

NEWS RELEASE



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

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COUNCIL STUNNED BY MASSIVE PROPOSED INCREASE IN HOUSING NUMBERS

The latest Government proposals would impose over 1,600 new homes a year on Wokingham Borough. That's more than double the current number that 47,000 Wokingham Borough residents objected to last year.

Wokingham Borough Council is outraged by the proposed increase and, as well as objecting to the Government's plans itself, is asking residents to make their feelings known as well. Wokingham Borough Council is asking borough residents to speak up now, as if the proposed new formula is adopted it would have a dramatic impact on the special character of Wokingham Borough. The government consultation is open to all and runs until 1 October.

Leader of the council John Halsall said: "This has come completely out of the blue and is horribly unfair to Wokingham Borough.

"We have put up with Government imposed housing targets for too long. I have gone to Westminster, as have previous council leaders, to ask for a fairer allocation on housing and got nothing back. Last year we asked our residents if they thought the then Government imposed housing target of 800 new homes per year was too many and had an overwhelming response – 47,000 residents told us 800 was too many. We thought that would strengthen our hand, but now the Government is proposing to more than double that!"

John Halsall continued: "We need our residents to step up and tell the Government that they need to rethink this. Adding a new town the size of Woodley and Earley combined into the borough every 15 years is just incomprehensible. We have created a petition to sign and are asking everyone to write to their MPs and to the Secretary of State. We all need to speak up to make our voices heard."

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In 2017, the Government committed itself to ensuring a housing market that would build 300,000 new homes per year across England. After falling short of this last year, the Government is now proposing a new formula to calculate housing need that will pick up the shortfall.

When the Government proposed this new formula, it knew there would be some outliers. The council believes Wokingham Borough to be an outlier and will be formally objecting to the proposed formula in the consultation, which runs until 1 October.

Since 2006, nearly 10,000 new homes have been built in Wokingham Borough, an average of 700 new homes each year. The council believes it is building the homes and infrastructure local people need, by building the right homes in the right places.

“I am outraged at how the Government are trying to pull the wool over our eyes,” added Cllr Wayne Smith, executive member for planning. “They are launching two consultations at the same time, but giving much greater coverage to the consultation that doesn’t include housing numbers. Under the umbrella of a major reform to an out of date planning system, they have slipped an attempt at some short term ‘wins’ under the radar – which will have a massive, detrimental impact on Wokingham Borough, as well as many other areas around the country.”

The petition on change.org, created by leader of the council John Halsall but with cross party support, had over 1400 signatures as of 1 September. The council is also hoping to get 100,000 signatures on a parliamentary petition, which would trigger a debate in parliament on the proposed changes to the housing numbers formula.

For more information and to learn more about how to respond, visit

www.wokingham.gov.uk/fairplayinhousing.

What can you do?

1. Contact your MP:

- Theresa May MP theresa.may.mp@parliament.uk
- John Redwood MP john.redwood.mp@parliament.uk
- Matt Rodda MP matt.rodde.mp@parliament.uk
- James Sunderland MP james.sunderland.mp@parliament.uk

2. Contact the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Robert Jenrick using the online form at <https://forms.communities.gov.uk/>

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3. Visit the council's website at <http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/fairplayinhousing> for more information and a copy of the Council's draft response (when available). More information and an online petition is available at www.enough-is-enough.org.uk
4. Take part in the Government consultation at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/changes-to-the-current-planning-system>

- ENDS -

Further information:

1. More from Cllr John Halsall, leader of the council, on john.halsall@wokingham.gov.uk or 01491 576190
2. More from Cllr Wayne Smith, executive member for planning and enforcement on wayne.smith@wokingham.gov.uk or 0118 9340840