

2 August 2024

PRESS RELEASE: Planning changes will put more pressure on nature and landscapes in Sussex

CPRE Sussex welcomes 'brownfield first' approach and focus on social housing but says proposals will put more development pressure from unaffordable homes on the county.

A Sussex charity has responded to a series of planning reforms [announced by deputy prime minister Angela Rayner](#) earlier this week.

CPRE Sussex said it shared ambitions to tackle the affordable housing crisis, as well as the rapid transition to renewable energy to tackle the climate crisis.

It also welcomed the confirmation of a 'brownfield first' approach, recognition of the importance of housing for social rent, and acknowledgement that opportunities for growing housing are greatest in towns and cities

However, having examined the [consultation documents](#), the charity has raised serious concerns including:

- Without further changes, the plans will make little difference to housing affordability while more development pressure will threaten the countryside's wildlife and tranquillity.
- Higher housing targets are being imposed on almost every council in Sussex.
- The focus should be on housing for social rent according to local need – but no new powers are being given to councils to lead on building themselves.
- The government does not appear to understand the unique challenges of rural affordable housing.
- Building still appears to be overwhelmingly left to big private companies whose biggest profits come from building 'executive homes' on greenfield sites in the south of England.

CPRE Sussex director Paul Steedman said: "Our first look at these proposals suggests that, by themselves, they will make little difference to housing affordability, especially for the people who are struggling most – low-income renters.

"At the same time, they will place more development pressure from unaffordable homes on Sussex's nature, landscape and water as mandatory housing targets are proposed to rise in every council area in Sussex bar one."

CPRE Sussex believes local councils are best placed to assess their own housing need, rather than having targets imposed on them. The continued use of a turbocharged 'affordability factor' relies on an incorrect assumption that setting higher housing targets and leaving delivery to the private sector will make any meaningful difference to housing costs.

'Golden rules' proposals do require higher rates of affordable housing to be built and seek to capture the uplift in land values created by the grant of planning permission to pay for public infrastructure. But this only applies to areas released for development from the Green Belt. As Sussex has no formally designated Green Belt, it gets none of these benefits.

"Imposing higher housing targets on almost every council in Sussex will not make housing cheaper," said Mr Steedman.

"What it will do is force councils to give companies permission to build in many more locations – places valued by local people for their tranquillity and with high value for nature. Parts of Sussex not covered by National Landscapes will be particularly under threat, the Low Weald in particular.

"We need to recognise top-down targets, combined with an approach that puts the delivery of public goods in the hands of big property companies and landowners, is not a recipe for tackling problems of affordability, nature or climate."

CPRE Sussex is calling for:

- Much greater involvement for councils in building social housing.
- A Land Use Framework to move away from a developer-led approach.
- Greater recognition of the value and rights of nature.
- Land value increases to be captured for the public everywhere.
- Golden rules to be applied to all greenfield areas.

[Find out more about CPRE's work on affordable housing here.](#)

[Have your say on the proposed changes to planning policy here.](#)

-ENDS-

For press inquiries and interview opportunities call Sheena Campbell on 07709 354924.

Notes for editors:

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.