though still well below the Cornish level) number of properties with no usual resident. This hints at one reason for the excess houses. The Cornish countryside has to cope with relatively higher development pressures not only because of need arising from its local communities, but to an extent because of demand from upcountry for second homes and holiday accommodation. Oddly, Cornwall Council spokespersons tend to highlight the local need but rarely volunteer information about the external demand.

Overall, housing growth in Cornwall is faster than anywhere else in the UK when related to the size of its population. Much of this is caused by demand from temporary residents for second homes and holiday lets.

Figure 5: Household spaces with no usual resident, English/Welsh regions, 2011

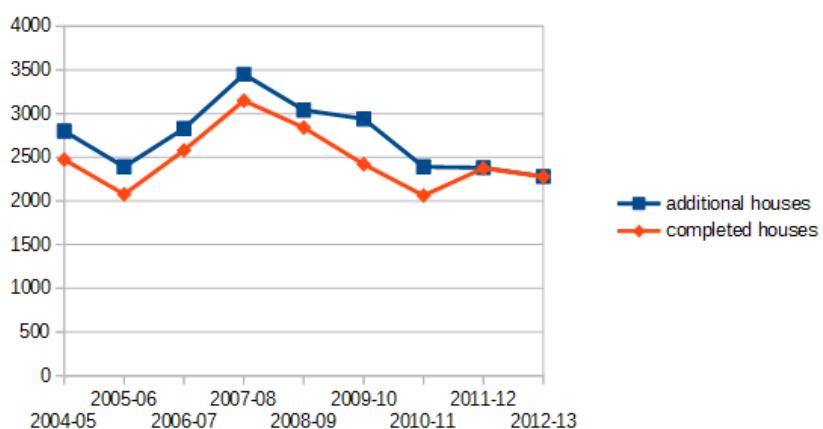


(Source: Census 2011)

The case of the missing houses

One might be forgiven for thinking that agreeing on the number of houses built over the past few years must be fairly easy. One would be mistaken. Take a look at the figure below which gives the annual number of additions to the Cornish housing stock according to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and the number of houses completed according to Cornwall Council.

Figure 6: Net additional houses and house completions, Cornwall 2004-12



(Source: DCLG Live Table 122; SHMNA, p.27; Cornwall Council Annual Monitoring Report 2012-13)

As we can see, DCLG data tell us that 24,500 dwellings were added to Cornwall's housing stock in the nine years from 2004 to 2012. Yet the *Strategic Housing Market Needs Assessment* (SHMNA), using data supplied from the Council's planners, informs us that the number of houses completed in these same years was 22,251. This discrepancy is explained by the number of extra dwellings produced by conversions, change of use and other factors. In 2012-13, according to the DCLG, 1,930 houses were added to Cornwall's stock as a result of 'new builds', but another net 350 came from conversions and change of use.³

This is a significant proportion but is nowhere mentioned in the Council's Local Plan documentation. There, the assumption is that all the calculated housing 'need' has to be met by new houses. But this is plainly not the case. If we extrapolate the difference between completions and additions to stock to a 20 year period to match the Local Plan period we might expect around 5,600 additional houses to be provided by conversions or change of use. This means that, if we accept for the moment the Council's assertion that we 'need' 47,500 houses, only 41,900 new houses actually have to be built. The rest will come from change of use etc. Alternatively, the Council is really planning to meet a 'need' for 53,100 houses rather than 47,500 but just not letting on. Incidentally, this neatly explains the otherwise puzzling discrepancy between Cornwall Council's Annual Monitoring Reports, written by its planning department, which tell us 42,106 houses were completed in the 20 years from 1990 to 2010 and the Census, where the increase in the stock of household spaces in the 20 years from 1991 to 2011 was 47,492, a considerably higher figure.

If all that wasn't confusing enough, we find that the number of new builds in 2012-13 according to the DCLG was 1,930 yet the number of 'completions' according to the Council was 2,375. Something or someone isn't adding up. If our collective brains haven't yet turned to soup, there's more. The DCLG's statistics for the number of 'permanent dwellings completed' give far lower totals than do the completions data supplied by Cornwall Council's planning department. Over the past five years the DCLG data ran at between 69% and 77% of the level reported by Cornwall Council.⁴ As the source of the DCLG statistics is supposed to be local planning authorities, it's difficult to explain this large anomaly. Moreover, this discrepancy between local authorities' own statistics of housing completions and DCLG totals is not confined to

Cornwall. This mystery suggests that official datasets are sometimes prone to inexplicable variation and are not quite the precise measurements they pretend to be. If we can't even be sure about how many houses are actually being built, claims about the numbers of houses that should be built based on DCLG statistics in particular need to be approached with a due degree of scepticism.

Councillors might do worse than to start asking their officers why change of use and conversions have been consistently ignored and why such discrepancies can be found between 'official' datasets.

And a lot more houses are on their way

What we can be certain about is that Cornwall Council's Local Plan target of 47,500 new houses by 2030 at a minimum suggests a business as usual approach. Despite the evidence presented above for a long-term, falling population growth trend Cornwall Council and the Tory/Lib Dem Government are clearly unwilling to take advantage of this to reduce the numbers of houses being built in Cornwall to a more reasonable level and slow down the high rate of urbanisation. Not only that; they appear hell-bent on reversing the falling population growth rate by encouraging the building of a lot more houses over the next 20 year period. Moreover, Cornwall's planners proudly state that 'in Cornwall ... development targets have consistently been met or exceeded'.⁵ Their 47,500 house target is therefore a minimum. Over the next 20 years, we can expect a continuation of the strategy of the past 50 years. This was one of directly or indirectly encouraging the expansion of the built environment and with it a relatively rapid rise of population.

In just two decades the equivalent of 4.2 Penzances, 5.1 Cambornes, 5.3 Truros or St Austells, 6.5 Saltashes or 10.7 Liskeards will have to be built. Our housing stock (and by implication our built-up area) will need to grow by at least 18.3%. **If that rate continues beyond the plan period, the built-up area doubles every 77 years.** Put another way, the urban area of Cornwall could double within the expected life span of someone born in Cornwall tomorrow.

In reality, some houses will be built on previously developed land and this will reduce the rate of urbanisation somewhat. However, the majority of housing on so-called

'brownfield' sites in Cornwall is actually built on re-vegetated land. Sites of former, demolished housing are few and far between, although old hotel sites are now being used for housing in places like Newquay and Falmouth, which no doubt accounts for some of the change of use noted above. Even so, new hotels are being built to replace them further inland, in the main on greenfield sites.

Why do we need to go on expanding the built-up area at such a rapid rate? Why are we continuing the growth strategy of the past 50 years?

Those in favour of a high growth strategy cite three explicit reasons why it is necessary to increase the rate of house building in Cornwall. They are ...

- to accommodate demographic change and population growth
- to provide more affordable housing
- to house the labour supply necessary to fill new jobs

But this is not the end of the story. For underlying this 'technical' rationale are deeper, socio-economic structural factors. These are rarely mentioned in planning documents but will be discussed after reviewing the three surface factors cited here.

2. 'Accommodating' demographic change or encouraging in-migration?

The first of the three-pronged technical justification for high housing growth comes in the shape of the 'need' to accommodate demographic change. There are two reasons why more houses are required. The first is if population increases. The second results from new households being formed from within the existing population. This in turn is triggered by social changes, such things as increased longevity (and more single pensioner households), young people leaving home earlier, or rising divorce rates and single parent households. Since the nineteenth century the mean size of households has steadily fallen. This means that the number of households has risen faster than the total number of people. If each household is separately housed then we can thus expect that the rate of housing growth will exceed the rate of population increase.

In this section I begin by describing how future population and household totals are predicted. I will test the recent record of these projections and show how in the 2000s they consistently exaggerated the actual growth that occurred. Focusing on population growth, I then establish the role of in-migration in Cornwall's demographic change. The difficulties of accurately predicting numbers of future in-migrants explains why, in the Cornish case, official projections are so faulty. I shall compare the most recent 'trend-based forecasts' with actual recent trends and show how the mismatch between these stretches credulity to breaking point. That done, I move onto the formation of new households. Official projections in this instance have been even more erroneous than for population, seriously over-estimating household growth in the 2000s. I shall show how the rather desperate attempts by planners to argue this slowdown in household formation was a temporary phenomenon of that decade are contradictory and confused.

Rigging the rules: 'objectively assessed need'

In 2012 the government produced its National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This aims to make 'the planning system work more efficiently and effectively'. The NPPF provides the 'core planning principles' that local planning authorities are supposed to work within. At its heart is a 'presumption in favour of sustainable development, which it describes as a 'golden thread running through both plan-

making and decision-taking'. To further this, planning authorities are told to meet the 'objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area'.⁶ To do that, they are required to produce a Strategic Housing Market Needs Assessment (SHMNA), which is supposed to establish 'new locally derived targets based on a thorough understanding of local housing need, demand and supply factors'.⁷

The honeyed words of the NPPF have been carefully crafted but in reality estimates of demand arising from demographic change are not 'locally derived' in the SHMNA at all, but calculated by external consultants and based on secondary 'official' data sources. Nonetheless, the SHMNA claims to provide a 'robust understanding' of needs even though it admits that 'no methodological approach or use of a particular dataset will result in a definitive assessment of housing need and demand'. Instead, it offers 'valuable insights'.⁸ These critical qualifications tend to be skated over by Cornwall Council's planners who assert that the SHMNA is 'vital in achieving the goal of meeting "objectively assessed need"'.⁹ Except that 'objectively assessed' in this case is about as far from 'objective' as we can possibly get.

Building houses on sand

Official projections of population and household change in Cornwall have consistently exaggerated the real growth. The SHMNA's demographic projection produces a minimum 47,300 house target, conveniently close to the 47,500 eventually adopted in the Council's draft Local Plan. However, the secondary analysis in the SHMNA is based on an uncritical acceptance of the population and household projections produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the Department for Communities and Local Government and the accuracy of its forecasts stand or fall on the quality of those projections.

Overall, the SHMNA contains a superficial analysis which lacks contextual reflection, makes elementary errors (for examples see pp. 15, 31, 39) and adopts some very questionable assumptions. Fundamentally, it fails to compare the ONS/DCLG projections with historic census data. Curiously, the SHMNA makes no effort to test the accuracy of recent projections. This could be very easily done by comparing past

ONS/DCLG projections for growth in the 2000s with the actual numbers of people and households recorded in the 2011 Census.

The following table compares the population growth forecast by the five ONS projections of the 2000s with the actual growth in that decade.

Table 1: The performance of ONS population projections, 2000s

base year	forecast population 2011	forecast growth 2001- 11	actual growth 2001-11	% overestimate
2003	548,000	47,000	32,000	47
2004	552,000	51,000	32,000	59
2006	555,000	54,000	32,000	69
2008	542,000	41,000	32,000	28
2010	541,000	40,000	32,000	25

(Source: ONS sub-national population projections and Census 2011)

Every single projection made in the 2000s over-estimated Cornwall's real growth. The level of inaccuracy peaked in 2006, but even in 2010, a year before the census, the ONS inflated Cornwall's recorded growth by a massive 25%. The key element here is the discrepancy in the forecast growth rather than the actual total, as the former is the basis of the supposed 'need' that housing targets have to meet. On the basis of its projections, the SHMNA predicts a need of 47,300 houses to 'accommodate' the expected extra population. But if we allow for its consistent tendency to inflate growth, and continue to accept trend-based projections, the 'need' is reduced, pro rata, to 35,500, even on the most accurate ONS projection. This is a considerable difference.

In practice the government defines 'objectively assessed need' even more narrowly. Their key 'test of soundness' has become the DCLG household projections, which are used as a 'proxy measure for objectively assessed need' and 'the benchmark against which examiners will assess housing requirements'.¹⁰ So have DCLG household projections been any more accurate than ONS projections?

Table 2: The performance of DCLG household projections, 2000s

base year	forecast households 2011	forecast growth 2001- 11	actual growth 2001-11	% overestimate
2004	249,000	33,000	16,000	106
2006	249,000	33,000	16,000	106
2008	240,000	26,000	16,000	63

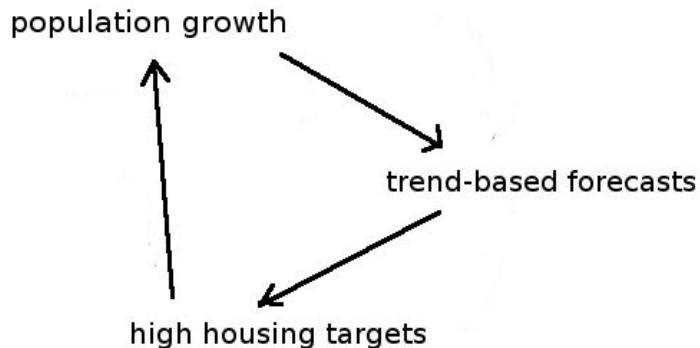
(Source: DCLG household projections, DCLG Table 406, and Census 2011)

The answer is clearly no. In the 2000s they were even more wildly inaccurate. As with the population forecasts, these consistently overestimated Cornwall's household growth, by an even greater margin than the population projections. If we were to revise the SHMNA target and allow for this tendency to grossly inflate future household growth in Cornwall, the housing total would have to be reduced further still to 29,800.

In passing, the SHMNA briefly notes the discrepancy between ONS forecasts and projections on the one hand and the actual outcome on the other. The 2011 Census showed that 'the population had not grown to the extent anticipated through the most up-to-date official sub-national population projections (2010 base)'. Yet this intrusion of reality is short-lived. The SHMNA hurriedly moves on to assert that official projections have 'improved'.¹¹ Meanwhile, Cornwall Council's planners admit the census data show an 'apparent slowdown in population and households'.¹² The word 'apparent' suggests the census somehow contains a provisional conclusion and that it may turn out to be wrong. This is relegated to a cautionary note while Cornwall Council is 'looking to better understand it'. In the meantime, they continue to accept the official projections, however faulty they have proved in the past, as 'robust evidence' for the future.

Councillors might start to ask their planning officers how such inaccurate projections can continue to be the basis of future planning and why they stubbornly persist in describing this as 'robust evidence', when its record of accuracy has been so astonishingly poor.

We can begin to see how we are locked into a vicious circle of housing and population growth.



Moreover, recently this circle has been given an extra spin by the exaggeration built into trend-based forecasts.

Rather than investigating why the past performance of projections has been so poor, the Council states that trend-based population projections 'can lead to over or under estimates of future population change'.¹³ This is curious because, as we have seen, since 2003 eight projections have produced eight overestimates. Let's repeat that so I'm not misunderstood. That's eight overestimates and not one underestimate. Instead of falsely implying that trend-based projections have led to under-estimations, one might have expected Cornwall's planners to have rigorously pursued the reasons for the consistent recent tendency to over-estimate growth in Cornwall. That way, a better model might have been created that more properly reflects trend-based growth in Cornwall. Such a model could provide the basis for a more accurate assessment of demographic needs even within the narrow, technical limits within which the housing and planning debate is imprisoned.

The SHMNA's procedure for projecting demographic change is identical to that used by the ONS and DCLG to create their projections. As the latter consistently overestimate Cornwall's growth to produce an unnecessarily high housing target, then it is hardly a surprise that the SHMNA does likewise. This self-referential and circular methodology contains a basic problem. If the input data - the official projections - are so obviously unsound, then the outputs, however complicated the software, become nonsensical and not fit for purpose.

The role of in-migration in population and household growth

In order to explain why all of the eight population and household projections so massively over-stated growth in Cornwall in the 2000s we must reflect on how population changes. This is the result of two factors; the difference between the number of births and deaths (natural change) and the difference between the number of people leaving and arriving (net migration). The latter are often divided into ‘internal’ migrants, those who move within the UK, and ‘international’ migrants, those who cross state borders.

The number of expected births and deaths (fertility and mortality) is fairly easily calculated, at least in the short term, as these variables change only slowly. On the other hand, accurately measuring migration is a difficult art. Projections for migration turn out to be culled from a mixture of trend observation (the trend being limited to just five years) and ‘expert opinion’.¹⁴ In other words, the migration projections in practice are not ‘objective’ at all, but to a degree subjective, based on the opinion, or speculation, of specialists in the field.

