



RTPI

Royal Town Planning Institute

Where should we Build New Homes?

RTPI policy statement on identifying new housing development opportunities

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A top priority for the UK Government must be to address the severe difficulties that many people have in accessing decent and affordable housing.

Identifying new development opportunities for where new housing should be located, is key for housing policy, as outlined in our Location of Development research¹. The Royal Town Planning Institute has also canvassed its members across the country on their experience in trying to meet the shortfall in housing supply, which has formed the basis of the following statement.

Make brownfield land achieve its full potential

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Previously-developed brownfield land in built-up areas must continue to play a vital role for a range of purposes including housing. However, a “brownfield first” policy will fail to deliver its full potential if there is insufficient available funding for the treatment and assembly of land. New proactive remedial programmes are needed to remove constraints on development and to make places where people want to live which are accessible by sustainable modes of transport.

Densification in existing housing areas

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The increase in density of existing housing areas in towns and cities may also have a key role in providing new housing. However, it is essential that increasing density is of high quality and is supported by infrastructure and facilities including sufficient open space. This requires real community consultation to take account their needs and minimise the displacement of existing residents.

Develop some greenfield strategically, but continue brownfield priority

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Even with enhanced urban renewal, and regeneration programmes of action and funding, land within existing built up areas will not meet our housing needs in full. Some of the future housing needs will have to be met on greenfield land

¹ www.rtpi.org.uk/locationofdevelopment

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around our towns and cities. The experience of our members clearly indicates that this can be done without undermining the priority to be given to brownfield sites through a planned, managed and phased approach to development.

Make green belts work for everybody

Planning policies such as green belts have enabled a managed approach to urban expansion, whilst avoiding urban sprawl around our major cities. The planning profession has championed this policy for over 60 years. However, it is important to revisit the purposes that green belts need to fulfil over the coming generation. The value of green belts is not simply about what is ugly and what is attractive, as some argue. We need to talk about what green belts are for, and about their social impact, along with their continued role in shaping and managing urban growth.

Green belt boundaries may well need to change, but only through careful reviews over wider areas than single local authorities, and where safeguards are put in place to ensure that development is sustainable, affordable and delivered in a timely manner, and without prejudice to the renewal of brownfield land. We should also explore opportunities to improve green belts to help meet key social and environmental needs.

Better planning, not less planning

Whichever kinds of sites we are talking about, if government is to help ensure timely action to deliver new housing opportunities it is important that the planning system is allowed to work. In particular, we need local plans that properly plan for the homes their communities need. Where these have been scrutinised and found sound by the independent Planning Inspectorate, they should not face the risk of an eleventh-hour call-in and delay. Rather, support should be given to local authorities who have worked in partnership to deliver those homes. Effective strategic planning is needed to address the housing crisis. Planners have the skills to do the job, working in partnership with politicians and communities.

For more information

www.rtpi.org.uk/betterplanning