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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **PLANNING WHITE PAPER ‘A MIXED BAG’ – PROTECTIONS FOR THE GREEN BELT BUT LESS DEMOCRACY AND POORER QUALITY**

The London Green Belt Council (LGBC) – which represents more than 100 local community organisations and amenity societies across London and the Home Counties – has described the Government’s proposals for reform of the planning system as “a mixed bag”, providing some protection for countryside in the Green Belt and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty but at the same time threatening to undermine local democracy and restrict community involvement in the planning process.

Responding to the publication today (6 August) of the Planning White Paper, ‘Planning for the Future’ by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), Andy Smith, Secretary of the London Green Belt Council said: “We welcome the Government’s pledge to protect Green Belt and AONB countryside from development but we are disappointed that ministers have missed this opportunity to strengthen local democracy and have instead opted for policies that circumvent local communities. We are also concerned about potential reductions in building standards resulting from the Government’s intention to ‘fast-track’ developments at the expense of quality and the environment.”

The LGBC will be participating in the Government’s consultation on the White Paper and is urging communities throughout London and the South East to “have their say, and to bring pressure to bear on ministers to ‘think again’ about planning”. Mr Smith adds: “The priority for any reforms to the planning system in England should be to increase public participation and to improve the quality and environmental sustainability of new developments. Whilst the White Paper’s reaffirmation of the important role of the Green Belt is very welcome, there is a danger that the current proposals from ministers will lead to a massive reduction in local democracy and accountability, which will harm the environment and will benefit only the developers and their profits.”

-ENDS

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