

EAST GRINSTEAD TOWN COUNCIL

COUNCIL COMMITS TO RESIDENT GROUPS DIALOGUE ON HOUSES PLAN

Town Council Leader Cllr James Baldwin has committed the Town Council to working with local residents groups to win the right deal for the Town from the County Structure Plan's proposals for 2500 homes. Speaking to a meeting of the Association of Imberhorne Residents last Wednesday, Cllr Baldwin said 'we need to stand together on this issue or the Town's interest is the loser.'

Cllr Baldwin also called for agreement on an 'overall vision' for the Town, saying 'we've suffered in the past from houses first, infrastructure much, much later, with no sense of overall vision. There is no question that any large development must be a part of an overall vision for the Town, and not just some bolted on, alien entity.'

He described the Town Council as the key guardian of the Town's character: 'if that is not our role, then we deserve no role at all. People should look to the Town Council to preserve community character as the District and County Councils just can't do it.'

Recognising some people had been angry with the Town Council on the housing issue, he said 'the one thing that has really disappointed me about the debate this year on this issue is the failure of the TC to get across just how conditional it's support for the principle of housebuilding really is: we never were wide eyed enthusiasts for housing at any price. Make no mistake, if the housebuilding deal cannot provide the existing Town with real benefit, such as an effective relief road, affordable houses and additional infrastructure, the Town Council is just not interested.'

'We mustn't settle for less, and we mustn't lose the uniqueness of East Grinstead. We're not interested in this Town becoming a dormitory suburb of Crawley/Gatwick: that's our message to the County and District Councils.'

Cllr Baldwin said the Town Council was meeting with a range of developers, including those for the site east of Crawley currently not being considered by the District Council, and wanted 'continuous dialogue' with local residents groups as part of its policy review on the housing issue. He was expecting the next phase of formal consultation with the County Council to take place in the New Year.

James Baldwin
Leader of the Town Council
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