

10 Cheeleys
Horsted Keynes
Haywards Heath
RH17 7AU

Mims Davies MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

28 September 2020

Dear Ms Davies

Re: Community led housing, Changes to the current planning system and Planning for the future

I am writing to you on behalf of the Horsted Keynes Community Land Trust Feasibility Group. Our parish, like many others in your constituency, suffers from a lack of affordable housing and we are concerned about the long-term effects that this will have for our community. It is with this in mind that our group was formed with the aim of delivering a small community led housing scheme to provide some genuinely affordable housing in perpetuity for people with a local connection to our parish.

We have the support of our Parish Council and Mid Sussex District Council, who have funded a housing needs survey that we commissioned Action in Rural Sussex to carry out in our parish last year. This survey confirms the need, initially for around 6-9 affordable dwellings, and we are currently in the process of trying to locate an appropriate site within our parish, something which is proving extremely difficult.

Having had a number of discussions with the Rt Hon Sir Nicholas Soames about these issues and our concerns about how proposals for larger developments of high-end market housing will do little to solve the problem, I note that he was very encouraging in his support for the aims of our group.

I am now writing to you because, having read the latest consultations on both the Changes to the current planning system and Planning for the future, we are deeply concerned that these proposals will do nothing to alleviate the affordable housing issue. In fact, we believe that if they are adopted, they could actually make things worse.

It is undisputable that there is a need for more housing, however what these proposals fail to address is that the housing we should be building must reflect need for genuinely affordable housing, not just more and more market housing that will end up being unaffordable for many of the local people.

We find it absolutely astonishing that the changes to the current planning system propose raising the small sites threshold for affordable housing from 10 to 40, or even 50, dwellings. This would remove the requirement for developers to provide any affordable housing at all on many sites. We understand that in Areas of

Outstanding Natural Beauty, as in the High Weald where Horsted Keynes lies, this may not apply but it is still a big concern to us as it would impact severely on the amount of affordable housing in the rest of Mid Sussex.

We are very disappointed to note that, within these latest consultations, there is barely any reference to community led housing projects and what little reference there is relates solely to areas identified for growth. So, it would seem that the need for genuinely affordable housing in designated rural areas, such as ours, is being overlooked or ignored.

We had been led to believe that the Government is supportive of community led housing projects, since they are proving to be a very successful way of providing much needed housing in rural areas, but these latest communications are causing us to question that level of commitment.

We are also deeply concerned about the lack of emphasis given to Neighbourhood Plans within these proposals. Our parish has been working hard to produce a plan over the last few years and, after one failed attempt, we are now close to the launch of a second regulation 14 consultation. Are we to now understand that this process may prove to have been a complete waste of time and money if the government's latest proposals succeed? This apparent attack on localism is a worry for communities like ours that are trying desperately hard to take an active role in shaping and improving their neighbourhood.

We understand the government's desire to boost the economy following the pandemic but, rather than just "Build Build Build", we believe the government should be investing in building the homes that people actually need.

We trust that we can rely on you to speak out against these flawed elements of the proposals and to show your support for encouraging genuinely affordable housing schemes, particularly where they are community led. We would also welcome the opportunity to meet you at an appropriate time in the future to discuss these issues and, more specifically, our proposals for a community led housing scheme in Horsted Keynes.

Yours sincerely



Phil Miles

Secretary of the Horsted Keynes Community Land Trust Feasibility Group

Cc David Colville – Chairman Horsted Keynes Parish Council
Helen Blackith – MSDC Housing Enabling Team Manager
Linda Stockwell – MSDC Ward Cllr
Paul Brown – MSDC Ward Cllr
Graham Maunders – AiRS Community Led Housing Advisor
Kia Trainor – Director CPRE Sussex