

RESPONSE TO UPDATED SCHEDULE FURTHER MATTERS, ISSUES AND QUESTIONS AUGUST 2020  
NHDC ED194

CHERYL NORGAN (PREVIOUSLY PEERS)

**MATTER 29**

My comment to the Inspector on this matter is that I have repeatedly sent emails to the Planning Staff at NHDC – in February 2020/March 2020 in an attempt to obtain information relating to exactly how many empty residential properties there are in North Hertfordshire and how many empty commercial properties there are. I believe that because of the effects of Covid-19 there are likely to be many empty commercial buildings becoming vacant as businesses go bust and people indulge in on line shopping rather than visiting retail in person. Covid-19 has shunted retail much further into the future. Cllr Levett was of the belief that to attract more people, retailing needed to be improved and this is now not the case at all. Retailers are going bust and the future economic situation is bleak on the retail front.

Planning staff refused to answer any of my emails. I had to not only ask my Local Councillor for his help, but also put in a FOI request. I find it difficult to comprehend why Planning staff at NHDC do not respond to polite emails from the public requesting simple information, other than that they have some ulterior motive in non-disclosure of what is surely public information. They expect people to take part in a planning process, eg Local Plan hearings, but refuse to help them to do that by giving information.

NHDC Planners have attended a meeting with CPRE experts from London branch of CPRE and Councillors in attendance on the subject of their insistence on building only very low density developments. There would not be a need to build on so many Green Belt sites if NHDC were more sensible in their approach to density. The Planners from NHDC have deliberately ignored the subject of even a minor increase in density or more imaginative methods of building – eg using underground car parks.

There seem to me to be many empty sites in Luton which could accommodate development/change of use. See attachments shown by Ms Cottier.