

Joint Statement

Permitted Development Rights: England

We, the undersigned, express our deep concern about the latest proposals for the expansion of Permitted Development Rights in England.

These proposals¹ will lower housing standards and accessible natural green infrastructure provision, extinguish local democracy, and end public participation. Communities and their local councils have simply lost control of many of the forms of development that matter most to them.

Permissions for over one million new homes are already in place but not built out according to the Local Government Association. There is little case to be made that the current system does not deliver consent for development.

Existing permitted development rights have resulted in what the Government's own report has called poor quality homes. Much less funding is going to local authorities as a result of these changes. Councillors and MPs across the spectrum have voiced their deep concern at the size, quality, amenity, design, location and climate change implications of these developments.

This consultation proposes to consolidate the relaxation of the use class order and extends and makes permanent existing permitted development rights. Town planning as we have known it will not apply to the vast majority of development in urban areas.

The intention to apply these private rights to conservation areas, and to exclude design and climate mitigation and adaptation from the list of very limited matters which councils can think about before giving approval is extremely damaging. Losing control of town centres to private interests will do nothing to secure their comprehensive regeneration in the public interest post the pandemic. Local people are being locked out of any say on the shape and feel of their communities and civic places.

We believe that local people and local businesses are best placed to lead the process of change that will result from a reduced need for existing retail space. Local communities will often want to see a range of other uses apart from retail and housing. There is an increasing interest, for example, in turning over town centre space for more health and wellbeing related purposes. Where new housing is appropriate, planning safeguards are needed to make sure that the homes provided best match local needs for more genuinely affordable and quality homes with accessible natural green space. The Government's proposals will offer no such safeguards.

We believe that the planning system needs to ensure:

Locally democratically accountable decisions

A right to have a say over the decisions which will transform communities

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/supporting-housing-delivery-and-public-service-infrastructure/supporting-housing-delivery-and-public-service-infrastructure#fnref:1>. This statement is specifically concerned with questions 1 to 6 of the consultation paper.

More genuinely affordable homes for local people

Environmental protection and recovery for biodiversity, and provision of accessible natural green space and conservation

The application of strong climate change mitigation and adaptation duties

Signed by:

Miriam Turner and Hugh Knowles, Co-Chief Executives, Friends of the Earth

Hugh Ellis, Director of Policy, Town and Country Planning Association

Crispin Truman, Chief Executive, CPRE

Ian Harvey, Executive Director, Civic Voice

Julie Hirigoyen, Chief Executive, UK Green Building Council

Craig Bennett, Chief Executive, The Wildlife Trusts

Beccy Speight, Chief Executive, The RSPB

Darren Moorcroft, Chief Executive, The Woodland Trust

Peter Hinton, Chief Executive, Chartered Institute for Archaeologists

David McDonald, Chair, Institute of Historic Building Conservation

Neil Redfern, Executive Director, Council for British Archaeology

Anna Liberadzki, Senior Campaigner, SumOfUs

Tom Platt, Director of Advocacy and Engagement, The Ramblers

Kit Stoner, Chief Executive, Bat Conservation Trust

Nicola Hodgson, Case Officer, Open Spaces Society

Fiona Mathews, The Mammal Society

Tony Gent, Chief Executive Officer, Amphibian and Reptile Conservation

Steve Chambers, Sustainable Transport Campaigner, Transport for New Homes

Naomi Luhde-Thompson, Director, Rights Community Action