This becomes more critical when the components of population change in Cornwall are broken down. Natural change is relatively unimportant. In the early 2000s this actually produced a net decline as there were around 1,200 to 1,400 more deaths than births in Cornwall every year. But, since 2005, the rate of natural decline has fallen. By 2011 the former pattern had reversed and there was a net increase of 196 due to natural change. However, in 2012 that reverted again to a natural decline of 168. Incidentally, predictions of likely natural change can also be inaccurate. For example, the planners confidently stated in 2013 that the 2011 based projections ‘also indicate that natural change is predicted to remain positive throughout the next ten year period’. But in 2011-12 natural change turned out to be negative again. Moreover, this was something that was actually noted earlier in the same report!¹⁵

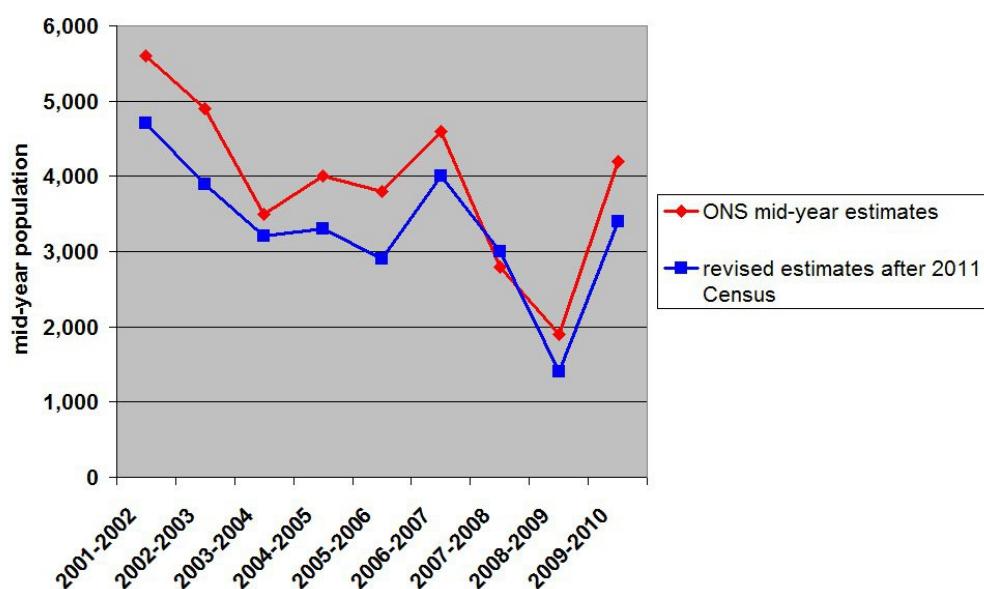
With natural change currently contributing only hundreds either way to the total, the Council admits that ‘migration is the single greatest driver of population change’.¹⁶ The SHMNA agrees, stating that ‘internal net migration has played a significant part in driving population growth over the past decade’.¹⁷ This is an understatement.

Internal migration accounted for all the population growth in Cornwall over the past ten years and is likely to do so again over the next ten.

Given the dominance of migration, estimates of future migration levels become critical when projecting future population growth. The SHMNA assumes a ‘strong flow of net in-migration’ will continue. It claims that a trend-based projection based on the last five years indicates that net internal migration in the 2010s will start at 4,700 a year before rising steadily to over 5,000 in the 2020s.¹⁸ This is a debatable assumption. Already, when we compare the ONS net migration figure for the year ending June 2012 with the SHMNA forecast, we again find the latter wanting. While the SHMNA projected a 4,700 net growth, the actual net migration according to the ONS was 3,800. Yet again we see that the projection overestimated actual net migration by around 20%.

Continuing inconsistencies between forecast and actual migration underlie the consistently poor performance of ONS projections for Cornwall’s population growth. It also explains why the annual ONS mid year estimates for the Cornish population produced throughout the 2000s were inaccurate.

Figure 7: ONS mid year estimates, original and revised



(Source: ONS mid-year estimates, cited in Peter Brett Associates, *Housing requirement for Cornwall*, 2012, 7 and ONS, revised annual mid-year population estimates, 2001-2010, 2013)

Steadily overestimating annual population growth, by the end of the 2000s the ONS had added a small town of almost 5,000, or over 15%, to the actual growth in population. This is most likely to relate to faulty migration projections. Indeed, it's strange that the ONS and the SHMNA both predict a net in-migration of 4,700 or more a year, supposedly on the basis of the most recent five-year trends, when the trends themselves point to a far lower figure.

Table 3: Recent five-year demographic trends

five-year periods	annual change			
	natural	internal migration	international migration	total
2002-06	-1,231	+ 6,101	- 134	+ 4,736
2007-11	- 384	+ 4,389	+ 302	+ 4,307
2008-12	- 276	+ 4,114	+ 246	+ 4,084

(Source: ONS, annual mid-year sub-national population estimates, 2001-2012)

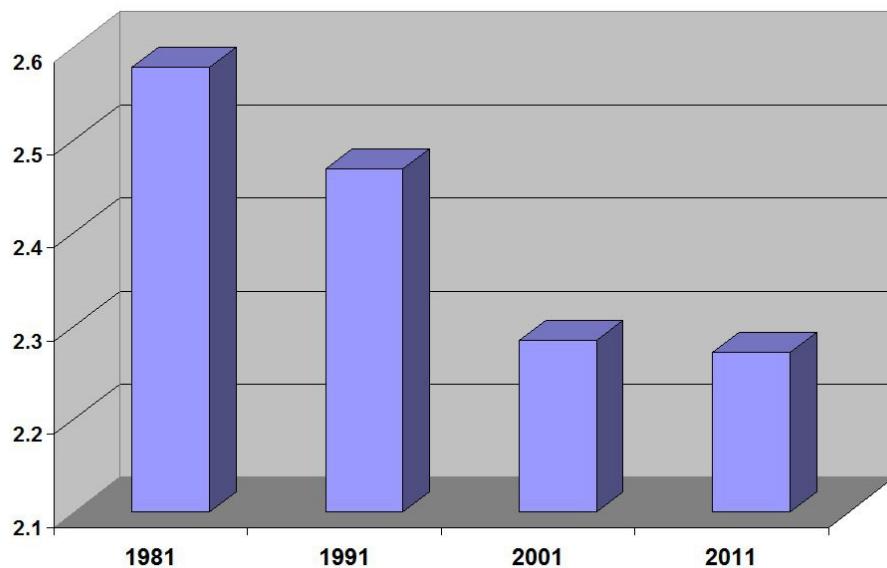
The 2011-based ONS projections in fact assume an annual population growth for 2012-16 of 5,221, which seems a rather abrupt increase on the most recent five-year trend figure of 4,084.

Overestimating the number of new households

Given the role of migration in Cornwall's population growth, the bulk, if not all, of net additional households result from people moving to Cornwall. Yet, even if population were stable there would still be an increase in the number of households, and therefore a need for some more housing, as noted at the beginning of this section.

In the 2000s demographers were surprised by a sudden slowdown in the fall in mean household size across the UK. Closer to home, in Cornwall mean household size was virtually stable, falling only from 2.285 to 2.272. In the long run of course, the fall in mean household size is bound to slow down and eventually stop, as it can go no lower than one. In practice it will remain a lot higher as most infants and children are hardly going to be left to fend for themselves in single person households and are always going to be brought up in households with at least one adult present. Significantly enough however, the slowdown in the 2000s was unanticipated in the DCLG household projections.

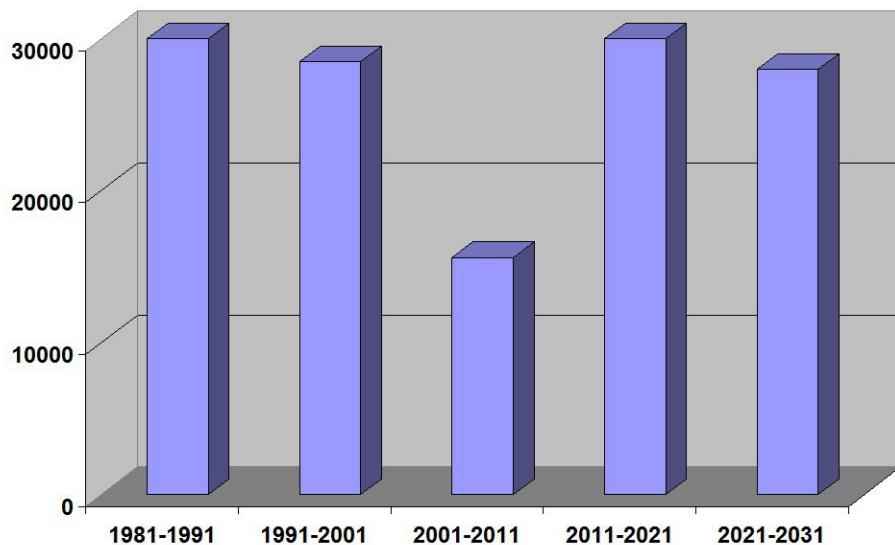
Figure 8: Mean household size in Cornwall, 1981-2011



(Source: Census, 1981-2011)

Both the SHMNA and Cornwall Council's planners claim that the slowdown in household formation in the 2000s was a result of the economic recession since 2007 and 'the context of prevailing market and economic conditions' when 'many households have been unable to form during this period'. Somewhat conveniently therefore for the argument that we 'need' a lot more houses, the slowdown in the fall in household size since the 1990s is rejected as evidence for a fall in the long-term rate of decline of household size. Despite their unquestioned acceptance of trend-based estimates elsewhere, Cornwall Council's consultants, echoing a broader panic among planners up and down Britain, bluntly state that, on the contrary, this 'does not provide an indication of the propensity or likeliness [sic] of households to form in the future'.¹⁹ They go further. They note that projections based on five year trends are now 'projecting forward a "recessionary" trend' which 'may lead to concealed households not being catered for'. They prefer instead to adopt the 2008-base household projections which forecast a return to much higher former growth rates and 58,000 more households in the 20 years between 2010 and 2030.²⁰

Figure 9: Number of households in Cornwall, 1991-2031 (actual and projected)



(Source: Census 1991-2011 and DCLG 2008-based household projection.)

A closer analysis of household change in the 2000s suggests the assumption that the slowdown was merely a temporary result of the recession cannot be borne out. In the 1990s the number of households in Cornwall grew by 28,500, or an average of 2,850 a year. In the 2000s this fell to 15,600. We know that net inward internal migration was high in the early 2000s, averaging almost 6,000 a year. This suggests that the rate of household formation in the pre-recession years must have remained at least at the rate of the 1990s, if the long-term trend of household size was continuing downwards as the SHMNA and planners assume. If that were so, then in those six years at least 17,100 net new households must have been formed. But on that basis the later four years of recession must have reduced the number of households by 1,500, producing an absolute fall. This is extremely unlikely as, despite the recession, net in-migration in those four years remained around 4,000 a year. In addition, the natural decline was 1,000 fewer in those years, thus necessitating more, not fewer, households. This has to mean that the rate of net household formation in the early 2000s was a lot lower than 2,850 a year to allow for some continuing growth in the recession years. The slowdown in household formation cannot possibly be entirely the result of the recession but must have set in before 2007. (Indeed, the rise in fertility associated with the rising birth rate may explain some of the slowdown in the fall in household size.)

Now you see it, now you don't. How to transform a long-term falling trend of population growth into a rising rate of population growth in the 2010s

As we have seen, ONS and DCLG projections are far from being ‘robust’ assessments of ‘objective’ need. In fact, they are subject to a substantial margin of error. In practice, the words ‘robust’ and ‘objective’ are just rhetorical devices to justify the methodology, not a description grounded in evidence. Comparison with census data shows that projections invariably over-estimated Cornwall’s population and household growth in the past ten years. The consistency of this means that it’s most likely to be the result of structural shortcomings. The puzzle is why Cornwall’s planners persist in arguing that such flawed datasets provide the only ‘defensible’ evidence. The Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research advises local planning authorities to plan on the basis of official projections ‘unless there is strong local evidence to the contrary’.²¹ In Cornwall there is strong local evidence to the contrary but it’s ignored.

Let’s sum up. If the most recent 2011-based projected levels of population and household growth for the next ten years are compared with those of the last three ten year periods we can see that they look unlikely, even on a superficial level. Moreover, we’re told the 2011 projections are based on the five year trend of the recession years, so they ought to be artificially low.

Table 4: Change in households and population, 1981-2021

	1981-91 (thousands)	1991-2001 (thousands)	2001-11 (thousands)	projected 2011-21 (thousands)
Households	31	29	16	24
Population	45	31	32	51

(Source: Census, 1981-2011 and ONS/DCLG 2011-based projections)

These projections are just not credible. We are seriously being asked to believe that population will suddenly grow over the next decade at a faster rate even than during the 1980s. Meanwhile, household growth will reverse recent trends and grow at a rate 50% higher than in the 2000s. Even allowing for a temporary reduction in the rate of natural decline, the projections are not believable, given that the longer term trend in the rate of both population and household growth since the 1980s in Cornwall has

been downwards. The more cynical among us may even view them as either wishful thinking or deliberate misapplication.

The net result of inaccurate projections and a blunt refusal to accept the evidence of the census is that the planners have proved, to their own satisfaction at least, that over the next 20 years the rate of housing and population growth in Cornwall must remain at least as high as it's been in the previous 20 years and preferably higher. Because they ignore changes of use and conversions and set their faces against accepting the likelihood of lower household formation figures, they plan for a large increase in housebuilding and population growth, and therefore migration. As I shall argue in the next section, planning for a larger in-migration than might be expected on the basis of past trends is to some extent a self-fulfilling prophecy. This is because housebuilding does not merely react to in-migration; housebuilders actively encourage in-migration. Put another way, supply does not simply react to demand; supply creates its own demand. In order to pursue this further, we next have to investigate how the market actually works in Cornwall and what effect this has on housing supply, migration and local people's access to housing.

3. Concentrate on the quantity, ignore the quality. The market and unaffordability

I have suggested that relatively high rates of housebuilding in Cornwall are being justified partly on the basis of flawed projections of the growth in the number of people and households. Yet this is only the first of three ways in which the planners seek to convince us we must build more houses and speed up the process of urbanising our land. The second weapon they deploy is the problem of affordability. The only way to solve this is, they claim, by building more houses. Unfortunately for them their case is undermined by the failure to understand how the market works in practice and how it has especially negative effects on Cornish communities and Cornwall more generally.

This section begins by establishing what is meant by affordability. I then argue that, far from solving our affordability crisis, building thousands of unaffordable houses and encouraging more in-migration and second home ownership makes the problem worse not better. In part, this is a result of the way the market operates, with Cornish houses aggressively sold to upcountry buyers seeking 'lifestyle Cornwall'. Turning to the specific provision of affordable housing, I examine the planners' claims of housing need. While market failure condemns a growing proportion of the population to difficulties when accessing decent housing, planners have assiduously exaggerated this need in order to facilitate development proposals which contain large numbers of unaffordable housing. This is particularly stark in relation to the misuse of the Home Choice register. If the Home Choice register is a good way to multiply present levels of need, the SHMNA uses extremely questionable assumptions to ramp up the future need for affordable housing. All in all, affordability becomes a convenient tool cynically wielded by developers and planners to legitimise housebuilding and induce guilt among campaigners for a more sustainable Cornwall.

Defining affordability

Planning documents assert that a higher number of houses must be built to meet the 'development needs of the area' or 'the needs of present and future generations'. The implication is that somehow such 'needs' arise directly from the communities currently residing in the housing market areas concerned. But, as we have discovered,

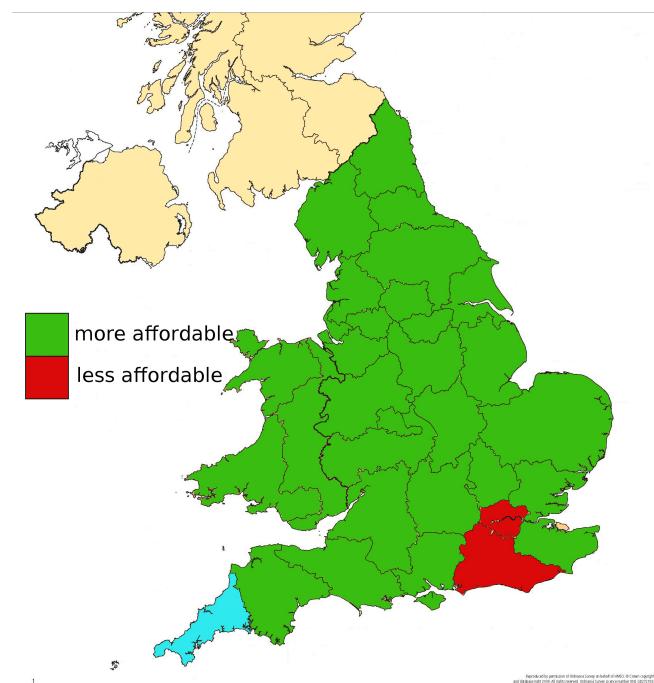
in Cornwall they do not. While the ‘objective’ assessments turn out to be inaccurate and structurally unsound, the needs ‘of the housing market area’ in practice means the needs of future migrants to this market area. This aspect is hardly made transparent. Instead, planning documents and the Local Plan work hard to portray the distinct impression that ‘need’ arises locally rather than almost entirely from migration.

