

# Green Party reaction to launch of Devolution White Paper

## 2. Press Releases

Reacting to the government's [White Paper on the reorganisation of local government](#), Green Party MP Ellie Chowns said:

"There is much to be welcomed in this White Paper including strengthening the rights of communities to purchase cherished local assets such as youth clubs, libraries or sport facilities; increasing powers over control of local transport, better alignment of public services including police, health and probation and removing the need for government to sign off decisions for locally specific things like cycle lanes.

"The big gap is the democratic deficit in Labour's plans. This risks being devolution that steals power away from local people. We have to ask, how will local communities get heard? And who will hold mayors to account?

"We need to keep the local in local government. That means decision making as close as possible to the people most impacted; it involves trusting local communities to know what is best for them and supporting them with investment to deliver real change. And true democracy must include a fair proportional voting system for local elections, which seems to be a glaring omission from this White Paper."

16 December 2024 / 16 December 2024 by [Green Party](#)

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## Greens say local government reorganisation "steals power away from local people"

Responding to measures contained within the government's [White Paper on English Devolution](#), which the government will announce today, Green Party co-leader Adrian Ramsay MP said:

"Local democracy is in urgent need of reform but this White Paper does not

deliver the real change our local councils need.

“It steals power away from local people and risks making the real changes required harder to achieve, including building the homes we need, cleaning our rivers, reforming social care and greening our local economies.

“We should trust local communities to make the right decisions on homes, food, energy, nature and adapting to the climate crisis.

“Instead, these plans risk moving power away from local councils to huge remote super councils and regional mayors.

“Devolution must mean real decentralisation of powers and funding so local councils can deliver the improvements to services that their communities need.

“If we want warmer homes; affordable, reliable accessible public transport, and flood defences that are fit for purpose, we must invest in local democracy.

“Without power devolved down so that decisions are made closest to where they have the greatest impact, people will grow ever more cynical about politics.

“Our fragile democracy can’t afford that.

“We will be pressing for local government to be kept local and made more democratic.

“That means:

- taking decisions as close as possible to the people most impacted
- trusting local communities to know what is best for them
- supporting them with investment to deliver real change.
- fair voting for local elections using proportional representation.

“Then, we can have the green transformation our country desperately needs, including warmer, affordable homes for people to rent or buy, reliable public transport and adapting to the climate crisis which is already underway.”

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**New planning framework “panders” to profit driven private housing**

# developers say Greens

Responding to [the “planning overhaul” announced today by government](#), Green Party Co-Leader, Adrian Ramsay, said:

“This new planning framework from Government fails to tackle the housing crisis head on and instead panders yet further to the interests of private developers whose main interest is lining their pockets.

By pitting what’s happening as a binary battle between builders and blockers, the government has insulted local communities and local government, all of whom desperately want affordable homes and fully understand the importance of balancing that with the need for food, nature and local energy.

Instead, the Government should be going head to head with the developers who are fixated on one thing only – maximising their profits by building yet more executive unaffordable homes at the expense of council homes for social rent and more affordable homes to buy. That means being tougher with developers over requiring a higher proportion of genuinely affordable and homes to rent and to buy as part of new developments. Equally developers must be made to honour real commitments to invest in local services that housebuilding does put additional pressure on.

This all can be done and still reverse the disastrous decline in biodiversity and protect local democracy. But this has to be done with communities, including through strengthening the role of neighbourhood plans, not imposed onto them by profit driven developers.

And Ministers should be taking this opportunity to look in the round at the housing crisis, and prioritising funds for increasing supply and ending right to buy, alongside building the right homes in the right place and the right price.

As it stands, this planning framework confirms many of the fears of those who not only want to protect this country’s degraded nature. We are not on course to meet most of the legally-binding nature recovery targets we have signed up to and this Planning Framework makes it even less likely we will hit them. This is more than a missed opportunity, it’s a dereliction of duty. We can and we must tackle both the housing crisis and the nature crisis. This new NPPF currently does neither.

The Government isn’t only bringing more and more land into its definition of ‘grey belt’ which can be built on, it is removing any local democratic say in the process. The deputy prime minister’s claim that this will remove “chaos and subjectiveness” from the system doesn’t wash. People have the right to have a say over major changes to their local community. This is local democracy in action.”

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## The Government cannot build its way out of the prison crisis, say Greens

Responding to the Justice Secretary, Shabana Mahmood's announcement that prisons may run out of space despite government plans to open 14,000 more prison places, Green Party MP Siân Berry said,

"The justice secretary is facing the reality that however fast the Government builds prisons, at the current rates of offending and reoffending, the respite from the current crisis of overcrowding will only last a handful of years.

"Instead of building more prisons, a planned programme of prevention and more effective alternatives to incarceration is required, particularly for women, young people and offenders whose crimes are driven by poverty and destitution.

"We need wholesale reform of short prison sentences, a focus on providing a real new start for people leaving prison, including safe housing, and a clear-headed look at the many ways people can repay their criminal debts to society more constructively."  
She continued,

"At the heart of this crisis is a continuous error from successive governments – amplified by misleading front pages – in assuming that the way to reduce crime is to keep locking up more and more of our citizens.

"Reducing crime means investing in services and job opportunities for young people, and I am confident that Justice Minister Lord Timpson knows this.

"The only question is whether the Prime Minister is bold and brave enough to allow him to bring forward common-sense reforms to bring prison populations back down, rather than trying to build their way out of this crisis."

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## "We remain clear, cutting services always was and still is, a political

# choice" say Greens

## 2. [Press Releases](#)

Responding to the news that Rachel Reeves is asking [Ministers to identify efficiency savings worth 5% of their current budgets](#), Green Party Co-Leader, Adrian Ramsay said:

"Labour call their 5% cuts across government departments "efficiency savings."

"We call it what it is: cuts to services.

"This amounts to the continuation of the same damaging, unpopular and unnecessary policy that has, under successive governments, so devastated our country over many years."

He continued, "Instead of stripping more money from essential front-line services that are already on their knees, Labour could and should look to tax the very richest more to raise crucial funds.

"This could act as a lifeline for key services such as our NHS.

"We remain clear, cutting services always was and still is, a political choice."

10 December 2024 by [Green Party](#)

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