

Embargoed until 00.01 on Thursday 22 April 2021

Spokespeople and case studies available for interview

More ‘Crown jewels’ of Sussex countryside under threat – pressured not protected.

CPRE Sussex, the countryside charity, is calling on the government to halt reckless development in and adjacent to protected landscapes and prevent high levels of housing pressure in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in its upcoming Planning Bill. This is in response to a CPRE report published today which found that:

- Pressure for housing development in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in Sussex is particularly high.
- Since 2012, the amount of greenfield land in England’s Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty that will be built on has more than doubled (129% increase)
- Such development is ‘land hungry’ and is not solving the affordable housing crisis.
- In the last four years alone, planning permissions to build over 900 homes in the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty have been granted.
- There is high housing pressure on land around AONBs, with the number of homes built in the setting (within 500 meters of the boundary) increasing by 135% since 2012.

England badly needs a better land use planning strategy that accounts for climate change, maximises the use of brownfield land, provides badly needed affordable housing, ensures our food supply, and connects nature rather than fragmenting it.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are some of our most precious landscapes, which many people would expect to mean that they are safe from being built on. But even though these areas have the strongest protections available in planning law, they are falling foul to an increasing amount of rapid and reckless housing development, according to new analysis from CPRE, the countryside charity.

Threats to England’s 34 AONBs from development is increasing at an alarming rate – [***‘Beauty still betrayed: The state of our AONBs 2021’***](#) report reveals a 129% increase in the amount of greenfield land planned to be built over. The research, conducted by Glenigan Consultancy for CPRE, has found that high housing pressure on land around AONBs, with the number of homes built in the setting (within 500 meters of the boundary) increasing by 135% since 2012

There is a different kind of north/south divide when it comes to threats to our AONBs, with particular pressure on AONB land in the south west and south east of England. Only four AONB areas - High Weald, Cotswolds, Dorset and Chilterns - have accounted for over half (52%) of all greenfield development in AONBs, with the High

Weald AONB seeing the highest development pressure with 932 housing units on greenfield land approved since 2017.

It is clear this kind of sprawling development is bad for people, nature and the countryside. The research found that the developments on AONBs use up twice as much land compared to the national average for developments. Yet only 16% of the homes built in AONBs are considered affordable even by the government's own definition. Clear evidence shows that the real affordability of housing in many rural areas is much worse than the government estimates. Tragically, the kind of housing currently being provided will do little to tackle the affordable housing crisis, while concreting over precious countryside and setting back action to tackle the climate and nature emergencies.

Commenting on the findings, Dan Osborn, Chair of CPRE Sussex said:

'We are losing some of our most valuable green spaces and food land at a time when the nature and climate emergencies should be driving a different approach. Not only are we concreting over some of our most beautiful landscapes, new developments are not creating the affordable homes we want and need. The Government must toughen up national planning policy so that we get a better outcome for people and nature. It says it favours beauty – it needs to act accordingly; not betray it.'

CPRE, the countryside charity, is calling on the government to use the upcoming Planning Bill to strengthen planning protections for precious green space and prevent high levels of development in AONBs and further still, only allow development if it meets the needs of local people, nature and the countryside.

Examples in Sussex:

High Weald AONB

A 600-dwelling allocation at **Pease Pottage** in the High Weald was approved by Mid-Sussex District Council, despite arguments that the development did not meet local need and would compromise the landscape

See Photos attached

Land Off Crawley Road Faygate (473 dwellings) is comprised of farmland within the AONB. The application, which was refused by Horsham District Council, is now subject to an Appeal. Local group KOGS' (Keep Our Green Spaces) formed in February 2020 to fight for this green space, which is described as "loved and enjoyed by so many" and "An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty where we can walk to from our homes; an area which is good for the soul, families to play, animals to enjoy and memories to be made. These fields aren't just something we glance at when driving our car. They are a hub for our community, from residents, dog walkers, horse riders, photographers, nature enthusiasts and ramblers."

An application to build 119 Homes at **Eridge road, Crowborough** was approved in 2020 against the advice of the High Weald AONB Unit and despite previously being rejected by the planning committee on landscape grounds.

Chichester Harbour AONB

A raft of applications along the edge of the AONB have been submitted to Chichester District Council in recent months, including **Land at Highgrove Farm, Bosham** (301 dwellings)

Richard Evans writes “The development represents something like a 25% expansion of the village - without any investment in infrastructure, which is already overloaded. In particular sewerage is already overloaded - resulting in discharges of sewerage into the road a matter of yards from our house. It will have seriously adverse impact on the AONB and particular block an important wildlife corridor from AONB to S Downs. It will contribute to the ribbon development along the A259 which will result in Bosham losing its identity as a village and becoming a suburb of Chichester”.

ENDS

For further information, case studies or to interview a spokesperson, please contact:

Kia Trainor | Director CPRE Sussex

T: 01825 890975 | DD: 07964894333

E: kia.trainor@cpresussex.org.uk | www.cpresussex.org.uk

About the State of AONBs 2021 report

This report from CPRE, the countryside charity, examines the extent of housing development taking place in England’s AONBs between 2017 and 2020. The research, conducted by Glenigan on behalf of CPRE has found that since 2017/2018, an average of 1,670 housing units have been approved on an average of 119 hectares of greenfield land within AONBs per year. The report also looks into how AONB housing developments have provided for local communities in terms of affordable housing provision, as well as highlighting which regions are most under threat.

About CPRE, the countryside charity

CPRE is the countryside charity that campaigns to promote, enhance and protect the countryside for everyone’s benefit, wherever they live. With a local CPRE in every county, we work with communities, businesses and government to find positive and lasting ways to help the countryside thrive - today and for generations to come. Founded in 1926, President: Emma Bridgewater, Patron: Her Majesty The Queen. www.cpre.org.uk

CPRE Sussex is the local CPRE group in Sussex

[Homepage - CPRE Sussex](http://www.cpre.org.uk)