

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council Cabinet
c/o Councillor Tony Kingsbury
Leader of the Council
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Date: 24/02/2022

Rt Hon Stuart Andrew MP

stuart.andrew@communities.gov.uk

Dear Minister,

Cc: Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP

Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan

We are writing to you to seek your support to enable us to achieve a sound local plan.

We wrote a letter to the Secretary of State on 8th October 2021 and received a response from the previous Housing Minister on 18th November. We attach the letters rather than repeat the information here.

Subsequently on 2nd February 2022, our Council decided on sites to allow development of 13,279 dwellings over the full planning period based on our earlier decision in November 2020. The inspector has responded. We also attach these letters.

Repeating what has already been said, we are still between a rock and a hard place. We believe it would be extremely irresponsible to risk an unsound plan, or to try and start again. At the same time, if a sound plan involves a target based on 15,200 homes even based on the Inspector's suggested number over a 10-year period, we would be driving it through against wishes of much of the community, and will be sacrificing Green Belt, including some assessed as High Harm, to achieve it.

We note several references in the Leveling Up White Paper to the Green Belt, green spaces and empowering local leaders. For example, on page 225 it states, as I am sure you are aware, "These attractive new communities, made possible by the UK Government's investment, and the rebalancing of housing and transport investment, will reduce pressure on housing and on greenfield

and Green Belt sites in overheated areas of London and the South East.” The Inspector doesn’t seem to acknowledge the change of emphasis.

We have also heard previously that it is up to local authorities to decide on housing numbers and the best areas for development and it is clear that whilst we can take that into consideration the inspector is unwilling to do so.

Given the impossible situation in which we now find yourselves, and before we feel compelled to withdraw our plan, we would like to ask for the opportunity to meet with you along with our MP, Grant Shapps, to discuss the difficult position we are faced with. We know he too shares these concerns.

We look forward to your response and hope that a convenient time can be found in the coming days as the inspector has set a deadline for a response from our Council by 21st March.

Yours Sincerely,

Councillor Tony Kingsbury
Leader of the Council

Councillor Duncan Bell
Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member,
Resources

Councillor Stephen Boulton
Executive Member, Environment, Planning, Estates
and Development

Councillor Nick Pace
Executive Member, Governance and Public Health

Councillor Bernard Sarson
Executive Member, Leisure and Community Safety

Councillor Fiona Thomson
Executive Member, Housing and Climate Change