



CRISPIN BLUNT MP
Member of Parliament for Reigate

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

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2 May 2017

Sir/Madam,

Fixing Our Broken Housing Market - DCLG White Paper Consultation Response

We, the undersigned, all of whom until 3rd May 2017 represented constituencies containing areas of the London Metropolitan Green Belt, are writing in response to the Housing White Paper (February 2017) Consultation.

We are in general agreement with most of the comments and responses forwarded to you by The Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) but a particularly concerned about three key issues:

- The potential dilution of Green Belt land that may result from the White Paper proposals
- The basis of local housing need calculation and its implications for local authorities constrained from development by the Green Belt
- The need to diverting development from the overheated South East to less congested areas of the country where there is a requirement for more economic growth

Whilst we welcome the proposals to develop brownfield land and for higher density housing, we believe that the this will not be sufficient to prevent development on the Green Belt and on greenfield sites bearing in mind the current estimates for housing demand. Housing demand should not be a reason for diminishing the Green Belt.

We believe that permanence of the Green Belt should be extended by beyond the five year period of Local Plan reviews and that it should be specifically protected in a longer term strategy of at least 20 to 30 years. Without this, the Green belt is at risk of gradual erosion at every review and its value downgraded.

We would question the methodology for the allocation and delivery of housing targets, especially in local authority areas which contain large areas of Green Belt land and have already been densely developed in areas where such development is possible. We believe that a new and standardized approach is required to assessing housing requirements which should include consideration of constraints on land supply such as Green Belt and Areas of Outstanding National Beauty (AONB) (Q3b).

We strongly object to the proposal that local authorities may amend the Green Belt when they demonstrate that they have examined all other reasonable options for meeting their identified development requirements and do not believe it is acceptable that Green Belt boundaries should be allowed to be amended if development targets cannot be reached by other means (Q10a).

Furthermore, we do not accept that 'compensatory improvements' can overcome the damage caused by losing Green Belt as the whole purpose of the Green Belt will be lost if alternative means are found of justifying development on it (Q10b).

We do not favour details of any amendment of Green Belt being determined by neighbourhood plans other than minor anomalies such as garden boundaries. Any significant amendment should form part of a Local Plan review (Q10e).

We also oppose the proposal that Local Planning Authorities, when carrying out a Green Belt review, should look first at first using land that has been previously developed as there is no clear definition of 'previously developed land' (Q10f). There is a danger that aerodromes or golf courses, for example, which are predominantly open land, will be classified as previously developed land and be subject to concentrated housing development. There should be a stipulation that 'there should be no loss of openness, no greater building footprint, or any adverse impact on the purpose of the Green Belt'.

With regards to options for developing national policy that should be explored fully before Green Belt boundaries are amended, we believe that central government should consider a better spread of development across the whole country instead of concentrating growth in the South East and other already congested conurbations, reducing the necessity to further develop in areas protected by Green Belt which are already developed to near capacity (Q11).

In summary, we believe that Green Belt protection should override new housing development in protected areas as there is sufficient capacity in the country to meet new homes targets without Green Belt encroachment. Any dilution of the Green Belt is likely to lead to its gradual and inevitable erosion, ultimate disappearance and replacement by urban sprawl.

Yours sincerely,



11 Crispin Blunt, MP for Reigate
Dominic Raab, MP for Esher and Walton
Gordon Henderson, MP for Sittingbourne and Sheppey
Adam Afriyie, MP for Windsor
Jonathan Lord, MP for Woking