

Higher housing targets, more green spaces under threat

A letter to the Herald, July 2008

Sir

Last week, the government announced what it calls a “bold long-term spatial vision” for the South East. For us in Hampshire, their vision means an even higher target number of new homes and the go-ahead for more waste facilities (landfill, incinerators, waste dumps) in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty – and indeed National Parks. Green Belt protection is also to be removed in several parts of the wider region.

County-wide, the housing target is 6,685 new dwellings a year, 585 more than in the 2006 draft plan. The high level of housing development is being imposed by the government but comes with no promise of adequate infrastructure.

The higher housing numbers for Hampshire follow the government enforcing on the county a target of over 2.6 million tonnes of sand and gravel extraction a year – though the County Council has argued persuasively that this target is 45% higher than it should be.

Pushing up Whitehall building targets carries the risks of urban sprawl through more of the South East, extra congestion, more train overcrowding, higher carbon emissions, and more flooding.

Of course, we do need more homes, and in pricey areas like ours, there is an acute need for affordable developments. But Labour’s plans may deliver what people don’t want – and without the proper infrastructure and environmental sustainability.

The government should be a lot more imaginative, and find ways to spread the overall demand load to other parts of the country – where a population inflow would actually be beneficial. At the same time, there is a need to further prioritise the creation of homes for local people, at the affordable end of the scale – both social and private.

Yours

Damian Hinds

Parliamentary candidate (Conservative) – East Hants

damian@damianhinds.info