

Shortage of new bungalows puts elderly at risk

Andrew Ellson, Consumer Affairs Correspondent
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In the past 30 years the number of bungalows built each year has dropped from almost 30,000 to 2,210 in 2016

The failure to build enough bungalows risks putting a strain on the health service and care homes as the population ages, according to a report.

Housebuilders are not constructing enough bungalows to meet demand because the profit margins are lower than for two-storey houses, the study claims.

In the past 30 years the number of bungalows built each year has dropped from almost 30,000 to 2,210, according to the National House Building Council. That is a fall from one in six new homes to one in 63. In cities such as Portsmouth, Oxford and Aberdeen less than one in 40 homes for sale is a bungalow, making it harder for older people to find a property without stairs.

In Greater London, where 9 million people live, there are 129 bungalows listed for sale on Rightmove, the property website.

The shortage means that bungalows on average command a premium of almost 20 per cent on the price per square foot of multi-storey houses.

The report says that the effect of fewer bungalows could be devastating because the lack of suitable properties for older people will force them into care homes earlier or result in longer hospital stays, putting more strain on the NHS. It predicts that developers could stop building bungalows entirely within five years as the housing crisis worsens.

Alex Gosling, chief executive of House Simple, the online agent that conducted the study, said: “There is a lack of suitable housing for the older generation, and with fewer bungalows being built and the existing stock declining or off the market indefinitely, there is a crisis brewing. That could put a terrific strain on the care home system and NHS in the next decade.

“We have an ageing population but there isn’t the housing infrastructure in place to meet the needs of this demographic. Bungalows have proved to be a solution but the fact that fewer are being built every year speaks volumes.

“Without any incentives or government intervention . . . there is every chance that housebuilders could stop building bungalows altogether in the next three to five years.”

The shortage of bungalows is most pronounced in Merseyside, where the asking price of an average three-bed bungalow is more than double the average cost of a three-bed house in the area. However, not all areas have a shortage. The study found that one in four homes for sale in the retirement town of Worthing and one in five for sale in Bournemouth and Eastbourne are bungalows.

Steve Turner, of the House Builders Federation, said: “Land is

at a premium and landowners know what they can sell land for, so in many cases it is not viable to build bungalows because the number of rooms you get compared to a two or three-storey house is lower.

“There are solutions available through the planning system where local authorities allocate land for retirement housing only and this is reflected in sale price to the developer.”

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3 comments

Mr John Maltby

John

A better solution might be the building of Mews type cottages with patio gardens and parking spaces using small infill sites in existing locations.

A far better use of land than building bungalows and more suitable for retired people to manage.

Heather

Flats with lifts and balconies should do just as well.

But not those retirement properties where the ongoing costs are high, and the penalties on selling are costly.

Also as you get older looking after a garden is hard work.

David Edwards

There is an existing stock of bungalows, but building new ones in areas where housing land is scarce is unjustifiable. If there is net migration of hundreds of thousands annually, most to the south east, and many homes in London are kept empty by foreign investors; making the best use of developable land is essential. So even if Builders wanted to build bungalows, they shouldn't get Planning Permission.

If you live in Greater London and really want to move to a bungalow, because even a ground floor flat is unacceptable, moving to one of the areas mentioned is worth considering.

Southern Rail permitting, it is possible to go up to London and back in a day. Some nice 1930's bungalows are in prominent locations on cliff-tops near Brighton and show just how the UK would be if Planning controls were scrapped so there was a home in the UK for anybody from anywhere who wanted it.