

Controlling development in Wokingham

Yesterday I attended a meeting with the Secretary of State for Communities and local government with the Leader and Deputy Leader of Wokingham Borough Council.

We explained to the Minister how Wokingham had identified four major sites for housing development, and how the Council was seeking to put in the new schools, roads and other public facilities they require. Whilst the construction work is underway it is disruptive to the local community, but not as disruptive as having more smaller sites all over the Borough. The idea of the local plan is to concentrate the developments, creating new communities and providing them with the necessary facilities.

In return for making its contribution to the national housing effort, the Council needs government Inspectors to turn down appeals for planning permissions in addition to the large new settlements already agreed. Public budgets will not stretch to even more infrastructure to service yet more diverse new settlements and housing additions. Our road network is already overstretched, and we have needed to put new schools in at speed to keep pace with pupil demand. The aim should be to encourage a decent pace of development and completion, to reduce the period of disruption and to hit the housing targets of the plan.

The government is concerned about these matters and has agreed to work with the Council to see what can be done.