

Edward Davey MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW19 0AA

The Rt Hon Steve Reed OBE MP
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government
Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government
Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

18th November 2025

Dear Steve,

Following your written statement announcing government plans to remove local councils' ability to veto large housing developments of over 150 homes or more, I am seeking urgent clarification on the detail of these proposals, including when you hope to implement them, how and when they will have effect and what parliamentary scrutiny will be possible to debate and vote on them before they take effect.

As I am sure you are aware, these plans represent a profound and sudden change in planning policy and a deeply troubling removal of the rights of local people and communities to have their say on what happens in their areas and a dramatic attack on local democracy.

The Government's policy to re-designate green belt land into grey belt has already had profound implications for parts of my constituency and many others. Although I opposed that move, it was at least part of your election manifesto. However, your latest proposal to remove entirely the right of local communities to turn down large-scale developments did not appear in your manifesto and yet it would appear to destroy a local community's ability to have a say in how their local areas are shaped. You have no democratic mandate to remove these democratic powers, and I will oppose any such move in the strongest possible terms.

Local authorities are not obstacles. They are democratically elected bodies entrusted to balance housing needs with the capacity of their local infrastructure, local environmental considerations and local services to support such additional homes. To strip councils of their statutory role in planning decisions in this way will further damage remaining public trust in the planning system altogether.

While I support the need for more homes, in my constituency we are already driving forward the largest council home building programme for over 40 years, designed to address local housing needs, and the local council has already granted planning permissions to private developers many of which have yet to be built out. Furthermore, the council is undertaking a reform of its own planning department to make it more fit for purpose, in the context of stretched local authority

budgets. Nationally, given 9 out of 10 applications are approved by councils, your move seems inappropriate. The reasons homes are not being built has much more to do with the wider economy and the high cost of new homes than the planning system.

I understand that my Liberal Democrat colleague, Gideon Amos MP, is also writing to you with a set of detailed policy and legal questions about this proposal. As you know, Gideon not only speaks for my party on housing and planning matters, but he is also a genuine expert on planning, given his past career as the Chief Executive of the Town and Country Planning Association and as a Planning Inspector. I hope you and your officials will answer my letter and Gideon's in detail at your very earliest convenience.

Thank you in advance for your urgent consideration.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Edward Davey', with a small flourish at the end.

Sir Edward Davey
MP for Kingston & Surbiton

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