

Press release

Thousands of new homes get the go ahead in North Sussex

21,000 new homes in North Sussex
unlocked after four-year bottleneck

From: Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs
([/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs](#)), Natural England
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([/government/people/emma-reynolds--2](#)) and Matthew Pennycook MP
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Families in North Sussex are set to benefit from thousands of new homes following a landmark agreement between government, regulators and

industry – resolving a four-year pause on development while safeguarding local wetlands and wildlife.

This marks a major step forward in delivering homes for local families, supporting community growth and protecting the natural heritage of the Arun Valley.

Around 4,000 homes that were previously stalled will now proceed while enabling a further 17,000 to be built.

This breakthrough builds on the government pledge to build 1.5 million homes by the end of this Parliament, a core milestone of the Plan for Change.

Environment Secretary Emma Reynolds said:

“This breakthrough ends a broken status quo and shows how we can build the homes the community needs while protecting nature.

“Under the government’s Plan for Change, we are taking a win-win approach that unlocks growth while protecting and restoring the natural world we all depend on.

“We are getting Britain building again while securing a brighter future for our precious wetlands, wildlife and local rivers.”

Discussions were led through Defra’s Water Delivery Taskforce, a forum for government departments, water companies, regulators and developers to drive progress and resolve issues like this one.

Marian Spain, Chief Executive of Natural England, said:

“This type of sustainable development clearly shows how we can build the new homes this country needs while restoring and protecting nature.

“A thriving natural environment is at the heart of a strong economy and is vital to all of our health and wellbeing. We know that people want to live near nature and cases like this where sound nature regulations prompted innovative solutions mean we can continue to make that possible.”

Jennie Donovan, Environment Agency Director Nature and Place, said:

“The Environment Agency are committed to protecting the environment whilst supporting growth and sustainable development, ensuring new

homes are built with adequate flood risk protection, supply of drinking water and sewerage services.

“This agreement shows how working together to manage our water needs can unlock development and enable new homes for local communities, whilst helping nature recover at the same time.”

Housing and Planning Minister Matthew Pennycook said:

“The breakthrough achieved in Sussex North demonstrates how through smart policy interventions we can unlock precisely the kind of win-win for development and nature that this government is committed to achieving.”

Building work had been halted since 2021 due to concerns over the amount of water being taken from rivers and wetlands in the Arun Valley, which risked impacting protected wildlife and local water resources.

Work will begin from 1 November, with local authorities and developers working together to deliver homes that meet high environmental standards.

Under the agreement by Defra, Natural England, the Environment Agency and Southern Water, the water company will change its water abstraction permits to limit the amount of water taken from local rivers and wetlands, as well as provide funding to restore habitats. This will be paid for by the company and not by consumers.

The agreement ensures protection for rare species like the Lesser Whirlpool Ramshorn Snail, a unique part of the Arun Valley's ecosystem.

New homes will also be built to higher water efficiency standards in line with the building regulation guidance for water scarce areas, reducing daily water use and easing pressure on local watercourses.

This follows our [announcement on changes to Building Regulations \(https://www.gov.uk/government/news/water-saving-plans-to-reduce-bills-and-unblock-new-homes\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/water-saving-plans-to-reduce-bills-and-unblock-new-homes) that will tackle water shortage bottlenecks and unblock stalled developments in areas of water scarcity.

Notes to editors:

- In 2021, Natural England issued a water neutrality position statement in relation to the Arun Valley. As a result, new housing developments in parts of Horsham, Crawley and Chichester were paused.
- Today's agreement enables development to continue, building work will resume on 1 November.

- This government recognises the significant contribution by local authorities in managing the implications of water scarcity and the future challenges involved in getting appropriate development back underway, and we will continue to work with them to this end.
- The projected number of homes is based on estimates provided by local authorities.

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