

November 2025

All Under One Roof

**How Britons understand nature's place
within the housebuilding agenda**



**More in
Common**



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About More in Common

More in Common is a think tank and research agency working to bridge the gap between policy makers and the public and helping people in Westminster to understand those voters who feel ignored or overlooked by those in power. Our British Seven segmentation provides a unique lens at understanding what the public think and why. We've published ground-breaking reports on a range of issues from climate and refugees to culture wars to crime. We are a full-service research agency offering polling and focus group research and are members of the British Polling Council.

We are grateful to the RSPB for supporting this research. More in Common has retained full editorial control over this report.

Foreword

At a time when the UK faces pressing challenges around housing, infrastructure and economic growth, this report offers a timely and vital reminder to politicians: nature is not a luxury, it is a necessity. And crucially, it's a vote-winner. Right across the political spectrum, people care deeply about the natural world and their access to it. With a clear majority of people saying they are much more likely to vote for a party that makes nature conservation a priority, trashing nature is not just bad policy, it's bad politics. More in Common's research clearly shows that people do not see nature as a blocker when it comes to housebuilding. What they do see is poor planning outcomes, a lack of much-needed services like GPs and schools, and a democratic deficit in decision-making. Most also see new-build houses as unaffordable, and they don't see increased housebuilding result in lower house prices, so owning a house remains an impossible dream for them and their children. They want better homes, not just more houses, and they want those homes to be affordable and built with nature in mind, not at its expense. This isn't about choosing between homes and habitats. It's about creating great places to live that work – for people and for nature. That means providing people with access to wildlife-rich spaces where they live, and not destroying protected spaces and irreplaceable habitats like ancient woodlands that are vital for wildlife and highly prized by local people. Putting nature at the heart of planning will create developments that enhance communities rather than erode them. It also means listening to those communities. Too often, local voices are ignored, and the result is resistance, mistrust and missed opportunities. Engaging communities early and meaningfully in place-making is not just good practice, it's essential for building consensus and lasting support.

People feel the benefits of nature in their everyday lives – fresh air, birdsong, green views, and the physical and mental health boost of being outdoors. These are tangible, immediate, and deeply valued. By contrast, 'economic growth' often feels abstract and distant. Many struggle to see how it improves their lives, especially those facing rising bills, insecure housing, or stagnant wages. If growth is to win hearts and minds, it must be felt in real, local ways. And nature can be part of that story.

It's encouraging to see that most of the public believe organisations like the RSPB should play a leading role in protecting places for nature – and that they support prioritising wildlife conservation, even when it comes at a financial cost. However, it's deeply concerning how anti-nature rhetoric – particularly when voiced by those in the highest offices – can distort public perception. Nature, and by extension the environment sector, is increasingly being scapegoated for costly mitigations like bat tunnels, despite the fact we neither design nor advocate for them. If nature is considered early in the planning process, both environmental impact and financial cost can be significantly reduced. The solution isn't to sideline nature, it's to integrate it from the start.

Nature is not a barrier to progress. It is part of the solution. If we get this right, we can build not just more houses, but vibrant communities too – great places to live, that have longevity

and where people and nature thrive together. That future is entirely possible, and it's what we should all be working towards. It's what we all deserve.

Beccy Speight
Chief Executive, RSPB

Executive Summary

As the Planning & Infrastructure Bill enters its final stages in Parliament, and the UK Government has made the finishing touches to its plan to build 1.5 million new homes before the next election, we ought to take stock of how the public understand the housing crisis and what, if anything, should be done.

Much of the debate around housing has centred on the so-called “YIMBY-NIMBY divide”, with the former tending to characterise the latter as being selfish and narrow-minded. The inconvenient reality for the government is that this debate exists in an entirely separate space from the rest of the public. Britons tend to understand both housing and nature on a local level, and the government’s housing targets register as a poorly thought out intrusion on their neighbourhoods and green spaces.

Building more homes does not have to come at such a high political cost. The general public would be far more amenable to seeing new developments in their area if they can see that they are being built with care, and if they are convinced by the government’s argument that economic growth will make a tangible benefit to their lives. As it stands, Britons’ attitudes towards growth are lukewarm and uncertain – they do not see why they should have to make sacrifices in order to achieve it, and reject the idea that nature is an impediment to growth. The government must articulate a more compelling story on the benefits of economic growth that can be felt by the general public, not just by big business and developers.

The quality of new build developments has to improve if the public are to get on board with the government’s aims. Developers are thought to care about profit more than building homes which are suitable for both the people who will end up living in them, and the existing residents around them. Britons believe that new homes are being built without new infrastructure to support them, without wildlife and green spaces in or around them, with shoddy construction, before being sold at exorbitant prices. This perception is a significant obstacle for public support behind accelerating housebuilding, as the public feel underserved by existing policy in this respect, and would welcome a politician who more clearly expresses the view that development should embrace – not destroy – the natural world.

“Protecting nature” is not just an excuse for “NIMBYs” to block new development in their area. Britons intuitively appreciate the benefits of having green spaces and natural wildlife around them – to physical and mental health, to sustainability, and to a sense of community. New homes which lack opportunities for their residents to access nature are seen to be squalid, lifeless and the source of various social ills that people can notice in their area. That existing residents might have to lose access to wildlife and their own green spaces to make way for these developments is seen as a kick in the teeth.

From the government's perspective, their housebuilding targets can still be achieved in a manner which is far less divisive if they are willing to lend an ear to these concerns. Developing with care is not a novel idea for Britons - in focus groups, they spoke about what developments from twenty years ago had which current ones do not - and the government would do well to hear their concerns if it wants its planning and infrastructure agenda to be successful.

The Seven Segments

Using extensive research into Britons' core beliefs, their values and behaviours, More in Common has developed a unique segmentation of the British public. This segmentation allows us to look upstream not just at what different groups think, but why they think it, reflecting fundamental differences between groups in how they relate to authority, change, community and the future.

More in Common's analysis produces seven segments within the British population, which are referred to throughout this report:

Progressive Activists - 12 per cent of the population

A highly engaged and globally-minded group driven by concerns about social justice. Politically active but feeling increasingly alienated from mainstream party politics, they prioritise issues such as climate change and international affairs. Occasionally outliers on social issues, they maintain a strongly held and sometimes uncompromising approach to their beliefs.

Incrementalist Left - 21 per cent of the population

A civic-minded, community-oriented group holding views which are generally left-of-centre but with an aversion to the extreme; they prefer gradual reform over revolutionary change. They trust experts and institutions yet are largely tuned out of day-to-day politics and can be conflict-averse, stepping away from issues they see as particularly fraught or complex.

Established Liberals - 9 per cent of the population

A prosperous, confident segment who believe the system broadly works as it is and who trust experts to deliver continued progress. They have a strong belief in individual agency which can make them less empathetic to those who are struggling. Institutionally trusting, they maintain faith in democratic processes and have a strong information-centric way of engaging with issues.

Sceptical Scrollers - 10 per cent of the population

A digitally-native group whose unhappiness with the social contract means they have lost faith in traditional institutions and seek alternative sources of truth online. Often shaped by their experience of the Covid pandemic, they prefer individual influencers over mainstream media and are increasingly drawn to conspiratorial thinking.

Rooted Patriots - 20 per cent of the population

A patriotic but politically untethered group which feels abandoned and overlooked by political elites and yearns for leaders with common sense, but does not want to overthrow the system as a whole. They are particularly concerned about community decline and the pressures of migration. Interventionist on economics but conservative on social issues, they have shaped much of Britain's politics over the past decade.

Traditional Conservatives - 8 per cent of the population

Respectful of authority and tradition, Traditional Conservatives believe in individual responsibility and established norms that have served them well. Nostalgic for the past but optimistic about the future, they are deeply sceptical of many forces of change such as immigration or the path to net-zero.

Dissenting Disruptors - 20 per cent of the population

Frustrated with their circumstances and with an appetite for radical solutions, Dissenting Disruptors crave dramatic change and strong leadership. Highly distrustful of institutions, opposed to multiculturalism and feeling disconnected from society, they are drawn to political movements that promise to overhaul the status quo and put people like them first.

Chapter 1 | Growth at all costs?

In more politically engaged and online discourse, debates around housebuilding and development are often reduced down to two sides. On the one hand, the “YIMBYs” who argue that housebuilding should be maximised as much as possible, as construction is essential for economic growth and will help stop rising house prices. On the other hand, the “NIMBYs” raise concerns about the impact of new development on a local level – on public services and on nature.

Yet despite these two stereotyped sides that will be familiar to anyone following the housebuilding debate online, the majority of Britons do not neatly fit into either of them. What’s more, many of the arguments put forward by each of those two camps do not necessarily chime with the public understanding and experiences of the housing crisis in Britain.

This chapter explores three of the arguments put forward by the so-called “YIMBY” side of the debate – that housebuilding is essential for the public good because it drives economic growth, that housebuilding lowers housing costs by raising supply, and that environmental regulations are blocking housebuilding. For the public, none of these are intuitive: For example, only four in ten Britons think that economic growth benefits them, and few Britons see lack of supply as a driver of high housing costs.

Doubts about the importance of economic growth

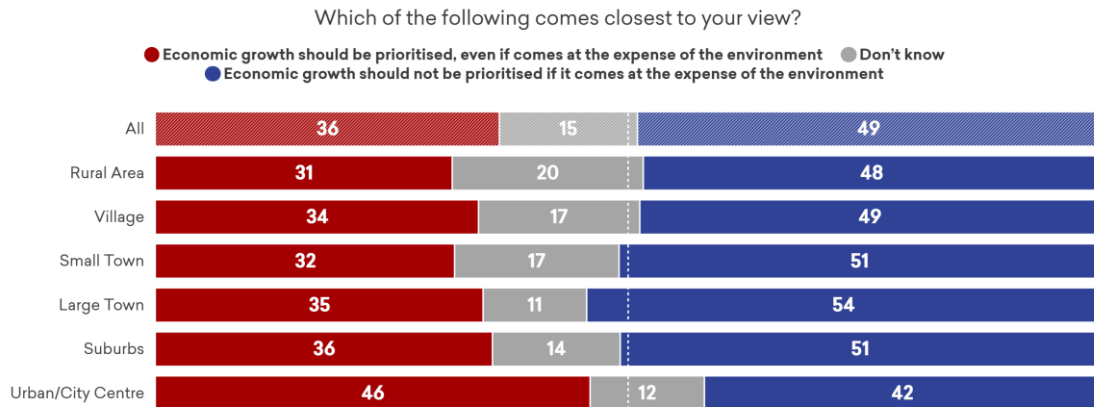
The public tend to agree that the UK needs economic growth, but do not believe it should be pursued at the expense of the environment. Britons have a strong connection to local nature, and while growth is important to Britons, the more visible benefits they feel from nature are often clearer to them than the benefits of economic growth.

