

**RESPONSE TO CHAPTERS WITHIN THE LOCAL PLAN DIRECTION OF TRAVEL  
CONSULTATION DOCUMENT – 18 JANUARY 2021  
Uckfield Town Council**

**CHAPTER 6 – HOUSING PART 1**

**Are there any issues or challenges we have missed?**

**Housing targets should meet the needs of the community**, not be developed to meet unrealistic figures set by central government. Given the huge numbers of developments that have had planning permission granted but not been built, it seems logical that there isn't the demand for the high numbers of new homes being imposed. Wealden DC should challenge the target as part of the Local Plan development process.

6.23 – redundant farm buildings. Whether they are converted into commercial or residential they are in a **rural area and isolated** which therefore encourages more car use and more pollution. It limits access for HGVs and the types of businesses that can move there. An example is work experience opportunities for Wealden Works students, many are based in the rural areas or northern part of the district and the apprentices are not always able to access these opportunities due to limited public transport provision.

6.7 - Planning White Paper – if they put up the **cost of development** whether they call it CIL or S106, it is not the developer or the landowner who pays the cost. The developer still wants their profit and the landowner still wants the same amount of money for the acreage – the cost ends up being added to the price of the house. The more you load onto development, the more unaffordable it becomes.

**The quality of the housebuilding can be poor.** Certain development companies have very poor reputations in the building industry and are beset with long term problems. Wealden DC need to take more care in who they offer the development contracts too. In reality, **developers will build to national housing standards only. We should be building houses that last for generations to come.**

Some developments are not being built with large enough road widths. The initial plans for Mallards Drive present a road that a refuse lorry would struggle to turn in and houses with limited parking. Four bed houses are being built with one or two parking spaces.

Another challenge, is the length of time a developer can take to complete a development. Could a policy be introduced around this? Although permission says three years, a quicker time limit would reduce developers holding back to control the sale price or coming back with changes just before construction.

**Do you agree with the proposed policy options?**

No response.

**Do you disagree with any of the options?**

Reference to the **conversion of rural buildings** is not clear. Currently there appears to be a loophole that allows for 'barn conversions' without particularly rigorous planning consideration. Some entrepreneurs could exploit this.

House building based on 50% migration for work from large towns and Gatwick is now outdated. **Covid has changed the way we work and employment opportunities** in these areas for now and a long time to come. With more people likely to work from home and less

job opportunities in large towns and cities, housing and infrastructure must be guided around more local support.

### **Are there any other policy options we should be considering?**

Working with local communities to develop **Community Land Trusts** in all areas, to give communities ownership of future development. Consider reserving land for this purpose.

**Self build** is a very good way of people on lower rates of income to get on the housing ladder.

With an estimate of 32% of the population by 2033 being 65 and over, more thought must be given to building new retirement homes and flats not just upgrading existing stock. Thought must be given to **retirement** villages e.g. St Georges Court in Burgess Hill. They also need to look at how elderly residents can be supported with dementia within these communities and how council residential homes can be built and improved to support the elderly and vulnerable in our society. There is no provision for these residents at all.

More emphasis must be put on **developing brown field sites. Building on AONB is unacceptable**, this is the land that cannot be replaced and is central to our tourist appeal in Wealden and vital to our mental health. Wealden must not step outside of the planning development boundaries e.g. the plans for electric forecourt in Uckfield. It will be a slippery slope which encourages development on the countryside once this begins. Developers should be encouraged to build housing developments that work with the countryside. By working with the wildlife and eco systems already in existence it would improve community cohesion, retain wildlife corridors and reduce the risk of destroying these habitats altogether.

Design should reflect the character of the area – a character assessment of the town has been drafted within the work of the local Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

Low carbon building materials and techniques or low energy housing.

**A policy needs including to encourage high quality builds. Ensure they meet standards** and less faults.

### **Do you have any other comments in relation to how we can plan to deliver housing, including the range, type, size and tenure?**

Wealden DC policy must **ensure the right houses are being built for the area**. As seen on one of the charts it shows a lack of 1, 2 and 3 bedroom houses and these are the sizes our next generation needs now to ensure they can remain living and working locally. We have heard that a possible new warden assisted unit could be built on green land between Uckfield and Five Ash Down. Could these not be included within new developments? This would ensure the residents stay within communities and have access to local facilities.

As shown by the Wealden DC company Sussex Weald homes development in Crowborough these have all been sold already so the need is there for the smaller units and this would also enable more houses to be built in an area of development instead of larger properties.

The increase of **people with disabilities or impairments** highlights the need for specifically built housing and accommodation with full access to town and amenities. The homes for adults with learning difficulties are often sited a good distance from town and transport is needed to access support groups and local shops. This is also the case with extra care or sheltered units such as those being considered between Five Ash Down and Uckfield.

Access to local amenities is important for all age groups and abilities. Wealden DC needs to look in more detail on how it will integrate those with varying abilities into our society and this includes improving access to shops and leisure facilities.