



DEBATE PACK

Number CDP 2018/0032, 5 February 2018

Housing, Planning and the Green Belt

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This pack has been produced ahead of the General Debate to be held in the Commons Chamber on Tuesday 6 February 2018 on Housing, Planning and the Green Belt. The subject for the debate has been selected by the Backbench Business Committee at the request of Mr Laurence Robertson.

Mr Robertson told the Committee that he wanted to raise the following issues:

Given that the Government have made housing one of their priorities—we hear a lot about the broken housing market and the housing crisis—there is a need for a debate to put this in perspective. I do not think that the crisis or problem is in every area across the country; it is more acute in certain areas than others. Also, we are taking our eye off the type of housing needed. There are lots of three, four and five-bedroom houses being built, when perhaps what we need is two-bedroom houses, but planning guidance policy does not seem to allow for the right direction to be given.

His submission went on to highlight:

- Potential issues with lending policy in relation to home-ownership.
- The role and powers of the Planning Inspectorate.
- Policy and guidance around building on the greenbelt.

The [full submission](#) is on the Committee's website.

The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

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1. The supply and affordability of housing

Other Commons Library briefings

[Tackling the under-supply of housing in England](#), June 2017

[Housebuilding \(UK\): Social Indicators page](#), November 2017

[Stimulating housing supply - Government initiatives \(England\)](#), December 2017

[What is affordable housing?](#) November 2017

The Library has also produced an interactive tool, [Housing supply for local authorities](#), for comparing trends in local housing supply in England.

According to current projections, an average of 210,000 new households will form in England in each year between 2014 and 2039. In 2016/17, the total housing stock in England increased by around 217,000 residential dwellings: 15% higher than the previous year's increase but short of the estimated 240-250,000 new homes needed to keep pace with household formation.

Housing need manifests itself in a variety of ways, such as increased levels of overcrowding, acute affordability issues, more young people living with their parents for longer periods, impaired labour mobility resulting in businesses finding it difficult to recruit and retain staff, and increased levels of homelessness.

The 2015 Government set out an ambition to deliver **1 million net additions** to the housing stock by the end of the Parliament, which was expected to be in 2020. Net additions includes, for example, conversions and changes of use. Critics said that the figure did not take account of the backlog of housing need. The House of Lords Select Committee on Economic Affairs concluded in [Building More Homes](#) (2016), that the target "was not based on a robust analysis" and went on to recommend that the housing crisis required the development of at least 300,000 new homes annually "for the foreseeable future." In addition to questioning whether a target of 1 million homes is ambitious enough, there is some doubt over whether even this number is achievable.

The current Government was elected in 2017 with a manifesto pledge to meet the 2015 commitment to deliver 1 million homes by the end of 2020 and to "deliver half a million more by the end of 2022." The manifesto said that, if elected, the Government would deliver on the reforms proposed in the Housing White Paper (February 2017).

There is general consensus around the long-term under-supply housing and the need to address this, but there is less agreement within the industry about *how* best to achieve the necessary step-change in supply. Commentators agree that there is no 'silver bullet' and call for a range

of solutions across a number of policy areas. The various barriers and solutions cover issues including:

- The potential contribution of the local authority and housing association sectors. The delivery of more than 200,000 homes per year in England has, since 1939, only happened largely as a result of major public sector (local authority) housebuilding programmes.
- How to ensure that more land suitable for development is brought forward at a reasonable price, including how more public land can be brought forward more quickly.
- How to properly resource local authority planning departments and tackle a planning system that is widely seen as slow, costly and complex. There is some agreement on the need to incentivise authorities and communities to approve development, and for measures to encourage developers to build-out permissioned land without unnecessary delays.
- Consideration of how essential infrastructure to support housing development can be funded.
- How to encourage and support more small and medium sized building firms into a market that is currently dominated by a small number of large companies.
- How to ensure that the construction industry is in a fit state to deliver the housebuilding capacity that England requires. The Government commissioned [Farmer Review of the UK Construction Labour Model](#) (2016) concluded that “many features of the industry are synonymous with a sick, or even a dying patient.”

The [2017 UK Housing Review Briefing Paper](#) (September 2017) argues that while supply is of critical importance, “so is the rather more neglected issue of **affordability**, in both the private and social housing sectors.” The Resolution Foundation has said that a greater proportion of genuinely affordable homes to rent and own will be needed “to make housing less of a living standards burden for families.” The Review argues that “we cannot assume more supply is the sole answer to the problem” and goes on:

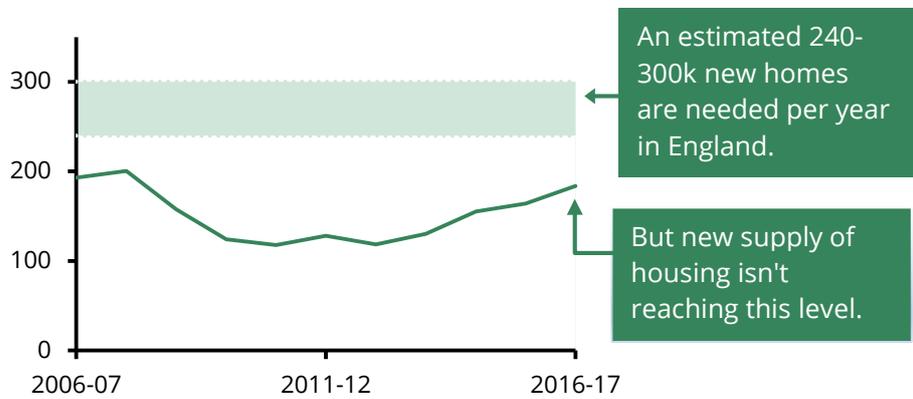
Indeed as the evidence to the Redfern Review from Oxford Economics reminds us, it is unlikely to bring house prices down except in the very long term and with sustained high output of new homes relative to household growth. Even boosting (UK) housing supply to 310,000 homes per annum in their model only brings a five per cent fall in the baseline forecast of house prices. Oxford Economics says this has ‘important implications for a policy debate that has focused heavily on supply as both the cause of the problem of high house prices and its solution.’

The 2015 Government took action to stimulate housing supply through a variety of schemes. These schemes were referred to in the Government’s response to [Building More Homes](#) which acknowledged that “we have much more to do as a country to build more homes and that the Government has a role to play in making sure our housing market works for everyone.” February 2017 saw the publication of the Housing White paper [Fixing our broken housing market](#), which set out

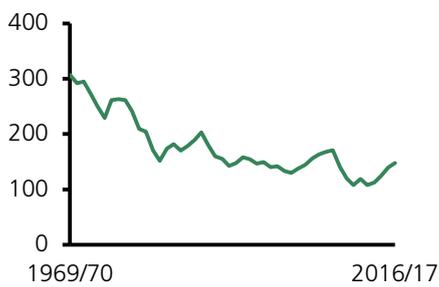
“a comprehensive package of reform to increase housing supply and halt the decline in housing affordability.” The White Paper identified a threefold problem of “not enough local authorities planning for the homes they need; housebuilding that is simply too slow; and a construction industry that is too reliant on a small number of big players.” The White Paper focuses on four main areas:

- Building the right homes in the right places.
- Building them faster.
- Widening the range of builders and construction methods.
- ‘Helping people now’ including investing in new affordable housing and preventing homelessness.

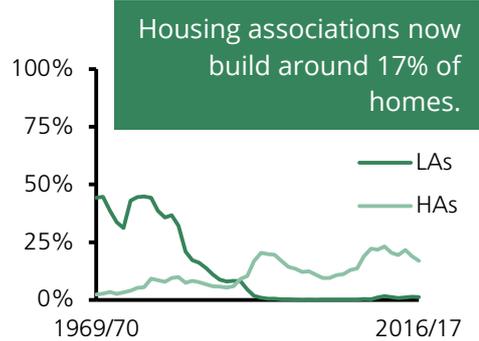
IN CHARTS: HOUSING SUPPLY IN ENGLAND

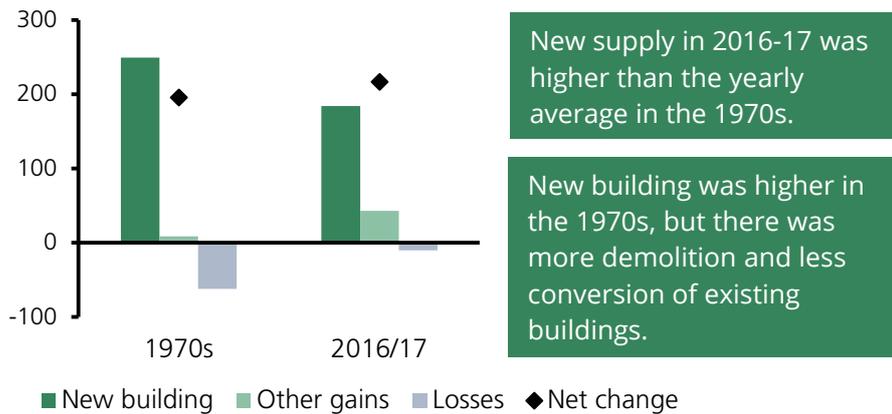


House building has declined since the 1970s.