And I don't want to be a NIMBY because I do agree we need housing, but the rate of growth of housing estates around the villages has been shocking in my opinion.

Paula, Bookkeeper, Milton Keynes North

This sentiment is more pronounced among people based in rural areas and towns, but even city-dwellers are split on what to prioritise: 46 per cent say that economic growth should be pursued even if it comes at the expense of the environment, but another 42 per cent say the opposite. It is significant that the people most likely to say we should prioritise the environment over economic growth live in small to large-sized towns, perhaps because natural spaces are more valued where they are both more limited than in rural areas, yet disappearing faster than in cities.

Even those in urban areas are unsure which to prioritise: the economy or the environment?



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This picture is consistent on a national level when it comes to the specific issue of building more homes. For over a year, even before the election, climate change and the environment has been just as salient an issue as affordable housing.

Majority of Britons place their importance in protecting wildlife, at the expense of delaying development plans

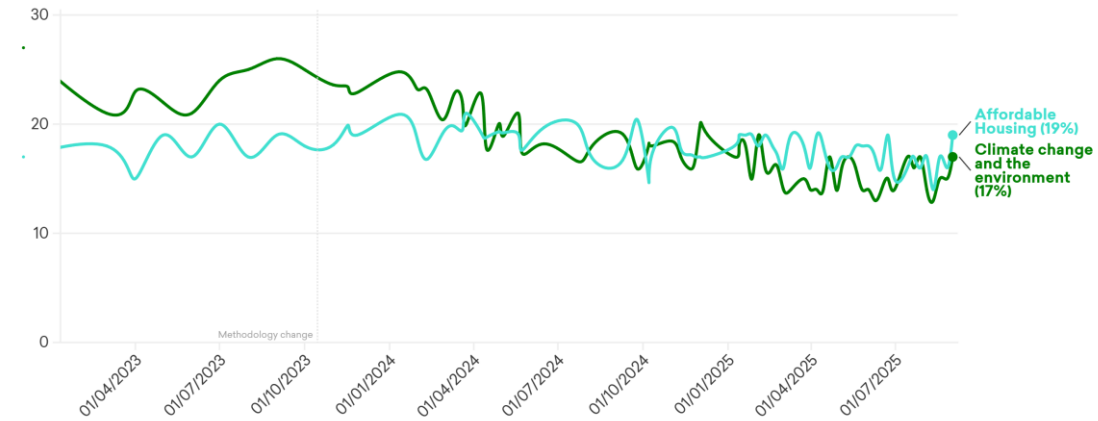


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Despite this, few Britons think there necessarily needs to be a trade-off between protecting nature and building new homes. Both issues are very important to people – in fact a similar number of Britons put “affordable housing” and “climate change and the environment” among their top three issues facing the country.

Climate change & affordable housing are of similar significance to the electorate

In your opinion, which are the most IMPORTANT issues facing the country today? Please select up to three



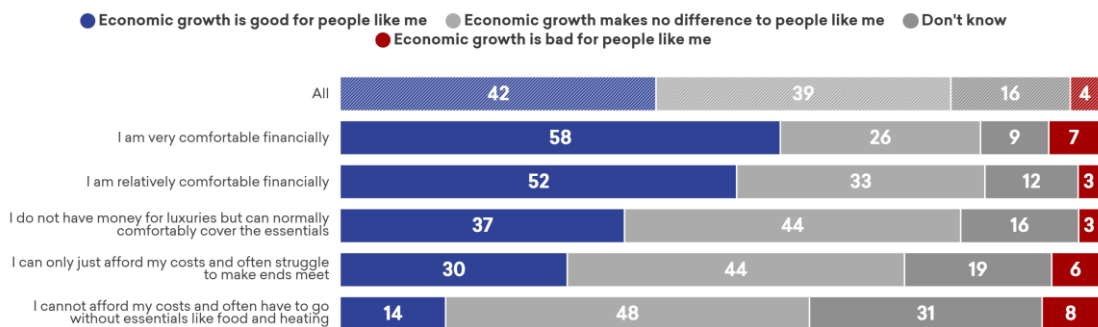
Latest fieldwork: 29 August - 1 September 2025

Part of the challenge with economic growth arguments for building more housing is that economic growth is perceived in abstract terms by many Britons, and few see how it directly improves their lives. Only four in ten Britons think that economic growth has a positive effect on people like them. Another 39 per cent think that it makes no difference in their lives.

This effect is more pronounced among those who are less economically secure. 57 percent of those who describe themselves as “very financially comfortable” believe that economic growth is good for them, compared to only 26 percent who say that they “struggle to make ends meet” or cannot afford their costs. Arguments in favour of housebuilding, then, need to do more than simply say they will “drive economic growth”. Instead, it should be clearer exactly how this will benefit people, and not just the well-off.

Britons split on what economic growth means for them

Which of the following comes closest to your view?



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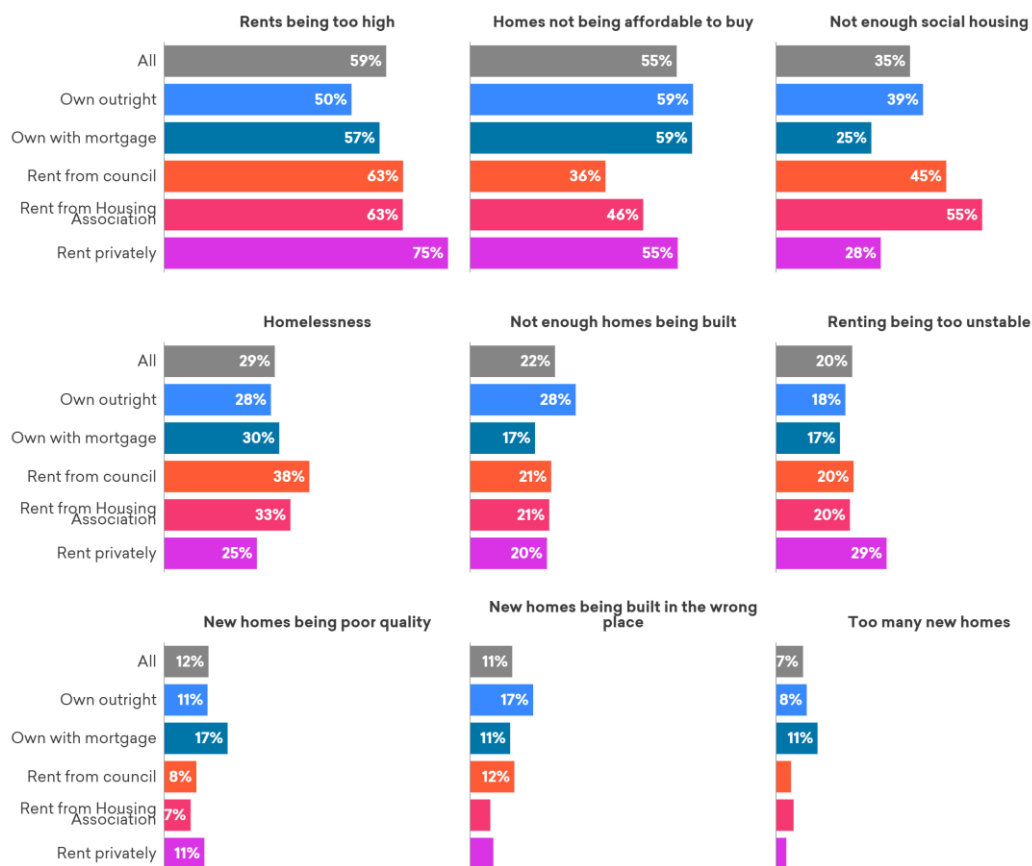
On the other hand, nature and green spaces are real, tangible things wherein Britons can notice and feel change. Deteriorating access to wildlife and green spaces, and the quality of those spaces, has an immediate impact on the public, which can affect their attitudes towards future developments.

How Britons understand the housing crisis

Beyond economic growth, the other core argument for building more houses is that it will lower housing costs. However, perhaps the lukewarm support for the growth and housebuilding agenda can be further explained by the fact that many Britons doubt whether a lack of supply is even the main culprit behind high housing costs. The public are much more likely to describe the housing crisis as being one of rents being too high, homes being unaffordable, and there not being enough social housing, rather than attributing the crisis directly to a lack of homes being built.

Only 22 per cent of Britons think lack of housebuilding is an important aspect of the housing crisis

What do you think are the most important aspects of the housing crisis? Please select up to three



In focus groups, residents told us that they were sceptical that their local areas needed additional housing, with participants bringing up buy-to-let mortgages, price gouging and neglect by landlords, and the loss of social housing via right-to-buy as other likely causes behind the housing crisis.

I personally don't see a shortage in housing. If you look on Rightmove, there's loads of houses for sale, they're just unaffordable so people can't get a mortgage, people can't afford what they need to.

Thea, Technology buyer, Basingstoke

And if there was an abundance of properties then maybe fair game. But if there's a national shortage and there's a real problem here, then the government should step in and say right, buy-to-let mortgages are no longer a thing, and everybody should have a fair chance to get on the housing ladder.

Marcus, Sales Manager, Basingstoke

Proponents of greater housebuilding might be extremely comfortable with the laws of supply and demand, but in focus groups participants are much more likely to say that there is plenty of supply of luxury housing, and not enough attention is paid to building more affordable housing.

