



The countryside charity
Sussex

CPRE Sussex
Brownings Farm
Blackboys
East Sussex TN22 5HG
Telephone 01825 890975
info@cpresussex.org.uk
www.cpresussex.org.uk

Maria Caulfield MP

By email: maria.caulfield.mp@parliament.uk

May 2021

Dear Maria Caulfield MP,

The Lewes Local Plan and wider planning reforms

Thank you very much for making the time to meet with representatives from CPRE Lewes on Monday 10th May 2021.

We are heartened that you fully support the wishes of local people for a planning system that creates thriving places, tackles the climate emergency and ensures the protection of our valued green spaces. In particular we are pleased to hear that you agree;

1. The Housing Delivery Test should be abolished. As you quite rightly highlighted, there are sites in Lewes with planning permission that lie idle (such as Lewes North Street and Newhaven marina) whilst unsustainable greenfield applications escalate. The housing delivery test does nothing to tackle this and only exacerbates the problem.
2. The assessment of local housing needs should be based on the most up-to-date evidence available. The Dec 2020 MHCLG instructions for assessing housing need for use in the “standard method” ignored both the 2020 assessment (based on 2018 data) and the 2018 assessment (based on 2016 data). Instead, it insisted on the use of the 2016 assessment (based on 2014 data), even though this particular assessment is now known to have been a substantial over-estimate.
3. The “affordability factor” should be removed from the process of assessing housing need/the standard method as this increases housing targets in the most profitable areas and will therefore do nothing for the government’s ‘levelling up’ agenda.

All the above measures could be addressed before the Planning Bill, announced in the Queen’s speech on Tuesday, is enacted. It is important that these changes are made urgently to prevent the rapidly unfolding and very unpopular planning wrangles underway in Lewes District.

In addition to these urgent changes to the current planning system, we are also very glad that you support our final ‘ask’ which could be delivered as part of future planning reforms;

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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4. The requirement to review Local Plans should be aligned with the practicalities of the required Local Plan Review process and that Local Plans should deliver **types** of new housing to match the identified need, as well as the total number.

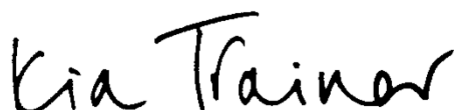
You may have seen the reaction of CPRE to the Queen's speech on Tuesday. CPRE Sussex does share the concerns which were voiced by Theresa May during the debate following the speech:

4.33 pm Mrs Theresa May (Maidenhead) (Con):

*"Underpinning the proposals seems to be the concept that the reason more homes are not being built is the planning system. In fact, the last figure I saw from the Local Government Association showed that 1 million homes have been given planning permission but have yet to be built, so the issue is not just about the planning system. A key issue in the White Paper proposals was the division of the area of a local authority into three different areas—we read that this may now be two: of growth and protection. In the growth area, outline planning permission was automatically to be given to developers.... I think my hon. Friend felt that the proposal would bring greater local involvement. In fact, the White Paper proposals would bring less local involvement. They would reduce local democracy, remove the opportunity for local people to comment on specific developments, and remove the ability of local authorities to set development policies locally. I think the White Paper proposals would also lead to fewer affordable homes, because they hand developers a get-out clause. We need more homes to be built. We need the right homes to be built in the right places. I fear that, unless the Government look again at the White Paper proposals, what we will see is not more homes, but, potentially, **the wrong homes being built in the wrong places**"*

Unfortunately, we did not have time to discuss in detail how wildlife recovery and people's easy access to nature can be at the heart of planning reform. The Planning Bill must align seamlessly with the requirements of the Environment Act, particularly Nature Recovery Strategies and Mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain. We would be happy to talk to you in more detail about this, with representatives from the Sussex Wildlife Trust, at a future date.

Yours sincerely,



Kia Trainor
Director, CPRE Sussex