



House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA
Tel: 020 7219 7107

Rt. Hon. Robert Jenrick MP
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
2 Marsham Street
Westminster
London
SW1P 4DF

10th September 2020

Dear Secretary of State

MHCLG consultation - standard housing method

We write to express our deep concern about the impact that the proposed changes to the Standard Housing Method will have upon our communities in Kent and Medway.

You will be aware that these proposals will result in an increase in housing targets for all but one lower-tier local authority in Kent, requiring the delivery of an additional 2,835 homes a year across the county. The numbers produced by the current 'standard method' already substantially exceed the county's previous combined local plan requirement; partly due to the use of outdated ONS household projection statistics from 2014 which have since been revised down. These new proposals will now create further increases in the annual housing targets of between 25% and 85% for the Kentish local authority areas represented by signatories to this letter. By way of comparison, however, housing numbers required for Northern Powerhouse regions, such as Greater Manchester, are scheduled to decrease under the proposed reforms.

Under the Government's new proposals, new homes will need to be delivered in areas which have already shouldered a substantial amount of housing growth in recent years. They are areas where road infrastructure is creaking, particularly in our towns, where school places are under pressure and where access to GP appointments is proving increasingly difficult. There is understandable and widespread concern amongst our constituents about the impact upon our precious green spaces, including Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Green Belt and farmland.

The proposals also appear inherently unreasonable, particularly to those local authorities in Kent who have already successfully worked with the Government to deliver the homes we need. One has to question the propriety of constantly increasing targets with completely unrealistic transitional timescales, being foisted upon our hard-working planners, executives and elected officials in such a demotivational and punitive manner. Local plans (many of which are in the latter stages of development) will be left in tatters and planners will have to re-start the process, wasting so much time and taxpayer's money already spent.

Further, there is considerable doubt about industry capacity to build at the rate required. This could result in missed delivery targets, leading to local plan redundancy and thus empowering developers to determine which sites are prioritised for construction. Such sidelining of the democratic planning process must surely be questionable.

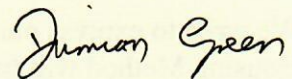
In short, the proposed changes will arrest well-considered town and country planning and threaten community trust and consent. We therefore ask that you look again at the proposed changes and seek to relieve the disproportionate burden they place upon our communities in Kent.

The short consultation timescales mean time is very much of the essence here. We would therefore like to meet with you, at your earliest convenience, to discuss our concerns in more detail.

Best wishes



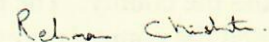
HELEN GRANT



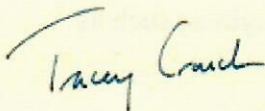
DAMIAN GREEN



ROGER GALE



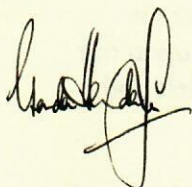
REHMAN CHISHTI



TRACEY CROUCH



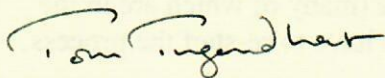
CRAIG MACKINLAY



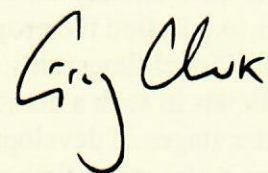
GORDON HENDERSON



GARETH JOHNSON



TOM TUGENDHAT



GREG CLARK