The one area where local needs are explicitly identified with housing provision is that of affordable housing. Households in need of affordable housing are defined as those ‘who lack their own housing or live in unsuitable housing and who cannot afford to meet their needs in the open market’.²² This is not an insubstantial or marginal group. DCLG guidance on affordability suggests that houses are ‘affordable’ to buy if they are less than 3.5 times annual household income. Houses are ‘affordable’ to rent if they cost no more than 25% of income.

Using the DCLG measure of affordability, (the ratio of lower quartile house prices to lower quartile earnings), in 2012 Cornwall was less affordable than all English and Welsh regions except London and Surrey/Sussex (see Map 1 below). Moreover, the affordability ratio had worsened more from 2000 to 2012 in Cornwall than in any region apart from East Yorkshire/North Lincolnshire.

In Cornwall, the 35% of households with a gross income of £15,000 or less, and who therefore can only afford a house priced at £52,500 or £312 a month to rent, clearly have a limited market choice. In order to buy even a lower quartile house in Cornwall a household income of £37,273 is required. Renting a two-bedroom property needs an income of £25,680. High prices combined with low wages means that perhaps half of households in Cornwall cannot afford to buy or rent a house on the open market. The SHMNA estimates that this proportion amounts to more than half - 54% - of all new households.²³

Map 1: Affordability in English and Welsh regions compared with Cornwall, 2012



(Source: DCLG Live Table 576)

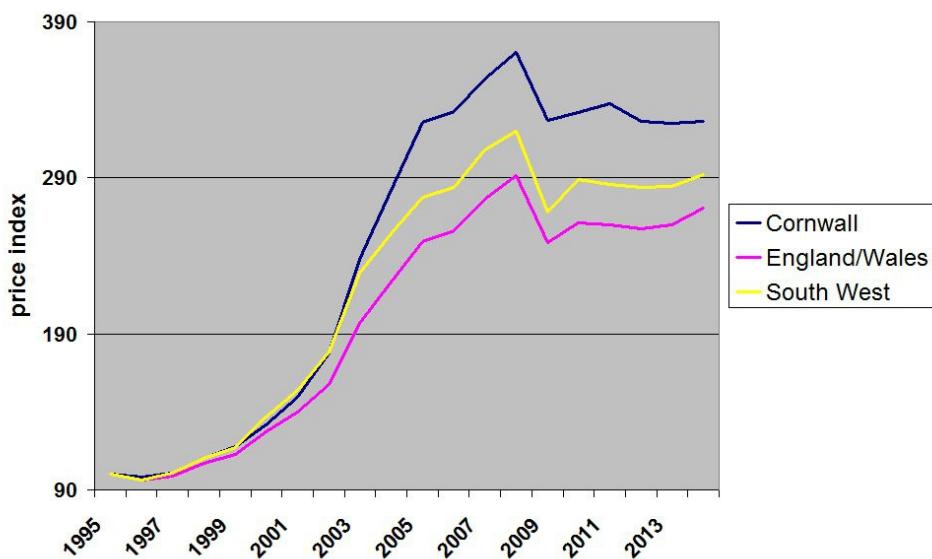
In a rational society most observers might interpret a state of affairs where half of new households cannot access a basic human need for decent shelter as an indictment of the allocation system, a clear example of market failure and an urgent signal to erect a better system. However, from a dominant neo-liberal ideology which insists the market has to be the principal allocation method, the problem of affordability has to be solved within the confines of that market-led system. The obvious alternative - transferring resources to invest in the subsidised provision of socialised housing - is ruled out by ideology and dogma.

How the way the market works exacerbates problems of affordability for Cornish communities

Market signals, in the form of the price of housing, have taken on a talismanic role. DCLG guidance from 2007 told local planning authorities to treat house price change as a 'direct indicator in relation to the supply and demand balance'. The SHMNA admits that 'this formula is overly simplistic and in reality house price levels are influenced by a complexity of factors', not the least of which is mortgage availability.²⁴ Drawing out the lessons from price changes is not easy. The data are

contradictory and the conclusions confusing. On page 89 of the SHMNA, it is claimed that Cornwall has 'tracked the national average house prices very closely since 1996'. if so,. This would suggest an exceedingly high demand. Despite building more houses in relation to population than elsewhere, demand for property in Cornwall kept up with supply. And yet detailed Land Registry data show a different picture.

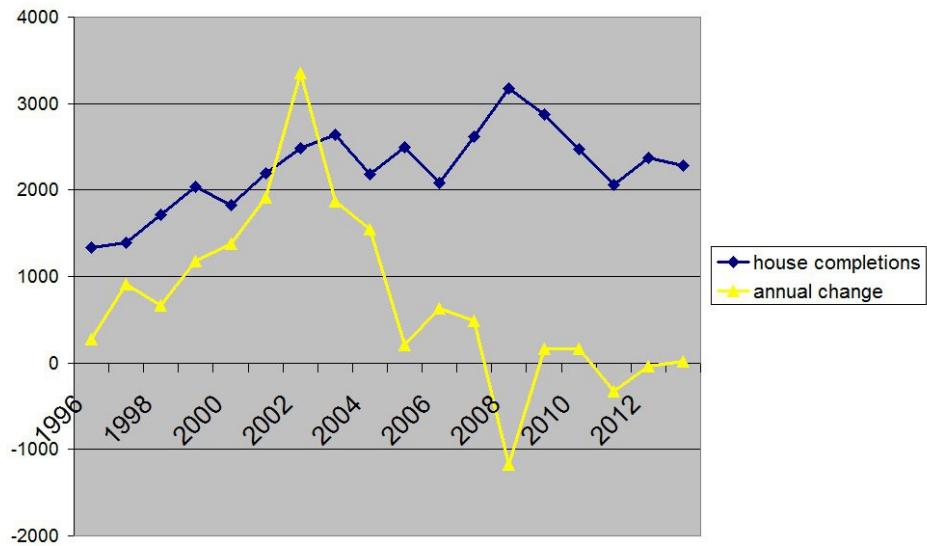
Figure 10: Change in house prices, 1995-2013



(Source: Land Registry)

House prices in Cornwall rose much faster than in England and Wales in the first half of the 2000s. After 2006 price changes converged back onto the general level. If we were to adopt a simplistic view of prices as signals of over or under provision of housing this might imply that in relative terms supply has held up well in Cornwall since 2008, whereas it lagged well behind demand in the years between 2001 and 2005. Yet, if we compare this with new house completions we can see there is little relationship between the supply of new houses and price changes. This is hardly surprising as new houses add just 1% a year to existing stock and account for a minority - something under 15% - of sales. Moreover, it disregards the warning from the SHMNA that house prices and market 'signals' are only a very rough and ready guide to effective demand (that is demand backed up by financial resources) and in any case tell us little or nothing about 'need', which is different from demand.

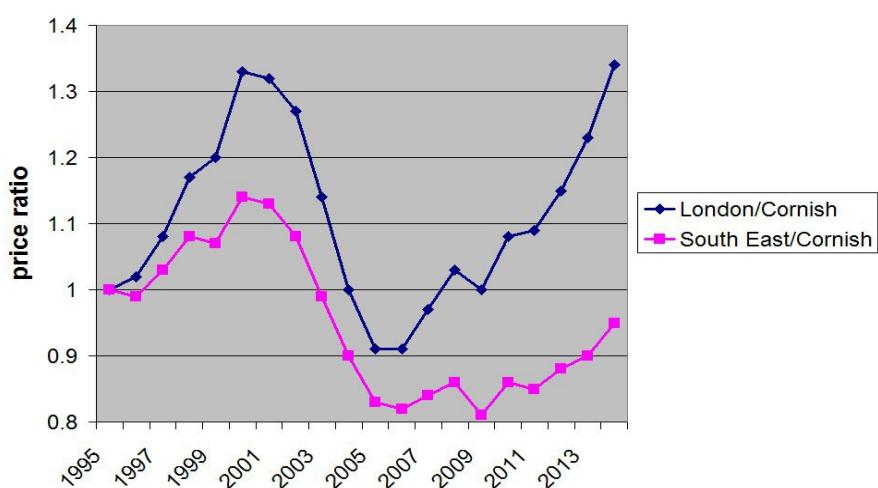
Figure 11: Housing completions and price changes, Cornwall 1995-2013



(Source: Land Registry and Cornwall Council Annual Monitoring Reports)

There is a hint in the data that prices in the open market in Cornwall in the early to mid 2000s were reacting to changes in the London market, with a lag of a few years. This fits the qualitative impression. For instance, a developer interviewed in the SHMNA was active in Lostwithiel because it had a 'direct train link to London Paddington'.²⁵ However, this relationship has become less clear since the mid-2000s.

Figure 12: Ratio of London and Cornish house prices, 1995-2013



(source: Land Registry)

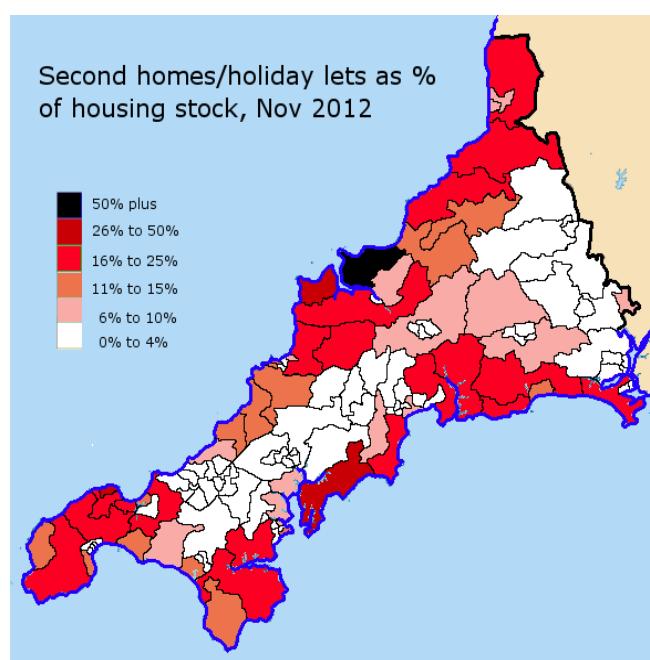
The boom in London prices that began in 2006 failed to trigger an echoing response in Cornwall. The association may be more directly between Cornish prices and the

wider South East region, from where the majority of migrants to Cornwall originate. Cornish houses became less affordable in relation to the South East from 2002 to 2005. In 2013 they were still less affordable than in the period 1995-2002. However, the ratio of Cornish prices to prices in the South East has been creeping up again since 2009. In the early 2000s a peak in net in-migration accompanied a house price bubble in Cornwall which was preceded by a rise in this ratio. The data suggest we could be on the verge of another such bubble, which would make the problem of affordability even worse, as it would push up house prices faster than incomes, not that difficult as real wages have been falling since 2008.

However, there are deeper problems with using prices as indicators of need. Planners assume there is a series of segmented housing markets in Cornwall. There are 'affluent and desirable' areas such as 'Truro, Penryn, Fowey, Mevagissey, St Agnes and the coast'. There are 'less desirable' areas such as 'Bugle, St Stephen, Nanpean, Camborne and parts of Redruth'.²⁶ The assumption is that these are somehow unconnected.

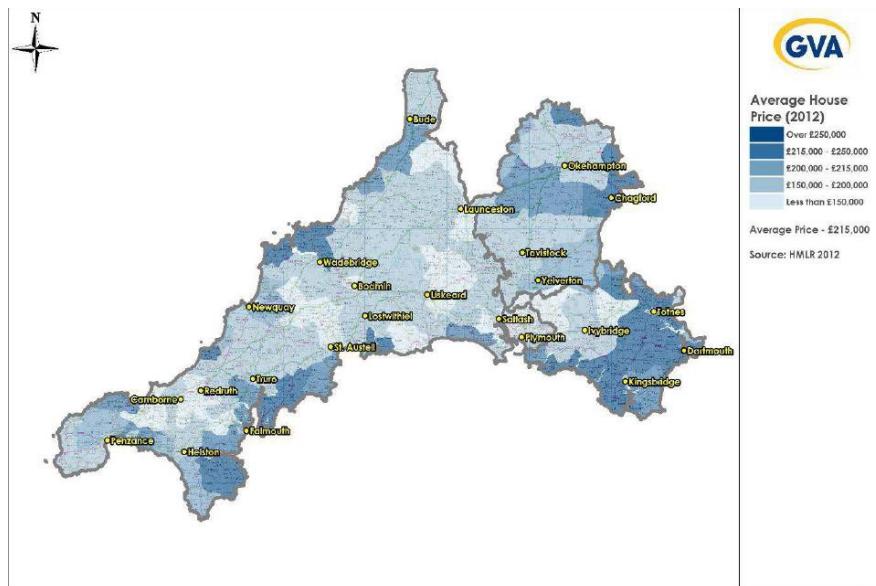
As the following maps indicate, there is a clear relationship between levels of second home ownership and house prices.

Map 2: Second homes, Cornwall 2012



(Source: Cornwall Council)

Map 3: House prices, Cornwall and south west Devon



(Source: SHMNA, p.91)

‘In higher value areas prices are pushed up by the budgets of affluent second home owners’.²⁷ Cornwall’s planners conclude that in parishes where a third or more of the houses are second homes, prices are 87% above the Cornish average. When second home ownership is from 20-30%, prices are 46% higher, when 10-20%, 23% higher. But the existence of hotspots has an effect on all prices, rippling out from second home parishes to inland Cornwall and pushing up the general average. This is exactly the same phenomenon as that visible more generally, when London prices, bid up by asset speculation, a small elite of foreign and home-grown investors and a very highly paid banking sector, ripple out across the south of England.

Peddling market myths

A further questionable assumption that often lies behind analyses of the housing market and its relationship to new dwellings is that supply responds solely to demand. In reality, markets are places where supply interacts with demand. Demand is not the invariably independent variable and supply always the dependent variable. Supply can and does create its own demand. The marketing strategies of the volume house builders and estate agents active in Cornwall make this patently obvious.

Adverts for housing that include text such as the following are not aimed at a Cornish market: 'the Cathedral city of Truro ... has a wide range of national and independent retailers, a superb choice of places to eat out. ... This is a wonderful location with the beautiful Cornish coastline never far away with many seaside villages and towns to explore and stunning coastal scenery nearby. The world famous 'Bodmin Moor' is a fabulous place to explore and take in its wild beauty ... The city of Truro is ideally situated just off the A30 dual carriageway giving easy access to the city of Exeter and the M5'.²⁸ Neither are explicit sales events such as Stags estate agents' 'Move to the country show' held in London on March 27th, 2014.²⁹

Instead, these things are designed to sell houses to a particular market. That market is found not in Cornwall, where people do not need to be told, or rather misinformed, where Truro is, but in south-east England. Demand is potentially huge, fuelled by an image of 'lifestyle Cornwall' and facilitated by price differentials between the south-east and Cornwall. New housing supply creates its own demand, something occasionally recognised in statements such as 'future population growth will generally be facilitated by new housing development'.³⁰ But this relationship is more normally reversed or has a discreet veil drawn over it, something not fit for discussion in polite (planners') circles.

Cornwall Council's planners insist that 'planning can play a role in helping to keep house prices stable by ensuring that there is a good supply of housing coming forward'.³¹ In practice, house prices, when measured against the general price index, have been anything but 'stable' since the 1980s. Underlying this claim is a touching faith that price rises in Cornwall can in some manner be stabilised simply by increasing the supply of houses built in Cornwall. The implication is that merely increasing the quantity of houses can reduce problems of affordability.

In addition to the assumption that increasing supply does not affect demand, this argument contains two further flaws. First, there is no evidence that the affordability ratio is affected by the quantity of houses built. Indeed, if we compare the growth in the housing stock and affordability at the regional level we find no correlation at all. (The correlation coefficient is actually -0.066, which suggests no correlation or, if

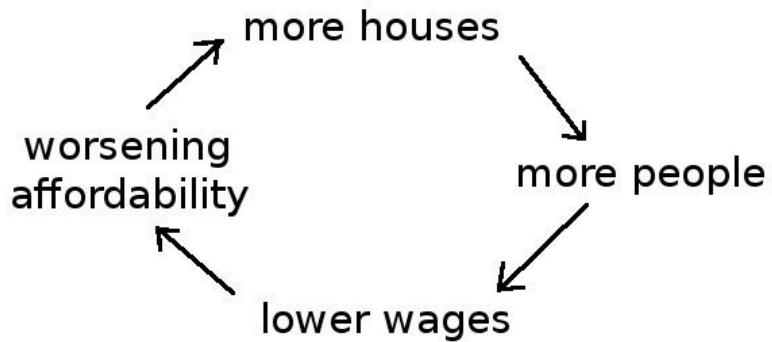
anything, a very slight association between growth in houses and rising unaffordability.)

