

March 2021: Update for Residents from Plumpton Parish Council on Additional housing targets for Lewes District Council (LDC)

The Parish Council received a letter from Maria Caulfield on 23 February. [See the full text here](#). In that letter she confirms the housing target rises from 345 to 785 after May 2021. This is Government Policy.

Lewes Local Plan was adopted in 2016 and was supposed to last until 2030. In 2018, the (Theresa May) Government introduced the rule about Local Plans being considered out-of-date if not renewed every five years, and that local need must now only be calculated by the 'standard method'. The 'standard method' is the calculation that results in such a high target for Lewes.

Making things worse still, another change meant neighbourhood plans were now effectively only valid for two years.

If a local plan cannot be considered up to date, it is not possible to just 'renew' it. There is a statutory process for the preparation of local plans that needs to be followed. This includes gathering evidence, consulting with the community, and submitting the plan to the Secretary of State to arrange an independent examination by a Planning Inspector. Failure to follow the correct procedure would mean that local plan would fail examination.

We received a further email from Maria Caulfield on 14th March in response to detailed questions asked by Plumpton Parish Council. The questions ([see the questions here](#)) were not answered but curiously the email states:-

"The situation currently is that LDC can keep their number at 385 a year if they are able to provide an up to date five year land supply and the standard method up to date figures are here on the indicative local housing need <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/changes-to-the-current-planning-system> which clearly shows the figure is 385. However, if the local plan expires then developers are able to pick

off sites which is why we are seeing a spate of applications coming forward.”

385 is a new number to us which we would like to trust, as whilst it is greater than the current 345 it is considerably less than the 782 via the standard method, but experience suggests we can't yet take it as guaranteed. At least Maria Caulfield does confirm that a new housing target does indeed apply after May 2021. This supports the LDC position which was based on the law and policy as written and regular dialogue with the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government and the Planning Advisory Service.

There is clearly a lack of clarity on government policy as the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government seemed unaware of this in the discussions with LDC, but what is obvious is that this lack of clarity is leading to applications for speculative development across the district.

So, we are still a little bit confused about what is really happening but will not give up the fight for a sensible, plan-led resolution. Click on the Blue Banner [“Additional Housing Targets for Lewes District”](#) above this update for more information including the Parish Council response to the initial Land Availability Assessment and ‘Call for Sites’ map.

 [Questions put to Maria Caulfield](#)

 [Letter from Maria Caulfield 23/02/21](#)