Britons are not agreed on whether housebuilding should be a priority for the government



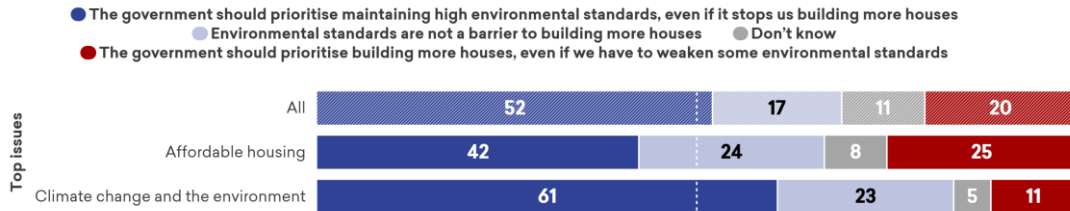
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Nature and development

A third argument made by some proponents of greater housebuilding is that environmental regulations could be stifling housebuilding. The public, meanwhile, believe that even if this is true, those regulations should not be sacrificed in the interest of building more homes. Fifty-two per cent of Britons say that current environmental standards should be maintained, even if it means we build fewer houses. Another 17 per cent say that environmental standards are not a barrier to building houses at all. Interestingly, among people who place “affordable housing” in their top three issues, this figure is even higher, with 24 per cent saying environmental standards are not a barrier to house building.

Those who see affordable housing as a top issue in Britain still tend to believe that we should maintain our environmental standards around development

Which of the following comes closest to your view?



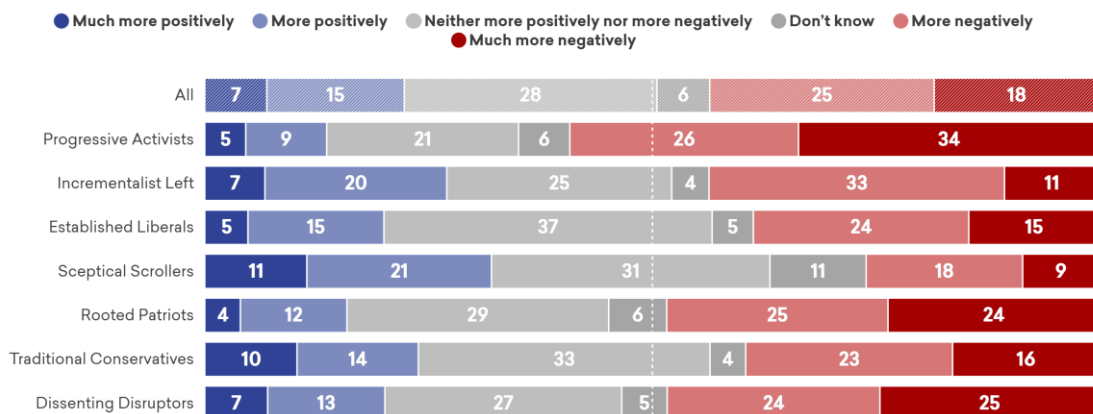
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The public are more likely to think negatively of a politician if they say that “Nature sometimes gets in the way of our country’s ability to develop” – 44 per cent more negatively, to just 22 per cent more positively. The public are united on this sentiment across our seven segments – from left wing to right wing, voters are not sold on the idea that Britain’s nature has to be an impediment to growth.

For proponents of housebuilding, the specific arguments are only one part of why people are not more sympathetic to their views. Equally important is the messengers delivering these arguments. If housebuilders and developers are seen to be untrustworthy, they are unlikely to be heard no matter what arguments they are making.

Framing around nature being a barrier to development is not viewed favourably by the public

To what extent would you think more or less positively of a politician who says “Nature sometimes gets in the way of our country’s ability to develop”

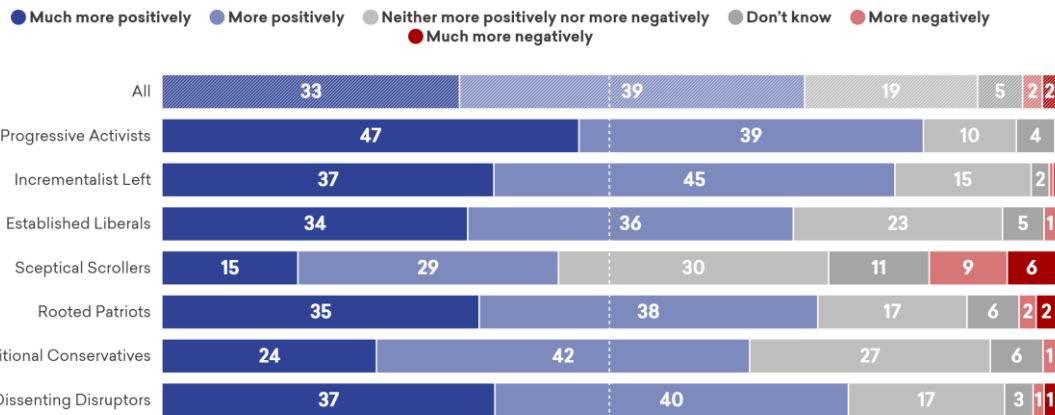


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Britons are far more likely to think positively of a politician who says “New housing and infrastructure should integrate with the natural world, not destroy it” – nearly three quarters (72 per cent) more positively, to just 4 per cent more negatively.

Britons would think more positively of a politician who advocates housing which doesn't destroy the natural world

To what extent would you think more or less positively of a politician who says “New housing and infrastructure should integrate with the natural world, not destroy it”



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If there were no rules, there would be houses everywhere. There'd be no green spaces left in any city.

Lukasz, Train Driver, Milton Keynes North

If anything, the public would like to see **more** obligations be placed on developers for their treatment of nature. Two-thirds of Britons (67 per cent) think that developers should have to accommodate and look after the natural environment in and around new developments (another 21 per cent think it should be the council's problem). As it stands, developers are perceived to be building with little or no consideration of the natural environment whatsoever.

It feels like they crowbar them in at any cost. No foresight. There's no plan. It just feels like even if people really are unhappy locals, it doesn't matter because it's going to go ahead anyway. They just seem to ride roughshod against all of the rules and regulations.

Fiona, Personal Assistant, Basingstoke

Two thirds of the public think that developers must accommodate and look after nature in a new development

Thinking about new housing development, which of the following is closest to your view?

- Developers and planners should have to accommodate and look after the natural environment in and around a new development
- Don't know
- The natural environment in and around a new development is the responsibility of the local council



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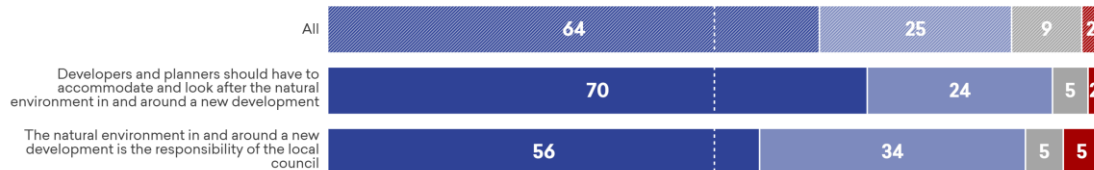
The public would also support seeing places for nature being given more protections from development (64 per cent), while only 2 per cent would support taking protections away.

Majority of Britons think places for nature should get more protections in any planning reforms

Which of the following is closest to your view?

- Important places for nature should be given more protections in any planning reforms
- Important places for nature are already given enough protection in planning
- Don't know
- Important places for nature should be given fewer protections in any planning reforms

Responsibility to look after environment



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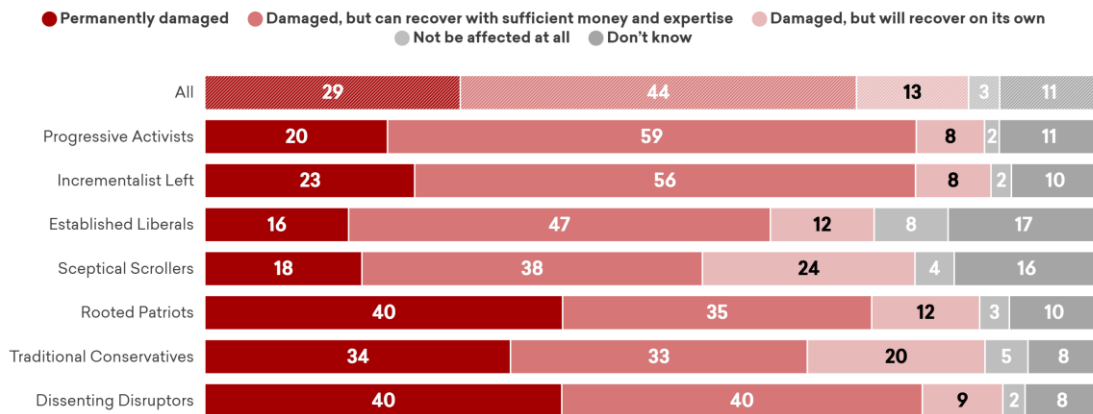
The notion of nature being “irreplaceable” polled strongly and was frequently brought up unprompted in focus groups. More conservative segments are significantly more likely than the rest of the public to say that the natural environment is irrevocably damaged by development, rather than being salvageable with investment and expertise. Overall, three in ten Britons (29 per cent) believe that the natural environment around new builds is permanently damaged after construction.

My concern would be that - yeah, I get it, we need housing - but we are never going to get back the green spaces once they're built on.

Paula, Bookkeeper, Milton Keynes North

Conservative segments are more likely to say that housing developments permanently damage the environment

Which of the following is closest to your view? When a new housing development is built, the natural environment around it is usually...



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The government must communicate better about the need for economic growth and how it will benefit the public if it wants them to get on board. There is no point in simply stating that growth is the goal - if the ends are unclear, then the means will seem unjustified and confused. The public wants to know how building new infrastructure and homes will benefit them and benefit nature, and the government ought to tell (or perhaps show) them how it could improve their lives.

The risks posed to nature and the environment by accelerating housebuilding loom large among the public, but are far from being the only concerns that Britons have about new housing developments. New developments are perceived to be rife with all kinds of issues, which has softened enthusiasm for building more.

