

Gareth Johnson
Member of Parliament for Dartford

HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

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GJ/SB/4949/

Dear

Thank you for your further letter regarding the Sevenoaks Draft Local Plan. I hope the information below will provide an overview of relevant central government policy.

The National Planning Policy Framework, provides a comprehensive approach for planners, developers, and councils.

The new Framework is clear local plans should make as much use as possible of brownfield land, as well as under-utilised land and buildings.

A Written Ministerial Statement issued on 24th July clarified the current approach that requires local planning authorities to meet their housing targets. There was no Parliamentary Bill passed in relation to this announcement that would have changed the current law.

These proposals build on other steps taken to reform planning, including a £25 million Planning Delivery Fund to help speed up planning decisions and encouraging local authorities to publish brownfield registers.

Sevenoaks District Council published their Brownfield Land Register in December 2017 and it can be accessed from the link below;

https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/downloads/file/1042/brownfield_land_register_-_december_2017

Specifically, in relation to the Green Belt, the revised National Planning Policy Framework gives further clarification to the existing strong protections for the Green Belt.

Whilst the former Framework stipulated Green Belt boundaries could only be altered by local authorities in "exceptional circumstances", it failed to define what these exceptional circumstances might be. The revised Framework sets out steps that a local planning authority

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must take before concluding such exceptional circumstances exist, including the consideration of suitable brownfield sites. The revised Framework allows brownfield land in the Green Belt to be used for development, provided that this does not impact the openness of the Green Belt.

As you identify, there have been reports in the media of certain circumstances in which Councils could lose some of their powers in relation to planning.

Firstly. In November 2017, the Government confirmed that it would commence the consideration of intervention in 15 local authorities where there has been a failure to produce a local plan. These local authorities were confirmed in a Written Ministerial Statement to be; Basildon, Brentwood, Bolsover, Calderdale, Castle Point, Eastleigh, Liverpool, Mansfield, North East Derbyshire, Northumberland, Runnymede, St Albans, Thanet, Wirral and York.

Since November, four of these authorities have since produced a plan while progress has been made with the remaining eleven: Castle Point; Thanet; Wirral; Northumberland; Basildon; Bolsover; Brentwood; Calderdale; Eastleigh; Mansfield; St Albans.

In three of these authorities, the Government has confirmed a team of experts will be sent in to assess whether the government needs to take over the process of producing the local plan.

In addition, the new National Planning Policy Framework, includes a new housing delivery test. The Housing Delivery Test (HDT) will be an annual measurement of housing delivery performance to be made by local authorities responsible for plan-making. The HDT will be a percentage measurement of the total net homes delivered over a three year period divided by the total number of homes required over a three year period.

The document makes clear that planning permission should only be approved where development accords with the local plan. There are circumstances under which a local plan can be deemed to be out of date, such as where local authorities have fallen below a specified percentage of their house-building target. I understand that were this to occur, planning applications could be considered without reference to the local plan. I am seeking farther clarification on this point.

As far as the Sevenoaks Draft Local Plan is concerned, the new NPPF, reiterates the importance of protecting the Green Belt and the necessity to develop Brownfield sites. I will not be amending my representations to Sevenoaks District Council in light of this document as I remain of the view that exceptional circumstances do not exist to allow the inclusion of these sites in the Local Plan.

I remain completely opposed to the proposed developments in Hartley. There needs to be some community enhancement before it can be deemed that ' exceptional circumstances' exist to allow these areas of land to be

built on. I believe the response by the village to these proposals illustrates that no such enhancement exists.

Thank you for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Gareth Johnson