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Full Council Meeting

Date: 28th July 2022

Agenda Item: FC069 - To consider the communication from CPRE proposing Parish Councils write to their MP regarding the potential consequences of the Government's Levelling Up & Regeneration Bill

Detailed below is the article shared by CPRE for consideration by Council:

Obscure New Planning Rules Could Silence Local Communities

by Professor Dan Osborn, Chair CPRE Sussex & Dr Roger F Smith, Trustee CPRE Sussex

The problem

CPRE Sussex is keeping careful watch on the Government's Levelling-Up & Regeneration Bill which we believe "radically centralises planning decision-making and substantially erodes public participation in the planning system". There would be damaging consequences for Sussex if this Bill is passed.

Our concerns are highlighted in a letter to Michael Gove, dated 21 June 2022, from Clive Betts MP, Chair, Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee, who summarises legal opinion as follows (we are quoting from this letter to emphasise the seriousness of the Bill for Sussex):

Quote:

"a) The Bill represents a significant change to the existing planning system. It undermines an important planning principle, the primacy of the development plan, by elevating national development management policies to the top of the planning hierarchy.

b) Unlike development plans, which are produced locally via a statutory process that involves considerable public participation, the Bill contains no obligation to allow the public to participate in the development of national development management policies.

c) The Bill also introduces two new development plan documents, spatial development strategies and supplementary plans. The Bill provides for very limited opportunities for public participation in the production of these documents.

d) The Bill introduces a new mechanism to allow the Secretary of State to grant planning permission for controversial developments, bypassing the planning system entirely. There is no right for the public to be consulted as part of this process.

e) Overall, in our view the Bill radically centralises planning decision-making and

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substantially erodes public participation in the planning system.”

We also note with concern that the Bill will enable the Secretary of State to designate any area of England as an ‘urban development area’ and ‘establish a development corporation for the area’. Will strategic site allocations in Sussex and the areas in which they occur be designated urban development areas?

A Worrying Lack of Response from Sussex MPs

Clearly there is cause for considerable concern though surprisingly none has been expressed by Sussex’s MPs. Hansard records show that only two of our MPs spoke at the Commons debate of the Bill on 8 June.

They were Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion, Green) and Caroline Ansell (Eastbourne, Conservative). Neither addressed the issues raised by Clive Betts. Were our Sussex MPs not aware?

The debate is recorded in the House of Commons Official Report Parliamentary Debates (Hansard) Wednesday 8 June 2022: Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill: Second Reading, pages 821 to 916).

What we will do

CPRE Sussex will work to alert local council leaders and MPs to the risks the new rules present to Sussex.

What you can do

We urge you our members to write to your MPs and council leaders. To add weight to your concerns, you can include the quotes and information above.

Find your MP at members.parliament.uk/FindYourMP and your Council Leader at [gov.uk > find-your-local-councillors](https://gov.uk/find-your-local-councillors)

Pause for thought

Progress was never made by reducing standards, neither will lower standards of protection help levelling up in any way. And decisions made based on lower standards are unlikely to be sustainable. Why invest now in creating problems for the future with rules that lower standards and stretch our natural resources to breaking point?