Chapter 2 | Quality vs. Quantity

The public want new homes to be built, but they have real concerns about the quality of new builds being produced today. One of the simplest ways to make the case for new build development, then, would be to make the quality of new builds better and make those developments more appealing to people. The public's problems with new builds go beyond their impact on nature and the environment. The sentiment that developments "run roughshod" over local areas applies to all aspects of their construction and integration (or lack thereof) with surrounding communities.

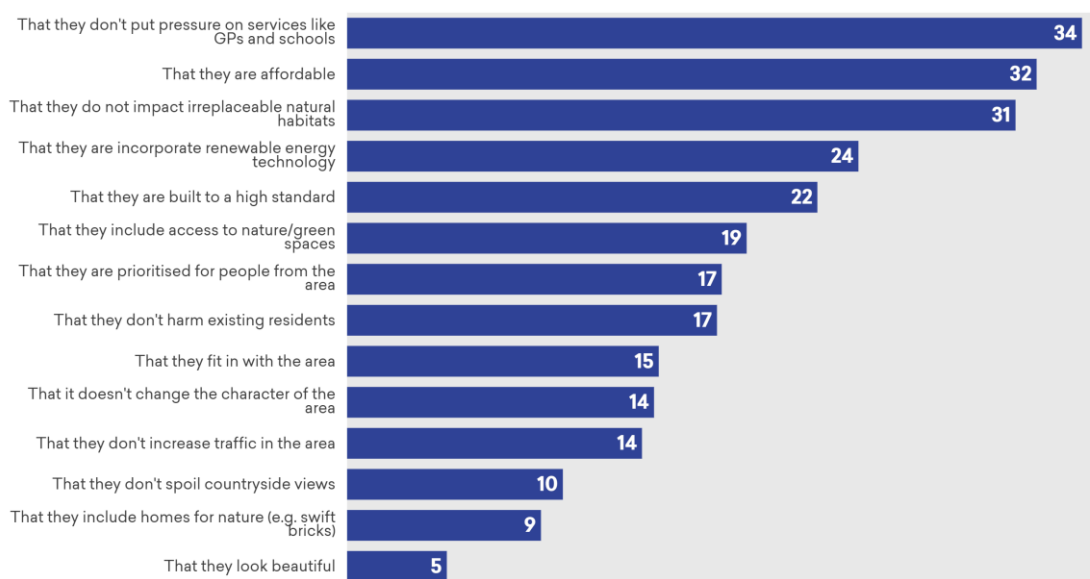
The need for supporting infrastructure

The most immediate concern for most of the public is developments which are built without any additional infrastructure to support them. At a time where NHS waiting lists are still high, schools are oversubscribed, public transport is stretched thin, and roads are in disrepair, residents worry about the additional stresses placed on them when new homes appear in their area.

When asked what the priorities for new build developments should be, 34 per cent of the public said that it should be avoiding putting pressure on local services, and another 32 per cent said that they should be affordable.

Green spaces and protecting habitats are more important to Britons than unobstructed views or aesthetics

Thinking of new-build houses and estates, what aspects do you think are most important to prioritise?
Please select up to three.



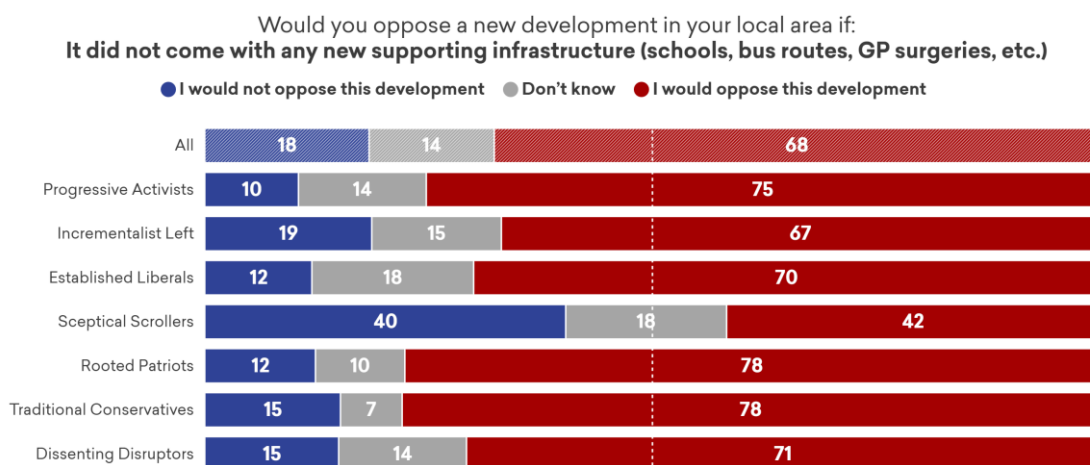
We need more housing. The population's growing. That's a fact whether you like it or not, but it could be done much more sympathetically and I think people buck against it because they think, well, where are the doctor surgeries? Where's the extra capacity in the hospital? Where are the schools? The roads are busier and busier but yet they haven't fixed potholes and there's traffic everywhere. I just think if there was any attempt to do it smoothly and intelligently... it seems they never take that opportunity in my opinion, ever.

Fiona, Personal Assistant, Basingstoke

But they're not going to have the secondary school that they promised. So we've got more and more people that can't go to school, their kids can't go to school, they haven't got the dentists, the doctors.

Katherine, Administrator, Basingstoke

Two thirds of the public would oppose a local development if it had no extra infrastructure to support it



Falling apart

The quality of new build houses is an additional pain point for Britons. In focus groups, residents told us about their unwillingness to buy any of the new homes they have seen built in their area – affordability notwithstanding – because of the perceived haphazard construction, poor quality and (in rentals) poor maintenance.

I find the quality of new builds... people in different aspects of the industry, they always said just never buy a new build. I say, well, why are they here if they have a snag list as long as you can even imagine?

Daniel, IT Manager, Basingstoke

Yet there are so many private landlords, many of them don't keep their properties up to a liveable standard.

Marcus, Sales Manager, Basingstoke

Twenty-two per cent of the public think that one of the priorities for new build houses and estates going forward should be that they are built to a high standard, making it the fifth-most important priority for Britons overall, more than fitting in with the character of the area (14 per cent), not affecting traffic (14 per cent), or being aesthetically beautiful (5 per cent).

Affordability, not luxury

With all these problems that new builds are perceived to have, Britons find it hard to understand or accept how expensive these homes can be.

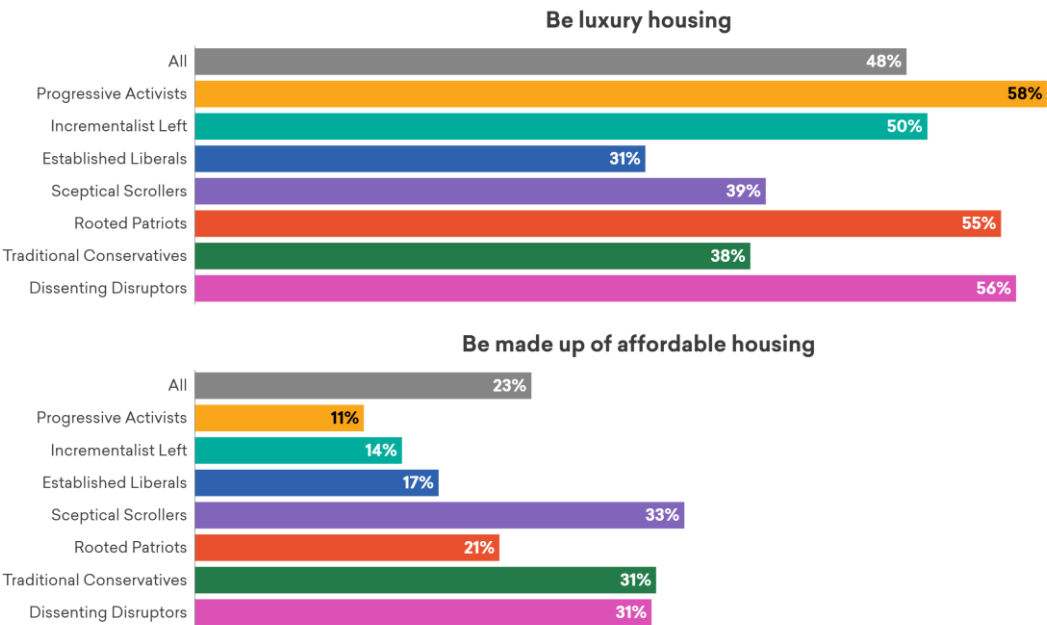
When thinking of new build homes in your area, in a few words what comes to mind?



The public hold strong negative feelings towards “luxury” new builds, and there is a strong perception that these are being built instead of affordable homes that are much more urgently needed. Nearly half of the public (48 per cent) say that they would oppose a development in their local area if it were luxury housing. Only 23 per cent say they would do the same if it were affordable housing.

The public are more than twice as likely to oppose luxury housing being built in their local area than affordable housing

Under each of the following circumstances, would you oppose a new development in your local area? If the development would...



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Even though I had a very good job and I have a good pension, I can't afford to do more than having a housing association house for me and my children. And the private rents are so high, a three-bedroom house, you're looking at £16,000... no, £1,600. The other number would be right if they could get away with it. But it's just crazy.

Rebecca, Retired, Milton Keynes North

Quality matters for the public when it comes to newly built homes - it can be the make-or-break factor in whether the public find new developments acceptable, and their willingness to buy, rent, or even look at the new homes.

But there are other factors at play. After public services and affordability, the next top priority for the public is preserving the surrounding natural environment and green spaces.

