



Louise St John Howe
Programme Officer
North Herts Emerging Local Plan Examination
PO Services
PO Box 10965,
Sudbury,
Suffolk
CO10 3BF

NHDC Emerging Local Plan Consultation on Main Modifications 2019 – Objections/Comments

Representation by: Save Our Green Belt

NAME: Mr Adrian Hawkins - Chairman

EMAIL: info@save-our-green-belt.org

15th September 2020

Dear Louise,

Further to the request made by the Planning Inspector for responses to his recent MIQ's, we would be very grateful if you could forward on this letter to the Inspector for him to consider in due course.

This correspondence addresses the matters stated below and is additional to our submission of the 27th January 2020

Document ED194 Matter 21

The SOGB group has, for some time, queried the Housing numbers proposed by the NHDC in their 2014 Local Plan.

Today the ONS figures of 6,400 are ranged against the 2014 Local Plan number of 13,800. The "independent" justification supplied by NHDC is proven to be unjustified and mathematically incorrect and clearly a desperate attempt to support the initial, incorrect NHDC Housing projections, to help justify the consumption of huge swathes of protected Green Belt.

The attached letter from Stevenage Member of Parliament, Stephen McPartland dated January 2015 can also be seen at the link below and clearly states that the NHDC were aware that a Housing figure of 7,000 was a "preferred" option. This information would have been shared with a local Conservative MP by the NHDC which was at the time, a Conservative Council. The "preferred" figure of 7,000 Homes remarkably fits closely with the accurate data now provided by the ONS. These details are in the public domain and will be relied upon by the Public in deciding the viability of the NHDC Local plan.

<https://www.stephen-mcpartland.com/local-news/721-stephen-mcpartland-mp-calls-for-a-new-garden-city-to-be-built-to-solve-housing-needs>

As stated by the NPPF, Local housing needs should be kept up to date and that assessment applies in both directions. The attached information however shows that the original "preferred" figure of 7,000 Homes has always been accurate.

The NHDC has already agreed that a "meaningful" change is now necessary from a Planning perspective and this should be met with a "meaningful" reduction in the number of Homes required.

We will be inspecting in fine detail, whether homes already built, up to the date of the EiP, will be removed from the plan in order that the wrong number originally selected by the NHDC in 2014 is now substantiated.

NHDC Councillors have publicly stated their dissatisfaction with their Local Plan and that they were being forced to accept unreasonably high numbers imposed upon them by Government, yet when the Office of National Statistics publish much lower numbers, strangely they remain steadfast in defending their incorrect higher number of homes.

The same Councillors have also publicly stated that they will rely on the decision of the Local Plan Inspector in reaching the correct decision on this Local Plan. This places the final decision to accept a wholly unacceptable Local Plan that has been grossly overstated on the Planning Inspectorate, whom are also being criticised for taking too much time to conclude their deliberations of a Plan that is not fit for purpose.

Since this Plan has been submitted, the Conservative Leader of the Council has lost her seat and the Chief Executive has accepted redundancy. <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/appointment-managing-director> There has also been further developments within the same area of the safeguarded land west of Stevenage set out at the link below. <https://publicaccess.stevenage.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?keyVal=PY16B4PH03Z00&activeTab=summary>

There is absolutely no conclusive proof submitted by the NHDC that justifies building the number of homes proposed in 2014 and certainly no justification to consume the volume of protected Green Belt requested.

Document ED194 Matter 22 – Land for Housing

This matter is referred to by our Barrister Mr. Andrew Parkinson in a separate submission made by our Solicitor Richard Buxton.

Document ED194 Matter 29 – Use Classes Order

This aspect is recognised as a “meaningful” amendment to Planning regulations in response to the changes taking place in the Retail sector which have sadly been hastened by the Covid 19 Pandemic. This provides many Local Authorities who in many cases own properties in these areas, the opportunity to develop properties for residential use which in turn will provide many sustainable homes in brownfield spaces. Local Authorities are required to maintain a Brownfield register and we urge the Planning Inspector to request an audit of these and identify the number of homes that will likely arise from developing these spaces and remove this number from their determination to reduce the Green Belt.

Given the current Pandemic, it is unlikely that the release of any Green Belt will be tolerated by both our Government and the Residents of North Herts and this plan will continue to be scrutinized, should the NHDC continue to impose such unrealistic Housing numbers on the residents of North Herts.

We are relying on the Inspectors continued scrutiny to ensure that this inadequate plan has a restricted impact upon much of the Green Belt and that the decision to abandon this plan starts with the incomprehensible and unjustified housing numbers.

Yours Sincerely,

Adrian Hawkins
Chairman - Save Our Green Belt Group
info@save-our-green-belt.org