Second, the number of houses that would be needed to have a perceptible effect on prices is very high, even on the very questionable assumption that increasing supply has no effect on demand. A formula for housing affordability supplied by the National Housing and Planning Advisory Unit suggested that, in order to keep house prices down to an annual increase of less than 2% in England, 70,000 more houses a year were needed.³² Applying this to Cornwall, council planners estimated it would mean a target of 69,920 to 79,360 houses over the next 20 years, almost double the historic rate.

In fact, it's extremely doubtful whether even such a total would guarantee stable house prices given the level of new potential demand that increasing supply on this scale would create. Here's another curious thing. The implied increase of 2,000 to 2,500 houses a year over the current target in Cornwall equates to 2.9% to 3.6% of the overall target of 70,000. But Cornwall's population is less than 1% of that of England and its land area only 2.7% of the total. The implications of meeting market demand in order to keep the price of unaffordable houses relatively 'low' are therefore that the communities and environment of Cornwall have to pay a disproportionate price.

In the real world, there is little evidence that a general under-supply of housing is the cause of worsening affordability. Such assertions fail to differentiate between types of housing. Total supply, including houses sold to 'those who can afford to purchase one or more properties',³³ has a tenuous relationship with affordability. Under-supply certainly exists, but it's an under-supply of the right kind of houses at the right price. Building more and more houses, which are promptly sold to relatively affluent buyers from south east England, is completely irrelevant to the aim of improving affordability. As the planners recognise, 'the draw of Cornwall in terms of its offer and attractiveness is a significant factor in population growth'.³⁴ In fact, an over-supply that encourages more migration ends up depressing wage levels even further and thereby worsening affordability.

Focusing on the overall housing target in this naive way merely locks us into another vicious circle.



It may be counter-intuitive but in fact worsening affordability problems are not caused by under-providing housing but by over-providing open market housing

Exaggerating the need for affordable housing

'Mainstream' analyses of Cornish housing markets and the relationship between demand, supply and prices are ultimately unconvincing because of questionable assumptions. But when we turn to need, the problems again lie in faulty data. The ambiguity of the price evidence doesn't stop Cornwall Council's planners asserting that Cornwall has experienced 'the consequences of a prolonged under-provision of housing'.³⁵ Apparently, despite building many more houses in Cornwall in relation to its resident population than anywhere else in the UK, we are still 'under-provided'!

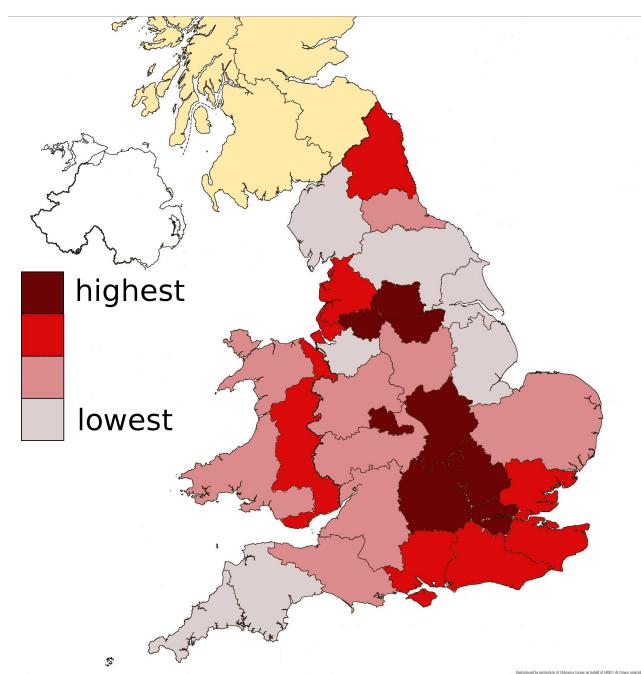
A vaguely defined 'under-provision' is then used to 'explain' why the rate of household formation fell in the 2000s. 'In areas such as Cornwall it is likely that household formation rates may have been suppressed in the last ten or fifteen years by an under supply of housing and worsening affordability'.³⁶ This of course contradicts those other claims assessed earlier that the backlog of housing need is purely the result of 'the recession'. It also ignores the fact that the **worsening of affordability occurred in the period 2000 to 2006, precisely when in-migration was at its peak and the number of houses being built was rising and not falling.**

Planners cite three measures of housing need. They are

- overcrowding
- homelessness
- concealed households

If housing stress were particularly bad in Cornwall in relative terms with a long-term under-provision of housing, then we should expect levels of overcrowding to be rising and to be worse than elsewhere. In fact, if we take the ONS definition of overcrowding, as an occupancy rating of -1 bedrooms or less, we actually find that in Cornwall 2.6% households were living in overcrowded conditions in 2011, compared with 4.8% in England and Wales.³⁷ A comparison of occupancy ratings in the 2001 and 2011 Censuses shows that overcrowding fell everywhere in England and Cornwall, even in London. This might raise some doubts about these statistics, or on the other hand may suggest there was no widespread under-provision of housing in the 2000s. Relatively, Cornwall is one of the regions with the least overcrowding, as the following map shows.

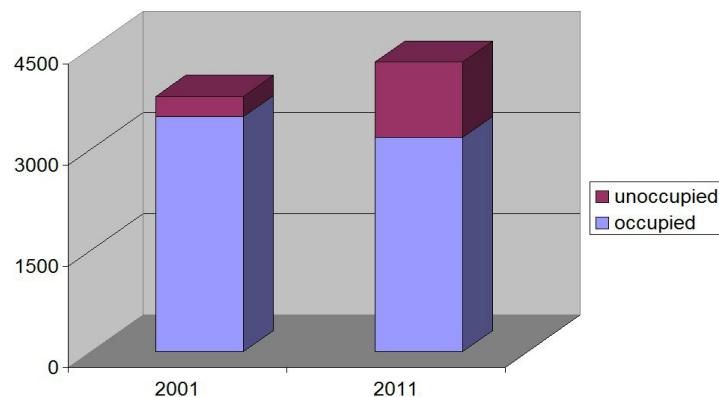
Map 4: Comparative occupancy rates by region: England, Wales and Cornwall 2011



(Source, Census 2011, KS403EW)

Cornwall Council's planners have also claimed that homelessness is indicated by the number of households who live in caravans. In Cornwall this runs at twice the national average.³⁸ Yet, if we compare the number of caravans in 2001 and 2011, we find that there was a rise in the number of caravans with no permanent occupants but a fall in the number of those with permanent residents. If anything, this is evidence for an improving housing situation rather than growing housing stress.

Figure 13: Caravans in Cornwall, 2001-11

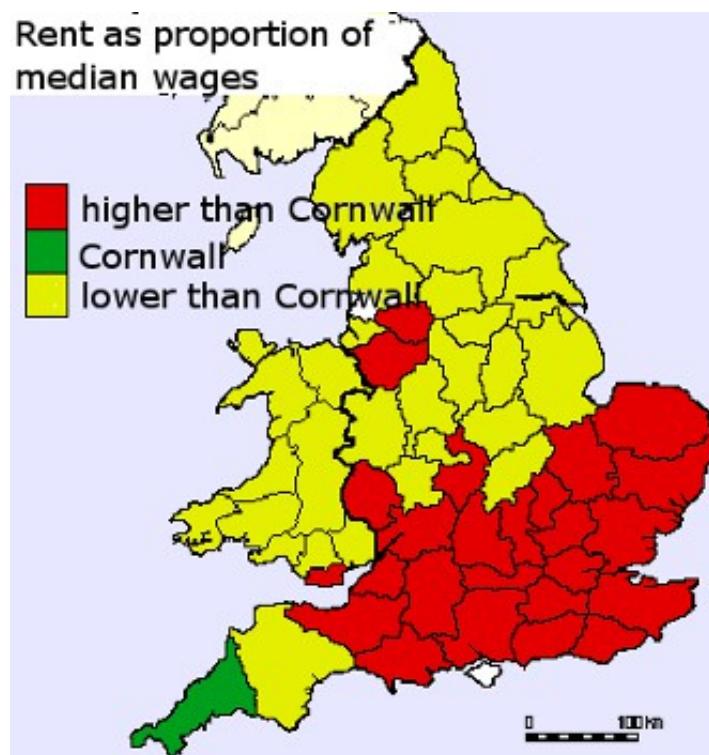


(Source: Census 2001 and 2011)

The proportion of 'concealed families' (those sharing a dwelling with other families) in the 2011 Census was, on the other hand, higher in Cornwall than the average. In Cornwall 1.73% of families were 'concealed', compared with a regional median of 1.42%. Nevertheless, this was still lower than the overall mean for England and Wales, which was 1.84%. What we don't know is how many of these were unwillingly sharing a house. Research in the 1990s also found that there was a slightly greater tendency for Cornish families to share a house, but concluded this was evidence for a continuation of a distinct cultural pattern that included closer family relations.³⁹

Furthermore, if we compare rent with median wages, Cornwall has lower rents than most of southern England, although higher than most of northern England and Wales.

Map 5: Rent as a proportion of median wages, 2013



(Source: Calculated from data at Zoopla (http://www.zoopla.co.uk/to-rent/?include_rented=false&include_retirement_homes=true&include_share_d_accommodation=true) and ONS, annual survey of hours and earnings, 2013)

None of these data sources unequivocally suggest that the crisis of affordability in Cornwall has worsened at a greater rate than elsewhere.

This is not to deny that there is a problem of affordability or that this problem is getting worse. It's just that the evidence for a relatively greater problem in Cornwall is a lot more elusive than the pat statements of planners, developers and councillors might lead us to believe. We need to be careful not to exaggerate it. But, while Cornwall does not show up particularly badly when compared with English and Welsh regions for housing need by these criteria, there is still a major problem of affordability and an absolute if not relative need that must be met but isn't being met by current market mechanisms.

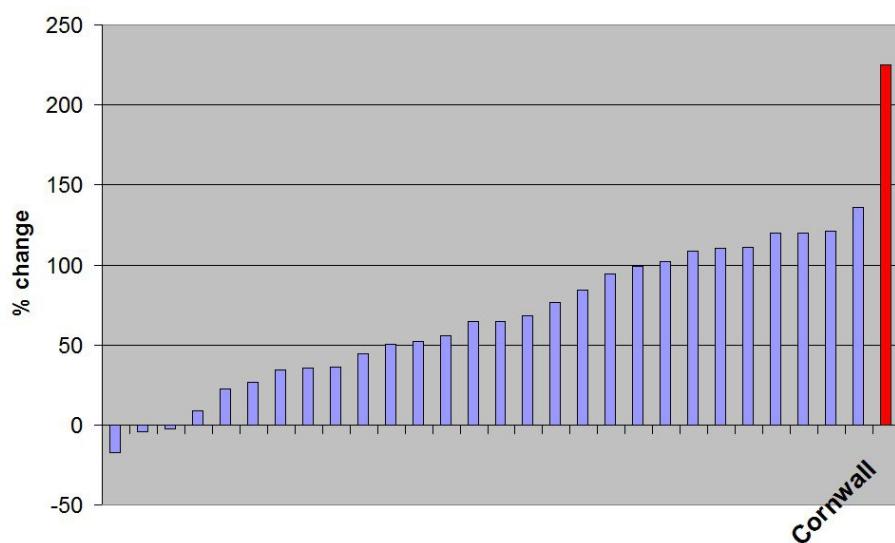
Misusing the Home Choice register

The SHMNA uses another proxy measure for concealed and overcrowded households. This number is derived from the Home Choice register. The Home Choice register is not a straightforward measure of the need for affordable housing, as it includes households that express an aspiration for social rented housing but are adequately housed. Moreover, if households that occupy a house are re-housed then they must logically release the property they occupy for others. Thus the total of those on the Home Choice register is not at all the same as the number of net additional houses required.

The total registering for social housing in Cornwall has risen sharply since the register was begun in 2009. It has also risen much more rapidly than other regions as Figure 14 below indicates.

F

Figure 14: Growth of housing waiting lists by region



(Source; DCLG Live Table 600)

However, these data display sudden and extreme variations over time which make them a very suspect source for measuring need. For example, Cornwall's Home Choice register grew by 50% from 2009 to 2013. But in neighbouring Devon the numbers on similar lists fell by 4%. Moreover, large falls were experienced in Tyne and Wear & Northumberland, Merseyside, West Yorkshire and East Anglia. It is most unlikely that these latter regions have discovered a miraculous solution to their

social housing problems, one that is unavailable to other regions. Rather than measuring real need, lists of people seeking social housing appear to be prone to changes in political and bureaucratic practices as local housing need criteria are periodically redefined.

The Home Choice register allocates applicants to bands, depending on the level of need. These range from band A, which includes those in urgent need, to band E - 'no housing need'. The SHMNA excludes Band E from its assessment of affordable housing need 'based on the policy definition of households allocated to this band being evaluated as adequately housed within their current accommodation'.⁴⁰

However, this distinction is sometimes lost. This often happens in facile media reports which simplistically relate the Home Choice register total to need or even homelessness. Affordable housing need is also discussed in the planners' reports that accompany major housing developments. In such cases, the total number on the Home Choice register with a local connection is invariably cited as an indicator of need. For example, in December 2013 the Duchy of Cornwall's plans for 800 houses at Quintrell Downs came before Cornwall's Strategic Planning Committee. The planning report stated that 'the Council's Home Choice register identifies an acute level of local housing need in Newquay, with 1,122 households ... stating a local connection'.⁴¹ In fact, in January 2013, 74.2% of those identifying a local connection with Newquay could be found in the lowest band E, defined by the council as having 'no housing need'.⁴² The SHMNA reported that 11,997 households were allocated to Bands A-D at that time, but it was being regularly reported that '22,000' were on the waiting lists.⁴³

Discussion of the Home Choice register in the relevant documents is anything but transparent. While the SHMNA states on page 111 that 11,997 households were in Bands A-D in early 2013, in its calculation of 'current housing need' on page 167 this was reduced to 7,598. There is no explanation for this startling discrepancy, so one must assume that the SHMNA's analysts' access to the detailed register led them to remove a third of those in Bands A-D from their definition of households in need. It then transpires that 2,118, or over a quarter, of those left are already occupying social housing and are seeking a transfer to larger or smaller premises. So the real backlog

of need is reduced even further from 7,598 to 5,480. The 22,000 figure for those in housing need, repeated regularly and uncritically by councillors and the media, was therefore at a stroke slashed to 5,500 with no proper explanation for the discrepancy.

Nonetheless, despite the uncertainties that surround it, it seems reasonable to accept that around 5,500 houses are required to meet the backlog of demand for affordable housing.⁴⁴ These would either have to be built and/or transferred from other sectors (second homes, holiday lets, private rented and other uses). Moreover, it should be noted that 94% of the need is for social rented housing and only 6% for intermediate (or shared equity) housing.⁴⁵ These proportions are rarely matched in developers' proposals, which usually contain far too few social rented houses and too many intermediate houses.

Exaggerating future need

If the Home Choice register is cynically employed to exaggerate the level of current need, then the SHMNA is the means through which the same is done for future need.⁴⁶ The SHMNA authors calculate there is a net new annual need of 1,314 houses, to meet households that fall into need plus new households. But, in order to meet the backlog of affordable housing need, in the first five years of the Local Plan 2,240 houses a year have to be built. Thereafter 1,314 a year will be required for 'new need'. This gives a total requirement of 30,910 affordable houses over the course of the next 20 years. But at present the proportion of affordable housing in planning permissions granted in 2012-13 was only 28.6%, while just 20.1% of the 15,250 houses with planning permission but not yet built at 1st April 2013 were affordable.⁴⁷ At these rates, and relying on providing affordable housing through market mechanisms as at present, somewhere between 108,000 and 154,000 houses would have to be built in the next 20 years to meet the need for affordable homes if all these were to be new.

But these conclusions rest on a very odd assumption in the SHMNA. It states that every year 4,376 new households will be formed and assumes these will require 4,376 houses, 54% of which will have to be affordable. Presumably only half of these will come from people dying and thus releasing houses. Moreover, we are told this 'excludes migration trends' and the 4,376 new households a year arise solely from

natural change.⁴⁸ This is therefore gross household formation, these households being mainly single young people leaving home, the majority of whom are students.

The logic of this calculation is considerably less than crystal clear as it appears to assume that all new households require a new house.⁴⁹ It also assumes that it will be impossible to devise policies that could convert under-used or empty housing into affordable housing and reform the tenurial structure, rather than leaving the current failed market system in place and merely building more houses, most of which will be unaffordable. And it doesn't even take into account any in-migrating households (which include some Cornish return in-migrants) who may also be unable to afford to buy or rent a house! The logic of this method of calculating housing need is truly bizarre, but continues to be defined by both central government and local planners as 'robust evidence'.