The % of homes built by local authorities has fallen.





Sources: (top to bottom) DCLG, [Live Table 120](#); DCLG, [Live Table 209](#); DCLG, [Live Table 120](#) and Holmans, *Historical Statistics of Housing in Great Britain*; DCLG, [Live Table 104](#)

2. Mortgage lending & affordability

Some commentators have suggested that difficulties in accessing owner-occupation are due to restrictive mortgage lending practices rather than the cost of buying a house. The previous section refers to the [2017 UK Housing Review's](#) assessment that the housing crisis is one of affordability as much as supply – mortgage regulation is highlighted as a factor in the affordability of housing:

Incomes and the cost and supply of credit are also key factors, and here the constraints being imposed by mortgage regulation and a range of macro-prudential controls from the Bank of England and elsewhere come into the equation.¹

Mortgage lending policy is partly down to regulations set by the financial regulator (FCA), and partly down to the lender (for example a bank or building society).

The Mortgage Market Review recommended various changes to mortgage lending policy.

Mortgage Market Review

1. In 2005, soon after it had taken over responsibility for regulating the mortgage market, the Financial Services Authority (FSA) began a review of the mortgage market. The financial crisis which began in 2007, gave it a new focus and emphasis, reflecting the experience of lenders and lending practices exposed by that crisis.
2. When it was finally published in 2009, the review included 'tough' proposals that would limit over-lending and the likelihood of over-burdening mortgage holders with unsustainable debts. It has provoked a strong reaction from mortgage lenders and house builders who felt it had gone too far because, they claim, it will limit the number of mortgages which can be granted in future and thus deprive credit worthy individuals

¹ [2017 UK Housing Review Briefing Paper](#), p8

the chance to become homeowners. The FSA denied this and insisted that the benefits of the proposals far outweighed the costs of a, slightly, lower level of mortgage lending.

3. Since then the FSA has been replaced as the mortgage regulator by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and it is the FCA which has overseen the introduction of the new rules in April 2014.

The guiding principle under the MMR (and now the rules) is affordability. Lenders are required to take a more positive approach to verifying the affordability of a mortgage and leaving greater margins of safety before agreeing to one.

The new requirements are now part of the Financial Conduct Authority's Handbook, specifically the [MCOB 11.6 section](#). The structure of the rules is set in general terms – lenders must ensure that a mortgage is affordable given the income and expenditures of the applicant, and there are supplementary rules about what counts as evidence and what counts as income. It does not provide strict mathematical formulae hence, within the broad framework of the rules, lenders have a degree of autonomy as to where they set their limits.

Things like self-certification of income are a thing of the past and borrowers have to prove they have the means to pay off any interest only borrowings.

Typically, lenders look at income less reasonable expenses and then see if the mortgage could be paid off if the interest rate was several points above the original quote. There is often an extensive and in depth examination of spending and income. For example, this part of the assessment rules illustrates the depths to which a lender has to drill down into the applicant's circumstances (MCOB 11.6.10):

For the purposes of a [mortgage lender's](#) or [home purchase provider's](#) assessment of whether the [customer](#) will be able to pay the sums due:

(1) the committed expenditure of a [customer](#) in [MCOB 11.6.5R \(2\)\(b\)\(i\)](#) is his credit and other contractual commitments which will continue after the [regulated mortgage contract](#) or [home purchase plan](#) (or variation) is entered into;

(2) the basic essential expenditure of a [customer's](#) household in [MCOB 11.6.5R \(2\)\(b\)\(ii\)](#) comprises expenditure for: housekeeping (food and washing); gas, electricity and other heating; water; telephone; council tax; buildings insurance; ground rent and service charge for leasehold properties; and essential travel (including to work or school); and

(3) the basic quality-of-living costs of a [customer's](#) household in [MCOB 11.6.5R \(2\)\(b\)\(ii\)](#) are its expenditure which is hard to reduce and gives a basic quality of life (beyond the absolute essential expenditure in (2)).

MCOB 11.6.11 G 21/03/2016

(1) Examples of committed expenditure are: credit commitments such as secured and unsecured [loans](#) and credit cards; hire purchase agreements; child maintenance; alimony; and the cost of a [repayment strategy](#) where the [customer](#) has an [interest-only mortgage](#) (where affordability has not been assessed on a capital and interest

basis: see [MCOB 11.6.48 R](#) (Assessing affordability under an [interest-only mortgage](#))).

(2) Examples of basic quality-of-living costs (which can be reduced, but only with difficulty) are: clothing; household goods (such as furniture and appliances) and repairs; personal goods (such as toiletries); basic recreation (television, some allowance for basic recreational activities, some non-essential transport); and childcare.

The Financial Conduct Authority has published [general guidance on mortgage affordability](#).

3. Green Belt policy

Other Commons Library briefings

The Commons Library [briefing on the Green Belt](#) examines these issues in more depth.²

Briefings on various other matters to do with planning – including [planning for housing](#)³ - are available on the Library's [topic page for housing and planning](#).

Green Belt planning policy

Government policy on protection for the Green Belt is set out in chapter 9 of the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF). The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The NPPF states that the construction of new buildings should be regarded as “inappropriate” for the Green Belt, although there are some exceptions, which are listed. It is for local authorities to define and maintain Green Belt land in their local areas. The Government expects local planning authorities with Green Belts to establish Green Belt boundaries in their Local Plans, which can be altered as part of the plan review process.

[Planning Practice Guidance](#) issued by Government in March 2014 aimed to make clear that “unmet housing need (including for traveller sites) is unlikely to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and other harm to constitute the “very special circumstances” justifying inappropriate development on a site within the Green Belt”.⁴ This was followed up with further changes to planning guidance in October 2014.

The previous Government [consulted](#) on the case for changing planning policy and practice guidance to strengthen Green Belt protection in regard to traveller sites.⁵

² SN 00934, 17 November 2017

³ SN 03741, 14 June 2017

⁴ Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG, now the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), [Guidance: Housing and economic land availability assessment](#), March 2014

⁵ MHCLG, [Consultation: planning and travellers](#), September 2014

The current Government revised its [Planning Policy for Traveller Sites](#) in August 2015.⁶ From August 2015 the current Government also [announced](#) that the Planning Inspectorate would monitor all appeal decisions involving unauthorised development in the Green Belt and that, in addition, it would consider the recovery of a proportion of relevant appeals in the Green Belt for the Secretary of State's decision.⁷

How well is the Green Belt working?

In a nutshell

The question of whether the Green Belt is working well can prove contentious. Some commentators argue that the protections afforded by the Green Belt are too weak, and inappropriate development can encroach on the Green Belt, while others argue that the protections are too strong, and get in the way of building sufficient housing and so limit growth.

The Select Committee on Communities and Local Government [published a report](#) on the operation of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in December 2014.⁸ The committee concluded that there had been inappropriate development and local authorities should be encouraged to review their Green Belts.

The 2010 Natural England and Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) report, [Green Belts: A greener future](#), concluded Green Belt policy was "highly effective" in its principal purpose, but called for "more ambition" to further enhance the Green Belt protection for future generations.⁹ Paul Cheshire, Professor Emeritus of Economic Geography, LSE, [has argued](#) that building on the least attractive and lowest amenity parts of Green Belts could solve housing supply and affordability problems.¹⁰ The [Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development](#) (OECD) has also criticised the Green Belt system for being an obstacle to house building.