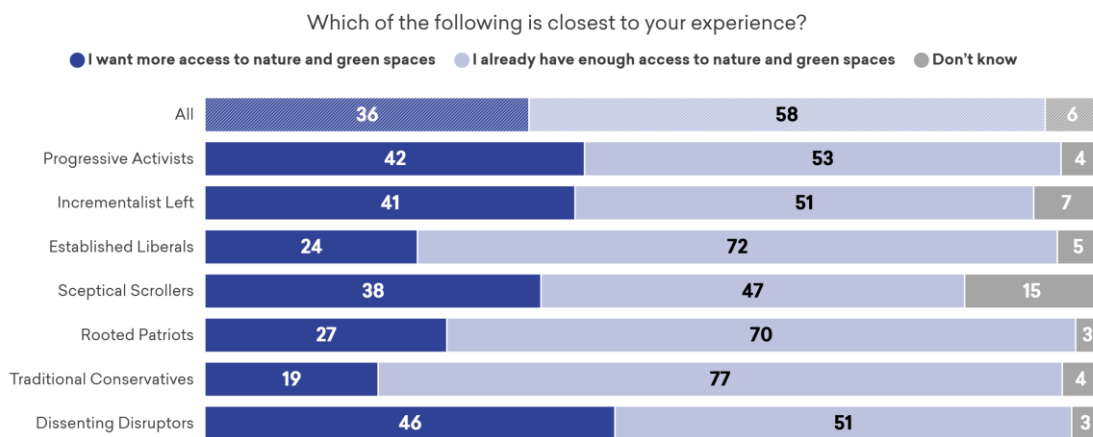
Chapter 3 | A room without a view

These reputational problems that new builds have made it harder for the public to stomach additional housebuilding initiatives. But one area of growing concern is the perceived “lifelessness” of new developments – lacking in green space, surrounding nature being bulldozed or fenced off, or accessible only by car. This is something that can be felt not only by the new build residents themselves, but by anyone living around them. The green space crisis is felt by the public at large.

Accessing nature

Britons think that access to nature is an important part of their day-to-day lives, yet are concerned about inequalities in who has access to it. Most (71 per cent) believe that some people do not enjoy the same amount of access as others. 58 per cent of people say that they themselves have enough access to nature and green spaces, while another 36 per cent wish they had more.

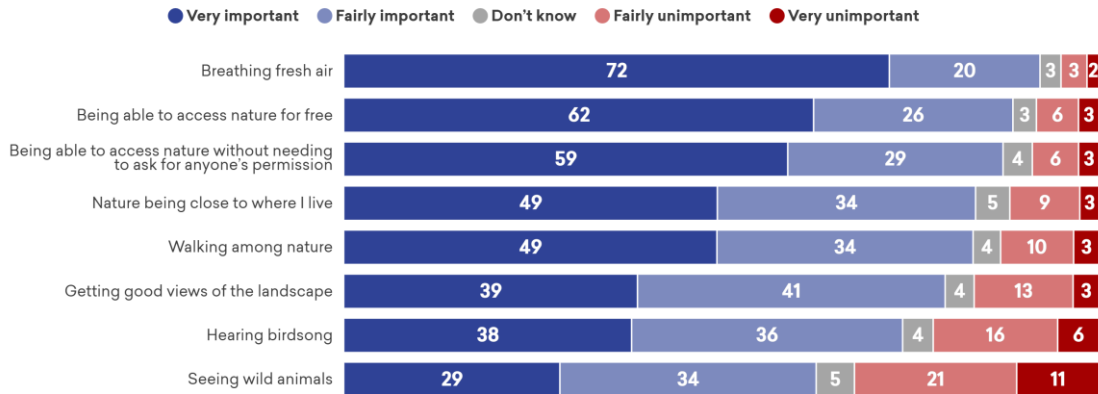
More than a third of Britons want more access to nature and green spaces



More than three quarters of the public (77 per cent) say that access to nature is important to their mental health. Britons like nature to be close to where they live, and being able to access it for free and without asking for anyone's permission. Breathing fresh air, walking among nature and hearing birdsong are important considerations for three quarters of Britons when choosing where to live.

A majority of the public say nature is important in their decision on where to live

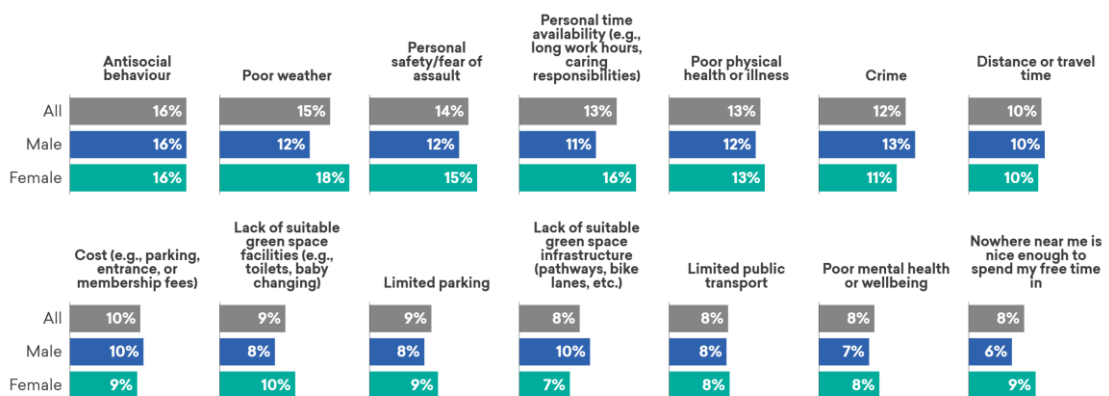
How important/unimportant are the following things to you when considering where to live?



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For many reasons, members of the public find their access to nature being limited by factors outside their control. Top of the list is safety and antisocial behaviour – 16 per cent worry about antisocial behaviour in local green spaces – 15 per cent of women say they worry about their personal safety. 10 per cent say that their green spaces are too far away, and just as many cite cost (parking, entrance or membership fees) as a barrier. 9 per cent complain of there not being enough essential facilities (toilets, baby changing), and 8 per cent can't get to their local green spaces on public transport.

Are there any barriers to accessing green spaces where you live? Select all that apply

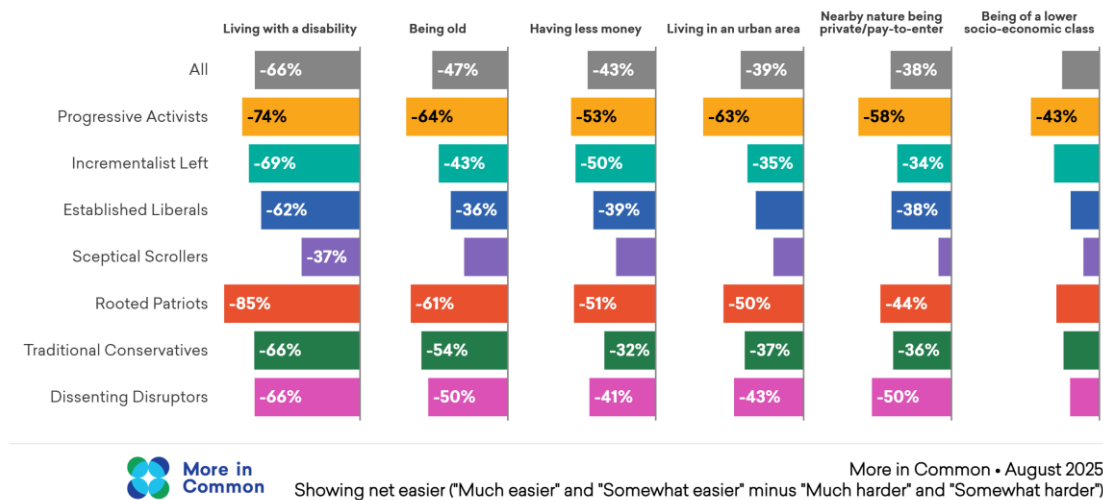


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More generally, Britons tend to think that being of a lower socioeconomic class, having less money, being old or living with a disability make nature and green spaces much harder to access. Fifty-five per cent of the public also think that local nature being private or pay-to-enter could be a limiting factor for many people.

Living with a disability, being old and having less money are seen as the biggest obstacles to accessing nature

In your view, to what extent if at all do the following make people's ability to access nature easier or harder?
(Showing net % easier)



Missed opportunities in developments

Given the public's concerns about access to nature, it is no surprise that Britons frequently note that new housing developments lacking in green space are a missed opportunity. When discussing new developments in their area, locals worry about the lack of green spaces being made available to those new residents.

We have lots of green spaces in Milton Keynes, but they're in the estates that have been established for the last 30 or 40 years. And you notice the difference in the new estates that they don't have the green spaces anymore... now when they're building the newer estates, that community hub is no longer there. So from that point of view of protecting the green space, they're just not making them anymore.

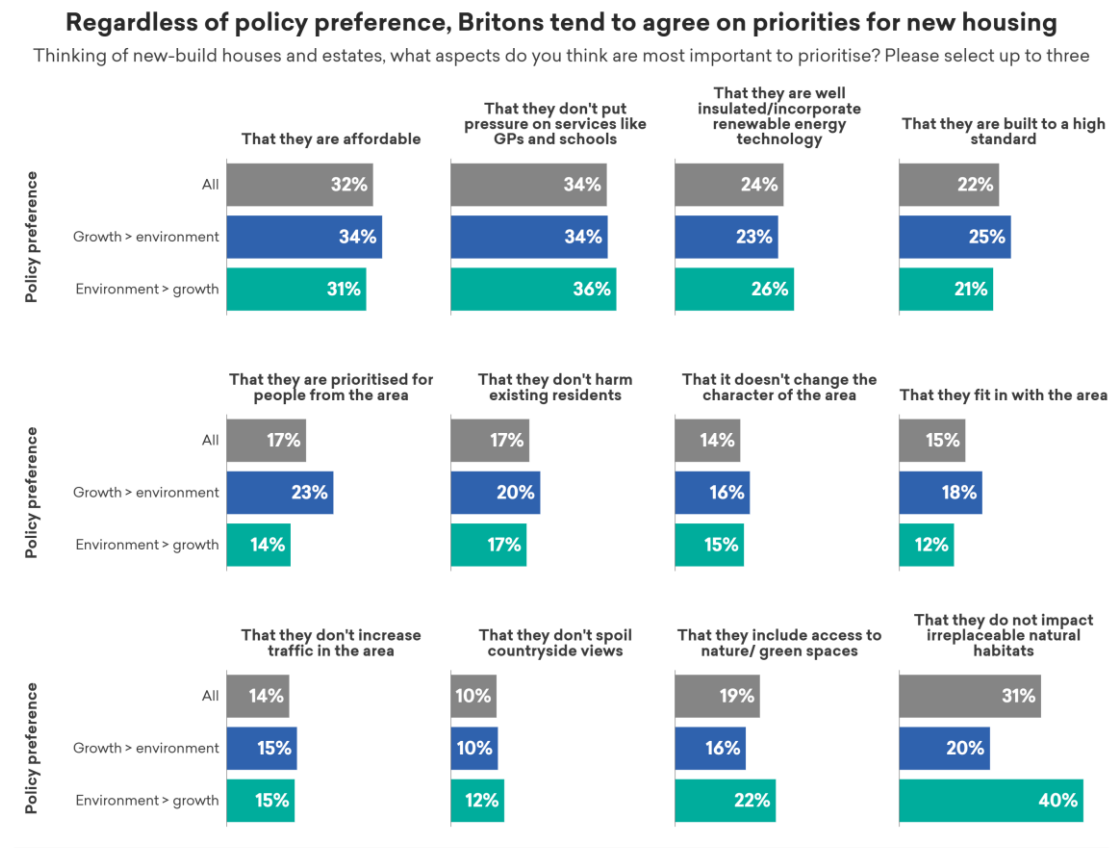
Rebecca, Retired, Milton Keynes North

Some locals expressed their worry that new developments were not incorporating green spaces, in order to make more land available to build homes.

