



26 January 2021

Rt. Hon Sir Oliver Heald QC  
Member of Parliament for North East  
Hertfordshire

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By Email only

Dear Sir Oliver,

### **Housing Delivery in North Hertfordshire**

Thank-you for your recent correspondence regarding the latest *Housing Delivery Test* results released by the Government for North Hertfordshire and your meeting with the Housing Minister, Christopher Pincher.

The latest figures for our District say that we have delivered less than half the number of homes required, making North Hertfordshire, on paper, one of the worst performing authorities in the country. We have also received the Housing Minister's letter on this matter.

However, we consider the latest results do not paint a full or fair picture of the situation in North Hertfordshire. Following the release of the previous *Housing Delivery Test* (HDT) figures (published February 2020), we produced an Action Plan in line with Government requirements. That was adopted and published in June 2020 and can be viewed [on the Council's website](#).

Our Action Plan identifies that the biggest single step we can take to improve our 'performance' under the HDT is to complete the examination of the Local Plan and adopt it. As you will be aware, our Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State (SoS) for examination in June 2017 and it presently remains with his appointed Inspector more than three and a half years later.

Absent an up-to-date Plan - which sets an agreed housing requirement for the District (which, in turn would form the basis of the HDT calculation) and identifies the sites to meet it – we cannot substantively improve upon our HDT result.

We have permitted a number of schemes, including several sites around Royston, in advance of the Plan in order to maintain and boost housing supply as best we can. However, you will also be aware our Plan proposes the release of a number of sites from the Green Belt to meet North Hertfordshire's identified housing needs in full as well as making a positive contribution towards unmet housing need from neighbouring Luton. These require a clear indication they have the backing of the SoS' Inspector before we can allow schemes to proceed. This includes proposed sites in your constituency around Letchworth Garden City and Baldock.

Resumed Local Plan hearings were held in November / December 2020 (delayed from March 2020 by the current pandemic). Following these, the Inspector undertook to alert us to any substantive concerns with our proposals by the end of January. Beyond that point – and subject to no significant issues being raised - we would hope to proceed through the final stages of examination and consultation this year.

Completion of our examination and adoption of our Local Plan would result in an immediate and significant improvement of our 'performance' under the *Housing Delivery Test*. It would also help better protect the Council against hostile applications for inappropriate development which can be harder to resist in our current situation.

Should our Local Plan receive the backing of his Inspector following extensive scrutiny over a number of years, we would therefore strongly urge the Housing Minister to resist any requests to further delay its implementation through call-in or any other action.

We continue to work towards the other measures in the Action Plan which aim to further improve our internal resources and processes so that we can deliver housing in a timely manner without compromising on quality or the provision of essential supporting infrastructure.

If you or the Housing Minister would like to discuss any of the matters in this letter in further detail, please contact my officers using the details provided.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Clark', written in a cursive style.

Cllr Paul Clark  
Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Planning & Transport