



The countryside charity
Peak District and
South Yorkshire

Media statement from CPRE, the countryside charity:

Sheffield should not sacrifice its Green Belt to meet unrealistic Government housing targets

The countryside charity, CPRE Peak District and South Yorkshire, is urging Sheffield City Council to ensure the city's vital and valued Green Belt is not sacrificed to meet unrealistic new housebuilding targets set by the Government.

The Government is requiring Sheffield to build 55,000 new homes by 2039.

But CPRE says the target is open to challenge as it has not been justified, and far exceeds likely population growth needs.

Councillors are being asked this week for their opinions on five broad options for how much of Sheffield's Green Belt should be released to meet housing requirements.

This could vary from none if Option 1 is adopted. This would mean new housing is built only on urban brownfield land, (i.e. land that has been previously developed), but this would fall some way short of the Government's target.

At the other extreme, Option 5 says 16,000 homes could have to be built on Green Belt land if the Government target was to be met in full.

The options report to councillors from a senior planning officer warns this latter option "is likely to cause serious harm to the environment and undermine Sheffield's reputation as the Outdoor City."

Other options include using previously undeveloped (greenfield) land within the urban area, including informal green space and sports grounds etc.

This could be problematic, especially as Covid lockdowns have shown how important and valued local green space is to communities across the city.

CPRE favours a strong but nuanced brownfield-first approach where local green space and nature recovery contributes to new, super-sustainable, low carbon urban neighbourhoods.

The re-use of a very small number of derelict brownfield sites in the Green Belt, in sustainable locations at the edge of the urban area (as outlined in the Council's 'Option 3') may be a way forward that helps meet Sheffield's realistic housing needs rather than the Government's target.

But such exceptional use of Green Belt would have to demonstrate exceptional affordability, sustainability and zero carbon credentials.

CPRE is particularly concerned that the council is being required by Government to provide house numbers that far exceed likely population growth needs.

New research by consultants Icenii, on behalf of the Council, also shows the Government's target is in excess of the house numbers needed to meet the growth in jobs anticipated by the City Region's Strategic Economic Plan.

"We don't believe the Government's new housing targets are a credible solution to the country's urgent housing crisis or have been properly justified," said Andy Tickle, Head of Campaigns at CPRE.

"The Government is also unlikely to properly fund councils to deliver the right homes in the right place, not helping with the additional costs of brownfield reclamation nor the provision of truly affordable new homes."

ENDS

12 January 2022

Background note: *In the 1930s, CPRE instigated the mapping and designation of Sheffield's Green Belt, one of the first in England. CPRE is now urging Sheffield City Council to challenge the idea that new housing targets alone are a justification to abandon the city's vital and valued Green Belt.*

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