

Emily O'Brien's February 2023 Report
Lewes District Council

- On the endless saga of Ringmer and planning, I was absolutely delighted that the appeal inspector upheld the LDC decision to refuse the Bedford Park development – a chink of good news! I am keeping my fingers crossed for the Averys development where I attended and spoke as a ward councillor.
- I continue to be really busy around planning more widely - I have coordinating a response to the NPPF consultation on behalf of the local green party and also developing a template response for the association of green councillors to be shared with Green Councillors round the UK, and also been working in my capacity as chair of one of the local government association (LGA) boards to push for a strong response from the LGA.
- One thing that I have noticed is that unlike issues around housing requirements etc, the issues to do with the requirement on five-year review rule which have been catastrophic for our local plan aren't being shouted about and I am incorporating an ask on this in all the above. I have also asked for it to be included in the SE councils response and I am developing a template letter that residents can send in support. I'm including the draft wording below in case the parish council would like to include in any response they might make.
- I've also locally attended our Lewes District Cost of Living summit, and nationally given evidence on behalf of the LGA on the cost of living crisis to an all party parliamentary group. I've been visiting food banks and warm spaces in the district. Please do continue to signpost residents to information on council support available at: <https://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/community/cost-of-living-crisis/>.
- I've visited the Community land trust housing under construction and it's good to see such great progress- and also the Lewes district council house for a family with very specialised needs around multiple health conditions and disabilities, which is going up fast. I've raised with officers a report from a resident that verges were damaged by one of the vehicles attending the site, and the site foreman has committed to repairing any damage and ensuring it doesn't recur.
- I've continued to support residents in Mill Road who are concerned about flooding they believe is as a result of the Caburn Field development and ESCC have now agreed to an independent investigation of these issues.

Wording on NPPF 'ask' below in case helpful:

I am pleased the government is undertaking a consultation on changes to the national planning policy framework to try and fix our broken planning system.

However, the changes designed to restore our confidence on issues such as housing targets will only apply if **the government considers the area to have an up to date local plan. Two thirds of places do not - and the system is skewed against maintaining one.**

An unintended loophole has effectively wiped ours out. And what is happening to us today will soon affect other places. This nonsensical situation has created a developer's field day; ridden roughshod over environmental protections and neighbourhood plans, and lost the confidence of local councillors and residents. **To put it simply, we want our local plan back.**

In Lewes District our 2016 plan, which should have run for 20 years, was destroyed by the new five year rule introduced in 2018. This rule states that if review shows a new plan is needed **then the current plan is no longer considered 'up to date' until a new plan is produced.** This simply **cannot be done** in the timescale. Please make sure the new NPPF fixes this loophole. In particular Paragraph 33 must be amended to state that if a five year review shows the need for a new local plan, **the government will regard the current adopted plan as 'up to date' whilst the new one is prepared.**