

The local plan and housing numbers

I met leading Councillors and Planning Officers on Friday at the Borough Council offices. I explained why I would like the next local Plan to confirm lower new housing numbers given the past pressures on green spaces, local infrastructure and public services from the rate of development.

The Council said it too would like to slow the growth rate. I suggested that the Council

1. Maximises identified land that should be kept free of development through the various designations of green space, sites of special scientific interest, green belt, green gaps between settlements, recreation space, good quality agricultural land and others
2. Do not identify a large number of marginal or unsuitable sites as possibly suitable for housing as that might make defending decisions later more difficult.
3. Make a proposal for changing the way housing need is calculated, as this is central to calculating how much land needs to be identified for housing. The Secretary of State is currently considering whether and how to change national planning law. I would be happy to put a good working proposal to the Secretary of State.

The Council needs to get on with a new local Plan to cover the period up to 2037. The current Plan is near its end and is too permissive.