

## Government reviewing small-sites policy as part of Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill

The government has committed to reviewing its planning policy on small sites as part of the next stages of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill.

Developers said the commitment to review the policy could deliver an extra 110,000 new homes on brownfield land.

The review follows a campaign by Andrew Lewer, the MP for Northampton South, with the support of an industry coalition of 28 organisations led by Pocket Living.

These organisations include the National Housing Federation, Barratt Homes, Optivo, Network Homes and a number of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and industry leaders.

Analysis by Pocket Living of 10 urban settlements in England highlighted the potential to deliver over 110,000 new homes on small brownfield sites in those areas alone.

The developer said this would cover almost 70% of the government's overall target to deliver 160,000 homes on all brownfield sites.

It estimates the national figure could be far higher.

The analysis found that more than 50% of councils are failing to identify up to 85% of potential small brownfield sites.

Following the commitment by government, it is envisaged that the next stage will be a consultation on the change linked to a wider review of the policies contained in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Mr 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.

"Helping innovative businesses like Pocket Living to get on with their work needs to be a priority for the department as the country faces unprecedented housing pressures."

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

“The fact that hundreds of thousands of our citizens aged 25 to 45 are effectively being forced to abandon any hope of ever owning a home due to record-high housing costs is nothing short of a tragedy and a national disgrace.

“Yet that is precisely what is happening. At long last it seems as though the government is now being bold enough to consider empowering SME housing developers to deliver, through a presumption in favour of development on small brownfield sites, to deliver a substantial number of homes coming forward 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.”

Paul Hackett, chief executive of Optivo, said: “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.”