

CHIDDINGLY PARISH COUNCIL - WGOD

WHAT ARE WEALDEN'S REAL HOUSING NEEDS FOR 2021-2031?

Wealden is a rural and an agricultural district and it should remain that. Unfortunately, week after week we are witnessing loss of green fields, countryside, and habitat of wildlife. We must realise that the Government's drive for economic regeneration through its programme of building 300,000 new houses in England each year is leading to irreversible concretisation of our district, whilst failing to protect our lives and the lives of our children from increasing traffic, air pollution, and from climate change.

The number of houses the Government has decided that it wants to be built in England are considerably higher than the projections by the Office of National Statistics. ONS's 2014-based Household Projections show a demand of 212,739 new houses per annum over the period 2021 to 2031. The Government's standard method utilises these statistics and then uplifts the projections using the Adjustment on Affordability and the Urban Adjustment to arrive at its desired result of 300,000 new houses per annum. In the case of Wealden, in 2021 the 2014 ONS projections yielded 872 houses per annum, adjusted (with the capped 40% increase for affordability) to 1,221 house per annum. Wealden is a rural district with most of its area being constrained (53% is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and a further 5% is

part of the South Downs), leaving Low Weald (42%) to bear most of the Government's so called "housing need" of 1,221 houses.

For Wealden 1,221 new houses per annum is unsustainable and unacceptable. As citizens and voters we have to be concerned when we see the Government ignoring the lower population projections produced by ONS in its 2016 and 2018 Household Projections bulletin. According to the 2016 data England's needs for new houses reduced from 212,739 to 166,985 per annum between 2021 — 2031. The same publication shows only a modest reduction in Wealden's needs, from 872 down to 844 per annum. Interestingly, the 2018 data show England's housing needs to have slightly reduced further down to 161,048. However, the demographics of our district resulted in a projection of just 598 new houses per annum, in fact half the number demanded of us by the Government.

We are aggrieved to see the Government ignore the lower projected needs and continue with its unsustainable demands.

WGOD wrote a letter to our MP Nus Ghani on 20 September alerting her to these concerns which we think government must address urgently, asking her to make use of the Parish News to inform us of what she intends to do. We hope to hear from her in due course.