If the blizzard of highly technical but fundamentally flawed demographic data and the crocodile tears about affordability don't do the job then the Council and the Government have another trick up their sleeves. Their third line of attack is to resort to the 'need' for growth. For, as we know, we must have growth. Or we revert to the Stone Age and start eating our babies.

4. Locking us into a 'jobs' and population growth treadmill

Economic growth is the heroin of capitalism. And we're all hopeless addicts. If there is growth then we're able to function. If there isn't, then we stare apocalypse in the face. Or so we're told. Pursuing this metaphor, we find the drug dealers in the Tweedledum/Tweedledee political class, while the producers lurk more anonymously in the borderless world of the corporations. Locally, our craving for economic growth translates into pathetic and begging pleas for more jobs, any jobs. Providing the inevitable jobs fix eases the way for any and all development. As we focus on all those lovely jobs we're promised, we forget the anguish that comes in their wake.

'Employment-led growth', dangling the jobs fix in front of us, is therefore a more persuasive ploy complementing arguments based on accommodating demographic change and 'solving' affordability issues. The fact that the number of promised jobs seem to spring out of thin air is irrelevant. Who checks whether the jobs promised by a developer actually come to fruition or not? Who counts the jobs a 'development' might destroy elsewhere? In any case, we've all moved on to the next great jobs boost.

In this section, I probe the jobs issue, too often supinely taken-for-granted by our elected representatives and the media. We shall discover that what's being proposed is not a growth in jobs for the current labour force at all, but a growth in job-seekers who fill the new jobs. At bottom, this is far more about facilitating population growth than it is about producing jobs for local communities.

More jobs need more people

That said, most of us need to sell our labour to live. So jobs are clearly essential. But what we're now being told is that, in order to get those jobs, we need more people as well. A lot more people.

The logic runs like this. If the quantity of jobs in an area increases but the labour force doesn't then 'net in-migration will occur'.⁵⁰ In Cornwall the number of jobs has been increasing over the long term. But, as the population ages and the post-war baby-boomer generation retires, the proportion of people in their 30s and 40s is set to

decline. There is then a ‘need to continue to accommodate an increase in population in order that there be sufficient working age people to realise this ambition [for more jobs]’.⁵¹

In order to meet the ‘need to balance the working age population with levels of projected employment growth’, the SHMNA presents two employment-led scenarios.⁵² These suggest that population must grow by between 122,600 and 140,900 in just 20 years in order for the Council to meet its policy ‘vision’ of ‘economic growth’. This is almost double the demographic projection of a 78,000 population growth and well over double the actual population rise of 63,000 in the period 1991-2011. **Cornwall Council's employment and economic growth policies therefore necessitate encouraging a huge increase in the working age population.** And these in-migrants have to be housed.

As with the population models, employment models are given a high degree of credibility. However, on closer inspection, even in technical terms they are riddled with shortcomings. First, the number of jobs that are likely to be created is derived from projections from local authorities. These are supposed in turn to be based on assessments of future trends based on past performance and on quantitative projections produced by private sector economic consultancies (Experian, Cambridge Econometrics, Oxford Economics). Guesswork about the number of new jobs is then matched with population projections, which turn out to be the same old faulty ONS and DCLG projections we met in section 3 above. In a fine example of circular logic, this is all legitimated by paragraph 159 of the NPPF, which insists that these projections have to be the ‘starting base point for this assessment’.⁵³ This exercise in circularity essentially therefore combines guesswork and wishful thinking relating to the number of jobs which may or may not be created with structurally unsound demographic projections that have a record of grossly overestimating population and household growth in Cornwall. The fact that the job growth for 2011-30 produced by the various consultants varies so widely, from 8% to over 20% growth,⁵⁴ should give pause for thought. But it doesn’t.

How a jobs-led policy makes affordability worse

If the modelling process is flimsy, then the conclusions generated are nothing short of incredible. Let's take a step back and compare the employment-led scenarios with recent patterns of job creation.

Table 5: Jobs growth in Cornwall, 1991-2010

	1991	2001	2010
full time equivalent jobs	170,000	205,900	225,400

(SHMNA, p.69 and Census, 1991)

In fact, the number of jobs peaked in 2007 at nearly 243,000, before declining as a result of the recession. The Cornish economy has actually been quite successful in creating jobs, even though the proportion of these that are part-time rose from 37% of all jobs in 1995 to 40% in 2008.⁵⁵ Nonetheless, the long-term unemployment rate fell in the late 1990s to a level below that of the UK. For the first time since the 1860s Cornwall's unemployment level is now lower than the general average.

But note that this increase in jobs and fall in unemployment occurred at a time when population growth had fallen away from its peak of the 1970s and 80s. Yet now we are assured that, if we want to maintain job creation even at a lower level, we have to accept a considerable hike in population.

Table 6: Actual and projected population, housing and employment growth, 1991-2031

	growth 1991-2011	SHMNA projection 2011-31
population	63,000	123-141,000
houses	41-47,000	64-72,000
jobs	55,000	31-39,000

(Source: Census, 1991 and 2011; SHMNA, pp.145-46.)

In the last 20 year period every extra person was associated with the creation of 0.87 extra jobs. But in the next 20 year period, we're expected to believe this ratio will decline dramatically to around 0.25. The SHMNA offers no explicit explanation for this collapse in job creation.

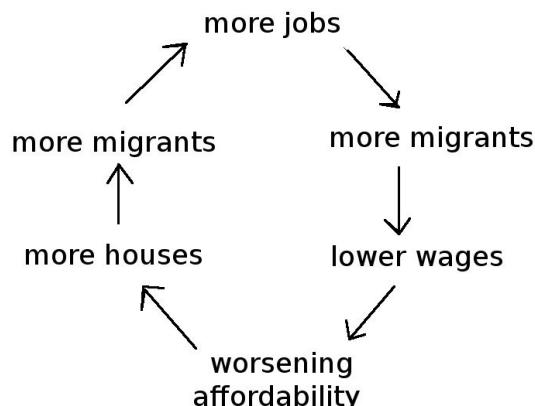
To some extent, the difference might be explained by a changing balance of the age structure, as rising birth rates and increasing longevity are likely to produce an increase in the number of those in the ‘non-economically active’ age groups. But even when we compare the number of jobs created with the projected change in the (extended) ‘working age’ population, we find that each extra working age person was associated with 1.06 new jobs in the last 20 years but only 0.60 in the next.

Table 7: Actual and projected changes in age structure, Cornwall, 1991-2030

age group	actual population growth 1991-2011	projected demographic growth, 2011-31	projected employment-led population growth, 2011-31
0-17	1,800	12,500	25,600-29,800
18-74	51,800	23,300	52,100-65,700
74+	12,300	41,900	44,900-45,400

(Source: Census, 1991 and 2011; SHMNA, pp.145-46.)

Whatever else it might do, expanding the working age population in this way seems to run the risk of increasing unemployment again and driving down wages. If this happens, problems of housing affordability will worsen. The ‘economic driver’ of change turns out to run the risk of locking us into another vicious circle.



The dead-end of 'jobs-led growth'

While those who seriously propose such a huge population and housing growth, which will not even manage to maintain current levels of job creation, fail to set their projections into a historical context and in consequence seem to lose all touch with reality, they also employ extremely questionable assumptions.

First, the SHMNA largely ignores the issue of job-quality, preferring to concentrate purely on their quantity. It admits that 'changes in total employment do not reveal the quality of employment opportunities being created or wage potential'.⁵⁶ Quite so. The existing workforce needs higher paid jobs, not more low paid, insecure ones. The lack of focus on the type of jobs created reflects a broader tendency among policy-makers to focus on quantity rather than quality. For example, the overall housing target, rather than the type of housing and tenures that is being provided.

The second questionable, assumption is more fundamental and relates to the way the Council and its consultants think jobs are created. The Council appears to be assuming that jobs are an independent variable and that migration and population growth respond entirely to an increase in jobs. This turns previous assumptions on their heads.

If we simplify things, we can see there are two main ways in which jobs might be created. The first is what could be called the Homes for the Home Counties strategy. This relies on an increase in consumption from new residents who come to live in the extra houses. Each new household will spend money and this stimulates what economists term a 'multiplier effect'. The money they spend on local goods and services will create local jobs.⁵⁷ The second approach to creating jobs could be called the Pasties for the Home Counties strategy. Here, if Kernow Pasty Company sells more pasties upcountry then they will need more pasty-makers in Cornwall.

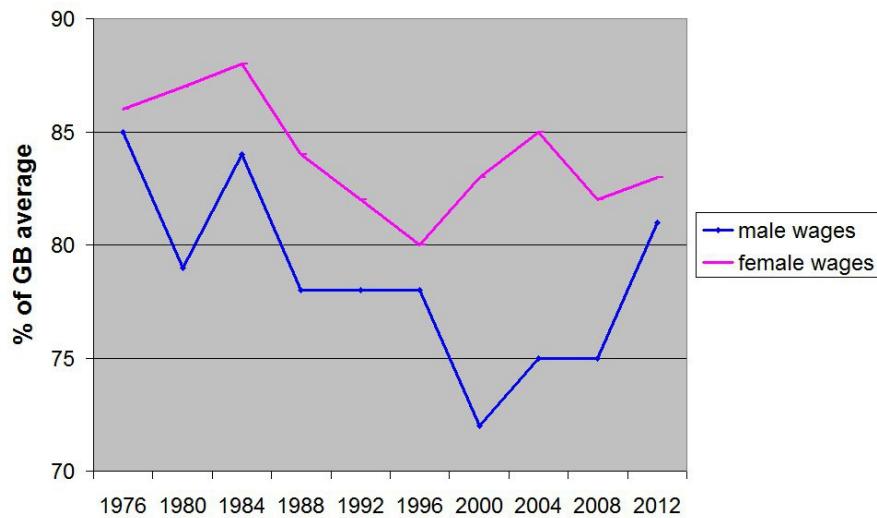
In reality, jobs are created in both these ways. Formerly however, it was always assumed that the main 'driver' of job creation was housing, in-migration and multiplier spending. For example in 2011 the Council asserted that 'experts' predicted 6,000 houses in Camborne-Redruth would create 5,500 jobs.⁵⁸ Let's pass over the fact that other experts were finding that each new house built in 2006-11 created far fewer

- 0.62 - jobs.⁵⁹ Despite the failure to agree how many jobs were actually produced by house building, there was agreement that houses were the causal factor. More houses created more jobs through their construction and the multiplier effect of the increased consumer spending by the people who came to live in the houses.

However, the employment model of the SHMNA reverses this process. In their world, housing follows jobs rather than jobs being created by housing. This implies additional jobs are created entirely on the supply side by firms selling more goods and services, things like agricultural products or tourism services, irrespective of population change. Given chronically low wages and low disposable income in Cornwall, the bulk of these extra jobs must flow from an exogenous rise in demand. If Kernow Pasty Company sells more pasties in London or Leeds then they might well end up creating more jobs. The Council's planners would at this point argue that 'we need to increase the labour force to fill these jobs'. Yet the idea that we always need to expand the total labour force if demand in a sector increases is an odd one. If we go back a hundred years we find the number of agricultural workers or miners in the UK was high. As new industries came along some sectors increased and others lost labour. Those where the number of workers fell were either sectors in decline or where increasing productivity through mechanisation meant fewer were needed.

An increase in demand for pasties from Cornwall could be met either by transferring labour from other, less productive, work or increasing productivity per pasty maker or a combination of these. Transferring workers from less productive and therefore less well paid sectors of the Cornish economy would have the obvious advantage of pushing up wages. One of the issues of the Cornish economy is that, despite an increase in the quantity of jobs, earnings have remained stubbornly low.

Figure 15: Cornish wages as a proportion of the British average, 1976-2012

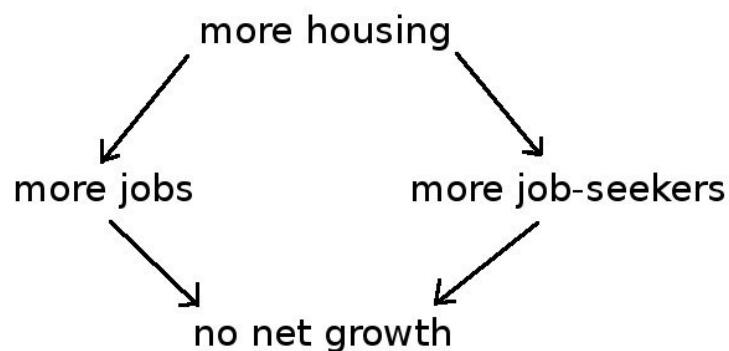


(Source: Information from Economic Development Service, Cornwall Council)

The idea that jobs are created solely by growth in external demand and that houses just follow the jobs is well short of convincing. At least two out of three workers in Cornwall depend on a more local market, catering for demand for goods and services from the existing population, things such as education, health or the purchase of consumer goods.

Whichever model is adopted, the net result is a lot more people (and houses). More houses, and therefore more households, also increase the supply of job-seekers so **any job creation is mopped up by those new migrating job-seekers.**

This is not a circle, but a dead-end.



To those who fail to examine this relationship there is an appearance of jobs growth and economic growth. 'Extra' jobs or new shops are evidence of 'growth'. But this is an illusion. If all the new jobs have to be filled by an in-migrating population then what exactly is the point? This may be growth in a purely quantitative sense but it brings with it major quality of life and sustainability issues.

A further dubious assumption lies behind the employment-led scenarios. If all local authorities seek 'growth' in this way - simply equated to a growth of jobs and the extra population necessary to provide the labour force for those jobs - then overall there has to be a large and continuing net immigration into the UK. Given the growing salience of this issue in the political arena, does it really make sense to assume high levels of international immigration will continue indefinitely?

Has high housing and population growth been successful?

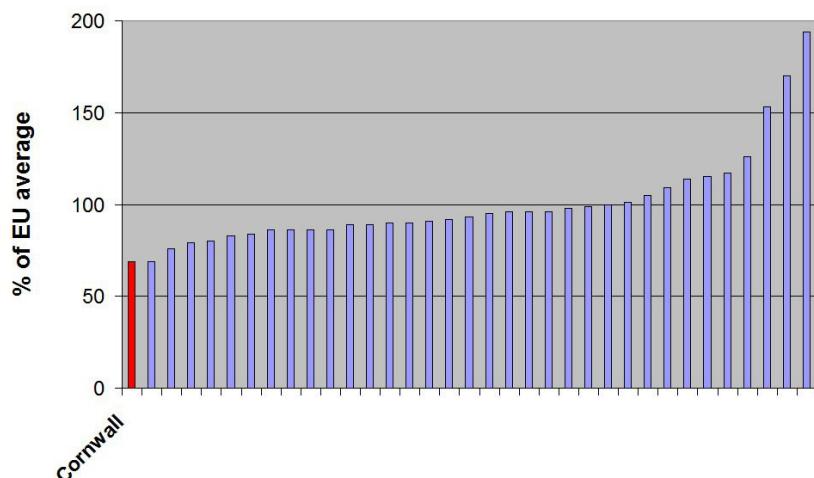
Strategies ought to continue only if they have a clear record of success and their benefits outweigh their costs. If they don't then they should be dropped and replaced. Despite policy documents that sometimes appear to think that 'growth' is a brand-new idea, completely unknown in Cornwall, a high growth housing and population-led strategy has been adopted or has occurred in Cornwall since the 1960s. But has it succeeded even in its own terms and increased material wealth?

Overall, we have seen that the 'need' to increase the rate of house building in Cornwall seems to react principally to exogenous factors, to demographic change caused by in-migration, to demand for second homes, to the failure of the housing market and to political policies for 'growth'. As a result, Cornwall has experienced a rapid housing and population growth since the 1960s at a level relatively far greater than the UK norm.

Did this growth bring the promised benefits and a rise in material prosperity? Figure 15 above shows that wages in Cornwall drifted down in the decades of highest population and housing growth and have only stabilised since that growth eased. They remain at a level far below the British average.

Despite ten years of the most generous level of European grant aid, in Cornwall gross value added (GVA) per capita is still the lowest in the UK.

