



[Vicky Radtke](#) · 28 April at 23:54 ·

The world has changed so much over the past two years and how we plan for the future of society is of critical importance. How land is used is of vital consideration and planning and housing policy must reflect the current and future situation, considering the implications of the pandemic, the Russian war on Ukraine and the climate crisis. This is a worldwide, nationwide, and local issue and planning policy at District level must swiftly react to the unprecedented circumstances that we all now face.

Mass house building across the district is not to meet actual housing need in the area, everyone knows that. It is both political and to meet huge housing allocations (algorithmically calculated back in 2014 when the world was a vastly different place) to support *economic* growth which feeds into the pockets of the few, namely landowners, big developers and second homeowners. This leaves so many people still unable to afford their own homes, especially with a potential recession on the horizon.

We do need to grow but we need to grow food now, not housing. We need housing of course, of the right type, at the right cost and in the right numbers for actual need. The war in Ukraine has shown the world how fragile our food systems are, now that the 'breadbasket of the world' can no longer supply the food commodities we all took for granted just a couple of months ago.

The climate crisis is disrupting food growing areas the world over with unpredictable weather wreaking havoc with floods, droughts and wildfires destroying crops. This is going to intensify, and it will impact us all.

Unprotected farmland is viewed as a commodity by the house building industry – easy to colonise and make vast profits from and it is an economic win-win for all those with fingers in the pie. However, once it is colonised and concreted over, it can never be regained.

Grasslands store 34% of the world's land carbon which makes them an immensely powerful carbon sink. 90% of carbon is held in the complex structure of undisturbed soil, with 10% in vegetation which captures the CO₂ in the atmosphere for photosynthesis. *The construction industry accounts for 38% of CO₂ emissions.* Existing grasslands, woodlands, hedgerows, and floodplains should be saved wherever possible as they are sequestering enormous quantities of CO₂ at no cost without expensive technological intervention. When destroyed for whatever reason this process goes into *reverse* and massive amounts of CO₂ are emitted.

A progressive District Council must swivel in its approach to housing allocation by taking all these factors into account in the final stages of developing its Local Plan. Wealden District Council is challenging housing numbers but not necessarily housing type. It could imagine a better and more secure future for its residents by allocating housing which protects local food security in uncertain times. Over 70% of the world's food is grown on smallholdings, homesteads and in gardens. Local food production reduces food miles and carbon footprint.

Wealden District Council could have an active policy of building affordable housing around community allotments, thus promoting food security (and the added benefit of community cohesion) for those people who are likely to suffer food insecurity in current times. It could allocate zones for a dispersity of regenerative smallholdings and single acre homesteads which would increase biodiversity and pepper the necessary built landscape far more attractively and beneficially for the environment. New smallholdings and homesteads are virtually non-existent and those such as just three gained by the Ecological Land Co-Operative in Arlington were difficult to obtain planning permission for yet have been enormously successful in their local business ventures in the few years that they have been running.

The Leader of the Council is changing. Let us hope that whomever the new Leader may choose as the Planning Portfolio Holder will be someone whom they can work wisely with to implement an imaginative and future-proofed plan for housing in the district.