

NEWS RELEASE



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

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ALMOST 47,000 RESIDENTS SAY GOVERNMENT-IMPOSED HOUSING TARGET IS TOO HIGH

Wokingham Borough Council has been overwhelmed by the number of responses to the Housing Target Consultation, with just under 50,000 individual responses received of which 46,807 (94%) said no to the government-imposed target.

John Halsall, leader of the council, said: “Firstly I want to thank all those thousands of people who took the time to take part in this consultation. I always believed that residents shared our opposition to the government-imposed target but even I was surprised by the response.

“This will strengthen our hand as we argue that the current system for allocating housing is arbitrary and unfair and that our targets are always too high. We will use this overwhelming response in our future lobbying on the subject and, whether we are successful this time or not, this is a line in the sand for the borough.”

Under the government’s methodology, the borough will need to accommodate about 800 to 900 homes a year in the years up to 2036. The homes already planned in the borough will help meet this target over the next few years but, without a major policy change from government, the rest will have to be accommodated through new housing.

“We are trying everything we can think of to lower the target, but if we are not successful, we are saying to government – ‘at least you will have to give us proper support for these new homes’. What we would need is massive upfront infrastructure funding, so the roads and other facilities needed can be provided early. And we will need guaranteed protection from developers trying to build homes that are outside proper plans. These are the least the government can offer us given the strength of feeling locally. We would also like government support to ensure any major developments we do accommodate are eco-friendly and fit with our environmental principles.

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Upfront infrastructure funding alongside housing is something Wokingham Borough Council has successfully secured in the past – for example to help the University of Reading fund the Shinfield Eastern Relief Road and for Bohunt Secondary School – but this has not been consistent across all major developments. Similarly, in the past, the borough has been prey to unscrupulous developers seeking to build in inappropriate locations outside designated housing areas. For properly planned development in the future, Wokingham Borough Council believes a coordinated approach to early infrastructure delivery and real protection from speculative development is necessary.

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Further information:

1. More from Cllr John Halsall, 07939041227