Whether this level of protection for the Green Belt remains necessary or appropriate - or whether, conversely, it places obstacles in the way of providing new housing – remains controversial. The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI), for example, has questioned some aspects of the Government's approach. In its [initial analysis of the housing white paper](#) (discussed later), the RTPI suggested that the role, purposes and social impact of Green Belts should be revisited and Green Belt boundaries "may well" need to change, albeit with safeguards:

Green belt boundaries may well need to change, but only through careful reviews over wider areas than single local authorities, and

⁶ DCLG, [Planning policy for traveller sites](#), August 2015

⁷ [HCWS423, 17 December 2015](#)

⁸ Communities and Local Government Committee, [Operation of the National Planning Policy Framework](#), HC 190 2014-15, 16 December 2014

⁹ Natural England and CPRE, [Green belts: A greener future](#), 2010

¹⁰ "Greenbelt myth is the driving force behind housing crisis", on *The Conversation*, 9 September 2013

where safeguards are put in place to ensure that development is sustainable, affordable and delivered in a timely manner, and without prejudice to the renewal of brownfield land.¹¹

How large is the Green Belt?

In brief

- The most recent [Green Belt statistics](#) put the size of the Green Belt at **1,634,700 hectares** at the end of 2016/17.¹²
- The Green Belt is clustered around 15 urban cores, primarily outside London and cities in the North West.
- The Green Belt has reduced by around 4,800 hectares since 2010/11, primarily due to local authorities adopting new plans that change Green Belt boundaries. Eight local authorities adopted new plans in 2016/17, resulting in a decrease of 790 hectares.

How much building has there been in the Green Belt?

Research by planning consultants Glenigan in 2015 found “a sharp increase in the number of houses securing full planning approval in the greenbelt.”¹³ According to earlier research in 2009/10, 2,258 homes were approved in Green Belt areas. In 2013/2014, the number had risen to 5,607 and in 2014/2015, it was 11,977 homes. According to DCLG’s land use change statistics, 356 hectares of Green Belt land changed to residential use in 2015-16.

Further change?

A December 2015 [Government consultation](#) proposed to amend Green Belt policy, to allow starter homes to be built in the Green Belt when a site had been identified in a neighbourhood plan and to allow for starter homes to be built on some brownfield sites in the Green Belt.¹⁴

In its [summary of the consultation responses](#), DCLG noted that – although there was support for providing more policy support for new settlements as a way of meeting development needs – some concerns had been raised about (amongst other things) protecting the Green Belt.¹⁵ On development on brownfield land, the Government noted that here too there was broad support for strengthening policy, but some respondents had voiced concerns about unintended consequences. On starter homes, the Government remarked that there had been mixed views about whether rural exception sites should be used to deliver starter homes in rural areas and about whether (for

¹¹ RTPI, [Housing white paper initial analysis](#), 8 February 2017

¹² National Statistics, [Local authority green belt statistics for England: 2016 to 2017](#)

¹³ See “[Building on greenbelt land has soared over five years](#)”, *BBC News* online, 9 June 2015

¹⁴ MHCLG, [National Planning Policy: consultation on proposed changes](#), December 2015

¹⁵ MHCLG, [Proposed changes to NPPF \(Dec 2015\):- Summary of consultation responses](#), February 2017

example) this might make it more difficult to provide affordable housing.

The [housing white paper](#), published in February last year, contained some proposals relating to planning and reiterated the Government's commitment to the Green Belt.¹⁶ It also emphasised that authorities should amend Green Belt boundaries only when they could demonstrate that they had examined fully all other reasonable options for meeting their identified development requirements.

Will there be more building on the Green Belt?

The circumstances in which future applications to build on the Green Belt might be considered were set out in a [PQ reply in October 2017](#):

[In] the Housing White Paper, Fixing our broken housing market, we proposed that a local authority should be able to alter a Green Belt boundary when it demonstrates that it has examined all other reasonable options for meeting its identified development needs, including:

- effective use of suitable brownfield and estate regeneration;
- the potential offered by under-used land (including surplus public sector land);
- optimising the density of development; and
- exploring whether other authorities can help to meet some of the identified development requirement.

We have been analysing the consultation responses on this proposed clarification, and will announce our conclusions in due course.

Autumn Budget 2017

[Media reports at the time suggested](#) that house building and reforms to planning would be central to the Budget.¹⁷ The [housing minister, Alok Sharma, was quoted](#) as suggesting that house-building would be "turbo-charged":

The prime minister is leading on this. She has said this is going to be the mission that she has in her government and we have a big meeting on Tuesday which she'll be leading with the big developers, with housing associations, with local government, so that we can turbocharge our efforts to build more homes.¹⁸

Despite several Government statements reiterating the Conservative manifesto pledge to protect the Green Belt, [there was speculation](#) that the Budget might pave the way for a review of the Green Belt, to facilitate more homes being built.¹⁹

¹⁶ MHCLG, [Fixing our broken housing market](#), Cm 9352, February 2017

¹⁷ "[Chancellor Philip Hammond puts homes at heart of budget](#)", *Times* online (paywall), 5 November 2017

¹⁸ "[Philip Hammond under pressure to deliver bold budget, say Tory sources](#)", *Guardian* online, 15 October 2017

¹⁹ "[Philip Hammond risks Tory backlash with gamble on opening up the green belt](#)", *Telegraph* online, 4 November 2017

Backing for a review of the Green Belt came from a [survey by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development \(OECD\)](#), published in October 2017.²⁰ In considering [relaxing housing constraints](#), the OECD suggested (not for the first time) that planning regulations could hamper growth.²¹ Denser building (the OECD argued) might not be enough to meet the demand for more housing, and there might be other, better ways to integrate green space into cities rather than around them, so a review of Green Belt protection was needed:

A careful reassessment of the overall economic costs and environmental benefits of maintaining the Green Belt is needed, including alternative ways to preserve or create green space, more integrated in the cities (parks) rather than around them.

The OECD acknowledged, though, that the Government was not so far persuaded.

In the [Autumn budget 2017](#), the Government said it would consult on creating an expectation that planning permission would be granted outside the local plan (but not in the Green Belt), provided that a large proportion of the homes would be offered at a discount to first time buyers or for affordable rent.²²

4. The role of the Planning Inspectorate

In a nutshell

The Planning Inspectorate hears appeals against refusal of planning permission. Some of its decisions, when granting planning permission against the advice or views of the local planning authority, have been controversial.

The Planning Inspectorate's [Procedural Guide to Planning Appeals in England](#) sets out the procedure for appealing against planning decisions.

The Commons Library briefing on [planning appeals](#) describes the appeals procedure.²³ Another Commons Library briefing on [calling in a planning application](#) contains more recent information on recovery of planning appeals.²⁴

Planning Inspectors

The Planning Inspectorate's page on [Planning Inspectors: Conduct and interests](#) includes a link to the Planning Inspectorate Code of Conduct. It states that Inspectors' decisions should be made fairly and in the public interest, having examined all the evidence and without regard to pre-determined views, irrelevant considerations or outside influence:

²⁰ OECD, [Economic survey of the UK 2017](#)

²¹ OECD, [Economic surveys: United Kingdom: Overview](#), October 2017

²² HM Treasury, [Autumn Budget 2017](#), HC587, 22 November 2017, page 60

²³ SN 05790, 19 August 2015

²⁴ SN 00930, 17 July 2017

This Code of Conduct is based on the seven principles of public life set down by Lord Nolan when Chairman of the Committee on Standards in Public Life (as subsequently amended), and set out at the end of this document. It also reflects the “Franks principles” of openness, fairness and impartiality.

(...)

Decisions must not be fettered by pre-determined views and cases should not be judged before they have considered the evidence:

Decision-makers may hold tentative views on the merits of individual cases but they should be open to persuasion and alternative points of view. They should only reach their final conclusions once they have considered all the evidence and representations.

Irrelevant considerations and outside influences must not influence decisions and recommendations:

Decisions and recommendations should be based on the relevance and substance of the evidence and arguments put by the parties and not by the identity, status or personality of those providing that evidence or argument. No-one should at any time deal privately with one party in the absence of the other parties.

(...)