I think people could cope with these smaller, postage stamp-sized gardens in these new builds, and having smaller houses, if the surrounding area was like "oh, I don't need a garden because there is this beautiful green area right outside my window", there would be some sort of balance there at least. But no, there doesn't seem to be any balance. Let's make them small, let's cram them all in any possible space we can and then let's charge God knows how many times what the building cost.

Marcus, Sales Manager, Basingstoke

Aside from supporting infrastructure and affordability, Britons' top priorities for new builds are that they do not impact irreplaceable natural habitats (31 per cent), incorporate green technology (24 per cent), are built to a high standard (22 per cent), and include access to nature and green spaces (19 per cent).



And focus group participants linked this loss of green spaces to various social ills that they had observed in their local area. Poor mental health and antisocial behaviour among teenagers in particular were flagged as being negative side effects downstream from the erosion of green spaces in new developments.

Another problem here is the more houses we build and take away the spaces where kids can play, they're going to go and cause trouble because they'll be bored when they have nothing to do - they're up to no good. And that's exactly what keeps happening in Milton Keynes.

Lukasz, Train Driver, Milton Keynes North

And if you build flats, then there's a known mental health impact if you're living in that sort of environment where you're all on top of each other. It does us good to get out in nature, and if we keep on building at this rate, that's not going to be an option.

Paula, Bookkeeper, Milton Keynes North

A more familiar story is one of existing green spaces being bulldozed to make space for new developments. The public can notice the effect that this has on wildlife.

The foxes are coming in so you can tell that we're destroying the habitats. There's foxes everywhere.

Sophie, Librarian, Milton Keynes North

Some Britons feel as though they could forgive this damage being done if they could see any benefits to new developments, but new builds are often likely to appear to make everything worse. In focus groups, residents expressed a sentiment that the losses far outweighed the gains.

What you'd want to know is how building more houses is going to specifically benefit everyone. I think you have to lay out those benefits. It's kind of this grand gesture of we will build 300,000 houses every year ... how will we feel that? And how does impacting the environment then benefit the people? In a way, if it's our people's ability to get on the housing market and it be a more affordable option or improve an issue around the growing population... I think you just have to try and understand how that's going to outweigh impacting the environment.

Daniel, IT Manager, Basingstoke

They should also be made to build the infrastructure. So, buses for every so many houses, there needs to be a junior school, a senior school, a health centre, so that it's not just about housing and taking the green spaces away for housing... we need to make sure that they're using them for the right things as well.

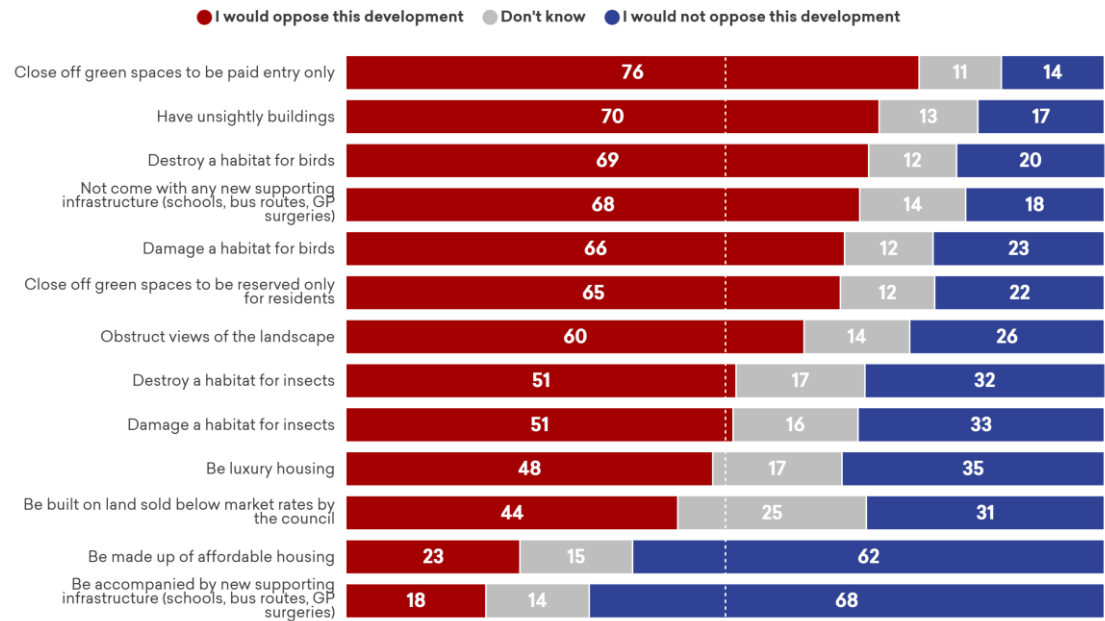
Rebecca, Retired, Milton Keynes North

Being a NIMBY or having NIMBY-like views was rarely a point of pride among participants in focus groups. Many expressed anxieties about being labelled as selfish or narrow-minded for opposing a development in their area. While concerns about affordability, effects on local infrastructure and the quality of construction are stronger pain points than damage to the environment for the public as a whole, the loss of green spaces and damage to nature are an aspect of new builds which are not only a problem to those who live in them. The knock-on effects can be felt by neighbours, people working for or using public

services, This, in turn, can motivate members of the public to actively oppose developments in their area.

Destroying habitats are a strong driver behind opposition to developments

Under each of the following circumstances, would you oppose a new development in your local area? If the development would...



Chapter 4 | Democratic deficit in development

“It depends” In My Back Yard

I think that with these massive building projects, there seems to me to be this attitude that for genuine reasons you might have about trying to protect green areas, whether it's just for the fact that it's a nice thing to have, it doesn't have to be of more value. Then it's nice to have some space... to have somewhere to let off a bit of steam or just walk, see some nature, see some greenery, see some trees. I think that there's this terrible attitude that that's kind of trivial, and that if you were to defend that or try and protect it, then 'oh, you're one of those types.'

Fiona, Personal Assistant, Basingstoke

It was a few years ago, there was a group of us who got together to protect the field out the back, and we lost and we put in our own personal money to get a [solicitor].

Paula, Bookkeeper, Milton Keynes North

For all those in our focus groups who had opposed a development, they had been unsuccessful and the development had gone ahead regardless. The overriding perception was that their views are not taken seriously, certainly not on the national level.

Recently it's been in the news with the new developments that are in Bramley, and again, the Bramley residents have been protesting against this, but looks like they're still going to go ahead. So it's like any of this protesting and people saying “we don't want these new developments on our doorstep or in our area”, they're just disregarded.

Nicky, Tutor, Basingstoke

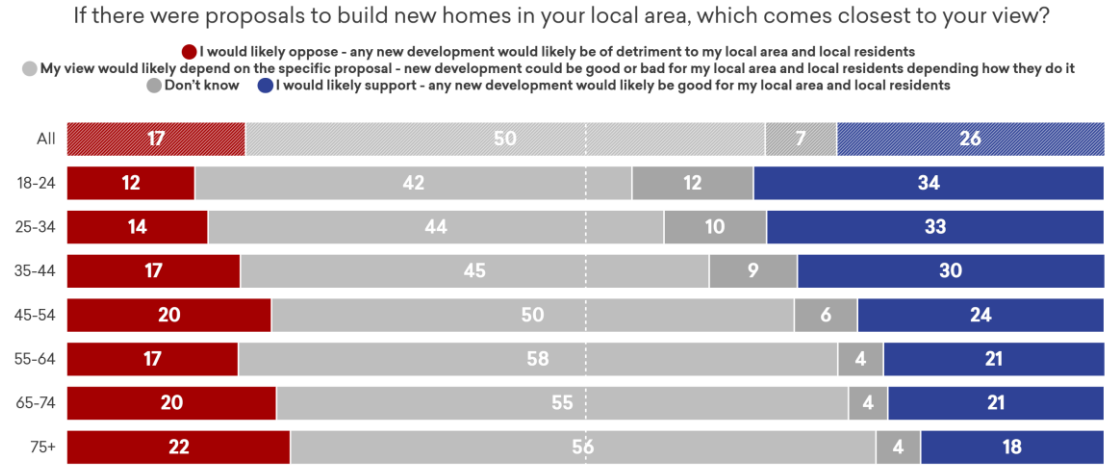
In turn, this feeling of being unrepresented has made many voters feel powerless, and has discouraged them from taking action in the first place.

But I am of the opinion that - someone said bulldozing earlier - what's one signature? I know that's not the best attitude to have, but they're going to do it anyway unless it's a big, big movement, which is never going to be enough. They're going to say, if it was a thousand signatures, if it was 10,000, if it was a hundred thousand, the ball keeps going up. So yeah, you can show your support, but the government is still going to do what they want to do.

Thea, Technology buyer, Basingstoke

It should be said that most Britons fall neither into the YIMBY nor NIMBY camp - half of the public say that they tend not to offer blanket support or opposition to developments, but rather assess each case on its own merits (50 per cent). Only 17 per cent say that they would usually oppose any new development in their local area, while 26 per cent would support it.

