

## **EXCESSIVE NEW BUILD IN BRISTOL “A NONSENSE!” IN CURRENT ECONOMIC CLIMATE**

The scale of housing development in the Bristol area **must** be reconsidered especially in light of the current economic climate, says the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE).

Before the downturn in the economy the housing targets were unrealistic, now they are nonsense, maintains the CPRE. Even the Regional Assembly is rejecting the higher housing figures for the region now proposed by the Government and the Government’s own appraisal of its regional plan indicates that “the high levels of economic growth on which the Proposed Changes RSS is based is now unlikely”.

“We are deeply concerned at the increased scale of development”, says Georgie Bigg, chairman of CPRE North Somerset. “Developers are already putting pressure on local authorities and pushing forward to secure planning approval on Green Belt sites before we’ve reached the end of the consultation period”.

The countryside campaigners will submit their response to the consultation on the proposed changes to the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) this Friday, October 24<sup>th</sup>, in a last ditch attempt to persuade the Government to reduce the level of housing proposed for the region.

“What’s more, these housing figures are now expressed as a minimum!” warns Georgie Bigg. “We believe it is essential that this approach is abandoned. It risks undermining the urban focus of the strategy, which we support, by allowing cherry picking of more easily developed and more profitable rural and green-field sites.

“There is no evidence that building on this scale would make housing more affordable for first-time buyers, and the lack of infrastructure, such as public transport and hospitals, simply will not support expansion on this level.”

The CPRE believes that a more sustainable and realistic approach must be found which will work in both difficult and good economic times, and which will not compromise the character of the countryside and the quality of life in and around Bristol.

ENDS

\* Quote from the Sustainability Appraisal of Proposed Changes to draft RSS - Para 31.

- The Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West (RSS) will set out a vision for how the region will grow and develop up to 2026. The Government is currently consulting on its Proposed Changes to the draft

RSS. This consultation can be found at [www.gosw.gov.uk](http://www.gosw.gov.uk) The closing date is 24 October 2008.

- Full details of the CPRE submission in response to the consultation are available on the CPRE South West website from 30<sup>th</sup> October 2008. Visit [www.cpresouthwest.org.uk](http://www.cpresouthwest.org.uk) for details.

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**Notes to editors**

**CPRE SOUTH WEST**

The Campaign to Protect Rural England is a registered charity which promotes the beauty, tranquillity and diversity of rural England advocating positive solutions for the long-term future of the countryside.

Registered charity Number 1089685

The seven CPRE branches in the South West (Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Somerset, Avonside and Wiltshire) work collectively to influence regional decision-making processes. They welcome new supporters, members and volunteers.

Visit [www.cpre.org.uk](http://www.cpre.org.uk) - for full details.