Decision-makers must be responsible for their own decisions and recommendations:

Except where specific provision has been made, decision-makers should not delegate their responsibilities to anyone else. Nor should they allow anyone to usurp their responsibilities.²⁵

A [report by the then Environment, Transport and Rural Affairs Committee](#) in 2000 examined the work of the Planning Inspectorate.²⁶

²⁵ Planning Inspectorate, [Code of Conduct](#), June 2017

²⁶ ETRA Committee, [The work of the Planning Inspectorate](#), HC 364 1999-2000, July 2000

5. News items

Telegraph

Skill shortage means UK will miss housebuilding target

1 February 2018

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2018/02/01/skill-shortage-means-uk-will-miss-housebuilding-target/>

Times [subscription]

Housing crisis: Taylor Wimpey hits back at ministers over land-banking

1 February 2018

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/taylor-wimpey-hits-back-at-ministers-over-land-banking-ggjtmrh9>

Times [subscription]

Housing crisis: Green belt brand is 'hiding ugly truth'

1 February 2018

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/housing-crisis-green-belt-brand-is-hiding-ugly-truth-fmjfqpf8b>

Guardian

Britain has enough land to solve the housing crisis – it's just being hoarded

31 January 2018

<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2017/jan/31/britain-land-housing-crisis-developers-not-building-land-banking>

Independent

New UK homes construction hits 10-year high

Builders registered plans to start 160,606 new homes, up 6 per cent from 2016 and the highest number since the start of the financial crisis in 2007

25 January 2018

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/uk-homes-new-numbers-high-construction-a8177061.html>

FT [subscription]

Boost UK housebuilding by lifting council borrowing curbs, MPs urge

Treasury select committee says public sector-backed construction must increase

22 January 2018

<https://www.ft.com/content/2d4c4922-fea1-11e7-9650-9c0ad2d7c5b5>

6. Press releases

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

£866 million investment to help unlock potential 200,000 new homes

Up to 200,000 new homes are set to get off the ground as government confirms £866 million investment in local housing projects.

Published 1 February 2018

Up to 200,000 new homes are set to get off the ground as government confirms £866 million investment in local housing projects today (1 February 2018).

Housing Secretary Sajid Javid and Chancellor Philip Hammond announced that 133 council-led projects across the country will receive funding to support local work that will make housing developments viable and get much-needed homes built quicker.

With the government committed to building 300,000 homes a year by the mid-2020s, this first wave of funding from the £5 billion Housing Infrastructure Fund is part of a comprehensive programme to fix the broken housing market.

This latest investment will fund key local infrastructure projects including new roads, cycle paths, flood defences and land remediation work, all essential ahead of building the homes.

Without this financial support these projects would struggle to go ahead or take years for work to begin, delaying the homes these communities need. Together with the government's Industrial Strategy, it will provide high-quality infrastructure to support economic growth.

Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Hammond, said:

Today marks the first step of the multi-billion pound investment we announced at the Budget to help build the homes our country needs.

This fund finances vital infrastructure such as roads, schools and bridges, which will kick-start housing development in some of Britain's highest-demand areas.

This support will help us meet our ambitious plan of building 300,000 new homes each year and ensure we have enough housing in areas which need it most.

Housing Secretary Sajid Javid said:

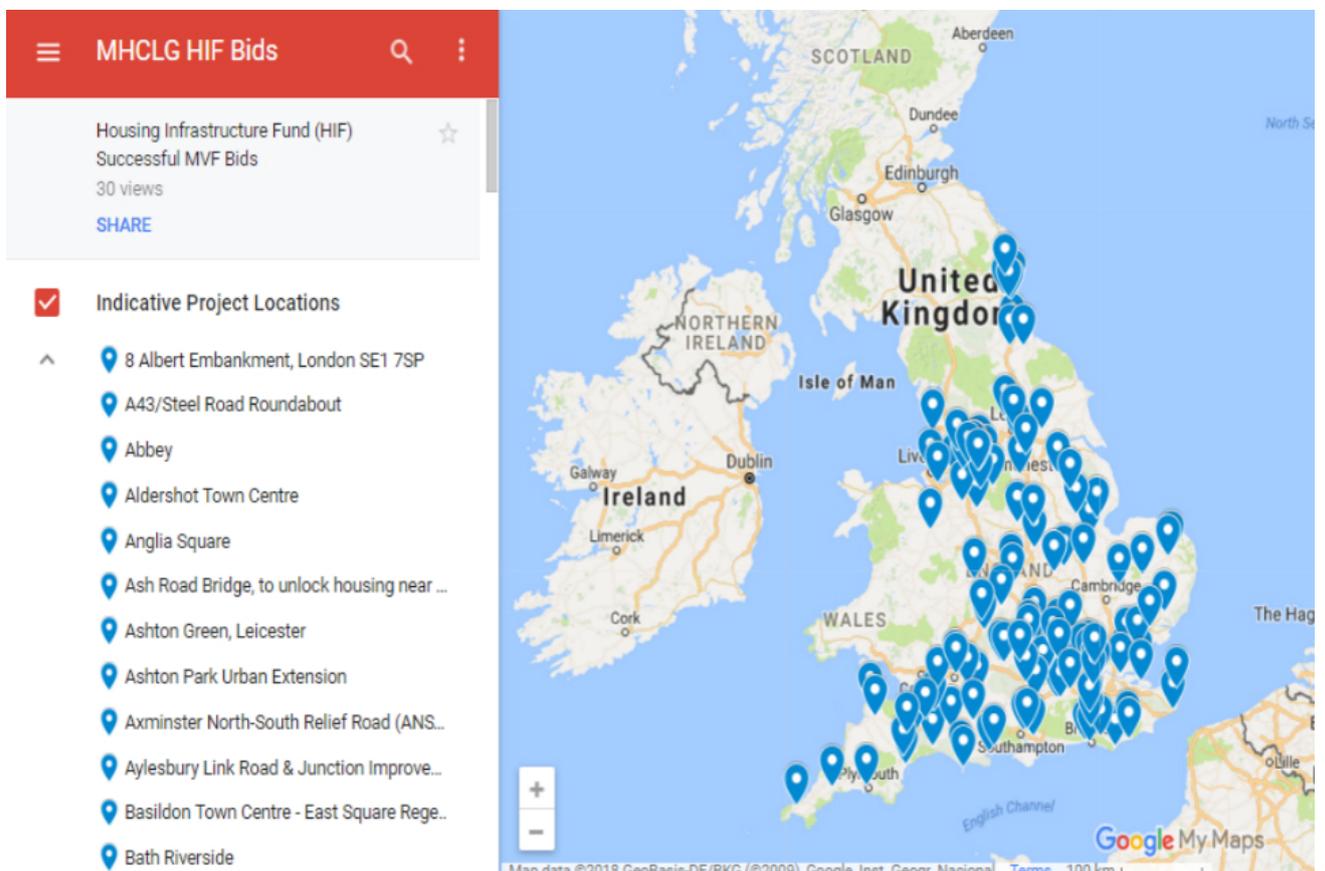
Our priority is building the homes this country desperately needs.

This first wave of investment totalling £866 million will help get up to 200,000 homes off the ground, making a huge difference to communities across the country.

This is just one of the many ways this government is taking action to get Britain building homes again.

Projects from County Durham to Cornwall will receive funding including:

- £10 million for highway infrastructure to unlock further development at the Ashton Green housing site in Leicester, helping to unlock 3,300 homes
- £10 million for construction of a bypass in Botley, Hampshire, a critical strategic road infrastructure project that will help unlock the delivery of 1,000 new homes
- £3.6 million for drainage works, new roads and footpaths at the Manor Cluster, south-east Sheffield to help unlock more than 400 homes by 2025
- £6.5 million to help build a new primary school as part of the **Ilfracombe Southern Extension in North Devon. This will help unlock 750 new homes.**



See a [map of project locations](#)

The £5 billion [Housing Infrastructure Fund](#) is a government capital grant programme to help unlock new homes in areas with the greatest housing demand. Funding is awarded to local authorities on a highly competitive basis.

The fund is divided into 2 streams:

- A Marginal Viability Fund – available to all single and lower tier local authorities in England – to provide a piece of infrastructure

funding to get additional sites allocated or existing sites unblocked quickly. Bids can be up to £10 million.

- A Forward Fund – available to the uppermost tier of local authorities in England – for a small number of strategic and high-impact infrastructure projects. Bids can be up to £250 million.

The government will be progressing Forward Funding projects to go through to co-development in the coming weeks, with final funding announced from Autumn 2018. Today's announcement forms part of the government's [Industrial Strategy](#) which sets out a long term plan to boost the productivity and earning power of people throughout the UK.

