

EAST BOLDON FORUM

Email: info.eastboldonforum@gmail.com

30th June 2022

Councillor Tracey Dixon, Leader, South Tyneside Council

Cc: Councillor Joan Atkinson
Councillor Ian Forster
Councillor David Herbert

Dear Tracey,

South Tyneside Housing Requirement, the Draft Local Plan and the implication for the Green Belt and our Villages.

We are contacting you again to ask for your help.

The newly published draft Local Plan seeks to allocate 1,500 homes on brownfield sites. However, the Borough's housing requirement, based on the Government's Standard Method, requires South Tyneside to find sites for another 3,000 homes, and it is proposed that these properties are to be built on Green Belt land. Approximately half of these are to be located in and around the villages of Whitburn, Cleadon and the Boldons.

The housing numbers proposed in the new plan will put a massive strain on the infrastructure of these small villages, especially the existing highways which will have great difficulty in coping with increased traffic. Not only will the Green Belt in and around these areas be greatly eroded, but the distinctiveness and the unique identity of these long-established settlements will be significantly and adversely affected by the Government's requirements.

This is opposed by many residents. You will recall that the draft Local Plan published in 2019, which sought to build houses on the green belt, received over 18,000 objections.

As far as East Boldon Neighbourhood Plan is concerned, around 650 dwellings are proposed for the Forum area. One of the key objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan was to protect the Green Belt. The Plan was supported at referendum by 95% of those residents who voted in a turnout of 42%.

It seems that the wishes of residents will be ignored if the Government's Housing Target is realised, and it is not surprising that people feel powerless and without influence.

That is why we have decided to write to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (see attached), to express our concern over the issue of Housing Targets and the implications for the Green Belt. We know that this issue, where the target can't be met without going into the Green Belt, is being played out up and down the country and there is an active campaign to have this situation addressed.

We feel that the Green Belt is important for so many reasons, that the Council should also take the issue up and address this problem at the highest level. **We are writing, therefore, to request that that South Tyneside Council also write to the Secretary of State and ask for a review of how the figures are generated and that Green Belt constraints are considered in assessing land availability.**

A huge frustration for many people is that the Government's Standard Method is based on 2014 household projections and if more up to date figures were used, our housing requirement would be reduced. This anomaly has been made even clearer with the publication of the 2021 census data. This shows that the population of South Tyneside in 2021 was 147,800, continuing the trend of population reduction since 1961 when the total was 187,123. South Tyneside's own estimate of 2021 population used in their draft Local Plan is 151,936, an overestimate of 4,136 compared with the actual figure. Against this background, the Government's housing requirement for South Tyneside of 4,500 new homes over the next 18 years covered by its Local Plan looks plainly wrong.

We also understand that the 'buffer element' included to calculate the overall figure has not been set at a minimum level but increased to 15%. Given the serious implication for the green belt and our villages referred to in this letter this seems unjustifiable and should be reconsidered.

In addition, most of the properties that will be built in and around the existing villages, where land prices are high, will result in expensive, executive style houses that neither reflect the need of local residents nor address the housing crisis that is being faced by many.

We hope you and your colleagues can help in this matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'KR', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Kirstin Richardson
Chair, East Boldon Forum