

## **RARA Petition Presentation to WDC**

**3<sup>rd</sup> April 2017**

Thank you for tabling this petition.

Risborough Area Residents Association (RARA) represents residents in the area and seeks to protect and enhance the natural and developed environment, public services and amenities.

Against the background of the Government's housing agenda, we recognise WDC faces difficult circumstances in meeting the current housing target of nearly 13,000 homes. Although sympathetic to these constraints, RARA cannot support Wycombe District Council's (WDC) proposal to expand Princes Risborough by 2,600 houses.

WDC's 'non-standard' proposal with a third of the district's new housing allocated to Princes Risborough effectively doubles the size of the town. In fact, the actual housing increase now approaches 3,600 houses in Risborough, taking into account the Local Plan as well as current schemes and plans for development in the neighbouring parishes. This will overwhelm the communities and settlements which the infrastructure is not capable of supporting .

Aware the community were not being heard, RARA set up a petition to capture the strength of feeling in the town. Almost 4,000 people have so far signed this hard copy petition we are presenting tonight.

With the current support of approximately 50% of the town's electorate, RARA will be presenting this petition to the Planning Inspector to challenge WDC's proposed Local Plan.

Our petition powerfully reflects the scale of 'public voice' where at least 90% of those we spoke to acknowledge the need for growth but oppose the overwhelming scale of development proposed by WDC.

We are dedicated to campaign for a better Town Plan, lower housing numbers of 1000 – 1500, aligned to a county and national plan for infrastructure, particularly strategic highway connectivity and capacity. These connections are critical as the Town Plan represents a net reduction in local employment in Risborough.

We have been greatly motivated by the strength of feeling within our community. Whilst the vast majority of signatories are local residents, we have also had support

from other interested stakeholders keen to add their voice for a plan that is relevant, sustainable and proportionate to our community. A plan that also recognises our setting with regard to the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and seeks to cherish and enhance this.

The petition wording at the top of each page, affirms signatories support for RARA in their demand for a better town and district plan. It specifically calls on the Planning Inspector to:

- Modify its plan for Princes Risborough, and propose a lower scale of development;
- Research alternative solutions for the Wycombe District that makes better use of available land
- Fully consult with local residents on proposals and act on their views and feedback

Common messages received from the public include:

- ‘Where are the jobs to support this scale of development?’
- ‘Where is the solution to the current traffic congestion on the 4010 at West Wycombe?’
- ‘The relief road is an expensive ‘white elephant’’
- ‘These proposals will lead to total chaos at the railway station’
- ‘Our town services can’t cope with existing numbers...where are we going to park?’
- ‘We want affordable homes for our young people but will they be able to afford them?’
- ‘We are happy to support the petition but you are wasting your time, no one will listen’

These messages demonstrate how the ‘localism agenda’ has been passed over by poor consultation and a housing target driven process.

This feedback reinforces the content of five letters we sent to WDC last year outlining key issues regarding the process you have adopted, economic sustainability, road infrastructure, rail services and the AONB. These can be found on our website.

We believe our town and its unique location needs to be developed with care, cherished and enjoyed - not destroyed. We need a plan that is driven from the

bottom up, based upon proper collaboration and not one imposed upon us; a plan that has a more proportionate and sustainable level of housing development, and protects our green fields and AONB setting. A plan that properly and transparently applies the National Planning Policy Framework which is aligned with the wider county and national infrastructure strategy.

It is now time to work with other district councils, local organisations and local government to challenge Central Government's unrealistic housing policy. It is not too late to listen and we would welcome the opportunity to work together with you to achieve the best results for all.

To quote the Buckinghamshire's CPRE (Campaign to Protect Rural England):

'The huge scale of development proposed in the Wycombe District Council draft Local Plan is the result of a flawed national methodology to calculate housing targets. The calculation leads to inflated figures that are based on aspirational demand rather than actual need, risking the loss of valued countryside in areas such as Princes Risborough. We need a methodology that takes proper account of real community need, environmental impact and land availability.'

Thank you

**Linda Cannon Clegg**  
**Chairman RARA**