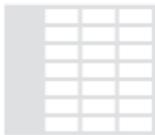
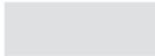
The Strategy sets out how we are building a Britain fit for the future – how we will help businesses create better, higher-paying jobs in every part of the UK with investment in skills, industries and infrastructure.

Further information

The government together with Homes England assessed each bid for their strategic ambition, benefits costs ratio and their deliverability.

We will work with the local authorities over the coming months to progress schemes through detailed funding clarification.

See details of all bids:



[Successful Marginal Viability Fund projects](#)

MS Excel Spreadsheet, 54.5KB

House of Commons Treasury Select Committee

Abolish borrowing cap so local authorities can increase housing supply

22 January 2018

The Treasury Committee publishes a unanimously agreed report on the Autumn Budget 2017.

- [Read the conclusions and recommendations](#)
- [Read the full report: Autumn Budget 2017](#)
- Local Authority Housing Revenue Account borrowing cap should be removed to help meet target of 300,000 new homes per year

- Stamp Duty reduction likely to increase prices for first time buyers
- OBR should incorporate Brexit in a "special forecast" before Parliament votes on Withdrawal Agreement
- Treasury should publish robust equalities impact assessments of future Budgets
- Transitional arrangements will provide certainty for businesses, encourage them to invest, and help improve productivity
- Use of RPI should be abolished where legally possible

Summary of the report

- Local authorities are limited in how much they can build through the cap on borrowing within Local Authority Housing Revenue Accounts. In Autumn Budget 2017, the Government raised the borrowing cap for councils in areas of high affordability by £1 billion to help achieve its target of 300,000 new homes per year. Private housebuilders have consistently provided 150,000 units per year, so the target is unlikely to be met without a significant increase in supply by local authorities. To achieve this, the Housing Revenue Account borrowing cap should be removed. At the very least, the Treasury should define the allocation criteria for the additional £1 billion more clearly.
- The Chancellor abolished Stamp Duty for first-time buyers (FTB's) on the first £300,000 of any property costing up to £500,000. The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) forecast that just 3,500 additional first time buyers over the forecast period will become FTB's as a result of the policy change, at a cost of £3 billion. In isolation, the reduction in Stamp Duty is likely to increase prices for FTB's by as much, if not more, than the amount they will save as a result of the reduction in Stamp Duty.
- Robert Chote, Chairman of the OBR, acknowledged that the consequences of Brexit on economic growth are likely to be so substantial as to dwarf the impact of any one-off 'divorce bill'. To ensure Parliament is fully informed about these economic and fiscal impacts, the OBR should publish a 'special forecast' before the introduction of the Withdrawal Agreement and Implementation Bill.
- The Treasury should use ONS and HMRC data to produce and publish robust equalities impact assessment of future Budgets, including the individual tax and welfare measures contained within them.
- A rise in public and private investment is likely to improve productivity growth. The Government's commitment to raise public investment is welcome, but a revival in productivity also requires a response from the private sector. The OBR expects a fall in private sector investment due to Brexit uncertainty. The Government should reach an agreement on transitional

arrangements for Brexit that reduces uncertainty for businesses urgently.

- The Government has acknowledged that using the statistically-flawed Retail Prices Index (RPI) to uprate the Business Rates multiplier is unfair on businesses. Having acknowledged that RPI is unfair, and removing the link between RPI and the uprating of pensions, benefits, and tax allowances, the Government should stop using RPI for any indexation purpose where legally possible. This would see the use of RPI discontinued as an index, for example, for calculating the interest rate on student loans, the uprating of rail fares, and Air Passenger Duty.

Chair's comments

Commenting on the Report, Rt Hon. Nicky Morgan MP, Chair of the Treasury Committee, said:

The Chancellor pledged to 'fix the broken housing market', but the Government is going to find it very difficult to meet this ambition. The increase in the cap on borrowing for local authorities to build homes is a step in the right direction, but it doesn't go far enough.

The borrowing cap restricts the number of homes that local authorities could deliver. To achieve the Government target of 300,000 new homes per year, the cap should be abolished. The potential of local authorities to build should be unleashed.

The Government's commitment to increase public investment is welcome, but a revival in productivity also requires action from the private sector. The OBR expects a fall in private sector investment due to Brexit-related uncertainty. An agreement between the UK and the EU27 on a 'standstill' transitional arrangements is therefore urgent.

Local Government Association

LGA on Treasury Committee call to abolish housing borrowing cap

22 January 2018

"This is significant recognition of our central argument about the vital role councils must play in solving our housing shortage."

Responding to a report by the Treasury Select Committee calling for the Housing Revenue Account borrowing cap to be abolished, Local Government Association Chairman, Lord Porter, said:

It is great that the influential Treasury Select Committee has backed [our call for councils to be given the freedom to borrow to build more](#) of the new homes our communities desperately need. This is significant recognition of our central argument about the vital role councils must play in solving our housing shortage.

Our national housing shortage is one of the most pressing issues we face and, as a nation, we have no chance of housing supply meeting demand unless councils can build again. When giving

evidence to the Committee last year, we were clear that if we are to truly get back to building 300,000 homes a year, then all areas of the country need to be able borrow to invest so that they can resume their role as major builders of affordable homes.

The Autumn Budget announcement that a number of local areas will be able to receive additional borrowing headroom to build homes was an encouraging first step. We now urge the Treasury to act on the Committee's recommendation and use the upcoming final Local Government Finance Settlement to completely scrap the cap on the amount councils can borrow to build. It also needs to allow councils to be able to keep 100 per cent of receipts from properties sold through Right to Buy to replace homes and reinvest in new housing.

A genuine renaissance in council housebuilding would not only increase housing supply but boost home ownership and reduce homelessness.

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

New housing agency to boost housebuilding

A new national housing agency – Homes England – has been launched.

11 January 2018

A new national housing agency – Homes England – has today (11 January 2018) been launched by Housing Secretary Sajid Javid as one of the key steps towards delivering the homes the country needs.

As the successor to the Homes and Communities Agency, Homes England will drive forward change, as set out in the government's [housing white paper](#).

By bringing together their existing planning expertise and new land buying powers, the new agency will play a major role in securing land in areas where people want to live, support smaller and more innovative house builders into the market and resource brownfield sites from across the country to deliver homes for families.

Homes England will play a major role in fixing the housing market by helping to deliver an average of 300,000 homes a year by the mid-2020s.

Visiting Alconbury in Cambridgeshire, a former airfield which will bring 5,000 new homes, the Housing Secretary toured the 1,420 acre site which is just one of the many locations across the country receiving government funding to build more homes.

Housing Secretary Sajid Javid said:

This government is determined to build the homes our country needs and help more people get on the housing ladder. Homes England will be at the heart of leading this effort.

The development at Alconbury is a prime example of how the agency has worked to deliver thousands of new homes, as well as improve roads and create space for local businesses.

The new agency will be key in replicating this approach right across the country and will help us build a Britain fit for the future.

Nick Walkley, Chief Executive of Homes England, said:

As Homes England, we will use our land, finance and expertise to expand the delivery of affordable new homes and connect ambitious partners to remove barriers to house building.

Sir Ed Lister, Chairman of Homes England, added:

We will take the lead in delivering better quality homes and great places that set the bar high for others. We will also stimulate demand for Modern Methods of Construction and ultimately disrupt the housing market.

The launch of Homes England is just one of the steps this government is taking to fix the broken housing market. Since 2010, government has delivered more than 1.1 million homes and Help to Buy has supported over 255,000 people to buy a property.

Around 310 local authorities have now published a brownfield register, revealing over 26,000 hectares of developable land on over 16,000 sites. More registers expected to be published over the next few weeks. By prioritising both the areas where people want to live and developers can build, Homes England will use the registers to progress brownfield development across the country.

The agency has already been supporting developments across the country including 10,000 new homes on a brownfield site northwest of Cambridge and a 3,200 new homes site in South Yorkshire.

Homes England will develop a new commercial approach to acquiring, preparing, managing and developing land in areas of high demand and strategic importance. By focusing on using both the land and money to support builders of all sizes to increase supply will continue to support accelerated construction on a selection of sites.

Meeting housing demand is also about supporting the SME sector and over £750 million of the £1 billion short term fund has been committed to SMEs, custom builders and developers using modern methods of construction which will result in over 25,500 homes being built. Homes England will support this initiative and SME builders to grow their businesses and build more homes.