Few Britons say they would likely oppose any development in their local area



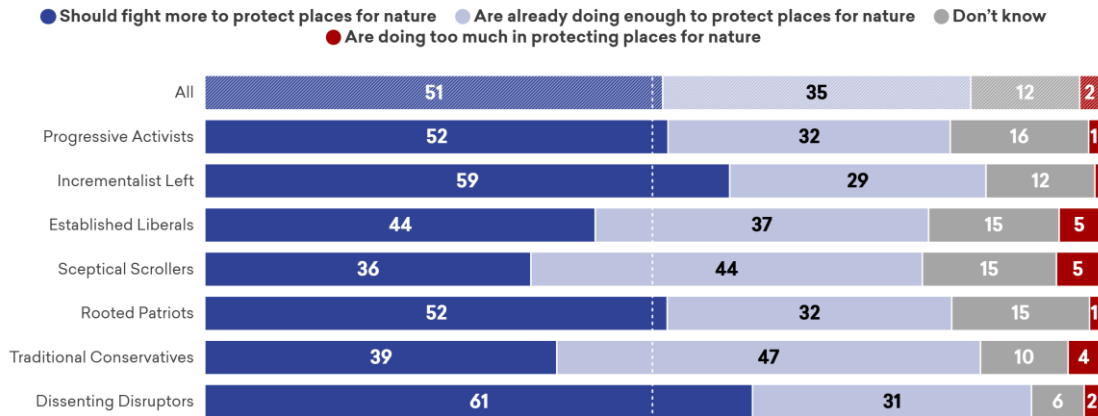
While the YIMBY arguments (such as those outlined in Chapter 1) fail to land with the public, we are not a nation of “blockers” either. The reality is that people are not instinctively positive or negative about housing in a general sense - above all, they just want **good** housing.

The role of the third sector

Just as polarised debates between YIMBYs and NIMBYs are mostly confined to online and hyper-engaged forums, the negative image of environmental organisations as the “nature lobby” blocking all developments is not widespread or mainstream. In fact, the public generally think that these organisations should, if anything, be doing more to protect nature and the environment. Only 2 per cent describe organisations such as the RSPB as doing “too much” in its aims to protect places for nature. A majority of Britons, some 51 per cent, think that they should be doing more.

Only 2 per cent of Britons say that organisations like the RSPB are doing too much

Which of the following is closest to your view? Organisations like the RSPB...



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In Milton Keynes North, residents stressed the importance of the Parks Trust in preserving its local green spaces and preventing overdevelopment.

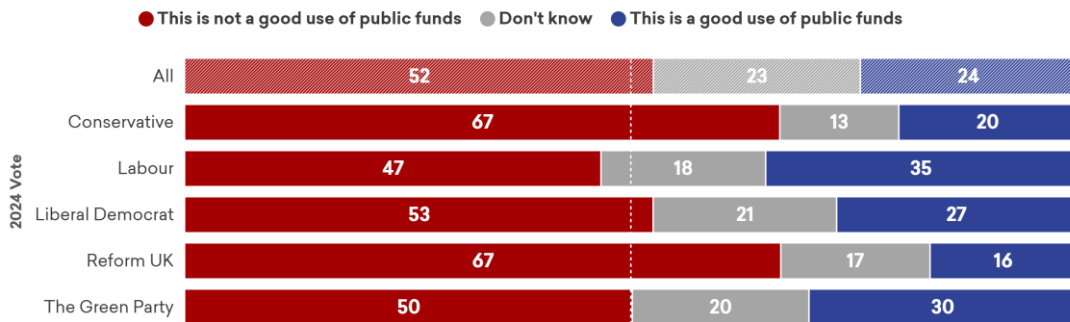
If there were no rules, there would be houses everywhere. There'd be no green spaces left in any city. So it's a great thing that we have the [Milton Keynes] Parks Trust... so there is some chance of [keeping our] green spaces in Milton Keynes.

Lukasz, Train Driver, Milton Keynes North

It is also clear the public want to see common sense used when it comes to the application of environmental regulations. The recent case of the so-called “bat tunnel” in HS2 was one way in which the public’s confidence in green development was shaken. 52 per cent believed that the tunnel was a poor use of public funds. A point of view echoed by politicians and environmental organisations alike.

The British public think the £100m HS2 bat tunnel isn't a good use of public money

As part of the construction of HS2, a 1-km tunnel is being built to protect bats at a cost of £100 million. Which of the following comes closest to your view?

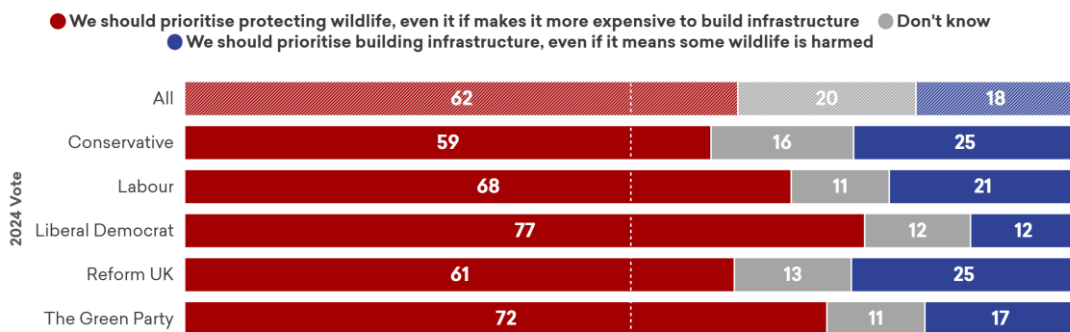


More in Common • November 2024

The public still think that protecting wildlife should be a priority, even if it makes building infrastructure more expensive. But cases like these highlight the need for planning regulations to be designed and implemented properly to ensure taxpayers' money is spent wisely.

Britons want the protection of wildlife to be prioritised over costs in the construction of infrastructure

Which of the following comes closest to your view?



More in Common • November 2024

Chapter 5 | Planning and Politics

Britons' views on housing development, nature and politics affect one another. Political parties, developers, and environmental charities would do well to keep this in mind as they approach these issues.

Voters perceive housing to already be taking priority over the environment, and there is a widespread feeling that this is an unbalanced set of priorities. There is not a strong appetite among the public for further accelerating housebuilding at the expense of nature and green spaces.

[Conservation of nature] is at the bottom of the pile, I think. That's not a priority, nature. Housing comes first [for the government].

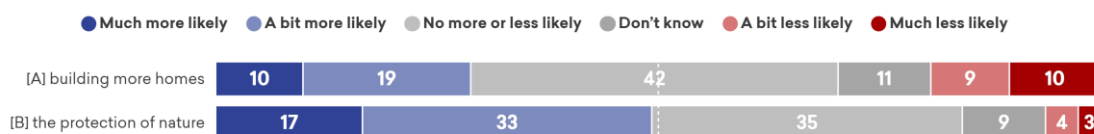
Paula, Bookkeeper, Milton Keynes North

Only 14 per cent of Britons think that politicians are aligned with their values on nature, while two thirds (67 per cent) say that politicians are out of touch on the issue.

As a result of this perceived imbalance, and perhaps in an effort to redress it, the public are more likely to vote for a party which makes nature conservation a priority. Britons are net (as in those who are more likely, minus those who are less likely) 43 per cent more likely to vote for a party that prioritises nature conservation, while being only net 10 per cent more likely to vote for one which prioritises housebuilding.

Britons find the protection of nature to be a more compelling reason to vote for a party

If a major party announced it was making [_____] a key part of its platform, would this make you more or less likely to vote for them?

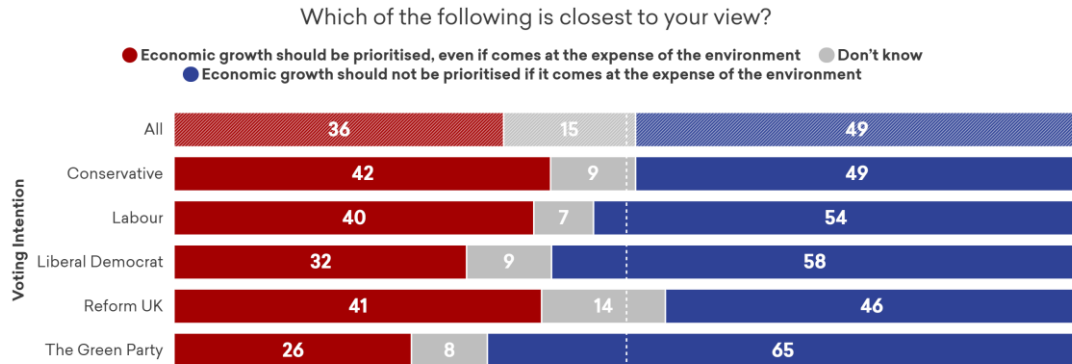


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Split sample: half were shown option A, half were shown option B

The challenge for Labour

Voters of every party across the political spectrum are more likely to say that the environment should be prioritised over economic growth. However, supporters of right wing parties are slightly more likely to want to prioritise economic growth over conservation of nature. Likely reform voters are most split on the issue, with 41 per cent saying that growth should be prioritised regardless of its effects on the environment, while 46 per cent say the opposite.

Voters of all parties tend to think that economic growth should not be prioritised at the expense of the environment and nature



Indeed, a challenge for the Government is that Labour's supporters only have weak support for its growth agenda, despite it being central to the Government. Those who intend to vote Labour are much more likely to say that economic growth should not be prioritised if it comes at the expense of the environment (54 per cent).

