

I held my debate on the role of developers, housebuilders and management companies at the beginning of January. You can watch it on my Facebook page, but I used as many constituency examples as I could of the low-quality of some homes; their environmental impact; the lack of affordable homes; the role of management companies, who charge large fees for very little work; and the overall broken process by which the houses come into being, including the failure to provide the infrastructure that is always promised.

My recommendations included ensuring a higher building standard for the homes; 'use it or lose it' planning permission; making builders build to the latest environmental standards, not the ones that existed when they got planning permission (often several years before); a tougher regime for management companies that prevents them hiking their fees and treating home-owners the way they do; and for the infrastructure to support new homes to go in first, as people no longer believe it will follow afterwards.

As I said, my campaigns for better infrastructure – including Grove Station to be reopened, improvements to the A420 and A34 and much better medical facilities for the constituency – are the least we should see given the number of houses we've had. There was quite a bit of cross-party support for what I said, and it is something I will return to regularly.

Making predictions about Covid is a mug's game but, at the time of writing, we do seem in a much better place to what we were last year. I am glad that people could, in general, have a better Christmas and New Year than they did the year before. I am particularly pleased our schools have remained open for all children (most were open for at least vulnerable children throughout the pandemic) as it is the best place for them to learn.

Regular readers will know I am the lead parliamentary sponsor of the Local Electricity Bill, which would enable local communities to buy their energy from local, renewable sources. At the moment a community operation generating renewable energy would have to pay in the region of £1 million set-up costs to access the grid and agree to supply the whole country, rather than just, for example, their local village. This year, I'll be chairing a new All Party Parliamentary Group of MPs and Lords to try and help push this forward.

I know many of you are continuing to have problems with your post. I am in regular contact with Royal Mail about this, which is something I held a debate on in Parliament in June 2021 and which I have raised multiple times. As ever, the Royal Mail staff are working hard but something is still not working correctly. I'll continue to keep on the case of Royal Mail HQ.

As ever, if I can help with anything do get in touch via david.johnston.mp@parliament.uk