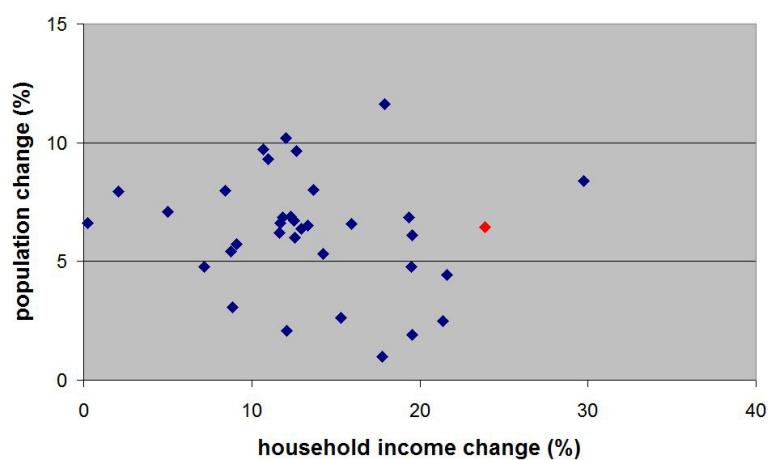
Figure 16: GVA per capita by region, 2000-11



(Source: Eurostat)

On the other hand, the mean net disposable income available to Cornish households has risen faster than the average since 2000, only exceeded by northern Scotland. However, when change in household income is compared with growth of population across the UK's regions, we find no relationship between the two, so a high population growth regime is not a necessary condition for income growth.

Figure 17: Disposable household income and population growth by region, 2000-11



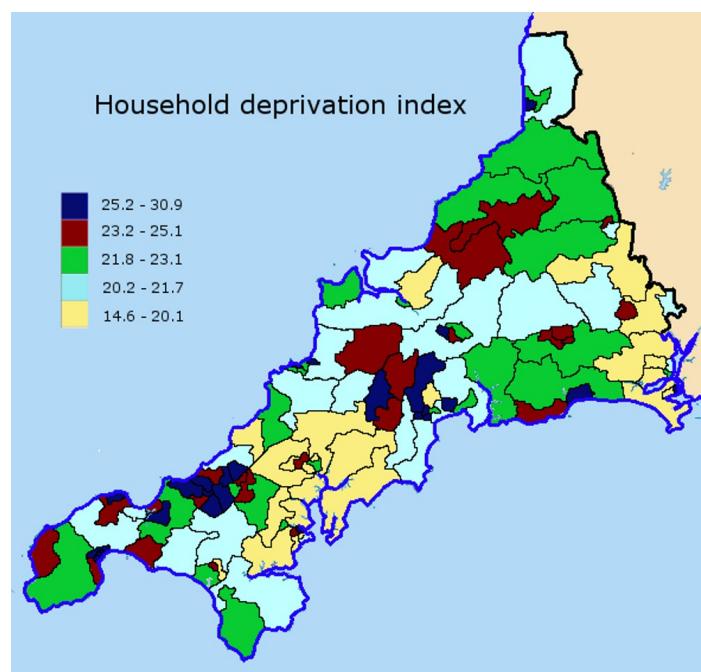
(Source: Eurostat and Census, 2001 and 2011)

Indeed, the correlation coefficient is -0.156, implying that higher population growth is actually weakly associated with a lower rise in household income rather than the reverse. There is therefore no evidence that improvements in household income are the direct result of housing or population growth. It could well be the case that the rise in household income in the 2000s would have been even higher if the population had been stable.

In any case, all this ignores a bigger question. Concentrating on material factors in this way ignores the question of whether ever-increasing material prosperity and the ability to consume more stuff actually makes people happier. On the contrary, research indicates that, after a certain level of income is achieved, piling on more income adds nothing to emotional well-being or life satisfaction.⁶⁰

Instead of shoehorning ever greater numbers of people into Cornwall, consuming our countryside at an increasing rate to meet external demand and increasing the possibility of a deteriorating quality of life, it is time to re-focus efforts on pockets of deprivation within Cornwall. For inequalities within the region may be greater than inequalities across regions.⁶¹

Map 6: Household deprivation, Cornish wards, 2011



(Source, Census 2011)

5. Ideology and methodology: the real causes of the great Cornish build

We have seen how high housing and population growth in Cornwall is justified by grossly distorted official demographic projections. These are backed up by a cynical resort to the crisis of affordability to propose that building a lot more unaffordable houses will magically solve local housing problems. If that weren't enough, aspirations for 'growth' are wheeled in and backed up by an employment growth model based on bizarre and frankly incredible assumptions. I have also shown how one of the fastest, if not the fastest, housing growth rates in the UK in relative terms has hardly brought the benefits its apologists loudly claim for it.

The 'need' for more housing is packaged within a technical discourse which is not easily opened up to democratic debate. This discourse is reproduced by central government guidelines that Cornwall Council is unwilling or unable to challenge. Furthermore, it's policed by a central government planning inspectorate which narrowly rules that the dodgy data and half-baked models are actually 'objectively assessed ... robust evidence'. This is enough to befuddle most of our elected representatives. They and their planning officers are incapable of envisaging or actively resist any alternative to business as usual. If they do hesitate, local planning authorities are leant on not to deviate from official projections, even when those projections and the datasets they produce are clearly flawed, as is the case in Cornwall.

But there are deeper factors at work. They work partly to confine local planning authorities' freedom of manoeuvre but are most effective in imposing an ideology within which planners and politicians police themselves. This results, in the Cornish instance at least, in housing and population growth becoming taken-for-granted. Ultimately, the power of the central state is brought into play to guarantee the process of accumulation, including the building of houses, shops and other infrastructure. As stuff gets built some get rich. And this cannot be allowed to stop, whatever the costs. Places like Cornwall, with a multitude of 'development opportunities' or 'opportunities to make money' are more vulnerable to the process than less favoured (or fortunate) regions. In other words, the fundamentally political project to guarantee

profit and accumulation that drives the technical arguments impinges particularly direly on Cornwall, its communities, countryside and culture.

The empty aim of sustainability

This agenda is embedded in the NPPF and its ‘golden thread’ of ‘sustainable development’. On the surface the NPPF maintains a balance between growth - ‘we must house a rising population’ - and sustainability - ‘ensuring that better lives for ourselves don’t mean worse lives for future generations’. It also accepts resolution 42/187 of the UN General Assembly which states that sustainable development should meet ‘the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’. Furthermore, its five guiding principles include ‘living within the planet’s environmental limits’. One of the ‘three dimensions’ of the government’s ‘sustainable development’ is environmental and its core planning principles include more specific aims of supporting ‘the transition to a low carbon future’, ‘helping to improve biodiversity’ and conserving ‘heritage assets’, while recognising ‘the intrinsic character and beauty of our countryside’ and the fact that open land ‘can perform many functions’.⁶²

This all sounds very fine. Yet what looks like a balancing act turns out not to be balance but bias. The government is not really walking a tightrope between building and sustainability or between developers and the environment, as emphasis is firmly placed on the commitment to ‘ensuring that the planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic growth’ and ‘boost significantly the supply of housing’. While planning authorities are encouraged to ‘use their evidence base to ensure that their Local Plan meets the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing’, no equivalent evidence has to be produced to ensure that the environmental aims are being met.⁶³ As the environmental rhetoric is vague and impressionistic the ‘sustainable’ aspect of ‘sustainable development’ shrinks. Translated into planning applications and planning documents, it loses all meaning, as it’s ritually appended merely to make building houses, supermarkets, roads and other infrastructure more acceptable. Any putative ‘balance’ between growth and sustainability disappears entirely from sight and ‘sustainable’ becomes an empty signifier.

The NPPF is dutifully echoed in Cornwall Council's Local Plan Policy 2, which contains the aim of 'accommodating growth ... while respecting the natural and historic character of Cornwall'.⁶⁴ Growth is quantified; 'respect' is a vague and hopeful qualitative aspiration and soon gets lost. In practice there is no balance. The Government and Cornwall Council seem not to have considered the possibility that growth and sustainability may be incompatible, that a balance is impossible or that the phrase 'sustainable development' might just be an oxymoron.

Others are much less sanguine. Tim Jackson argues that there is a 'growth dilemma'. Growth appears 'essential for lasting prosperity' but is also 'ecologically unsustainable' as it comes up against the limits of a finite world. Jackson deconstructs the comfortable notion that growth and resources can be 'decoupled' and that we can have both. He demonstrates how the basic arithmetic cannot possibly support such a naive and simplistic hypothesis.⁶⁵ Greening Cornwall and growing Cornwall is a zero-sum game. We can have one or the other but we can't have both.

The demands of everyday political policy tilt the playing field steeply towards 'growing' and building more houses rather than greening and building genuinely sustainable communities. From a central government perspective this meets macro-economic policy, returning the UK to 'growth', defined as a simple increase in the general value added. From a local government perspective, swingeing cuts in budgets since 2010, coupled with devices such as the New Homes Bonus, which brings a financial reward for each new house built, combine to make house building more attractive. Planning gains, section 106 agreements and the Community Infrastructure Levy become virtually the only means of providing new infrastructure for local communities. Some councils, Cornwall's included, go further, committing themselves to 'aspirations' for economic growth and job creation which, adopting the logic of their planning consultants, must be accompanied by swathes of new dwellings to house the labour supply 'needed' to fill those jobs.

A political consensus that housing has to be delivered primarily by the market underlies the macro-economic focus on the construction industry and the associated sectors - financial, retail - that are parasitic upon it. Housing associations are encouraged to converge with private developers and are now permitted to build open

market houses. Direct investment in social housing is kept to a minimum; buyers are subsidised through the Help to Buy scheme. Strangely also, in view of the urgency of the affordability crisis, the Right to Buy scheme, by which the total supply of affordable housing in Cornwall was reduced between 1979 and 1997 by 8,646 properties, amounting to 31% of the total social rented stock of houses in 2011, continues unchecked.⁶⁶

Co-opted by the developers' discourse

The political class's faith that the market can deliver the right kind of housing to meet need rather than demand is misplaced, either by design or default. But that faith is closely aligned to another 'need', which is much less often mentioned, if ever. In the 59 pages of the NPPF, the word 'sustainable' appears 106 times. In stark contrast, there is not one occurrence of the word 'profit'. And yet increasing the number of houses built also meets the needs of developers and construction companies for profit. In a capitalist society this is much more important than the need to accommodate demographic change or meet affordability issues. If companies do not make profits then houses do not get built. From the viewpoint of those who believe building more houses this is a good thing. Cornwall is very fortunate. The SHMNA found that 'it was evident throughout the consultation that a large number of developers are active in Cornwall - either building properties or looking for potential new development sites'.⁶⁷ Given the salience of lifestyle Cornwall, there is always a ready market for properties in the more 'desirable' parts of Cornwall and thus an opportunity for profit.

The higher the housing target, the easier it becomes for developers to obtain planning permission and make their profits. This explains why, in the first round of consultation on the Council's housing target in 2011, 87% of the businesses responding - most of them directly dependent on the construction sector - preferred a target of 57,000 houses or more, a sharp increase on the historic building rate. In contrast, no parish or town council wanted more than 48,000 and no voluntary organisation in Cornwall more than 38,000. Meanwhile, 64% of residents who responded preferred 38,000 or fewer. Virtually all developers who responded were based outside Cornwall as were the consultants hired to write their representations.⁶⁸

Clearly, developers have a vested financial interest in the outcome. But this doesn't prevent the Council giving their arguments consideration. Quite the reverse. In the second round of consultation in 2013 another wave of representations by upcountry planning consultants was made on behalf of house builders and developers. These contained a repetitive pattern. The NPPF's emphasis on development and meeting 'objectively assessed needs' was cited first, followed by a variety of quotations from Cornwall Council's own planning documents which had put forward a range of targets from 48,000 to 95,000.

The Council's planners found themselves in an echo chamber. Here were their own arguments for higher housing targets being bounced back at them. The developers took selected aspects of the various documents produced by Cornwall Council and spliced them together with the NPPF to conclude that a target of between 50,000 and 60,000, and often more than that, was required to meet an 'under-provision of housing' in the draft Local Plan, which was 'not based on an objective assessment of housing need'.⁶⁹ Cornwall's planners had either shot themselves in the foot, or provided developers with a set of handy arguments for ratcheting up the rate of housebuilding.

The close fit between developers' assumptions and arguments, a central government presumption in favour of building houses and the technical data produced by or on behalf of Cornwall Council illustrates the shared values and assumptions of developers and planners. Planners have been captured by the developers' discourse and are unable or unwilling to escape it. The developers' voice is institutionalised via devices such as the Cornwall Private Developers' Forum and the Council Housing Partnership. These were set up and hosted by Cornwall Council to 'discuss national and local planning policy' among other things and met quarterly, at least until January 2013.⁷⁰ Use of planning performance agreements with major house builders and negotiations over planning gains mean that developers and planners meet regularly and are in constant communication.

It would be unusual if a close working relationship did not lead to shared values. In Cornwall's case its planners effectively act as a bridge between developers and elected representatives. This may help explain why Cornwall's planners vehemently

resist criticisms of the official ONS/DCLG models and react so negatively to pleas to them to produce a stronger negotiating case when faced by central government pressure to increase house building rates even further.

Such a case could include arguing that measurements of ‘objectively assessed needs’ have been misleading and faulty and that meeting such flawed projections would have an ‘adverse impact’ which ‘would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits’.⁷¹ In contrast, planners describe the official projections as ‘a fairly sophisticated model’ and ‘the best available approach to estimate change’, giving ‘the most robust approach’ while insisting that capacity is ‘not an issue’.⁷²

We have seen that the demographic need for more housing is based on flawed data, that affordability issues are exacerbated by increasing the quantity of the wrong kind of housing and, while there is little evidence for their material benefits, powerful political and commercial interests are bent on continuing policies of endless housing and population growth. In addition, there is one final and more general factor reproducing a high housing and population growth rate in Cornwall. This is the methodology adopted by planners and government.

From vicious to vacuous circles: the problem of quantitative modelling

Since the 1970s, mainstream economists have embraced increasingly formal mathematical models to explain how economies work. This approach has now penetrated planning debates. However, models require assumptions and, as the maths and the models become more complex, the assumptions are increasingly divorced from reality. This is why the economists’ models failed entirely to predict the banking crisis of 2007/08.

The models become an end in themselves rather than a simplified version of reality, helping us to understand that reality. We see this tendency operating in planning discourse. For example, Cornwall’s planners prefer to accept the projections of their demographic and employment models rather than the reality of past experience. Data forecasting what might happen appear to carry equal or even more weight than data that record what has actually happened. As a result, if the inputs to the models are ‘right’ then the outputs cannot possibly be ‘wrong’. Even when they patently are.

Relying on mathematical models to this extent builds in a preference for quantity over quality, numbers over narrative. The modellers lose sight of the messier uncertainties and complexities of the real world; they fail to engage with its more ‘irrational’ aspects, such as identity or emotions towards places or landscapes. These things cannot be easily quantified. Therefore they cease to exist.

At bottom, Cornwall Council’s Local Plan legitimises a limited, unimaginative vision of business as usual. Fifty years of some of the fastest housing and population growth in the UK has left Cornwall with some of the lowest wages in Britain, a GVA per capita so low that it qualifies for the highest level of EU structural funding and a festering crisis of housing affordability. Imprisoned within the rules of a central government whose vision of the future extends only so far as more growth, the local state in the shape of Cornwall Council apes the central state in London.

More housing is justified ostensibly to meet the needs of ‘the local area’ (Local Plan Policy 2) even though in practice it meets demand from in-migrants. More housing is urgently required to ‘solve’ the lack of affordable housing, even though up to four fifths of the houses built will be unaffordable or go to meet the demand for second homes or holiday lets. More housing is necessary to house the migrants who will comprise the labour supply needed to fill the new jobs created. Against all the evidence of the past half century, ‘more’ will be ‘better’. Prosperity waits just around the corner if only we continue to do exactly what we’ve already been doing for five decades - without striking success. The landscape must be remoulded, the countryside built over, the Cornishness of Cornwall eroded. These are the costs we have to pay for ‘growth’ and the elusive ‘prosperity’ it will bring.

As cherished local landscapes disappear under the JCBs, planning policy and broader political strategy present us with a series of interlocking vicious circles. As these spin ever faster, the housing target is relentlessly ramped up. The 42,000 houses of the last 20 years become 47,500 in the next. That in turn becomes 57,000 to meet ‘objectively assessed need’, which becomes 70,000 to solve our affordability crisis, which becomes 95,000 if we want to create a lot of jobs. As the numbers spiral past they lose all meaning, increasingly detached from reality.

Doubling the population becomes a sane way of maintaining rates of job creation.⁷³ Identifying sites with a ‘potential for residential development’ of ‘113,567 dwellings over a 16+ year period’ becomes ‘a proactive plan for sustainable growth’.⁷⁴ We arrive at our final destination, the logic of the madhouse. Levels of housing and population growth unimaginable a few years ago are being seriously considered by councillors and bureaucrats who cling to the dehumanised, quantitative rationale of their models and become blind to the living Cornwall outside their double-glazed windows.

