

Government should beware pitfalls of the 'short term fix'

Elements of Housing and Planning Bill 'potentially harmful' warns ADEPT.

ADEPT, the Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport has called on the government to reconsider elements of the Housing and Planning Bill currently in the committee stage.

In its submission to the Housing and Planning Bill committee, the organisation raises concern that components of the bill are 'potentially harmful to regeneration and economic prosperity.'

Warning that a short-term approach to Starter Homes will cause problems in the future, ADEPT is calling for an amendment to the Bill so that 'the restrictions on sales and letting at open market value of Starter Homes are in perpetuity.'

Otherwise, it argues 'Starter Homes can be resold or let at open market value five years after the initial sale [and] affordability cannot be maintained,' allowing purchasers to reap 'a windfall' at a later date, pushing up prices.

Simon Neilson, chair of ADEPT's Planning, Housing and Regeneration Board said: "We are asking the Government to reconsider its approach in two key areas – guaranteeing affordability for Starter Homes over the long term and to review how industrial land is redefined for housing use.

"In its current form we believe that there are not enough safeguards to protect against landowners keen to take advantage of higher land values for housing. We must guard against losing land to housing that can be used to support industry and create jobs."

ADEPT believes that the description of industrial land that could be used for starter homes as 'under-used or no longer viable for commercial processes' is too open to interpretation.

ADEPT's submission argues that to become available for housing, industrial land should be clearly defined as 'no longer deliverable for commercial or industrial uses' and that a written statement of evidence should be provided by the landlord. Furthermore, ADEPT believes this definition should be contained within the Bill as a legal requirement, ensuring that any change of use is subject to scrutiny.

Simon continued: "The Government needs to recognise the potential consequences of the Bill as it stands. Affordable housing is essential, but not just for the next five years. At the same time we must not lose land that can contribute to economic regeneration and jobs."

ADEPT is the voice of Local Authority county, unitary and metropolitan Strategic Place Directors across England with responsibility for the key place based services, including transport, environment, planning, economic development, housing and waste.

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About ADEPT

The Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning & Transport (ADEPT) represents local authority county, unitary and metropolitan Directors. Operating at the strategic tier of local government, members are responsible for delivering public services that primarily relate to the physical environment and the economy, but which have a significant impact on all aspects of the nation's well-being. ADEPT represents members' interests by proactively engaging central Government on emerging policy & issues, promoting initiatives aimed at influencing Government policy and through the development of best practices and responding to European and UK Government initiatives and consultations.

For more information on ADEPT please visit the website: www.adeptnet.org.uk