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Thank you for your letter of 21 September about housing provision. As I said in my Statement on 14 September, the existing approach to calculating housing need is complex and lacks transparency, resulting in unnecessary preparation time and cost. It is also hard for people to understand. We are therefore proposing a new, simpler standard approach. The consultation, *Planning for the right homes in the right places*, will run until 9 November 2017:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-right-homes-in-the-right-places-consultation-proposals>.

We would value your, and your constituents', comments.

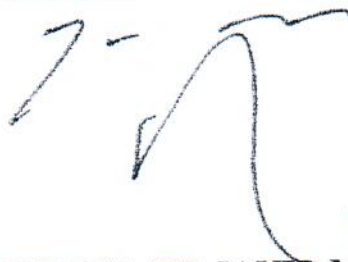
Alongside this consultation we published a table, applying the new method to housing need in each local authority area. For Epsom and Ewell, the estimated need is 579 dwellings a year; slightly up on the current estimate of 418 dwellings a year. I must emphasise that our proposals do not amount to a local housing target. Understanding housing need is the starting point in the Plan-making process, not the end. Local authorities then need to determine whether there are environmental designations or other physical or policy constraints (such as Green Belt) which prevent them meeting this housing need.

I do note your concern about the Green Belt. However, it is for each local authority, working with the community, to assess local housing need over the lifetime of the Local Plan, and to submit any new Plan policy based on that assessment, together with the supporting evidence, for examination by a planning inspector. Central government does not tell local authorities how many houses to build or where to put them. It is for the

local authority to decide where necessary development should go, and how particular land should be used. Local authorities also need to engage with other authorities, under the Duty to Cooperate, to determine how needs that cannot be accommodated locally will be redistributed over a wider area. Our latest consultation contains proposals to further strengthen co-operation between authorities when assessing housing need.

This Government is retaining strong protections for Green Belt land. Only in exceptional circumstances may a local authority alter a Green Belt boundary. Earlier this year the Housing White Paper, *Fixing our broken housing market*, underlined our commitment to Green Belt, and proposed for consultation measures to clarify the situation where release of Green Belt land is proposed. We have been carefully considering the responses to that consultation. We will announce our conclusions on both consultations in due course.

I do hope you find this information useful.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Sajid Javid', written over a horizontal line.

RT HON SAJID JAVID MP