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PRESS RELEASE: Rural homelessness increases in Sussex

As homelessness increases and social housing waiting lists rise, CPRE Sussex is backing a campaign for affordable rural housing.

Homelessness has increased in the four predominantly rural Sussex districts.

From 2018/19 to 2022/23, the number of homeless people in Chichester, Horsham, Rother and Wealden rose by 8% from 825 to 892.

Social housing waiting lists also grew in five Sussex districts classed as largely, mainly or significantly rural. The number of people on waiting lists in Chichester, Horsham, Lewes, Rother and Wealden rose from 5,141 in 2018 to 6,195 in 2023.

At the same time, affordable home build completions have largely stagnated. In 2021/22, 1,758 affordable homes were completed across the whole of Sussex, compared to a peak of 2,115 in 2014/15.

The figures were revealed as the national CPRE charity launched its campaign to build support for rural affordable housing on Tuesday (March 19).

CPRE Sussex director Paul Steedman said: “These figures paint a stark picture of the need for genuinely affordable housing, which meets local need, in Sussex. The chronic shortage of affordable rural housing is depriving parts of Sussex of skills, economic activity, and crucial public services.

“This campaign will put pressure on the next government to deliver genuinely affordable rural homes. I urge everyone in Sussex to get involved.”

Of the rural areas, Rother had the most people who were homeless in 2022/23 and the most people on social housing waiting lists in 2023 – 278 and 2,159 respectively.

Rother also had the lowest number of social housing completions in 2021/22. Adur had the lowest total number of social housing completions since 1999.

Mid Sussex had the highest number of social housing completions in 2021/22. Brighton & Hove had the highest total number of completions.

Find out more about the affordable rural housing campaign at cpre.org.uk/news/cpre-launches-campaign-to-build-support-for-rural-affordable-housing/

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For press inquiries and interview opportunities contact sheena.campbell@cpresussex.org.uk.

Notes for editors:

1. Rural classification for Chichester, Horsham and Rother Districts is Largely Rural (rural including hub towns 50-79%)
2. Rural classification for Wealden District is Mainly Rural (rural including hub towns >=80%)
3. Rural homelessness has increased between 2018/19 (825) and 2022/23 (892) in the four predominantly rural Sussex districts
4. Rural classification for Lewes is Urban with Significant Rural (rural including hub towns 26-49%)
5. Between 1999/2000 and 2021/22 completions of affordable homes in Sussex peaked at 2,115 in 2014/15. The lowest level was 804 in 2001/02.
6. Between 1999/2000 and 2021/22 29,217 affordable homes were completed in Sussex. The top districts for completions were Brighton & Hove (4,572), Horsham District (3,507) and Chichester (3,175). The lowest completion levels were in Adur (909), Eastbourne (1,151) and Lewes (1,161).

About CPRE Sussex

CPRE Sussex is shaping a greener future for Sussex. Our priorities are:

- Beautiful landscapes, rich in nature and greener towns and cities
- Countryside and green spaces which are accessible to all, enriching lives and health
- Sustainable development for thriving communities
- Effective responses to the climate emergency

We engage with decision makers, influencing them and challenging them to protect the Sussex countryside and green spaces. We inform on environmental issues and empower individuals and communities with robust evidence to defend and enhance the green spaces they love. We believe in collaborating with others to ensure a greener future for our county. We research and provide advice on planning issues. Together we can shape a greener future for Sussex.