



The countryside charity
Sussex



Sussex
Wildlife Trust

By Email Only

23rd September 2020

Dear Sir Peter,

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 Worthing the proposed figures are (homes per year)

Current local plan target	200
Average build, last 3 years	374
Current 'standard method' target	885
New proposed new target	871

Meeting this target will require a substantial loss of our rural countryside and associated 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 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>

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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When the new numbers prove undeliverable, the consequence will be to declare all Sussex Local Plans "out of date", and effectively abolish the democratic planning system, which has played such a crucial role over the past half century in maintaining the beauty and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. Or, as you so rightly said at the recent parliamentary debate about planning reforms where Andrew Griffith, member for Arundel and South Downs, coined the term 'mutant algorithm' – "pay attention to the shareholders, but even more to the nature of our countryside running down to the coast from the national park...." As you stated, with these proposals, the Ferring/Goring Gap will be under even greater pressure.

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 further 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 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,



Kia Trainor
Director, CPRE Sussex
01825 890975
info@cpresussex.org.uk

Yours sincerely,



Tor Lawrence
Chief Executive, Sussex Wildlife Trust
01273 492630
swtconservation@sussexwt.org.uk