This technocratic, dystopian approach lacks historical awareness. Its idea of long-term trends extends only as far back as five years.⁷⁵ Despite advice from the government’s Planning Advisory Service that planning authorities must ‘explore the differences between different projections, past information and the census data’ the past is another country entirely and might as well not have happened.⁷⁶ Future projections bear scant resemblance to recent trends. As well as having no rear-view mirror, the future itself only extends so far as the end of the current 20 year period. When planners are confronted with the inevitable consequences of their plans for exponential growth, their equally inevitable response is a refusal to contemplate what may lie beyond that 20 year end point. The Cornwall of future generations is not their concern, even though current policies are stoking up a legacy of problems that future generations will have to deal with.

A quantitative, robotic, modelling approach and a lack of temporal awareness engender complacency. Cornwall Council and its planners appear to be supremely unconcerned about the costs and implications of their growth agenda. Take the issue of land use.

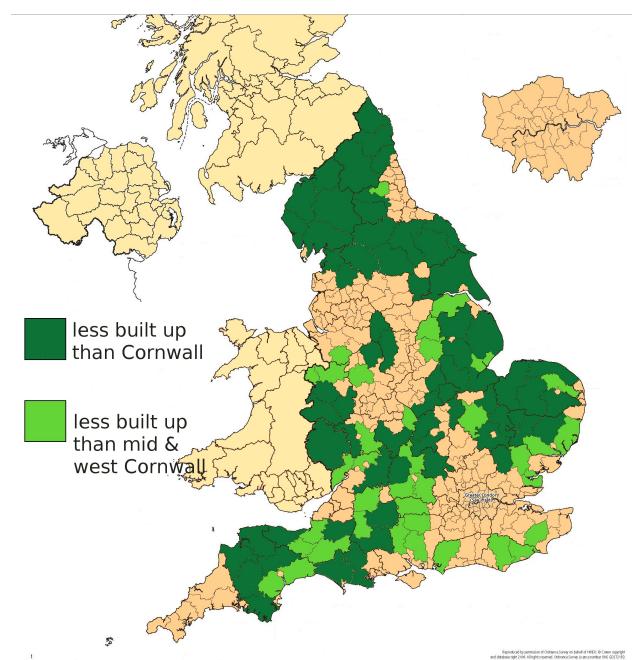
‘open land can perform many functions ... wildlife, recreation, flood risk mitigation, carbon storage, food production’ (core planning principle, NPPF, 6)

The Council’s *Sustainability Appraisal* notes that growth will have ‘significant negative effect’ on the landscape.⁷⁷ Yet critics of the amount of countryside that will have to be built on - the five or more Truros of the next 20 years - are met by a bureaucratic shrug of the shoulders. Campaigners are patiently reminded that ‘only

5.4%' of Cornwall' is 'developed, i.e. under all buildings, gardens, paths, roads and railways'.⁷⁸ By implication the other 95.6% is ripe for building on.

In fact the only source we have for land use - the generalised land use database of 2001 and 2005 - show that this is wrong. In 2005 93.4% of the land area of Cornwall was categorised as 'green space'. The other 6.6% was used for residential or industrial purposes or was derelict. Perhaps significantly, this was an increase on the 6.1% that was built up in 2001.⁷⁹ Moreover, this survey took every patch of unbuilt-on land and called it greenspace. Thus, even in places like the middle of Camborne or Truro, it found 20% of the land area was 'greenspace'! The proportion of built-up land in these surveys is a minimum and not the same as the proportion of land within the urban envelopes. Moreover, when Cornwall is compared with other regions, the differences are hardly profound.

Map 7: comparison of built-up land by district



(Source: Generalised Land Use Database, 2005, ONS)

In fact, the proportion of built-up land in mid and west Cornwall already exceeds many districts even in overcrowded England. Meanwhile, Wales and Scotland have far lower proportions of built-up land than Cornwall does.

But there is a deeper problem with an attitude that writes off 95% of Cornwall as fit for 'development'. The planners seem content to see the urban area double within just one lifetime but are unable to tell us how and when this process will end. Overall, they express little empathy for the meaning of that land or the Cornish landscape. Campaigners are reminded that they spend most of their time within built up zones and that the nearby countryside they see daily from their cars or their houses - countryside being transformed into 'hybrid developments' - is only a small proportion of the whole.

This may quantitatively be the case but it betrays an alarming lack of awareness that it's precisely these familiar stretches of countryside that hold the most meaning for people. They are not just blocks of land on a developers' map. For those brought up in Cornwall or who have lived there for decades they are the landscapes that give our lives meaning. They may be the fields and woods in which we roamed as children, the paths we walked through as we held hands with our first boy/girlfriend, the lanes we cycled through.

Local landscapes are the memory banks of local communities. Their destruction to meet demand from other communities hundreds of miles away and the need for profits for developers and builders, most of them equally distant, mean more than a small reduction in the quantity of countryside. From the perspective of the existing population, every new settlement tears up some of our roots. Every time local concerns are dismissed or derided as 'nimbyism', usually by those who live nowhere near the affected areas, we are reminded of the soulless and authoritarian face of the juggernaut of growth.

6. Is a high housing and population growth strategy affordable?

It's time to question whether the environmental, social and cultural costs of such a project outweigh its claimed benefits. Put another way, we need to question whether the current high population growth strategy is affordable, in the sense of whether we can continue to afford the costs it poses for Cornwall's environment and society.

The SHMNA and the developers focus on just one of the NPPF's 'core planning principles', the clarion call to 'proactively drive and support sustainable economic development'.⁸⁰ This is combined with the NPPF's paragraph 14 which tells local authorities to 'positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area' by meeting 'objectively assessed needs'. The final piece of the jigsaw arrives in paragraph 159, which confirms 'that the official ONS/DCLG datasets should form a starting base for this assessment'.⁸¹

The lock is in place; the key is turned. Cornwall's history of relatively high house building in relation to its resident population since the 1960s becomes a trend. The trend is projected forward. In doing so the projections, wittingly or unwittingly, exaggerate the trends and become self-fulfilling prophecies. The basic problem barely registers, that communities in Cornwall have to pay the price of meeting the aspirations of lifestyle Cornwall in terms of peripheral levels of low wages but Home Counties levels of high house prices. The political consensus commits Cornish communities to an endless spiral of growth, to a set of interlocking vicious circles.

However, simply delivering more houses, more people, more consumption into the foreseeable future has its costs. These have to be placed alongside the ambiguous material benefits the proponents of growth promise, the balance weighed and policy strategies considered. Usually overlooked, there is actually some small space provided in the NPPF for doing precisely this. This isn't a space Cornwall's planners make much of and it's not a space their nominal masters and mistresses - our elected representatives - have told them to explore. But it exists nonetheless.

The NPPF states in paragraph 14 that 'objectively assessed needs' have to be met unless 'any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably

outweigh the benefits'.⁸² Cornwall Council could demonstrate such a case. Unfortunately however, in the three years the Council has been working on its Local Plan this case has gone by default. Instead, the Council endorses its SHMNA, which treats 'the impact of environmental factors, the availability of land' merely as an afterthought.⁸³ The balance inherent in the NPPF, at least on the surface, between growth and sustainability, is completely lost. Those who seek equally 'robust' ways of measuring sustainability look in vain. In their absence, developers cavalierly claim each and every building project is 'sustainable'. This is nonsense. Sustainability cannot be reduced to individual locations in such a mechanistic fashion. Sustainability is a process not a place. The council's own *Sustainability Appraisal* of its Local Plan, although its format resembles a tick-box exercise rather than a joined-up narrative of the impact of growth on sustainability, does more than hint at this.⁸⁴

The economic benefits of 50 years of mass in-migration and high population growth are contestable. The environmental and social costs are incontestable.

A finite environment

a) Housing and population growth and climate change

'Support the transition to a low carbon future' (core planning principle, NPPF, p.5)

When her government established the Hadley Centre for Climate Change in 1990, Margaret Thatcher expressed the commonly held view at the time that climate change was a serious threat to the future of humanity. Since then at least 91 'thinktanks' and 'research institutes' have sprung up, mainly in the US, to question climate change science. They have received grants worth \$558 million since 2003.⁸⁵ Although the exact source of much of this is hidden, it's an open secret that the fossil fuel industry has been pouring millions into climate change denial. Big money and big lobbying have down their work and created doubt among the media and the public. This has in turn fatally delayed action to reduce the production of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, despite the warnings of 98% of climate scientists that human activity is directly responsible for dangerous global warming.⁸⁶

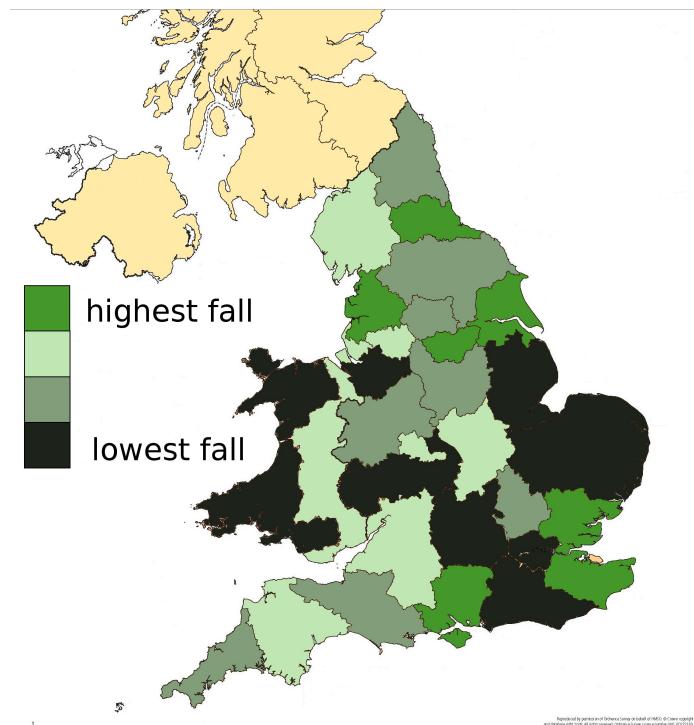
We cannot solve the looming crisis of unpredictable climate change solely in Cornwall. But our institutions have a responsibility to do their share, especially when

they proudly parade their 'green' credentials, as Cornwall Council does. Although the Council's Local Plan follows the current government lead and fatalistically prefers to concentrate on adapting to climate change rather than preventing it, it does recognise that a response is required and contains a commitment to a cut in greenhouse gas emissions.⁸⁷ Cornwall Council's *Green Cornwall Strategy* follows state targets and aims to cut current greenhouse gas emissions by at least 34% by 2020.⁸⁸ Unfortunately, even this is now regarded as insufficient to restrict global temperature rise to less than two degrees centigrade and avoid lumbering future generations with dangerous and unpredictable climate change. Instead levels by 2050 would need to be just 11% of those of 1990. The International Panel on Climate Change's (IPPC) *Fourth Assessment* report of 2007 concluded that this equated to a reduction of 4.9% every year from 2007 to 2050.⁸⁹

In Cornwall's case the 4.53 million tonnes of greenhouse gases emitted in 2009 would need to fall to 2.99 million tonnes by 2020 to meet the council's target and 2.75 million tonnes to meet the IPPC estimate. What progress is being made? The *Green Cornwall Programme Impact Analysis* of 2013 concludes that progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions is 'not successful' as 'greenhouse gas emissions are only reducing slowly'.⁹⁰

Cornwall ranked just under halfway, 18th of 31 English/Welsh regions, for the reduction of carbon emissions in the period 2005-11. In addition to not meeting the Council's own targets, the fall was less than the general average.

Map 8: Carbon emissions by region, 2005-11



(Source: Ricardo-AEA, *Local and Regional CO2 Emissions Estimates for 2005-2011*, 2013 - see <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-energy-climate-change/series/sub-national-greenhouse-gas-emissions-statistics>)

Strangely however, Cornwall Council's *Green Cornwall Impact Analysis* fails to mention one major contributor to the growth of greenhouse gases - housing and population growth. It has been claimed that building each new house creates 56 tonnes of greenhouse gases.⁹¹ Just building the council's housing target therefore contributes around 3% of current annual greenhouse gas emissions in Cornwall. By 2020, unless house building gets a lot more energy efficient and even assuming the target is not exceeded, house building could be contributing almost 5% to the total we need to get down to. The Council's own *Sustainability Appraisal* of 2013 points out that plans 'to build a minimum of 49,000 new homes [sic] and associated services, facilities and infrastructure over the next 20 years is undeniably negative in terms of increasing greenhouse gas emissions and vulnerability to climate change'.⁹² However, this is a cost that the Council is prepared to make our children pay.

b) Biodiversity

'helping to improve biodiversity' (advice on sustainable development, NPPF, p.2)

We are living through a sixth global extinction event. This time species decline is the result of mankind's inexorable over-exploitation of the environment rather than stray asteroids or natural climate change. The UN's major *Global Environmental Outlook Report 5* (2012) concludes that globally 'diversity is continuing to decline, with substantial and ongoing losses of populations, species and habitats'.⁹³ The fact that Cornwall Council's *Green Cornwall Strategy* makes no reference at all to biodiversity is perhaps best explained by the conclusions of the Local Plan *Sustainability Appraisal*. This states explicitly that 'biodiversity is threatened by development pressures'. The *Sustainability Appraisal* concludes that the Council's Policy 2, which includes its housing target, will have a 'very negative effect' on biodiversity. 'Climate change, population growth and the continuing pressure from new development and activities such as tourism and farming will result in a decline of biodiversity'. Even if 'existing biodiversity' is protected, 'this decline is inevitable'.⁹⁴

Moreover, the *Sustainability Appraisal* (p.48) points out that brownfield sites 'can often be more biologically diverse, or can provide a niche habitat for rare species'. In the Cornish context simplistic calls for building on 'brownfield' (some of which was last 'developed' in the 19th century) rather than 'greenfield' sites are entirely misplaced. In fact, they are likely to have a more disastrous effect on natural habitats than building on agri-industrial farmland, where pesticide use has already done much to cull wildlife. Similarly, those who focus on only protecting designated land (Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and the like) lose sight of the bigger picture.

The danger is that developers and politicians avoid such designated land but assume there can then be a free-for-all on the rest of Cornwall, the undesignated bits. These are then exposed to even greater development pressures, while the designated land is kept pristinely in aspic. This approach merely encourages the widening inequalities between designated, mainly coastal, Cornwall and undesignated, mainly inland,

Cornwall. The former become restricted to the better-off, the only people who can afford to live there, and a large chunk of its housing stock is handed over to the second-home owner. The latter, home to the Cornish, suffers growing environmental degradation and its communities are left to cope with the social consequences of rapid population growth. A two-tier Cornwall is the inevitable result. If designations are part of the answer, then those keen on them might consider a new designation – perhaps Areas of Special Cornish Significance, to recognise the cultural significance of the landscape.

Cornwall Council's *Sustainability Appraisal* does not refer to the concepts of ecofootprint or biocapacity. Our ecological footprint is the land and water area we require to produce the resources we consume and absorb the waste we generate. The biological capacity is the amount of useable resources that are available to us. 'If we use more resources than are available ... so that the damage to the environment will increase, without recovery – this is non-sustainable living'. If on the other hand our ecological footprint is less than the biological capacity available to us then we are being sustainable.⁹⁵

In Cornwall in 2004 each of us needed 5.4 hectares (our ecofootprint was slightly higher than the UK average of 5.3). But we only have 2.1 global hectares per person available to us. Put another way, to sustain our lifestyles we need more than two planets. As we don't have two planets our current way of life is diminishing the stock of resources available to us. In other words we're living off our capital. As we can't increase the size of the planet our present lifestyle is already unsustainable. We are in serious resource debt.

All this was clearly recognised in a report on the Cornish environment prepared in 2010. This concluded that 'the estimated ecological footprint of the area is well above a level of resource considered to be sustainable'. Urgent action was needed to minimise resource use. The report went on to pinpoint the main problems. 'Population growth and the associated growth in housing and development are likely to increase pressure on the environment.' This was exacerbated by tourism, which was found to result in 'significant pressure placed on the environment [by] the additional use of natural resources such as water and energy, as well as potential environmental

degradation and pollution, for example the impact of increased traffic on air quality and greenhouse gas emissions.’ The report concluded that ‘the environmental impacts associated with economic growth must be minimised’.⁹⁶ Published by Cornwall Council, this report appears to have been quietly buried, ignored by the Council’s Local Plan draft that was eventually agreed in early 2014.

Infinite population growth and Cornwall’s heritage

‘conserve heritage assets’ (core planning principle, NPPF, p.5)

Another Cornwall Council publication, its *Sustainability Appraisal*, lists on pages 71-72 the negative impacts of continued high population growth. It will

- ‘increase the demand for water’
- ‘result in a decline of biodiversity’
- ‘have a significant impact on the landscape character and quality’
- ‘create increasing pressures on the natural and historic maritime environment, ports and harbours and sea fisheries’
- create ‘pressure for development which could lead to higher density development’
- lead to ‘requirements for new infrastructure’

This list is enough on its own to make the claims of the Local Plan to be promoting ‘sustainable’ development begin to resemble a hollow joke. But there is another negative impact of high population growth, one specific to Cornwall, that goes unremarked by the planners.

