Dear Andrew

Thank you for your letter on behalf of the joint Parishes Committee regarding the proposal for the SWDP Worcester Parkway Garden Town.

Your letter makes some valid and interesting points. However, as I have explained to a number of the Parish Councils in the past, whilst I take an interest in local planning matters and decisions, as an MP, I (quite rightly) have no authority over local planning decisions and I must respect the authority of Wychavon District Council on all local planning matters – so long as they follow appropriate processes and laws.

I would therefore encourage you and your residents to contact your local District Councillors, who will be able to represent you and the Parishes Committee at the council planning committee meetings. Their contact details can be found on the Wychavon District Council website:

https://www.wychavon.gov.uk/about-wychavon-district-council/councillors-democracy

However on a general note, I completely agree about the importance of protecting Green Belt land here in Mid Worcestershire and across the country. The Green Belt is vital in preventing urban sprawl and stopping encroachment on our beautiful countryside.

I am therefore glad that, in his address to the 2021 Conservative Party Conference, the Prime Minister reiterated the Government's position that homes should not be built on green fields wherever possible. Instead, there should be a focus on boosting construction on brownfield sites. Focusing on brownfield land enables us to plan for enough homes in a way that maximises the use of existing infrastructure and helps to protect our countryside for future generations to come. As such, the National Planning Policy Framework strongly encourages regeneration and the reuse of brownfield sites, especially for development to meet housing need and to regenerate our high streets and town centres. I fully support this approach and I believe that Local Plans should support opportunities to remediate contaminated land or identify underused sites as the first priority.

To this end, I welcome that significant financial assistance is available for the take-up of brownfield sites and for the necessary infrastructure. Most recently, it was encouraging to see the 2021 Spending Review invest an extra £1.8 billion to bring 1,500 hectares of brownfield land into use, which will help to unlock 160,000 homes.

The manifesto upon which I stood committed to not only protecting the Green Belt and the countryside, but to enhancing it for future generations. That is why national planning policy delivers strict protections for the Green Belt, along with strong safeguards against boundary changes and development. It is worth noting that it is for local authorities to determine the distribution and density of development across their areas, and the designation of land as Green Belt.

I am aware that the Council have responded to the Parishes Committee back in March and I have been sent the following attachment. I am also told that they have had to delay the formal publication of the Plan – due to be considered by the three South Worcestershire Councils in June 2022 because one of the key documents was not sufficiently robust and has had to be revisited. Apparently when they do consult it will be over a period of six weeks though

because of the democratic process, the documents will be available before this giving people longer to view the proposals.

I would recommend that your group continue to meet with Wychavon District Council to discuss your concerns and participate in the consultation when it takes place so that you can request a seat at the examination.

Finally, I thought you may be interested in a recent letter I received from Michael Gove MP, about the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill.

Thank you again for writing to me.

Kind regards

Nigel

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