

Wealden Local Plan: Mythbusting FAQ

September 2026

Myth	Verdict	Reality
We don't need a plan to control development	False	Without a plan we can't refuse bad developments in the wrong places, built to low standards. No plan means more, worse development.
The plan means 25,000 houses will be built	False	That's the government's formula figure (~1,400/yr). Our draft plan proposes 1,052 homes a year, 16,833 in total to 2042. And even then, homes only get built if there's demand.
The government's housing formula is wrong	True, but...	We still have to start from it for our plan to pass examination. Our plan justifies a lower figure. With no plan of our own, the government's high figure applies by default.
South East Water can't cope with the numbers	Not quite	Providers say today's infrastructure can't support this growth, not that they refuse it. The plan tells them what's needed, where and when, putting them under a legal duty to deliver it. Development can't proceed without that infrastructure.
Mostly greenfield development in the Low Weald	True	We have very little brownfield land. 53% of the district is protected (National Park, High Weald). We'll use windfall sites, but there aren't many.
This will concrete over the whole district	False	Wealden is 6% developed; full build-out takes that to ~7%. 93% stays undeveloped.
Only 1,300 homes are needed, matching the waiting list	False	The waiting list only counts today's need. The plan must look 15 years ahead; 700 affordable homes are needed every year.
New development means car-dependent estates	Partly true	Wealden is rural and car use will remain high, but new developments must offer better walking, cycling and transport options than most existing communities.
Bring empty homes back into use instead	Not enough	Only 440 long-term empty homes in 2025/26. We're already working to reduce this, but it can't meet overall housing need.
Convert empty shops instead	Already happening	But there isn't much redundant commercial space, and we risk losing local jobs space too.
Build upwards, not outwards	We already aim to	We're increasing density where we can, but our towns and villages don't suit tall buildings, and most residents don't want to live in flats.
Better to let Wealden go into special measures	We don't think so	Local councillors should make these decisions, not the Planning Minister, who would impose more homes at lower standards.
The new unitary authority will just ignore the plan	False	Whatever happens with local government reorganisation, an adopted local plan becomes part of the statutory development plan and can't lawfully be ignored.
Support the plan, but remove sites like Owlsbury or Ashdown Business Park	Doesn't work	Removing them wouldn't protect them. We've pushed hard for safeguards on these sites, including a wildlife consultant, a contamination study, and policy NE14 requiring clean-up before development. Remove them from the plan, and government would simply allow them to be built anyway, with none of those protections.