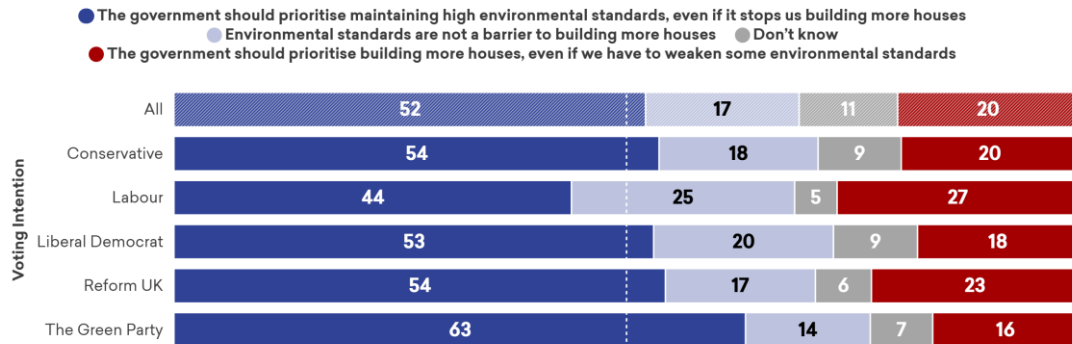
I think it's very easy for someone [local MP] who has this big job in London and might not live in the direct vicinity to go, yeah, sure you build, but actually is it in his backyard? Where does he live?

Elizabeth, Childminder, Milton Keynes North

Support for weakening environmental standards to enable more housebuilding is highest among Labour voters (27 per cent), but a majority among supporters of all other major parties say that these environmental standards should be maintained, even if it means building fewer houses.

Only a quarter of Labour voters think that environmental standards should be weakened to enable more housebuilding

Which of the following is closest to your view?



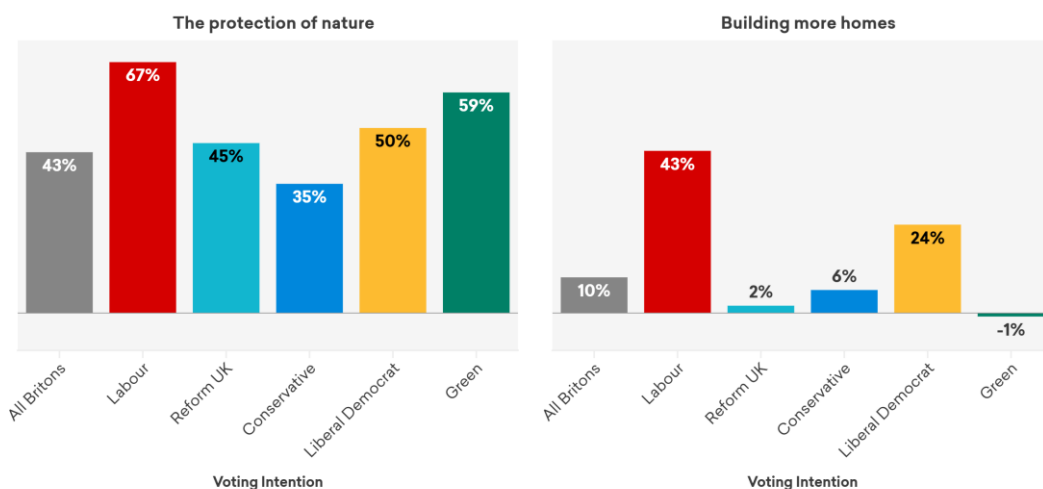
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Similarly, while Labour and Liberal Democrat supporters say they would be more likely to vote for a party which made building more homes a core part of its agenda, supporters of other parties are indifferent - neither more nor less likely to vote for them. On the other hand, voters of all parties, including Labour, say they'd be more likely to vote for a party which made nature conservation a core part of its agenda. Put simply, supporters of all parties would like them to pay much more attention to nature and the environment than they do right now.

While voters of all parties would favour a platform of protecting nature, only Labour and Liberal Democrat voters have the same attitude on housing

If a major party announced it was making [_____] a key part of its platform, would this make you more or less likely to vote for them?

(net % more likely)



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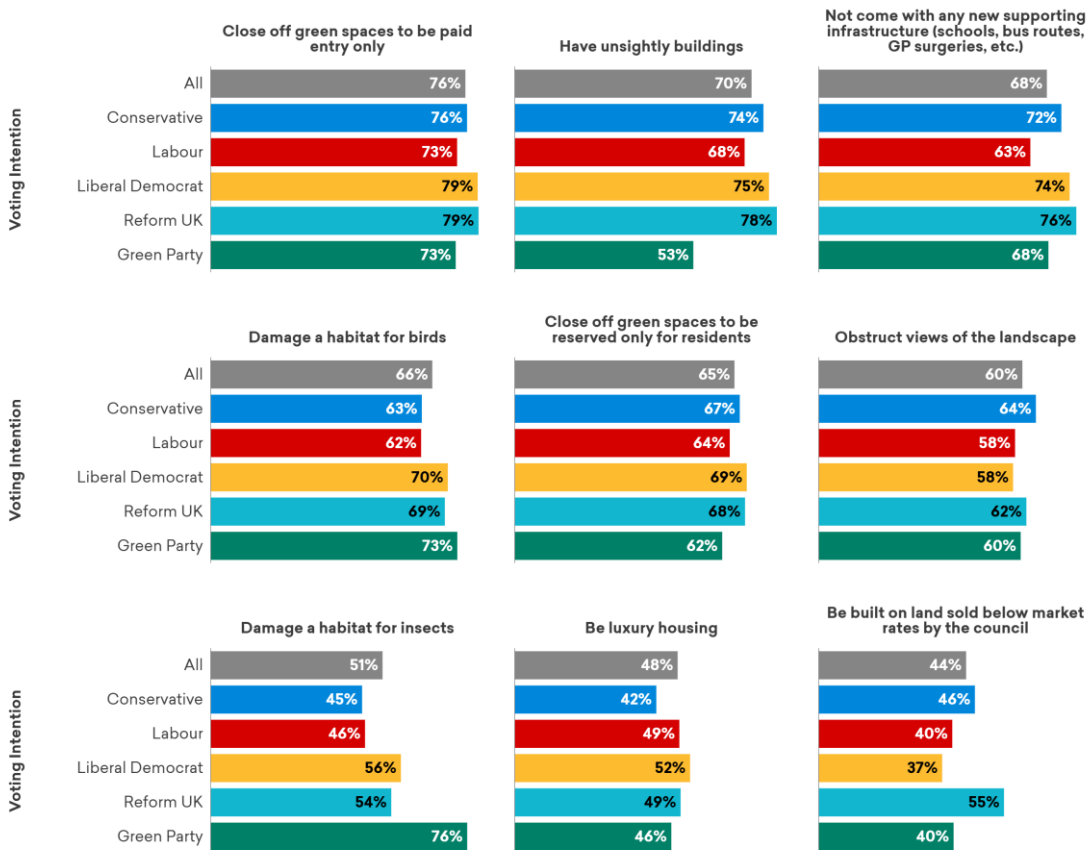
Proportion who are more likely to vote for such a party, minus the proportion who are less likely to vote for such a party

From the UK Government's perspective, its current policies on housing and nature appear to alienate both its existing base of Labour voters and the cohort of Reform voters who it wants to win over.

An approach which unites support from voters of all the major parties is not accelerating development, nor cancelling it, but making it better. Voters from all parties want habitats to be safeguarded, green spaces to be preserved and kept free, infrastructure to be developed alongside housing to support it, and more houses to be made affordable. They believe that this is possible, and most do not buy into the argument that much of these will have to be sacrificed in order to build enough homes.

Closing off green spaces to be paid entry would make voters of all parties likely to oppose a development

Under each of the following circumstances, would you oppose a new development in your local area? If the development would...



As our work with Climate Outreach on [Britain Talks Climate and Nature](#) shows, the public do not feel they have been properly consulted on many of these issues. Much of the backlash to development could be avoided if planners more sincerely engage with local communities, work with them in planning, and secure their buy-in as a result.

Conclusion

Britons are not generally as keen as the new UK Government on building more houses, but much of the public would be more supportive of housebuilding if it were done better. People who oppose a development in their area are often construed as being selfish: stopping houses being built so the view from their window isn't spoiled, or because they don't want to see new faces in their area. In reality, we find that the public's expectations for new developments are much more reasonable. They want to see new homes built with care: for the existing residents in the surrounding area, for the people who will end up living in them, and for the environment in and around them. These are not abstract ideas for Britons - in focus groups, participants looked to developments in their area built twenty or thirty years ago as examples of what they think is needed, as compared to what they see being built now.

If the government does encounter opposition to housebuilding among the public, this will not be because they are fundamentally against new developments. The public feel like their priorities and values are being overridden by a national interest that is poorly articulated and haphazardly carried out. In focus groups, residents were largely unaware of the government's housing targets and felt as though their only interaction with development was through one-sided consultations and fruitless efforts with their local council.

The importance of nature and green spaces in this conversation cannot be overstated - they consistently come up as some of the public's main gripes with the current approach to development. Removing the obligations placed on developers in regards to nature would be an unforced error on the part of the government, as the public consider these restrictions to be one of the few things remaining that keep developers in check, and if anything believe that they should be tightened further, even if this were to slow down housebuilding. Britons intuitively understand the value of green spaces and having accessible nature close to home, and think that these ought to be integrated with new housing projects rather than bulldozed to make space for them.

We should keep in mind that the public broadly agrees with the principle of economic growth and building more houses and infrastructure. The challenge here is a matter of how these things are achieved. Whereas for many people GDP growth feels like an abstract concept with little connection to them, the environment and nature is deeply connected to how people live their lives in the UK and feels much more tangible to the public, and the public want the government's priorities to better reflect this. The houses can be built, but the government ought to do so with care if it wants to meet the demands of the public for places that people want to live in.

Methodology

Quantitative research

Polling in this report was conducted by More in Common, a member of the British Polling Council.

Polls are weighted and allocated to be representative of the adult population of Great Britain.

Most of the analysis in this report is drawn from polling conducted on the following dates:

- 22nd - 26th August 2025, N=2,043

Additional data were used from these polls:

- 31st January - 6th February 2025, N=4,076
- 19th - 21st November 2024, N=2,002
- 24th - 27th November 2023, N=2,022
- 18th - 20th September 2023, N=2,019

Data tables for this research can be found at <https://www.moreincommon.org.uk/our-work/polling-tables/>

Qualitative research

This report draws on two focus groups conducted online via Zoom, with representative participants from the following constituencies:

- Basingstoke
- Milton Keynes North

Both groups were conducted on Monday 1st September 2025.

Participants were recruited using an independent recruitment company.