The 404 pages of the *Sustainability Appraisal* make no reference at all to Cornish culture or Cornishness. The NPPF calls on local authorities to ‘take account of ... cultural wellbeing’ but this aspect of Cornwall’s heritage is overlooked in the Local Plan.⁹⁷ This is despite Cornwall’s history as home to one of Britain’s Celtic peoples. Historical distinctiveness and the contemporary presence of non-English identifications and cultural practices make it unique within [sic] England. Its Cornishness is an asset and a potential strength, providing resilience for local communities and a sense of place for native population and new residents alike.

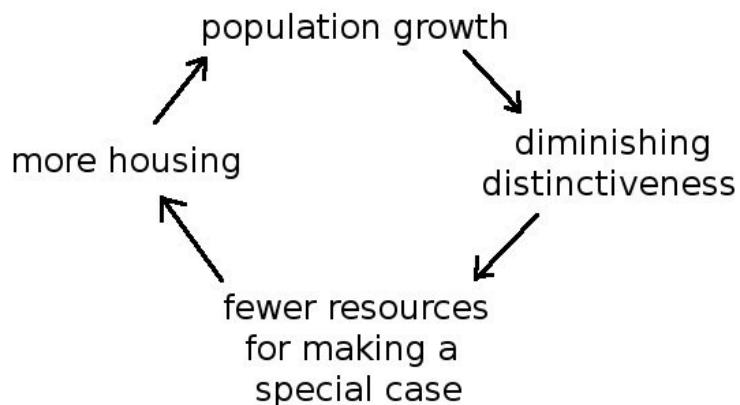
It's also a potential resource that Cornwall Council ignores. The SHMNA, by treating Cornwall as a mere sub-region of the Plymouth housing market area, itself embeds a dismissive attitude to Cornwall's uniqueness. This is further exacerbated when it discusses the needs of specific groups of people. The Cornish are written out of that discussion, their needs invisible.⁹⁸ Such indifference towards the Cornish as a group and Cornwall's special character unaccountably and inexplicably discards a valuable bargaining chip when negotiating housing targets with central government.

It also places the Council and the DCLG in breach of Article 16 of the Framework Charter for the Protection of National Minorities. This Council of Europe treaty was endorsed for the purpose of supporting the Cornish language by Cornwall County Council in 2007 and again in 2011 by the new unitary authority. In April 2014 the government finally agreed to recognise the Cornish as a national minority within the terms of this convention. Yet Article 16 states 'The Parties shall refrain from measures which alter the proportions of the population in areas inhabited by persons belonging to national minorities'. As we have seen, as population growth is entirely the result of in-migration it must constantly be reducing the proportion of the Cornish ethnic group within Cornwall's population.

Instead, the only mention the Cornish get in the Council's Local Plan documents appears in its brief *Equality Impact Assessment*, pp2/3, where 'ethnic groups (including Cornish)' are claimed to benefit from 'the provision of community facilities'. This lack of awareness of, or empathy for, Cornwall's ethnic diversity or its historic heritage is part of a broader problem. Communities are assumed by the planners to become more 'resilient' simply by the addition of community facilities, facilities that these days can only be delivered with the aid of major housing projects and population growth. Even this 'community resilience', limited to keeping the village shop open, is fatally compromised by other decisions, such as granting permission to out of town stores and shopping centres, which promptly leach trade from the village shops.

Moreover, there is a qualitative aspect to everyday life, one lost in the technocratic, quantitative, pro-growth discourse of government and developers. The value of

landscapes for example cannot easily be quantified. As the Council's *Sustainability Appraisal* concludes, landscape is an 'essential component and contributor to quality of life and health'.⁹⁹ The Cornish landscape is part of the spirit of Cornwall. That spirit does not only hold meaning for those who subscribe to lifestyle Cornwall; it has a special, perhaps different, meaning also for permanent residents. Cornwall Council's housing target, by prioritising meeting the demand for housing from lifestyle Cornwall, locks us into a spiral of never-ending population growth and urbanisation. This works to undermine and dismantle familiar landmarks, adding to a widespread sense of uncertainty and lost bearings. In fact, we meet another vicious circle.



Disempowering Cornish communities

The Local Plan talks of 'community sustainability' but brackets this simply with more houses and more people.¹⁰⁰ Surveys concur that, since the 1970s, there has been a growing sense of alienation from democratic institutions and the political process in the UK and indeed more widely across Europe. Expenses scandals, an electoral system stacked in favour of the neo-liberal/centralist consensus, bankers' bonuses and a culture of greed have all contributed to produce a deep distrust of the political class. One symptom of this is a decline in voting and shrinking membership of political parties, although compensated for to some extent by pressure group activity.

Alienation is reinforced by central government planning policies. These promise localism and then deliver centralism by imposing a strategic planning process where growth is the only option and past trends have to be perpetuated. If local planning decisions are overturned on appeal, or central government inspectors revise housing targets upwards, 'localism' and 'sustainability' become widely regarded as empty shells and cynicism is reinforced. Crucially, local communities realise they have no real control over their local environment.

In Cornwall the process of alienation from centrally imposed, externally-driven change is aggravated by a recent history of relatively rapid population growth. This has transformed communities but has occurred irrespective of the wishes of those local communities who have rarely, if ever, been asked for their views. If change appears as an uncontrollable juggernaut, then people lose faith in their ability to control their everyday lives. In such a context it's easy to resort to the role of passive consumer rather than active citizen with a stake in the planning process. Indeed, this is the role that neo-liberal dogma maps out for us,. Active citizens who question the nature of their orders are the last thing elites want. A critical citizenry might pose a danger to a system geared to meeting the extravagant and greedy demands of a small minority of the population.

7. Conclusion: live, work and decide in Cornwall

This paper has described how we are locked into a series of interconnected circles that reproduce high housing and population growth. A relatively high historic growth rate since the 1960s has not guaranteed access to decent housing at an affordable price for Cornish communities. Continuing on a path of adding to the quantity of the housing stock in a context of relying on the market delivery of housing carries no promise that these long-term problems will be solved. Indeed, it's very likely to make them worse. At the same time the costs in terms of the loss of countryside and productive land, environmental degradation and the less quantifiable spirit of Cornwall are profound and set to rise.

We have a choice. We can continue with a strategy of *Unaffordability*, accommodating externally generated demand while we watch a unique heritage dissolve in front of our eyes. Or we can begin on the path towards *Affordability* (in both senses of the word), meeting the real needs of local communities and strengthening Cornish distinctiveness and self-confidence. An Affordability strategy would replace a narrow focus on housing growth with a genuinely 'Green Cornwall' objective as the central element in a vision of Cornwall's future.

No-one is saying this would be easy. Or quick. It will involve community activism, democratic re-charging and grass-roots organising. It will need to confront some very powerful vested interests who have a stake in the current building bonanza. It would have to work towards a major paradigm shift in attitudes to housing and the environment, one that replaces developer-led growth with community-led democratic sustainability.

In the short term, we must press that Cornwall Council works up a strong and robust case for a lower housing target. This would demand special treatment for Cornwall in view of the particular pressures of second home ownership and tourism. It would focus on identifying and demanding the powers to deal with the under-provision of social housing for local needs, while reinforcing Cornwall's unique identity and sense of place.

In the longer-term, wider, more radical reforms will be required.

These might include

- abolishing Cornwall Council, replacing it with a strategic-level Cornish Assembly and rebuilding democratic local government in Cornwall.
- rating second homes more highly and/or controlling their spread. This could be done, for example, as in Switzerland, by limiting the proportion of second and holiday homes to 20% of the housing stock in any community.
- revaluing the rating system and ultimately replacing it with a progressive local property or land tax.
- investigating the possibility of a two-tier housing market as in the Channel Isles.

Useful websites

Most of the data used in this document can be accessed online. The most useful portals are

Cornwall Council's Local Plan: <http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/planning/planning-policy/cornwall-local-plan/cornwall-local-plan-strategic-policies/>

Census data are best accessed through nomis:
<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/Default.asp>

DCLG Live Tables: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-communities-and-local-government/about/statistics>

Eurostat:
http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/region_cities/regional_statistics/data/main_tables

Land Registry: <http://www.landregistry.gov.uk/public/house-prices-and-sales>

ONS: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/index.html>

¹ Eurostat regional statistics database, at

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/region_cities/regional_statistics/data/main_tables

² Cornwall Council, *Cornwall Structure Plan draft for consultation*, 1979, 37 and Census 2011

³ DCLG Live Table 123.

⁴ DCLG Live Table 253 at www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-house-building

⁵ Cornwall Council Housing Evidence Base, *Briefing Note (BN) 15: Housing backlog and shortfall*, 2013, p.1.

⁶ DCLG, *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)*, 2012, paras 14 and 47.

⁷ GVA/Edge Analytics, *Strategic Housing Market Needs Assessment (SHMNA)*, 2013, p.7

⁸ SHMNA, pp.3 and 5.

⁹ Cornwall Council Housing Evidence Base, *Briefing Note (BN) 2: Housing market and SHMNA*, 2013, p.3.

¹⁰ Cornwall Council Housing Evidence Base, *Briefing Note (BN) 1: Objectively assessed need*, 2013, pp.2/3.

¹¹ SHMNA, pp.128 and 130.

¹² Cornwall Council Housing Evidence Base, *Briefing Note (BN) 3: Population and population projections*, 2013, p.6.

¹³ BN 3, p.3.

¹⁴ ONS, *Methodology: Interim 2011-based subnational population projections*, 2012.

¹⁵ BN 3, 8 and 4.

¹⁶ BN 3, p.2.

¹⁷ SHMNA, p.53.

¹⁸ SHMNA, p.53.

¹⁹ SHMNA, pp.68/69. For the more general consternation stirred up in the wider planning community by census data that might (horrors) reduce the 'need' for more housing, see <http://www.planningresource.co.uk/article/1227822/report-warns-household-projection-data-risk>

²⁰ Cornwall Council Housing Evidence Base, *Briefing Note (BN) 4: Households and household projections*, 2013, pp.6-7.

²¹ The Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research, *Choice of assumptions in forecasting housing requirements*, 2013, p.24.

²² SHMNA, p.162.

²³ SHMNA, p.170.

²⁴ SHMNA, p.87.

²⁵ SHMNA, p.108.

²⁶ SHMNA, p.108.

²⁷ Cornwall Council Housing Evidence Base, *Briefing Note (BN) 11: Second and holiday homes*, 2013, p.1.

²⁸ <http://www.persimmonhomes.com/copperfield-tolgarick-10079>

²⁹ <http://www.stags.co.uk/pages/events>

³⁰ Cornwall Council Housing Evidence Base, *Briefing Note (BN) 5: Jobs, housing and economic growth projections*, 2013, p.7.

³¹ Cornwall Council Housing Evidence Base, *Briefing Note (BN) 14: House prices and affordability*, 2013, p.7.

³² Cited in BN 14, p.2.

³³ BN 2, p.1.

³⁴ BN 4, p.2.

³⁵ Cornwall Council Housing Evidence Base, *Briefing Note (BN) 6: Why do we need to build more houses?*, 2013, p.3.

³⁶ BN 4, p.1.

³⁷ Census 2011, KS403EW.

³⁸ BN 15, p.3.

³⁹ Lyn Bryant, 'The Cornish Family', in Philip Payton (ed.), *Cornwall Since the War*, Redruth, 1993, p.194.

⁴⁰ SHMNA, p.111.

⁴¹ <http://democracy.cornwall.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=618&MId=4904&Ver=4>

⁴² January 2013 Home Choice register data supplied by Affordable Housing Team, Cornwall Council.

⁴³ www.cllrandrewwallis.co.uk/welfare-reforms-and-the-bedrom-tax/

⁴⁴ SHMNA, p.167.

⁴⁵ SHMNA, p.180.

⁴⁶ SHMNA, pp.166-75.

⁴⁷ Cornwall Council. *Cornwall Monitoring Report 2012/13*, 2013, p.14.

⁴⁸ SHMNA, p.174.

⁴⁹ SHMNA, p.173.

⁵⁰ SHMNA, p.138.

⁵¹ BN 1, p.2.

⁵² SHMNA, p.140.

⁵³ SHMNA, p.147.

⁵⁴ SHMNA, p.72.

⁵⁵ Nomis Labour Force Survey data, at <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/Default.asp>

⁵⁶ SHMNA, p.70.

⁵⁷ Of course, some of this spending will leak out of the local economy, as profits for externally owned companies for example, or when goods are imported. Given Cornwall's peripheral status, this leakage could be quite large.

⁵⁸ *Western Morning News*, 15 Dec 2011.

⁵⁹ Cornwall Council, *Annual Monitoring Report*, 2010-11, 2011. pp.44-46.

⁶⁰ Tim Jackson, *Prosperity Without Growth: Economics for a finite planet*, London, 2009, p.42. See also the tentative doubts raised in a discussion paper within Cornwall Council by Kathryn Byfield and Robin Miller, 'Is rapid economic growth the right target', 2010.

⁶¹ See also Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, *The Spirit Level: Why equality is better for everyone*, London, 2010.

⁶² NPPF, pp.i, 2, 4 and 5.

⁶³ NPPF, pp.6 and 12.

⁶⁴ Cornwall Council, *Local Plan submission draft (LP)*, 2014, p.9.

⁶⁵ Jackson, pp.50 and 67-86.

⁶⁶ Cornwall Council Housing Evidence Base, *Briefing Note (BN) 10: Affordable housing*, 2013, p.5.

⁶⁷ SHMNA, p.107.

⁶⁸ Responses available from this webpage - <http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/planning/planning-policy/cornwall-local-plan/cornwall-local-plan-strategic-policies/our-preferred-approach-for-a-core-strategy-and-options-and-preferred-options-for-minerals-energy-and-waste/?page=32791#Response>

⁶⁹ For an example see Home Builders Federation response number 559, p.11, available at <http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/planning/planning-policy/cornwall-local-plan/cornwall-local-plan-strategic-policies/strategic-policies-pre-submission-stage/strategic-policies-pre-submission-version-list-of-representations/>

⁷⁰ <http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/planning/housing-delivery-partnerships/?page=27133>

⁷¹ NPPF, p.4, para 14.

⁷² Communication from Cllr Hannaford, 3 Jan 2014 and meeting with Cornwall Council planners, 8 Oct 2013.

⁷³ SHMNA, p.140.

⁷⁴ Cornwall Council, *Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment*, 2013, pp.29 and 10.

⁷⁵ SHMNA, p.15.

⁷⁶ BN 1, p.1.

⁷⁷ SA, p.78.

⁷⁸ Communication from Cllr Hannaford, 3 Jan 2014.

⁷⁹ Generalised Land Use Database, 2001 and 2005, available at ONS neighbourhood statistics - <http://neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/Download1.do?&nsjs=true&nsck=false&nssvg=false&nswid=1600>

⁸⁰ NPPF, p.5.

⁸¹ SHMNA, p.147.

⁸² NPPF, p.4.

⁸³ SHMNA, p.148.

⁸⁴ Cornwall Council, *Planning Future Cornwall: Cornwall Local Plan Strategic Policies 2010-2030 Sustainability Appraisal (SA)*, 2013.

⁸⁵ Robert Brulle, 'Institutionalizing delay: foundation funding and the creation of U.S. climate change counter-movement organizations', *Climatic Change*, December 2013.

⁸⁶ For the latest see Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), *Fifth Assessment Report: Mitigation of Climate Change*, 2014, available at <http://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/>

⁸⁷ Local Plan, p.30.

⁸⁸ Cornwall Council, *Green Cornwall Strategy*, 2011, p.15.

⁸⁹ IPPC, *Fourth Assessment Report*, 2007.

⁹⁰ Cornwall Council, *Green Cornwall Programme Impact Analysis*, 2013, p.5.

⁹¹ Robin Page, *Daily Telegraph*, 1 Mar 2014.

⁹² SA, p.82.

⁹³ United Nations, *Global Environmental Outlook Report 5*, 2012, p.134.

⁹⁴ SA, pp.47/48, 8 and 56; Cornwall Council, *Planning Future Cornwall: Cornwall Local Plan Strategic Policies 2010-2030: Addendum to Sustainability Appraisal (B)*, 2014, p.38.

⁹⁵ Alice Peasgood and Mark Goodwin, *Introducing Environment*, Oxford, 2007, p.134.

⁹⁶ Cornwall Council, *Cornwall environment evidence report*, 2010, pp.4-5.

⁹⁷ NPPF, p.6.

⁹⁸ SHMNA, p.209.

⁹⁹ SA, p.49.

¹⁰⁰ Local Plan, p.90.