Further information

The Homes and Communities Agency was established in 2008 as the government's housing, land and regeneration agency, and the regulator of social housing providers in England.

The Chancellor announced that the Homes and Communities Agency will be launched as Homes England during the [Autumn Budget in 2017](#).

Homes England is lending £45.07 million to Urban&Civic through the [Home Building Fund](#) to ramp up the delivery of 4,507 homes by

funding enabling works and infrastructure. The loan will be repaid over 11 years as serviced land is sold to house builders.

Approximately 310 local authorities have published a brownfield register, which reveal over 26,000 hectares of developable land.

The £1 billion short term fund is part of the Home Building Fund which also consists of a £2 billion long term fund for infrastructure. A further £1.5 billion was announced in the Autumn Budget for the short term fund.

Government has previously announced that the Regulator of Social Housing will be separated from the Agency and established as a standalone organisation. Homes England will be a commercially-focused land and investment agency.

Campaign to Protect Rural England

More Green Belt being lost without tackling housing crisis

3 July 2017

425,000 houses now planned for Green Belt, of which more than 70% are unaffordable

The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) today reveals a significant increase in houses planned for the Green Belt, and yet most of these houses will be unaffordable to those who need them.

Based on local and city-regional planning policies and new data from planning consultants Glenigan [1], CPRE's annual [Green Belt Under Siege report](#) shows that more than 70% of houses proposed for development are not expected to be 'affordable' [2]. It also demonstrates that just 16% of houses built on Green Belt land since 2009 outside local plans were classed as 'affordable' [3].

In total, 425,000 houses are now planned for Green Belt land. This is an increase of 54% on March 2016, and the biggest year-on-year increase in building proposed in the Green Belt for two decades [4]. Green Belt in the North West, West Midlands and South East is under particular pressure.

Furthermore, Government funds are handsomely rewarding the development of Green Belt land the Government supposedly promised to protect, but without delivering the much-needed affordable homes the funds were designed to encourage. CPRE estimates suggest that the Government's

New Homes Bonus initiative will reward councils with £2.4 billion for the proposed 425,000 new homes [5].

CPRE recognises the urgent need for new homes. It recently illustrated that rural affordable housing provision is in steep decline, exacerbating an already stark affordable housing shortage [6]. CPRE believes that

Government should help councils build again and help fund genuinely affordable homes, including on small rural sites.

Tom Fyans, director of campaigns and policy at the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE):

As we engage in a much-needed debate about the type, tenure and quality of housing local communities need, it is important to look at what housing is currently being planned and where it is being delivered.

Green Belt is being lost at an ever faster rate, yet the type of housing being built now or in the future will do very little to address the affordable housing crisis faced by many families and young people. We must not be the generation that sells off our precious Green Belt in the mistaken belief it will help improve the affordability of housing. The only ones set to benefit from future Green Belt development will be landowners and the big housebuilders, not communities in need of decent, affordable housing.

Protecting the Green Belt is part of, not a barrier to, solving the housing crisis. It encourages us to focus on the 1 million plus homes we can build on suitable brownfield sites, and avoid the environmental costs of urban sprawl. The Green Belt makes our towns and cities better places to live. It provides quick access to the countryside. The Government must do more to protect it. [7]

While the Conservative manifesto pledged to ‘maintain the existing strong protections on designated land like the Green Belt’, recent proposals in the Government’s Housing White Paper could prompt further Green Belt loss [8]. Under the plans, local authorities could be expected to review Green Belt boundaries every five years, and allocate more land for development if developers fail to build at the required speed [9].

Councils are expected to consider environmental and planning designations, such as Green Belt, when calculating their housing targets, yet many have chosen to ignore this requirement. The release of Green Belt is most often justified by ‘exceptional circumstances’.

Green Belt was first designated in 1955 to prevent urban sprawl [10]. A poll marking the Green Belt’s 60th anniversary demonstrated its widespread support amongst the public [11].

Notes to editors

[1] CPRE, Green Belt Under Siege, June 2017.

These local planning policies include adopted and draft local plans, as well as regional plans - such as the recently published draft Greater Manchester Spatial Framework. The data are up to date as of end of May 2017.

[2] Definition of ‘affordable’: CPRE has analysed draft or adopted local plans proposing new housing on current Green Belt land. Most local plans contain policies on the proportion of new housing that should be

considered 'affordable', and the definition of 'affordable' is set in the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). According to the Government definition, new housing can meet the requirement to be 'affordable' if it includes either an element of low cost homes for sale or shared ownership, or housing for rent. The 'housing for rent' houses can be rented at rates of up to 80% of open market rents.

[3] See Green Belt Under Siege (2017), p. 6.

[4] Green Belt Under Siege (2017) regional breakdowns:

Region	Homes proposed for Green belt, March '16	Homes proposed for Green Belt, May '17	Of which affordable homes, May '17	% of which affordable homes, May '17
East of England	73,520	65,277	24,084	37
East Midlands	18,475	18,475	5,543	30
London and South East	41,860	71,062	29,690	42
North East	11,550	12,650	2,075	16
North West	19,024	97,528	22,928	24
South West	17,195	32,030	11,025	34
West Midlands	44,170	72,650	12,243	17
Yorkshire and the Humber	46,900	55,000	11,290	21
Total	272,694	424,672	118,878	28

Rate of proposed building:

Date	Houses proposed for land released from the Green Belt	New homes proposed per month	Commercial land
2009 (draft regional plans)	147,000		n/a
August 2012	81,000		1,000 ha
August 2013	150,000	5,750	2,100 ha
March 2015	219,000	3,830	2,000 ha
March 2016	275,000	4,670	2,190 ha
May 2017	425,000	10,710	2,400 ha

CPRE London, meanwhile, has produced a [map](#) demonstrating particular threats to London's Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land.

[5] The New Homes Bonus was established in 2011 by the Coalition Government as an incentive for local authorities to allow more housebuilding. Payments are made when new houses are built and match the level of council tax raised on these new houses. Typically, payments are then repeated for a period of four years. See CPRE, Green Belt Under Siege, p. 8.

Sajid Javid, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, on protecting the Green Belt: [House of Commons](#), 7 February 2017.

[6] Recent CPRE research indicated a growing affordable housing crisis in rural areas. Just one in 10 rural homes are affordable, in contrast to one in five in urban areas. Yet over the last five years, the proportion of new affordable homes being provided in rural areas has more than

halved to 16%. See CPRE, [Developers renege on affordable homes as countryside faces housing crisis](#), 6 June 2017.

[7] At least 1.1 million homes could be built on suitable brownfield sites across England: CPRE, [Housing capacity on brownfield land](#), October 2016.

[8] [Conservative party manifesto](#) (2017), p. 71.

[9] See Paul Miner, CPRE, [Green Belt: when exceptional circumstances aren't exceptional](#), 30 March 2017.

CPRE urges the Government to withdraw New Homes Bonus money from market housing on protected land, and to require councils to review their Green Belts no more than once every 15 years – the recommended lifespan of a local plan.

[10] Organisations such as UN Habitat have argued that unhindered urban sprawl causes economic and social dislocation: Urban sprawl - Europe's ignored environmental challenge, [European Environment Agency](#), 24 November 2006; Urban trends: urban sprawl now a global problem, [UN Habitat press release](#), 18 March 2010.

[11] An Ipsos MORI poll to mark the 60th anniversary of the Green Belt found that 64% of respondents believe that the Green Belt should be protected: CPRE, [60th anniversary poll shows clear support for Green Belt](#), August 2015.

If you would like to talk to author Paul Miner about the report in more detail then please contact Benjamin Halfpenny on 020 7981 2819 / benjaminh@cpre.org.uk

The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) fights for a better future for the English countryside. We work locally and nationally to protect, shape and enhance a beautiful, thriving countryside for everyone to value and enjoy. Our members are united in their love for England's landscapes and rural communities, and stand up for the countryside, so it can continue to sustain, enchant and inspire future generations. Founded in 1926, President: Emma Bridgewater, Patron: Her Majesty The Queen. www.cpre.org.uk.

Town and Country Planning Association

Research highlights desperate housing crisis with councils warning of 'severe' need for affordable homes

23 May 2017

- New report finds that 98% of UK councils surveyed describe their need for affordable homes as either 'severe' or 'moderate'.
- Lack of investment in genuinely affordable housing alongside deregulation of planning is reducing the ability for local authorities to secure the homes the nation needs.

