

The deadline for me to submit this column is before the Chancellor has given his Budget statement to Parliament so while I cannot write in length about what he has said I thought I would comment instead on some of the early things we know from the news headlines.

In the days before the Budget there has been much coverage of the Chancellor's intention to boost housing supply and demand, with expected changes in the Budget to housebuilding targets, planning laws, and stamp duty. This is all very well intentioned and I, and many of my constituents, accept that there is a need to increase supply given our increasing population but also the currently thwarted ability of young adults to get on the housing ladder. My concern however is that development cannot happen in isolation of improved infrastructure.

Maidstone and Malling are being asked to increase the number of dwellings they are being asked to build each year and yet neither council is being offered additional funding to build the infrastructure to support these developments. At the Malling end of my constituency we have a hospital creaking at the seams, crowded schools, doctor surgeries, waiting lists for NHS dentists that reach into the thousands and an overburdened road network that can barely cope with the levels of traffic now. This is a Malling edition column but I could write the same for the Chatham end of my constituency too.

I understand why our area is popular to live and work in. I love where we live and all around it. I am not anti-housebuilding. I am not a NIMBY. And nor are my constituents. But if we must build, let's do it on brownfield and let's do it with the infrastructure put in place first and not as an afterthought when it is often too late. Doesn't seem like too much of an ask to me.