

GreenView



The Green Party newsletter for the Eastern Region

Green Solutions to the Region's Housing Problems

The Green Party is concerned about the wave of new house-building projects that are happening across the East, which have the potential to disrupt rural life and seem unlikely to address the needs of many people struggling to find affordable accommodation.

The lack of affordable accommodation is a major issue across Britain as house prices in many areas have risen drastically over the last two years. Homes in Cambridge, for instance, are now 13.4 percent higher than this time last year, with the average property in the city now valued at £338,500.

According to the charity, Shelter, the result is that approximately 1.8 million are now priced out of home-ownership completely. The Green Party is therefore campaigning to ensure that more affordable accommodation is available. To achieve this, the party would introduce higher council taxes for second and unoccupied properties and would increase the amount of social housing. The party has also called for more government subsidies to make houses energy efficient to tackle fuel poverty.

In contrast, the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats have introduced their "New Homes Bonus", which rewards councils for increasing the number of homes in their area. However, according to many local housing officers, this does not appear to have brought about a more 'strategic and coordinated approach' to house-building.

Instead across Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Suffolk



Greens call for more affordable housing in cities and greater protection for rural communities

and Norfolk the new house-building projects, in particular in rural areas, have created "dormitory towns", which have few amenities and fewer employment opportunities, partly because many inhabitants commute long distances, especially to London.

The Green Party would therefore like to see councils establish sustainable communities. This would include a commitment to affordable housing, would guarantee the creation of local jobs and the provision of local facilities, shops and decent public transport for residents.

As well as building in rural villages, new houses have also been planned on the "greenbelt" land around cities, notably London. Originally designed to control the growth of cities, open, green spaces were created around fast-growing cities about 80 years ago. However, today such areas across Hertfordshire, Essex and Bedfordshire as well as around Cambridge are ear-

marked to be built on.

The Green Party would like to see these open spaces and agricultural areas protected, e.g. along the A120 corridor in Essex and urges local councils to encourage the redevelopment of so-called "brownfield" sites first. Brownfield land was previously used for industry or commerce. Across the towns and cities in the East there are many such sites perfect for redevelopment. Such a policy would protect the green spaces around cities and would ensure the overdue re-invigoration of former industrial premises.

The Green Party is therefore campaigning for:

- 1) More affordable accommodation
- 2) Better public services and amenities in the region's towns
- 3) Greater protection for the region's "greenbelts"
- 4) New developments to occur primarily on "brownfield" sites

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