



The countryside charity  
Avon and Bristol

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Chair  
David Worskett

September 23<sup>rd</sup> 2020

Dear MP

### **Consultation on the Planning White Paper**

CPRE Bristol and Avon is deeply committed to supporting communities in our local area and helping them create better places for everyone to enjoy. We campaign on planning because it is crucial for empowering communities to protect and enhance the countryside. A fit-for-purpose planning process has the power to ensure everyone has a decent home that meets their needs and that they can afford. It is also a vital part of building sustainable communities and lifestyles that will enable us to meet the challenge of climate change in practicable ways.

We have grave misgivings about the impact of the Government's proposals as set out in the Planning White Paper, and in the consultation on Changes to the Planning System. While many of the stated 'aims' of the reforms are issues we support, and are areas where we have long campaigned for change, our analysis of the proposals leads us to believe that they will in many cases make achieving the declared goals more, not less difficult. In particular, we have concerns about how plans would reduce local democracy in the planning process, lead to fewer affordable homes in rural areas, direct new housing into already wealthy parts of the country and reduce our access to quality green space. We have set out this in more detail in the briefing included with this letter.



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Here in the West of England, the impact of the proposals on the residents of our four Unitary Authorities will be dramatic. The now discarded 'Joint Strategic Plan' for the sub-region envisaged increasing the number of homes required to 105,500, although the immense difficulties in both justifying that figure and in working out how to accommodate it were among the reasons for the plan being halted at the Public Enquiry stage. The Government's new proposals would take the target figure to 159,260. This is unjustified by the most robust demographic and economic data. It is also undeliverable in any way that is remotely sustainable or does not do irreparable harm to the precious green spaces and countryside which are among the most important reasons why people choose to live here. Furthermore, the changes in delivery of affordable housing mean that it is likely that a much smaller percentage of this final figure would actually be built for people who are in housing need. There are more details in the attached table, based on figures produced by the Lichfield's Consultancy which we understand the Government does not contest.

We are asking MPs to challenge the government's White Paper and, in its place, request reforms that put forward a positive vision for planning which will deliver collective economic, social and environmental objectives. If you share our concerns, we encourage you to make this clear to the responsible Government Ministers, table Written Parliamentary Questions and express your opposition to the media.

We would value a virtual meeting with you, to discuss this issue, and hope this is of interest. We are of course making our concerns clear to Government ministers, and CPRE's nationwide Network secured an online meeting with the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Robert Jenrick MP on the 21<sup>st</sup> of September.

We would be grateful if your office could email [director@cpreavonside.org.uk](mailto:director@cpreavonside.org.uk) with some suggested times and dates when you might do a virtual meeting.

Yours sincerely,

David Worskett  
Chair, CPRE Avon and Bristol