

**STATEMENT BY ANTHONY GAJADHARSINGH
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TORIES OFFER LITTLE HOPE FOR CHALFONT ST PETER

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It seems to me that Cheryl Gillan didn't actually say anything other than the usual politico double speak at the recent Chalfont St Peter planning open meeting.

She said nothing to comfort the residents who have strong and legitimate concerns about the future of their village. I urge the residents of Chalfont St Peter to continue their campaign.

She did not say she objects to the major development, nor did she say she would do anything to help. Instead, she merely referred to Conservative policy to abolish housing and density targets, which, in fact, would offer no hope of reducing development in Chiltern District or Chalfont St Peter.

Here's why:

- ✂ The Tories are committed to increasing, not reducing, the development of new houses.
- ✂ Chiltern District Council has always encouraged the development of more houses than required by any plan or target, including the current one. The Council forecasts that it will continue to do so.
- ✂ Therefore, the abolition of housing targets would have no effect in Chiltern District, as the target is always exceeded and will be in the future.
- ✂ The reality is that Chiltern District Council wants to grant planning permission for more development, but finds it politically convenient to claim it is required to do so by the Labour government, when this is not the case.
- ✂ There is no government requirement for development to be permitted on people's gardens, in fact the government guidance is the reverse. Again, the Council has many times over decided that such development is acceptable, but finds it politically convenient to blame the Labour government, rather than take responsibility for its own decisions.
- Chiltern District Council is perfectly at liberty to permit development at low densities, in keeping with the character of the area. In fact the average density of new development in Chiltern is only 12.3 homes per hectare. Where the Council chooses to encourage higher densities (as it has done at Chalfont St Peter) that is its own decision, not a government requirement.

- The government introduced housing targets to increase the supply of new homes in places where too little was being provided. Chiltern is **not** one of those places. **The District Council has been consistent over many years in granting planning permission for more new housing than has been required by any plan or target, including the current one.**
- That is because the housing targets for Chiltern have always been set low, reflecting the quality of our countryside, villages and towns, which should be protected for their own sake. The Labour government has been a strong supporter of the green belt and enhancement of the Chilterns, a concern I wholeheartedly share.

It is time for the local Tories to start taking responsibility for their actions and stop blaming others.

I invite local constituents to contact me regarding any problems or issues that they would like me to assist with.

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Note to editors:

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Here's the evidence:

- ✂ From 1991 to 2001, an average of 164 homes were built in Chiltern each year, **109% of the then housing target** of 150 per annum, set by the Buckinghamshire County Council¹.
- ✂ From 2001 to 2006, an average of 165² homes were built each year, **a whopping 138% of the target of that time** of 120 per annum, again set by Buckinghamshire County Council.
- ✂ Since 2006, an average of 162³ homes have been built each year, **much more than the government target of 145**.
- ✂ The long-term trend is even more amazing, with an average of 234 homes built each year since 1976⁴.
- ✂ Chiltern District Council's latest statement is that over coming years it will continue to grant planning permission for **more housing than the government target: 121.4%**⁵ in fact.

All this delivery of lots of housing is very much in accordance with Conservative policy. What Mrs Gillan did not mention in Chalfont St Peter is that her party's policy is to **increase** housebuilding across England, nowhere, even Chiltern, excluded. And her party's policy will require **more** land for development.

Mrs Gillan's planning colleague Caroline Spelman recently pronounced:

*"We are ambitious for our planning system and many developers share our hunger to make it faster, more efficient and more accountable. We are proposing to make a series of changes that will meet all three of those objectives and, crucially, **deliver more new homes** ...*

*"**To secure more house building**, we are going to dismantle the regional tier of planning as part of a far broader streamlining of the system so that developers, communities and planning authorities all have clarity and certainty about how to kick-start development and regeneration. ...*

*"[Councils] will already have put forward proposals for the amount of residential development they are planning. These figures provide a good baseline, to which they can **add more** or amend the most controversial aspects as they see fit.*

*"History proves that under the Tories **more homes**, both social and market, are built than when others are in power. **I am confident that a future Conservative government will prove this is the case again.**"*

(emphasis added, Journal of the Royal Town Planning Institute, 13 November 2009)

¹ Source: Chiltern District Council, 2004-5 Chiltern Annual Monitoring Report, p119, http://www.chiltern.gov.uk/downloads/AMR_2005_Complete_with_cover_and_dividers_reduced_final.pdf

² Source: Chiltern District Council, Table H1 of 2005-6 Chiltern Annual Monitoring Report, http://www.chiltern.gov.uk/downloads/14_Housing_18-01-2007.pdf

³ Source: Chiltern District Council, Table H1 of 2008-9 Chiltern Annual Monitoring Report, http://www.chiltern.gov.uk/downloads/9_Housing_2008-09_Complete.pdf

⁴ Source: Chiltern District Council, Table E1

Cumulative Totals Of New Dwellings Completed Between 1/4/1976 and 31/3/2006, http://www.chiltern.gov.uk/downloads/Table_E1-1-4-06_Housing.pdf

⁵ Source: Chiltern District Council, 2008-9 Annual Monitoring Report, paragraph 9.45, http://www.chiltern.gov.uk/downloads/9_Housing_2008-09_Complete.pdf

Building on gardens

Turning to the land upon which Chiltern District Council chooses to allow new development. By the Council's own admission, many new houses have been built on garden land. The Council likes to blame the government for this, but in fact it is matter for local choice not government dictat. The oft-misquoted government planning policy statement actually says:

*“When identifying previously-developed land for housing development, Local Planning Authorities and Regional Planning Bodies will, in particular, need to consider sustainability issues as some sites will not necessarily be suitable for housing. **There is no presumption that land that is previously-developed is necessarily suitable for housing development nor that the whole of the curtilage should be developed.**”*

(emphasis added, Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3) Housing, 2006, paragraph 41)

The government's chief planning officer recently wrote to all councils (19 January 2010) to emphasise that the government does not encourage inappropriate development on gardens. He said:

*“The main focus of the Government's position therefore is that local authorities are best placed to develop policies and take decisions on the most suitable locations for housing and they can, if appropriate, **resist development on existing gardens.** Indeed, the report by Kingston University found that of the applications looked at in the review, **the Planning Inspectorate supported four out of the five decisions made by local authorities in such circumstances.** This was particularly true when these where supported by having local policies in place.”*

(emphasis added)

Density

Finally, in relation to density, there is no government requirement or pressure for high density development. It is up to Chiltern District Council to decide and justify the density of development that it permits, which the government says is a matter for local policy in the light of the character of each place.

In fact, Chiltern District Council has done exactly that, and the average density of new housing is only 12.3 dwellings per hectare⁶. Where the Council chooses to encourage higher densities (as has done at Chalfont St Peter) that is its own decision, not a government requirement.

⁶ Source: Chiltern District Council, 2008-9 Annual Monitoring Report, paragraph 9.71, http://www.chiltern.gov.uk/downloads/9_Housing_2008-09_Complete.pdf