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INCLUDING FONTWELL AND BINSTED**  
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Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP  
Secretary of State  
Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government  
2 Marsham Street  
London SW1P 4DF

By email: [robert.jenrick.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:robert.jenrick.mp@parliament.uk)

15<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Dear Secretary of State,

I am writing to endorse the recent similar letter from Arun District Council and many other West Sussex District Councils regarding the effects of the Covid-19 outbreak on the planning system and to ask for your support.

As a parish council trying to protect rural villages, we would like the Government to swiftly intervene and take action that will:

- support the plan-led approach to planning we all champion;
- help to ensure housing sites are re-opened and the delivery of housing is quickly resumed now that the construction industry is to return after the lockdown; and
- importantly, offer certainty and confidence to councils and developers.

The lockdown has seriously affected the trajectory for the delivery of much needed housing.

We are specifically concerned that the current situation is / will result in the development sector:

- seeking to renegotiate S106 Agreements because of the impact of Covid-19, especially to reduce the affordable housing component;
- challenging the 5-year housing land supply on the basis that the current near cessation of building will slow housing delivery and the trajectories carefully developed by councils;
- seeking permission for sites not in conformity with agreed Plans; and
- practising increased land banking and a slow recommencement of building after lockdown is lifted to strengthen balance sheets.

We also believe all the above consequences would be very detrimental to the delivery of housing and costly to the public purse. Carefully considered intervention now could prevent these negative consequences of the Covid-19 outbreak.

We ask that you support Planning authorities now and help to re-establish housing supply in an orderly and sustainable way by:

- A suspension and/or roll forward of 5-year land supply arrangements, to acknowledge the lost supply during lockdown and to avoid a surge of speculative applications;
- Consequent changes to the Housing Delivery Test;
- Powers to extend the life of existing planning consents by the period of the lockdown;
- Tying extension to the life of existing consents to firm timescales for (re)commencement of sites;
- Extending Local Plan review timescales.

In 2010 the Government intervened to support housing supply after the financial crisis, and made a series of temporary amendments to the planning regime, including extensions to the life of planning consents. This precedent could be followed now and reflect all the issues raised by the West Sussex County Council joint letter.

We also think it is important that the Government indicates clearly now its support for a Plan led approach to planning and makes swift announcements to ensure 5-year supplies are not undermined by uncertainty and that, those councils without a 5-year supply at the start of this crisis, are incentivised to work towards securing one, through the planning system.

We are a Parish that is in the process of reviewing its Neighbourhood Plan and whose Reg 14 consultation and subsequent referendum date have been delayed by COVID-19.

We are particularly concerned that developers are already circling our villages in the absence of Arun District Council not having a 5 year land supply and urge you to support our local councils.

We understand that at this time of national crisis, there will be many challenges facing your Department, but we hope you agree that the issues and potential solutions outlined above, could quickly bring certainty to councils and the development sector and ensure a resilient and sustainable housing supply is resumed as quickly as possible.

Yours faithfully,

[Unsigned – sent by email](#)

Suzanne Clark  
Chairman - Waberton Parish Council

cc Andrew Griffith, MP for Arundel & South Downs  
Arun District Councillors - Mrs Faye Catterson, Paul Dendle and Grant Roberts