

District Councillor Emily O'Brien

March 2026 Report

- I have followed up with LDC officer re supporting RPC on Finger Post Field improvements – dates have now been offered.
- The site meeting with Southern Water re revisiting their decision not to allow a connection for the French drain in Mill Road gardens has taken place, to alleviate garden flooding following the Caburn field development, and I'm awaiting news on the outcome
- East Sussex County Council elections have been un-cancelled and will take place on May 7th
- I chased up our planning policy team regarding RPC request relating to neighbourhood plan screening and the head of planning policy has allocated an officer to get in touch.
- I submitted a detailed response to the LDC local plan consultation reflecting the many local concerns raised by local residents and organisations.
- As local councillors we are also encouraging responses to the current Government National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) consultation which in our view would be the final nail in the coffin for local plans, making a bad situation even worse. Already this is a govt system disguised as local control. I've pasted the don't Urbanise the Downs response below, but RPC concerns might include settlement boundaries essentially becoming meaningless.
- With other Green councillors I spoke out at the recent full council meeting on the NPPF, you can view the full webcast at https://lewes-eastbourne.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/971738/start_time/2191000 or a clip here <https://www.instagram.com/p/DVixnokgYJ/> A press release is at <https://lewes.greenparty.org.uk/2026/03/04/green-party-councillors-protest-over-government-planning-proposals/> With appreciation that everyone has consultation fatigue, if the parish council feels able to respond every voice will count.
- Please note the Ringmer protest on 18th April time tbc as part of the community planning alliance National Day of Action, highlighting community (and councillor) concerns over 'local' planning system (including the above...). We are waiting to hear form RAGE if they are organising something which we can support otherwise we will coordinate a time / theme that day.
- I have spoken with officers at LDC re options should Ringmer Parish Council (or LDC) wish to put in a CIL bid for public toilet refurbishment in collaboration with the Village Hall, given the ongoing saga. Could I perhaps have a conversation e.g. with Clerk outside of the meeting to gauge views?
- The roll out of alternate weekly collection has gone very smoothly overall, bar some inevitable teething issues. Do report any ongoing problems that aren't resolved to ward Cllrs or Wendy Maples as cabinet lead (Wendy.Maples@lewes.gov.uk)
- I continue to champion the TCPA health homes campaign and am attending the house of lords next week on behalf of Lewes District Council. The council is updating our new homes principles to including requiring a sustainability quality mark from Bream.
- My Local Government Association (LGA) role continues to be very busy with additional commitments around representing local government re the Warm Homes Plan, waste & licencing legislation etc and advocating for a statutory duty on climate and nature for local authorities, alongside the powers and resources needed.

Emily O'Brien (She/her)

Green Party Councillor for Ouse Valley & Ringmer

Cabinet Member for Nature, Climate & Food Systems at Lewes District Council

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



Dear Supporters,

Since we contacted you about the Draft Local Plan, **we have become aware of a situation at national level** which has the potential to **override the Local Plan** and put the **Eton New Town back in the frame!**

The government is currently consulting on proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which would make housing targets mandatory. Currently, factors such as the proximity to the South Downs National Park (inside which planning rules are strict) mean that Lewes District Council (LDC) could reasonably argue that targets are impossible to achieve. **Under the proposed changes, LDC would have no choice but to meet the targets by any means necessary.**

This could create a **backdoor for the Eton/Welbeck site at North Barnes Farm** to be **forced into the Local Plan**, regardless of local opposition or damage to our landscape, simply by claiming “unmet need”.

We must act now!

Please submit your comments to the Government consultation by **5pm, Tuesday 10th March**. We must make it clear that “unmet need” must never be used to justify development close to our National Parks.

We must continue to work together to protect our valuable landscape for future generations!

Take action now:

1. Use [this link to to open a draft email](#) that should open in your email
2. Add your name and customise (or not) as you see fit
3. Leave the “Type of organisation: personal view” unless you are responding on behalf of an organisation
4. Send the email

If this link doesn't work for any reason, please see below where there is a pro forma response you can cut and paste.

Thank you for your continued support.

Best wishes,

Don't Urbanise The Downs

PS Please follow this link if you want to read more about the proposed NPPF changes:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/697b6bc6aacd0dc9777b4fd2/December_2025_NPPF_Consultation.pdf

DRAFT EMAIL IN RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION

To: PlanningPolicyConsultation@communities.gov.uk

Subject: Response to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Consultation

Dear Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government,

I am writing to express my strong disapproval of several aspects of the proposed National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which I believe will lead to inappropriate development in highly sensitive rural areas.

1. Mandatory Housing Targets in Constrained Districts The proposal to make the "Standard Method" a mandatory minimum does not account for districts where geography is a "hard constraint." So, for instance in areas where a significant proportion of land is designated as a National Park, the remaining unprotected countryside acts as a vital buffer and wildlife corridor. Forcing the entirety of a district's housing target onto this small remaining area leads to "urban-scale" developments that are completely out of character with the rural landscape.

2. The Risk of Policy S5 (Unmet Need) I strongly object to Policy S5, which suggests that "unmet need" should justify development outside existing settlement boundaries. This creates a "speculative free-for-all" where developers can bypass local spatial strategies. A housing shortfall should never be a legal license to override local plans and destroy the rural setting of our National Parks.

3. Protection of National Park Settings The NPPF must go further in protecting the setting of National Parks. High-sensitivity landscapes bordering these protected areas should be explicitly shielded from large-scale development to prevent the "boxing-in" of our most precious natural assets.

I urge the Government to reconsider these "one-size-fits-all" rules and provide greater protection for rural districts constrained by significant environmental designations.

Yours faithfully,

[Name]

Type of organisation: Personal view