



The countryside charity  
Sussex



Sussex  
Wildlife Trust

By Email Only

23<sup>rd</sup> September 2020

Dear Caroline Ansell MP,

**Stop the ‘Mutant Algorithm’ for the sake of Sussex**

We are writing to you on behalf of CPRE Sussex, the countryside charity and the Sussex Wildlife Trust. Both charities campaign for a planning system that empowers local communities and protects and enhances the rich biodiversity of Sussex. A fit-for-purpose planning process has the power to ensure everyone has a decent home, that meets their needs and that they can afford. New homes should be inspiring and beautiful places to live, where people and nature thrive together.

Algorithms have been in the news recently, and not in a good way. The next one to afflict Sussex is contained within a consultation on ‘Changes to the Current Planning System’ (<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/changes-to-the-current-planning-system> )

The proposed ‘changes to the standard method for assessing local housing need’ will change the calculation for how many new houses have to be built in each local authority area. We forward to you an analysis of the new housing targets to be proposed for the various Local Planning Authorities under these proposals. The analysis is from the planning consultants Lichfields but is forwarded to you from CPRE Sussex and the Sussex Wildlife Trust.

For Eastbourne the proposed figures are (homes per year):

Current local plan target	239
Actual build, average last 3 years	153
Current 'standard method' target	675
<b>New proposed new target</b>	<b>486</b>

The proposed new target is a reduction on the current method, however both nationally derived targets are undeliverable considering the constraints on Eastbourne between the sea and the Downs. We are concerned that under the new proposals, Wealden will continue to be required to meet the ‘unmet need’ of Eastbourne, thus raising Wealden’s target even higher. This is despite the fact that over 53% of Wealden District falls within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Meeting this target will require a substantial loss of our rural countryside and associated

To promote, enhance and protect a thriving countryside for everyone’s benefit

President: Lord Egremont

Campaign to Protect Rural England Sussex Branch CIO | Registered charity number: 1156568

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habitats and will result in unsustainable, car-dependent developments that do nothing to meet the Government's commitment to net zero. It is also plainly undeliverable when compared to the current actual build figures. It is part of no housebuilders business model to build so many houses that you have to sell them at a discount and this was illustrated within the Letwin Review of 2018. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-review-of-build-out-final-report>

When the new numbers prove undeliverable, the consequence will be to declare all Sussex Local Plans "out of date", and effectively abolish the democratic planning system, which has played such a crucial role over the past half century in maintaining the beauty and ecological integrity of our Sussex countryside. That may be attractive to some Whitehall lobbyists but it will not be at all popular with your constituents.

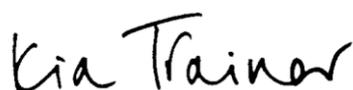
The term 'mutant algorithm' was coined by Andrew Griffith, member for Arundel and South Downs, at a recent parliamentary debate. We have attached a transcript of this debate for your information. Earlier this month, housing minister Christopher Pincher said the method set out in proposals "is not set in stone" and that the government would consider a "better methodology." We are asking all Sussex MPs to challenge the current proposals and put forward a positive vision for planning that can deliver on our collective economic, social and environmental objectives.

We would greatly appreciate working with you to raise these concerns in Parliament, such as the debate on motions related to planning on Wednesday 30th September and would be happy to meet to discuss this issue further. We would be grateful if your office could email [info@cpresussex.org.uk](mailto:info@cpresussex.org.uk) with some suggested times and dates and we can arrange a meeting with specialists on this topic from both our organisations.

We know that you feel passionately about the landscape and environment of your constituency, and we hope we can support you in defending it in the face of this unprecedented threat.

We look forward to meeting with you.

Yours sincerely,



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Yours sincerely,



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