

National Housing Targets and the Planning and Infrastructure Bill

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This Council notes with deep concern the current application of national housing targets to Waverley Borough and the likely consequences of the forthcoming Planning and Infrastructure Bill if implemented without greater flexibility for areas with significant environmental constraints.

Over 80% of land in Waverley is designated either as Green Belt or as part of the Surrey Hills National Landscape. This leaves very limited land—together with countryside beyond the Green Belt—available for development. Despite this, recent changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) have seen Waverley's annual housing target over double, from approximately 710 homes per year to more than 1,450, with no recognition of these exceptional constraints.

This Council further notes that accommodating such a target would place intense development pressure on the remaining 20% of land, much of which is already built up, lacks sufficient infrastructure capacity, or contains other environmental protections. Such an approach risks:

- overdevelopment of market towns and villages, especially where Green Belt was never considered necessary due to their rural context, exacerbating existing pressures on roads, sewerage, public services and utilities;*
- irreversible loss of unprotected green spaces and wildlife habitats, undermining national environmental objectives;*
- heightened public opposition, legal challenges and planning delays, ultimately impeding rather than accelerating sustainable housing delivery.*

This Council supports the need to increase housing supply, including genuinely affordable homes for local people. However, housing growth must respect environmental limits, align with infrastructure capacity and reflect the unique physical constraints of protected rural boroughs such as Waverley.

Accordingly, this Council requests that the Leader writes to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Steve Reed MP, to ask that:

- 1. **Waverley's revised housing target is reviewed** in light of its exceptional land constraints, enabling a more flexible and evidence-based interpretation of national policy.*
- 2. **Local authorities are supported during preparation of Local Development Plans**, including protection from the tilted balance for the duration of the plan period—or for a reasonable period determined by Government—allowing housing need to be planned and delivered more sustainably and alongside essential infrastructure.*
- 3. **Environmental designations, including National Landscapes, are fully protected**, and not undermined by inflexible numerical targets where land capacity is demonstrably limited.*
- 4. **The value of countryside beyond the Green Belt is properly recognised**, and the absence of Green Belt in rural villages is not taken to imply that such areas are unconstrained or suitable for disproportionate development.*
- 5. **Housing delivery expectations are phased realistically**, with growth tied to timely and guaranteed provision of transport, education, health services, utilities and environmental mitigation.*

This Council further resolves that a copy of this motion and the Leader's letter be shared with Waverley's MPs, Surrey County Council, neighbouring planning authorities and relevant community stakeholders to support a coordinated regional response.

Through this motion, Waverley Borough Council reaffirms its commitment to delivering the homes our communities need while safeguarding the landscape, environment and character of the Borough for future generations.