



PRESS RELEASE

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“GARDEN COMMUNITIES” – WHY COMMUNITIES ARE SAYING NO

“Garden communities” are central to the Government’s push for more housing, but the communities themselves who face imposition of garden towns or villages are identifying the massive shortcomings in the plans.

Now a group of opposition campaigns have set out their objections in a new report. Under the auspices of the Smart Growth UK coalition, six of those opposing Government-sponsored schemes and four fighting schemes dubbed “garden villages” by developers are setting out exactly why they say no.

Garden towns and villages are supposed to be “locally-led”, but when local communities actually get a chance to be heard, they paint a different picture. Far from being locally-led, the cash-strapped councils who have been induced into supporting them in return for money have made themselves very unpopular with their communities.

“Our local authorities have become obsessed with meeting Government housing targets via four vast new settlements,” says Campaign Against Urban Sprawl in Essex secretary Rosie Pearson. “But our 8,500 supporters say destroying 130 square kilometres of farmland and woodland without the infrastructure to support these new towns is utter folly.”

The campaigns identify a range of reasons why garden communities are the wrong approach, including:-

- They would be low-density greenfield development, squandering precious farmland and damaging the countryside;
- Very few make any serious use of brownfield land;
- All would necessitate massive provision of infrastructure, but proposals for it are totally inadequate;
- They would generate huge amounts of traffic on unsuitable local roads, increasing congestion, accidents and greenhouse gas emissions;
- They lack local support and provoke fierce opposition.

“We’re fighting to stop ‘Bailrigg Garden Village’ covering a large area of countryside south of Lancaster with 3,500-5,000 houses and extensive road links to the M6,” says Mary Breakell, co-founder and communications officer of the Citizens of Lancaster Opposed to Unnecessary Development group. “There is little local need for these houses and they would exacerbate local flooding, cause traffic congestion and much of the infrastructure they’d need lacks plans or costings.”

But the current planning system in England is deaf to objections and obsessed with building raw numbers of houses, often the wrong kinds in the wrong places. Most of the homes in garden communities would be market homes for sale or buy-to-let and would do little or nothing for those in need of social housing.

“‘Oxfordshire Cotswolds Garden Village’ is not in the Cotswolds and is planned to be a dormitory suburb of Oxford,” says Nigel Pearce of the Eynsham Planning Improvement Campaign. “As for the ‘garden’ aspect, it would be surrounded by congested main roads, sit right next to a park & ride and have an existing industrial aggregate recycling plant in the middle of it. Not what it says on the tin.”

Those with a vested interest dismiss opponents as “NIMBYs”. But these are people campaigning to protect their local environment from those trying to profit from its destruction.

Notes to editors: The report can be found at:-

http://www.smartgrowthuk.org/resources/downloads/Garden_Communities_Report.pdf

Smart Growth UK is an informal coalition of national and local groups and individuals who support the “Smart Growth” approach to spatial, transport and community planning. This advocates compact, traditional urbanist development, opposes sprawl and supports town centres, public transport and active travel. Last year it published a report [Garden Towns and Villages – Unwanted, Unnecessary and Unsustainable](#) about the schemes.

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