

# PRESS RELEASE

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## REACTION TO THE PRIME MINISTER’S SPEECH ON 9TH JUNE 2022

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The Prime Minister made a number of announcements last week that will have an impact on rural planning. The finer details are yet to be confirmed, but it is clear that the need for rural housing is high on the political agenda.

### Right to Buy

The proposal for an extended ‘Right to Buy’ scheme was announced, whereby housing association tenants can use their housing benefits to buy their homes termed a “home ownership revolution”!

The National Housing Federation chief executive Kate Henderson is concerned and has commented that “Right to Buy pilots have shown that there is not enough money from sales to build new social homes to replace those sold, meaning a net loss of social housing.”

CPRE Campaigns and Policy Director Tom Fyans argued that this will not address the shortage of homes in rural areas. He stressed that “Those living in the countryside are hampered by low wages and high house prices. That’s why the government needs to commit to building 145,000 social homes a year to fill the gap between supply and demand.”

### Barn Conversions

The Prime Minister has also pledged to ease planning regulations to make it easier to convert disused barns and other buildings for residential purposes as part of “levelling up” the UK housing market.

FarmingUK reported that “Major reforms to the planning system have been announced that will ease restrictions on the conversion of disused farm buildings into residential properties. The measures are also to be extended to designated landscapes, including National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs).”

Planning Resource’s headline was that “The government is to make it “easier” to convert disused agricultural buildings into homes for “local first-time buyers””



The CLA consider this a ‘win’ and President Mark Tufnell commented that “Rural communities everywhere see talented people forced to leave because of the lack of housing” he added “This brain drain holds back the rural economy, depriving our small villages of workers, entrepreneurs, and consumers.”

There are no firm details on how this will be brought forward, however it is speculated within the planning industry that current Permitted Development Rights (via Class Q) may be revised. The Prime Minister has announced one detail in that Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and National Parks will now be included as part of any proposals.

### **BCM’s Opinion**

The Prime Minister specifically mentioned turning “disused agricultural buildings into homes for local first-time buyers” as well as supporting farmers in growing and diversifying their businesses. BCM have many rural clients that are keen to see this new legislation come into force. Although at an early stage of the policy and legislative process, it is clear that delivering new housing in rural locations, both market and affordable is of great benefit to our rural communities and farmers alike.

If the extended ‘Right to Buy’ scheme goes ahead, these changes to will be even more important to further ‘free-up’ the system in rural areas.

### **END**

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