A report published today by APSE (Association for Public Service Excellence) and written and researched by the TCPA finds that UK councils are becoming increasingly unable to meet demands for affordable housing and 98% now describe their need as either 'severe' or 'moderate', with only 1% claiming that their need is not substantial.

The survey of 166 local authorities in Britain highlights the pressure on councils to meet the growing demand for affordable housing due to a lack of new homes being built and that many of those that are being built are not affordable to those in need.

The research highlights the cumulative impact of existing housing and planning policies in England—such as the 1 per cent annual rent reductions in the social rented sector and the continued deregulation and reform of the planning system—have reduced the ability of councils to secure genuinely affordable homes available for social rent.

Kate Henderson, Chief Executive of the TCPA, said:

Our research reveals that Britain is facing an acute housing crisis with councils across the country increasingly unable to meet the need for affordable housing.

The incoming government must make tackling the housing crisis a priority. An ambition to increase housing numbers is not enough, we need to ensure that the homes that are built are affordable and well designed.

By exploring a range of issues faced by councils, this study has identified how local authorities are already taking a more active role in housing delivery through entrepreneurial approaches, such as setting up local housing companies and innovative approaches to partnership working. Over two thirds (69%) of councils surveyed said that they already had or were thinking about setting up a local authority housing company either on their own or in partnership.

Paul O'Brien, Chief Executive of APSE said:

Whilst the general election had been pitched as the Brexit election the political narrative can't ignore the housing crisis that we face across the UK.

A new wave of council homes would help support local economic growth, jobs and skills in our economy; housing could be an effective driver for a renewed industrial strategy but to achieve this we need to place local councils at the heart of delivery on housing need. That means the future Government of whatever political make-up must provide the financial freedoms and flexibility for councils to deliver solutions to our chronic housing shortage.

The report, *Building homes, creating communities: Ensuring councils provide innovative solutions to meeting housing need*, has been released to coincide with the upcoming election and makes 15 recommendations to the incoming government, including a call for investment in building new homes available for social rent to house Britain's 'essential' low-paid workers.

Notes to Editors

1. The full report, *Building homes, creating communities: Ensuring councils provide innovative solutions to meeting housing need*, can be found [here](#).
2. APSE (Association for Public Service Excellence) is a not-for-profit local government body working with over 300 councils throughout the UK. Promoting excellence in public services, APSE is the foremost specialist in local authority frontline services and operates one of the UK's largest research programmes in local government policy and frontline service delivery matters.
3. The Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) is an independent campaigning charity calling for more integrated planning based on the principles of accessibility, sustainability, diversity, and community cohesion. The TCPA puts social justice and the environment at the heart of the debate about planning policy, housing and energy supply. We inspire government, industry and campaigners to take a fresh perspective on major issues including climate change and regeneration www.tcpa.org.uk

Centre for Cities**Government cannot address housing crisis without building on green belt****7 February 2017**

In response to the Government's new housing white paper (published today), Alexandra Jones, Chief Executive of the think tank Centre for Cities, said:

Many of the measures in the Government's new strategy will help to make the housing market work more effectively, by enabling developers to build homes more quickly, ensuring local authorities have plans in place to tackle housing demand in their areas, and encouraging higher density building in cities.

Ultimately, however, this is a national strategy which doesn't consider how different housing markets work across the country. The biggest problem for successful cities like London and Cambridge is that there simply isn't enough land in these places to build the homes they need, unless policy-makers consider all options available – including building on the green belt.

People often assume the green belt is made up entirely of idyllic countryside, but a great deal of this land is actually used for car-parks, quarries and golf courses. Continuing to rule out development on the green belt is a luxury the Government cannot afford if it is serious about tackling the housing crisis and ensuring our most successful cities can thrive in future.

Key stats from [Centre for Cities research](#) on how to address the UK's housing crisis

- 1.4m homes could be built on just 5% of greenbelt land in the UK's 10 least affordable cities
- More than 430,000 homes could be built at suburban densities and close to train stations on just 2% of London's greenbelt

About Centre for Cities

[Centre for Cities](#) is a research and policy institute, dedicated to improving the economic success of UK cities. We are a charity that works with cities, business and Whitehall to develop and implement policy that supports the performance of urban economies. We do this through impartial research and knowledge exchange. For more information, please visit www.centreforcities.org/about

7. Parliamentary material

PQs - Construction

[Housing: Construction](#)

Asked by: Robertson, Mr Laurence

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment is made of whether protection of greenbelt land outweighs unmet assessed housing need when (a) making local plans and (b) considering individual planning applications; and if he will make a statement.

Answering member: Dominic Raab | Department: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

This Government has a clear manifesto commitment to maintain the strong protections for Green Belt set out in our National Planning Policy Framework. The Framework makes clear that a local authority may alter the shape of its Green Belt only in exceptional circumstances, using the Local Plan process. The Framework does not define 'exceptional circumstances'. Where necessary, and in consultation with the community, a local authority can propose a Green Belt boundary change as part of its Local Plan process, but the revised Plan is subject to rigorous, formal examination by a planning inspector.

In the Housing White Paper, *Fixing our broken housing market*, we proposed that a local authority should be able to adjust a Green Belt boundary only when it demonstrates that it has examined all other reasonable options for meeting its identified development needs, including:

- the effective use of suitable brownfield land;
- the potential offered by under-used land;
- optimising the density of development; and
- exploring whether other authorities can help to meet some of the identified development requirement.

We have been analysing the responses not only to the White Paper, but also to our later consultation on the assessment of local housing need. We will be announcing our conclusions on both as soon as possible, alongside a consultation draft of a revised National Planning Policy Framework.

HC Deb 01 February 2018 | PQ 122350

[Housing: Construction](#)

Asked by: Patel, Priti |

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the potential role of garden communities in addressing shortfalls in (a) local housing need, (b) a local authority's five-year supply of deliverable housing sites by facilitating increased development in the later years of a Local Plan period.

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, what policies are in place to support the protection of sites located in the countryside outside of settlement boundaries from new housing in instances where a local authority (a) can and (b) cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable sites.

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, whether he plans to issue new guidance in relation to the protection of sites located in the countryside outside of settlement boundaries from new housing in instances where a local authority (a) can and (b) cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable sites.

Answering member: Alok Sharma | Department: Department for Communities and Local Government

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out (at paragraph 55) that to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. New garden communities have an important role to play in meeting local housing needs over the medium and long term.

If an area cannot demonstrate a five year land supply the relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up to date. In this circumstance permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. Exceptions where development should be restricted include land designated as Green Belt and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The need for new or revised Planning Guidance is kept under review.

HC Deb 14 December 2017 | PQ 117902: PQ 117899; PQ 117895

[Housing: Construction](#)

Asked by: Fallon, Sir Michael

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department takes to balance protection of the countryside with putting community interests at the centre of Government house-building policy.

Answering member: Alok Sharma | Department: Department for Communities and Local Government

The Government's objectives for planning are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. The Framework includes rigorous protection for designated land such as Green Belt and requires planning policies to

enhance biodiversity at a landscape scale. It asks local authorities, in balancing all the relevant issues, to recognise the character and beauty of the countryside, to encourage re-use of brownfield land if not of high environmental value, and to take account of the benefits of the best and most versatile farmland. The supporting Guidance also reminds local authorities that, in planning to meet local housing and other needs, they must have due regard to national policies - such as Green Belt policy - which indicate that development should be restricted and which may restrain the ability of an authority to meet its need. We intend to introduce a simpler and more transparent method for assessing the housing needs of each community next year, along with other reforms.

However, it will still be for local authorities in consultation with local people to plan their areas using the Local Plan, and then to decide planning applications in line with that Plan and all other relevant factors. It is for local residents to make their hopes, concerns and evidence known to the local authority and (if appropriate) the planning inspector examining a revised Plan or determining an appeal.

HC Deb 29 November 2017 | PQ 114853

PQs – Green Belt

[Green Belt](#)

Asked by: Esterson, Bill

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 6 December to Question 117028, what assessment he has made of whether alterations made by local authorities to the shape of their green belts have been consistent with the criteria set out in his answer.

