

The Editor
Dear Sir,

Councillor Hanson writes of the need for new homes in our area and about reviewing the North Lancashire Green Belt. The purposes of a Green Belt are defined as:

- To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land

The ongoing review is an integral part of the planning process, designed to determine whether these purposes continue to be relevant. I hope events prove Councillor Hanson right when she says that if green belt land is allocated for development, this will be a consequence of green belt land no longer serving the purposes for which it was created: it will not be to enable more houses to be built.

Councillor Hanson also writes about providing for "our young people who are struggling to find a home of their own" and about "young first time buyers who (sic) have no choice but to leave the village they have lived in all their lives to find an affordable home". I am pleased to note that the Housing and Planning Bill introduced into Parliament last month is coming to the rescue by providing a new general duty for a planning authority to "promote" starter homes. The Bill defines a starter home as a building or part of a building that is a new dwelling, available for purchase by qualifying first-time buyers under the age of 40, sold at a discount of at least 20% of the market value, sold for less than the price cap, and sold subject to any restrictions on sale or letting specified in regulations made by the Secretary of State.

Such homes, that might be called "**affordable to buy**" housing, will help young people to achieve their aspirations of having a home of their own and enable them to get "a foothold on the housing ladder" in a way that shared-ownership or renting of "affordable homes" can never do. Starter homes for purchase are a welcome solution to the particular problems that Councillor Hanson has described - and I am hopeful that would-be developers in areas throughout our district will be attracted by this new opportunity for meeting housing needs.

Cllr. J. R. Mace
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