

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/oct/16/labour-england-nature-housing-planning-bill>

Dear Editor

The Government and its master developer Homes England are being reckless and irresponsible in their pursuit of massive house-building in North Sussex - which includes the ancient Parish of Ifield [‘Urgent and renewed call for ‘ecological emergency’ in ancient parish as future of rare and protected ramshorn snail “uncertain”’, Crawley Observer-Sussex World, Oct 16].

The Guardian writes [The problem isn’t snails, but a broken housing model’, Editorial, Oct 12]:

‘Last Tuesday, the chancellor Rachel Reeves, told a conference of tech executives that she’d intervened to help a developer to build about 20,000 homes in north sussex that had been held up, she said, by “some snails...a protected species or something”. She added that they “are microscopic...you cannot even see” them...

‘The snail in question, the lesser whirlpool ramshorn, is one of Britain’s rarest freshwater creatures, found in only a handful of locations and highly sensitive to sewage pollution. But Ms Reeves portrayed it as a bureaucratic nuisance...growth is the priority , nature the obstacle...

‘The Treasury reportedly plans to hit green rules with amendments to its planning and infrastructure bill - ditching the precautionary principle, slashing species protections and curbing legal challenges...turning its back on the work of the Dasgupta review [which] argues that nature is not a constraint on growth but its foundation, a form of capital on which the economy depends.

‘The Wildlife Trusts points out that more than a million homes already have planning permission since 2015, but remain unbuilt. The real barriers to housebuilding are skills shortages, hoarded land and slow delivery. They need sorting out. Blaming snails, it would seem, is easier...mocking green protections and cosying up to developers...

‘The problem isn’t the planning system. It’s a broken, profit-driven housing model that banks land and starves supply. Scrapping nature protections won’t build 1.5m homes, it will just bulldoze public trust and the countryside’

Horsham District Council must reject - without hesitation - Homes England’s speculative West of Ifield planning application [DC/25/1312] which will bulldoze this beautiful North Sussex ancient Parish landscape into a building site for years to come.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

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Lesser Whirlpool Ramshorn Snail - a rare, protected species. Its future is “uncertain”.

Opinion

The Guardian view on Labour targeting nature: the problem isn't snails, but a broken housing model Editorial

Rachel Reeves's drive to speed up development is beginning to hurt wildlife and the environment as expendable. Voters want homes built, but not at any cost

Thu 12 Dec 2024 11:30 AM GMT



I began with gastropods. Last Tuesday, the chancellor, Rachel Reeves, told a conference of tech executives that she'd intervened to help a developer build about 20,000 homes in north Sussex that had been held up, she said, by "some snails ... a protected species or something". She added that they "are microscopic ... you cannot even see" them.

No one could miss the direction the chancellor was headed in. The snail in question, the lesser whorlpool ramshorn, is one of Britain's rarest freshwater creatures, found in only a handful of locations and highly sensitive to sewage pollution. But Ms Reeves portrayed it as a bureaucratic nuisance. She then bragged that she'd fixed it - after a friendly developer gave her a call. It's a bad look for a Labour politician, let alone the chancellor, to boast that green rules can be bent for chums.

The scheme was given the go-ahead a day before drought was declared in Sussex, potentially giving water companies cover to breach their licence obligations - including measures meant to protect the snails. Ms Reeves won't like being compared to Liz Truss, but the analogy works. Three years ago, Ms Truss railed against an "anti-growth coalition" of environmentalists, lawyers and regulators who, she claimed, were blocking Britain's path to prosperity. Ms Reeves is framing the issue the same way: growth is the priority, nature the obstacle.

But the public don't agree. Luke Tryl of More in Common told a Conservative conference fringe meeting that most Britons can't be categorised as "nimby" or "yimbby". They want both: to build and also to protect the countryside. However, when asked whether wildlife should be protected even if it delays or raises the cost of infrastructure, every single voter group - including Labour, Conservative and Reform UK - chose wildlife. Among the general public, 62% prioritised nature protection while 38% sided with building at any cost.

Guardian article [Oct 12 2025]



Ancient Parish of Ifield - designation as a 'National Landscape' by Natural England?



Proposed 'Ifield Park' within the Ancient Parish



Ancient Parish of Ifield [boundary.in black] - West of Ifield, North Sussex