



Lindfield Society

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Mims Davies MP
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

Dear Ms Davies,

**An open letter concerning
the threat posed by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill**

The planning provisions in this emerging bill are a matter of considerable concern. We refer to the letter to Michael Gove, dated 21 June 2022, from Clive Betts MP, Chair, Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee. The committee finds that "overall, in our view the Bill radically centralises planning decision-making and substantially erodes public participation in the planning system". Given that public participation in the current planning system is already minimal, this is a worrying conclusion.

The bill would enshrine national development policies as the dominant factor in planning decisions, with no obligation to involve the public in developing these policies. A new mechanism would allow the Secretary of State to bypass the planning system altogether in permitting controversial developments. Two new development plan documents would be introduced (spacial strategy and supplementary plans) offering very limited opportunities for public participation in their development. Ominously, the Secretary of State would also be empowered to designate any area of England as an "urban development area" and "establish a development corporation for the area".

The past decade has seen planning powers increasingly centralised, resulting in unrealistic housing targets dictated from above (Mid Sussex provides an unfortunately apt example) and developers being allowed to do largely as they please. The result has been waves of unwanted and unneeded speculative housing that disfigures desirable areas, while a shortage of truly affordable housing stubbornly persists. More of the same will simply not do.

We would very much appreciate your support in resisting further centralisation of planning powers and in returning decisions to the communities who know their own localities best.

Yours sincerely,

Gil Kennedy
Chairman