

STUART ANDREW MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Our Ref: SA/PS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP  
Secretary of State  
Department for Communities & Local Government  
Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
LONDON  
SW1E 5DU

3 September 2014

Dear Eric

I am writing to you today regarding the Leeds Core Strategy, which you will be aware is currently being developed by Leeds City Council.

As I am sure you can appreciate, the development of this strategy is of huge importance to my constituency and the whole of Leeds, meaning it is therefore vital for the area that it does not have any unintended negative repercussions. I am, however, afraid that myself and many other interested parties have grave concerns about the housing target of 70,000 as set out in the strategy, as it is neither achievable nor justified by the evidence.

Leeds City Council recently admitted to using flawed statistics to set the housing figure after the release of the ONS 2012-based population projections in May, which show an estimated population growth of 81,800 from 2012 to 2028, compared to the 2008 based estimate of 144,500 for the same period. These projections confirm that the Leeds population has been misestimated in the past and this admission of a mistake therefore provides sufficient evidence for the housing target to be lowered. This in on top of the fact that the Leeds target is significantly higher than anywhere and would require a rate of delivery sustained over a 16 year period that far exceeds anything previously achieved.

The NPPF requires that a housing target be justified and achievable and, in light of this information, it is very apparent that the target in the Leeds Core Strategy needs to be substantially reduced. If this does not happen, then there are a number of consequences I fear will have a devastating impact upon Leeds.

The initial consequence of the unrealistic target will be the release of too much green belt land, which will then lead to less sustainable patterns of development, whilst impacting on the natural environment, this all being contrary to the Government's core planning principles.

P.T.O.

Member of Parliament for Pudsey

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This in turn could have a significant impact upon regeneration, as one of the purposes of the green belt is to assist urban regeneration.

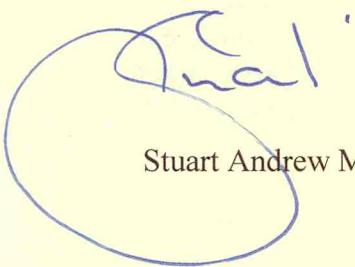
I firmly believe our landscape is a national treasure and that people in positions like ours have an enormous responsibility to ensure it remains one. As such, whilst I accept that some green belt land will be needed to accommodate growth, this should only be used when it is absolutely necessary. Unless it can be shown that the housing targets have an accurate foundation and that the rates of growth predicted are achievable, then the circumstances necessary to prevent damaging and unsuitable development will not exist; this is the situation we are currently in with the Leeds Core Strategy.

You will be aware that Section 6 of the 'Planning Inspectorate Guidance: Examining Local Plans Procedural Practice - The Planning Inspectorate December 2013 (3rd Edition v.1)' refers to the Fact Check Report for the Local Planning Authority and, at 6.2, states that the report will be copied to your Department. The guidance goes on to explain that Section 21 of the Localism Act provides the Secretary of State with powers of intervention before a Plan is adopted by a Local Planning Authority.

As Leeds City Council has consistently refused to revise the housing target downwards, even in the face of overwhelming evidence that it is far too high, I believe that this clause in the guidance is now the only means left of protecting Leeds from the devastating and long-lasting consequences the target will undoubtedly bring. Indeed, I would urge you to review this figure under Section 21 of the Act, so that it can be reduced before Leeds City Council adopts the plan and many of the precious greenspaces throughout Leeds are lost because of the developers need to meet a five year land supply based on an unachievable target.

I am sure you will appreciate the urgency of this situation and I therefore hope you are able to act on this information and review the Leeds housing target before the plan is adopted.

Kind regards



Stuart Andrew MP