

# Brownfield building pot of £200 million to save countryside from housing developers

By Christopher Hope  
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Plans to build thousands of new homes in 10 towns and cities have been announced by the government.

The Treasury will pay £200 million towards the cost of getting the "brownfield" sites ready for new homes, ministers said.

Brandon Lewis, the planning and Housing Minister, said the money would ensure that greenfield areas were protected, because it would focus developers' resources on meeting the needs for housing in towns and cities.

Under the scheme, councils will be able to bid to create 10 new housing zones in urban areas.\*

As part of the deal, the local authorities in those areas have to commit to building between 750 and 2000 homes. Councils that join developers to apply for the funding will also have to demonstrate they can build the homes quickly.

"We need to build more homes in the country, but it's also vital that we protect the countryside that people rightly treasure," Mr Lewis said. "That's why the government is offering councils a share of £200 million to prioritise development on brownfield land."

A separate bidding process for £400 million for new homes in London is being run by Boris Johnson, the Mayor of London.

The government said there was enough derelict land in towns and cities for 200,000 homes, but countryside campaigners claimed that the true figure was more than 10 times bigger.

Mr Lewis announced the plans as he visited a building site in Wolverhampton, where he saw the two family homes built by a housing association in a matter of days, using modern building techniques.

The homes which were built by Accord Group, were made from timber-framed walls assembled at a factory a few hundred yards away. Residents will be able to move in by December.

Alan Yates, Accord's director of regenerations said: "the demand for housing across the country remains high, but we are confident that off-site manufacturing offers a solution to increase the building of more homes, efficiently and to a high quality with less waste."

Shaun Spires, the chief executive of the Campaign to Protect Rural England, said: "this is a great start to getting back to a proper 'brownfield first' agenda which is good for our towns and for countryside. The CPRE is running a Waste of Space campaign which has identified a huge number of derelict sites across the country."

Other plans announced by Mr Lewis include a Right to Contest power and would allow people to challenge the government, to make it sell redundant land property to them.

Planning rules that came into force in 2012 were amended to include a stronger requirement for builders to develop brownfield before greenfield areas, after the "Hands Our Land" campaign supported by readers of *The Daily Telegraph*.

*\*N.B I caught a local news television clip yesterday which showed images of Dunsfold Aerodrome, the commentator said that Waverley Borough Council were planning to build 9000 homes across the borough.*