



The countryside charity
Norfolk

CPRE Norfolk Position Statement Housing

CPRE Norfolk campaigns to protect and enhance the Norfolk countryside. We support the provision of new housing of the right kind, especially truly affordable housing, if built in the right places. However, we have grave concerns over the impact of excessive housing targets on the character of our county. These targets are dictated by central government and set by local authorities. Meeting these targets would lead to a significant loss of countryside, a reduction in rural tranquillity, increased light pollution and traffic levels. This will have a negative impact on nature, leading to climate change.

It is crucial that the right amount of appropriate housing is built to address local needs, whilst ensuring current legislation and targets regarding Climate Change are met. The numbers, type and sites of new housing are very important regarding the impact on the environment, for example their carbon footprint. The need to retrofit existing housing stock, along with considering the environmental impact of car and delivery vehicles related to new and existing housing also needs to be considered. It is also important that opportunities are taken whenever and wherever possible to develop brownfield sites for housing before greenfield sites are built on. Brownfield sites tend to be in more sustainable locations than greenfield sites which are frequently outside existing settlements. The government needs to ensure that the planning system enables the creation of well-designed, vibrant places that people want to live in.

Current planning policy sees the creation of local plans which allocate sites for new housing. Unfortunately, these plans do not ensure that the houses are delivered/developed, and do not go far enough in being able to dictate the type of housing which needs to be included on the various allocated sites. This means that the actual local needs are rarely met, and instead large numbers of estate-type largely unaffordable houses are constructed. When new local plans are written, rather than ensuring that the allocated sites from the last plan are developed, these are carried forward into the new plan along with many new sites. CPRE Norfolk argues that it is common sense that the existing sites are built-out before new sites are added. This would help to ensure that sites in more sustainable locations will be more likely to be developed before the new sites, which tend to be in greenfield, less sustainable locations beyond the edges of settlements. For this to happen new legislation needs to be passed, and is one of the reasons for CPRE Norfolk's Parish Alliance which campaigns on this issue.

The need for truly affordable housing is widely acknowledged, although too little is done to ensure that it is delivered in sufficient quantities across the county. To ensure this happens government needs to enable social housing to be built which remains in that sector, along with closing the loophole which allows too many developers to avoid building affordable housing.

As the country emerges from the Covid-19 pandemic it is vital that rather than returning to the 'old normal' way of doing things, lessons are learned across all aspects of how we live, work and play. An important part of this is re-setting how we plan our places to live and how they connect, not only with places of work, but with places for physical and mental well-being. These places are most importantly green spaces, both in and outside our built-up areas. If new creative thinking is applied in urban planning, such as increasing residential provision by converting redundant retail and office spaces into housing we can revitalise town centres while at that same time reducing the need to build on Greenfield sites. With 80% of the pollution related to housing coming from the traffic generated by it, in order to combat climate change it makes extremely good sense to locate housing in urban centres where less new traffic movements will be generated, rather than in locations in the countryside or on urban fringes.

April 2021