

## District Councillor Emily O'Brien

### February 2026 Report

It was great to see such a good turnout of residents to Saturday's Ringmer local plan consultation event, given the immense importance to all of us. We really appreciate the efforts of RPC in supporting LDC around planning the event and organising the leaflet for every household which Johnny and I were happy to help deliver.

I spoke with many residents at the meeting. The top down target led, developer-focussed nature of our planning system is a continual frustration. I've been likening the local plan process to the village pub being taken over by Wetherspoons – it might still say 'local' on the label but the important stuff from the décor to what beer you sell is all dictated nationally. We're lucky if we get to organise a darts night.... I continue to push government and as councillors we intend to support any local activity re the community planning alliance day of action on 18th April <https://communityplanningalliance.org/events-calendar/>.

As well as my concerns about the volume and location of housing, we all agree it's really important that clear infrastructure requirements are set out i.e. what is needed where, and if there is a draft available of the RPC response prior to the 28th Feb deadline, I'd be really grateful if district councillors could see it, in case there are opportunities to align.

One thing I'm mulling including is an ask around traffic calming / weight limits/ 20mph speed limit for Lewes Road – it's impossible to imagine how any hope of a shift walking and cycling could be achieved with further traffic along the road, given the number of people already afraid to venture along. Whilst ESCC have been unreceptive to these requests previously I'm told the local plan process requires a different set of negotiations and it's a clear requisite to making any further development acceptable never mind the amount proposed. If in agreement perhaps RPC might consider including in their response too.

In other news I believe Lucy has updated on Broyle Close, and efforts being made to complete and let the property there. My Local Government association role has been busy with a number of round tables with ministers relating to waste and energy. I've also put a piece of work on a responsibility's framework re flooding and coastal erosion onto the agenda for the committee for which I'm vice chair along with an GA response to the recently issued Government plan for water.

I met with the Chief Executive of Southern Water, Lawrence Gosden, and alongside some assurances on wider issues (for example regarding our frustrations over planning and also bio bead release incident which contaminated coastlines at Rye). I was able to raise the plight of Mill Road residents who have been enduring garden flooding ever since the Caburn Field development was built. You will be aware Southern Water are refusing to allow a connection for the French drain which the county council have designed as a solution to the problem – paid for by the developer- even though it has been proven that this water will flow into the bulldog without adding additional load to the wastewater treatment works. I have my fingers crossed for some sensible decision making finally on their part.

Emily O'Brien (She/her)

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Vice Chair of the Local Government Association (LGA) Neighbourhoods Committee