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Revealed: Plans for 300,000 homes on green field sites as developers exploit change in rules

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Developers are to exploit a controversial change in the planning laws by building more than 300,000 homes on green field sites, campaigners claimed yesterday.

A study by the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) found that 230 major projects are already in the pipeline in anticipation of the Government's new National Planning Policy Framework.

The proposals involve building 313,000 new homes. These include 75,000 on previously protected Green Belt land. The rest would be built on undeveloped green field sites.

Campaigners claim developers have been stockpiling sites ahead of the controversial policy change which will introduce a new 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. More than 600,000 sites are being held in so-called land banks.

Although the reforms are still out for consultation, planning inspectors have been advised that they already need to bear them in mind when considering applications now.

The change in the planning laws will sweep away more than 1,000 pages of detailed guidance and replace it with just 50.



Ministers insist the reforms will unblock the planning process, which is blamed for stifling the economy and pushing housebuilding to a record low.

Last year just 105,000 homes were completed – fewer than half the number needed. The shortage of new homes is widely blamed for making it hard for young families to get a foot on the housing ladder.

Ministers say the changes will still prevent inappropriate development, with the Green Belt and designated beauty spots given special protection.

But campaigners, including the National Trust, the CPRE and the RSPB, have warned that the reforms will pave the way for a development free-for-all.

They claim that the requirement for 'sustainable development' is so poorly defined that almost all proposals will pass the test.

And they warn that the removal of a requirement to consider previously developed sites before building on green fields will lead to urban sprawl.

Developers tend to prefer green field sites because they are cheaper to build on than so-called 'brownfield' plots which often cost huge sums to clean up.

The new proposals also sweep away a requirement that developers consider town centre sites before building on the

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Some of the large projects planned for Green Belt land

	Number of homes
■ Aintree, Crosby, Formby, Southport, Sefton on Merseyside	17,600
■ Newcastle upon Tyne and Gateshead	9,700
■ Newmarket in Suffolk and surrounding towns	5,440
■ Harrogate, North Yorkshire	5,000
■ Cookham, Berks (above)	3,750
■ Durham	3,500
■ Basildon, Essex	2,600
■ Cambridge	2,500
■ Pinewood, Bucks	1,400
■ Rotherham	1,100

Source: CPRE

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outskirts or the open countryside.

Paul Miner, of the CPRE, said: 'At the moment a huge number of developments are being proposed on the back of the statement the Government has made that the default answer to development is "yes".'

The CPRE research suggests that developers are lining up plans for almost all parts of England.

In Cambridge, some 2,500 homes are planned for Green Belt land. Developers in Nottinghamshire are also eyeing up the Green Belt, including parts of Sherwood Forest, for housing development.

Other areas of Green Belt under threat include parts of Durham, where 3,500 new homes are planned, and areas around Newcastle and Gateshead where almost 10,000 houses are proposed.

Protesters in Cookham, in Berkshire, claim it will be swamped by plans for a 3,750-home development on the Green Belt, which they say will turn the village into a suburb of Maidenhead.

Other areas that could lose Green Belt land to development include Newmarket, in Suffolk, Harrogate, in North Yorkshire, Basildon, in Essex, Rotherham, in South Yorkshire, and parts of Merseyside, including Southport and Formby.

The consultation on the planning reforms ends next month and the changes are due to come into force next April. Ministers are under intense pressure to water down the reforms but insist they will not back down.

Read more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2041732/Planning-framework-Plans-300k-homes-green-field-sites-developers-exploit-reforms.html#ixzz1Z2viMxsc>