

Developers celebrate greenlight for consultation on brownfield sites

Developers are claiming success in a campaign to build at least 110,000 new homes on small brownfield sites in England's cities after the government agreed to consult on the issue.



Source: Shutterstock/Thinglass

A 28-strong coalition of developers, including Barratt Developments and affordable housing firm Pocket Living, pushed for changes to existing regulations, resulting in agreement to launch a consultation following last Tuesday's Levelling Up Bill debate.

Conservative MP Andrew Lewer inserted a small sites clause into the legislation requiring councils to "support opportunities to bring forward sites and apply a presumption in favour of development", provided at least 60 % of homes proposed were affordable.

Lewer said: "I am pleased to recommend making it easier for brownfield and small sites to come forward in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill and glad to hear from the housing minister that she intends to look into this further.

Pocket Living CEO Marc Vlessing said: "We are delighted the government has heeded our calls for an urgent review of its policy for small sites following our campaign and our analysis of the potential for such sites to deliver thousands of new homes.

“At long last it seems the government is being bold enough to consider empowering SME housing developers to deliver, through a presumption in favour of development on small brownfield sites, a substantial number of homes in sustainable urban locations.

“Contrast this to the current situation whereby councils across England’s 10 largest urban settlements are only identifying a fraction of brownfield sites, and the benefits of doing so are absolutely clear,” he added.

Paul Hackett, CEO of Optivo, another small builder, said: “A presumption in favour of development of small sites for affordable housing could unlock thousands of sites to build hundreds of thousands affordable homes across the country in the years ahead. Unlocking small urban sites would enable housing associations and SMEs to develop affordable homes in established urban locations, making better use of under-developed urban land.”

A review by Pocket Living of untapped potential small brownfield sites across 10 of England’s major urban areas found the capacity to develop at least 110,000 new homes, which would reflect almost 70% of the government’s target to create 160,000 homes on all brownfield sites.