Answering member: Alok Sharma | Department: Department for Communities and Local Government

Under the National Planning Policy Framework, local authorities can alter the shape of their Green Belt only in exceptional circumstances. They do this through their Local Plan. This involves rigorous consultation in public and consideration by a planning inspector at examination, who then makes a formal determination on whether the submitted Plan is sound. It is for each Plan to be found sound if it is properly prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy in the Framework.

In the Housing White Paper, *Fixing our broken housing market*, we recognised the need for more clarity on the exceptional circumstances in which a Green Belt boundary change can be proposed and consulted on a criteria. We are currently considering the responses and will implement any policy changes in a revision of the National Planning Policy Framework as soon as practicable in 2018.

HC Deb 12 December 2017 | PQ 118246

[Green Belt](#)

Asked by: Shapps, Grant

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, whether the Government has any plans to widen the duty to cooperate to include a requirement for councils to consider together the long-term strategic function of the Green Belt and not proceed only on a site by site basis.

Answering member: Alok Sharma | Department: Department for Communities and Local Government

Many areas of Green Belt cross local authority boundaries, and the creation or alteration of Green Belt has always been a strategic matter on which all local authorities involved liaise and work together. The National Planning Policy Framework clearly expects local authorities to ensure that Green Belt is consistent with the Local Plans of adjoining areas, and that Green Belt land continues to fulfil the purposes of Green Belt.

In the Housing White Paper, *Fixing our broken housing market*, we proposed that a local authority should be able to adjust a Green Belt boundary only when it can show that it has examined all other reasonable options for meeting identified development needs. These options are:

- making effective use of suitable brownfield sites and the opportunities offered by estate regeneration
- the potential offered by land which is currently underused, including surplus public sector land where appropriate
- optimising the proposed density of development
- exploring whether other authorities can help to meet some of the identified development requirement

My Department has been analysing the consultation responses on this proposed clarification, and will announce our conclusions as soon as possible in 2018, when we will also issue a revised National Planning Policy Framework.

HC Deb 07 December 2017 | PQ 117124

[Green Belt](#)

Asked by: Shapps, Grant

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, whether the Government has plans to remove Green Belt status from land in order to meet its housing commitments.

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, if he will make an assessment of the effectiveness of the (a) regulations that apply to and (b) role in national planning of the Green Belt; and if he will make a statement?

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, whether local planning authorities can cite Green Belt restraints as a reason for not meeting housing targets under the Objectively Assessed Housing Need.

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, whether his Department's policy on supporting the Green Belt has changed since his Department published its National Planning Policy Framework in 2012; and if he will make a statement.

Answering member: Alok Sharma | Department: Department for Communities and Local Government

Ministers recently reaffirmed the Government's clear manifesto commitment to maintaining the strong protections for Green Belt, which are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. The Framework makes clear that a local authority may alter the shape of its Green Belt only in exceptional circumstances, using the Local Plan process. The Framework does not define 'exceptional circumstances'. However, in the Housing White Paper, *Fixing our broken housing market*, we proposed that a local authority should be able to adjust a Green Belt boundary only when it demonstrates that it has examined all other reasonable options for meeting its identified development needs, including:

- effective use of suitable brownfield land;
- the potential offered by under-used land;
- optimising the density of development; and
- exploring whether other authorities can help to meet some of the identified development requirement.

We have been analysing the consultation responses on this proposed clarification, and will announce our conclusions as soon as possible in 2018.

Since records began in 1997, Green Belt has continued to cover around 13 per cent of England, and overall we consider that national policy has successfully restrained urban sprawl. Where necessary, a local authority in consultation with the community can propose a Green Belt boundary change, as part of its Local Plan process, but the revised Plan is subject to rigorous, formal examination by a planning inspector before it is adopted.

The Framework is not law, but the law does require local authorities engaged in Plan-making to have regard to the Framework.

HC Deb 06 December 2017 | PQ 117031; PQ 117030; PQ 117029; PQ 117028

[Green Belt](#)

Asked by: Lynch, Holly

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, what his policy is on the use of greenbelt land in local plans when there are insufficient brownfield sites.

Answering member: Alok Sharma | Department: Department for Communities and Local Government

The National Planning Policy Framework encourages local authorities to prioritise re-use of suitable brownfield land for development, and to adopt Local Plan policies that support the take-up of brownfield. Moreover, each local authority is now legally required to publish a register of local brownfield land by 31 December 2017. These new registers will bring many more sites to the attention of house-builders and investors. However, brownfield sites differ, and not all will be available or in the right place for sustainable redevelopment. It is therefore for each local authority, in consultation with local people, to decide what land to allocate for development, as part of the Local Plan process.

The Framework sets out strong protections for Green Belt, stating that inappropriate development should be refused permission except in special circumstances. Green Belt boundary may be altered only in exceptional circumstances, using the Plan process. In the Housing White Paper, *Fixing our broken housing market*, we proposed that a local authority should be able to alter a Green Belt boundary only when it can show that it has examined all other reasonable options for meeting its development needs. Besides brownfield, the options included under-used land; optimising the density of development; and exploring whether other authorities could help. We will announce our conclusions as soon as possible in 2018.

A local authority can consider any suitable land, but should have regard to all relevant policies in the Framework. For instance, the Framework also asks local authorities to direct development away from the best and most versatile agricultural land, and to recognise the character and beauty of the countryside.

HC Deb 30 November 2017 | PQ 115819

PQs – Planning

[Planning](#)

Asked by: Shelbrooke, Alec

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, with reference to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), what the definition is of a broad location for growth; whether local authorities under the NPPF criteria are permitted to change land previously listed as an allocated site for development to a broad location

during the course of an examination in public; and what is his policy on grade II-listed park and gardens within the green belt being protected from broad location for growth.

Answering member: Alok Sharma | Department: Department for Communities and Local Government

National planning policy does not define broad locations for growth. This is a matter for local decision and definition through the preparation of plans.

When considering changes during the examination of development plan documents, it would be for the appointed planning inspector, working with the local authority, to determine whether a change is appropriate. Given my quasi-judicial role in the planning process, I cannot comment on specific cases.

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out strong protections for the Green Belt. The Framework makes it clear that a local authority may alter the shape of its Green Belt only in exceptional circumstances, using the Local Plan process. The Framework does not define these 'exceptional circumstances'. In the Housing White Paper, Fixing our broken housing market, we proposed that a local authority should be able to alter a Green Belt boundary in exceptional circumstances if it can demonstrate that it has examined all other reasonable options for meeting its identified development needs.

We hope to respond to the consultation in the Housing White Paper in the new year.

HC Deb 29 November 2017 | PQ 114892

[Housing: Planning Permission](#)

Asked by: Lord Kirkhope of Harrogate

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of plans to remove the requirement for local councils to produce Strategic Housing Market Assessments, how they will ensure councils do not approve inappropriate planning requests in sensitive areas.

Answering member: Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth | Department: Department for Communities and Local Government

In order to plan properly, local authorities need to properly understand how many homes they need to build in their area. "Planning for the right homes in the right places", published on 14 September, sets out a proposed transparent and consistent method for assessing the need for homes in each area.

The consultation paper explains that when determining individual planning applications the decision-maker would still need to take account of the all policies in the National Planning Policy Framework, including those which restrict development (including policies relating to the Green Belt and Ancient Woodland).

HL Deb 06 November 2017 | PQ HL2349

Debates and statements

Lords Questions – Housing: Planning Laws

HL Deb 25 October 2017 | Vol 785 c934-

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2017-10-25/debates/20D84E4D-ADCB-42BA-BDE7-6CBC2208CADC/HousingPlanningLaws>

Commons statement: Local Housing Need

HC Deb 14 September 2017 | Vol 628 cc1010-

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2017-09-14/debates/308E35F7-5DE6-4427-A7B1-01FB92E39F7E/LocalHousingNeed>

Commons adjournment debate: Neighbourhood Planning

HC Deb 04 July 2017 | Vol 626 cc1139-

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2017-07-04/debates/8ED37454-F62D-4560-8378-5CE754C14F11/NeighbourhoodPlanning>

8. Useful links

Royal Town Planning Institute *Better Planning for Housing Affordability Position paper* February 2017

http://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/2220516/rtpi_better_planning_housing_affordability_position_paper_-_february_2017.pdf

Association for Public Service Excellence *Building homes, creating communities Ensuring councils provide innovative solutions to meeting housing need* May 2017

<https://www.tcpa.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=db494bb8-f8b0-4fdc-bebd-acd864340450>

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