

Cllr Robert Eggleston – Leader – Opening remarks 22nd October 2024

This Council takes plan making seriously as noted by the Inspector at the recent Albourne appeal. Our methodology for the allocation of housing sites has been tested twice in Examination and has been found to be sound both times. Our challenge, with 60% of the District in an AONB or the South Down National Park, is how we always continue to meet our legal obligations for plan making and housing supply on only 40% of the land. So, we've had to take brave decisions including changing our spatial strategy to ensure we continue to be the only council in the area to meet our own housing needs. Applying the same proven site selection methodology, we've risen to this challenge, and we are again fulfilling our obligations in this Plan.

Our Plan protects communities as much as possible and is sensitive to the pressures that development has on them and our treasured landscapes.

In preparing it we have worked closely with our town and parish councils affected by development going beyond any statutory requirements to consult with them, to deliver the best results for them. Indeed, between Regulation 18 and Regulation 19 officers held 56 hours of additional meetings with parishes affected by likely development to attempt to reflect their concerns. A good example of how that input has informed the Plan is the approach being adopted for the sites in Sayers Common.

Despite being able to meet our housing need, with a buffer, this District Plan is more than a number. It contains a suite of policies that will help to guide and control development in the district.

It's a Plan about people, people who want somewhere to live and work in the district, who want to get on the housing ladder, raise families, get off the housing waiting list and into affordable housing or enjoy their later years of life, possibly with assisted living. Homes for people who need homes appropriate to their needs and circumstances.

It's also a Plan about place, providing safe and sustainable communities which can provide for the everyday needs of residents, whilst ensuring that essential, sustainable connections are provided between places and town or village centres.

It's a Plan that is committed to Net Zero. This Plan maximises opportunities to make living in homes and communities as sustainable as possible through housing design and sustainable transport.

And finally, it is a Plan that supports the environment and nature. This District is 88% rural. And it will still be 86% rural when all the allocated sites are developed. This Plan makes more of our countryside open and accessible. It protects ancient woodlands, high grade agricultural land and landscape features. It supports nature and nature recovery and builds biodiversity net gain into its heart.

Yes, plan making is difficult. But this is a good plan. It is robust. It is evidence based. It is well considered with strong defensible policies. It is a plan which supports our communities, and it is a Plan which this Council stands behind with near unanimous support.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address you and I wish you all the very best in your deliberations.