



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Rt Hon. Robert Jenrick MP  
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government  
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government  
2 Marsham St  
London, SW1P 4JA

Monday 14 October 2019

Dear Robert,

You recently wrote to South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) regarding the possibility that the Council would withdraw its draft Local Plan, and in the letter you suggested that your department could take over the plan from the local authority, silencing democratically elected councillors.

As my constituents could be directly affected by decisions made about the SODC Local Plan, I am writing to ask that you rethink your approach to this issue, which is being seen as very heavy handed. Your letter says you want to work constructively, yet your actions so far don't seem to match these words.

I simply ask that you work in partnership with South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse District Councils, rather than dictating to them.

In May's local elections, the political makeup of those district councils changed, following an election campaign in which the debate about their Local Plans was at the forefront. The new administrations have a clear mandate to reflect the wishes of their residents.

As a result, SODC's cabinet wish to withdraw their Local Plan, and begin the process of developing a new plan for delivery within three years. This is partly to take account of more up-to-date housing assessments produced by your department in 2017. These figures are radically different to the out-of-date numbers the previous draft plan was based on.

Furthermore—and this is critical—I understand that the SODC leadership have clearly indicated that they will deliver the required level of housing in and around Didcot, which forms part of the County Council's successful Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) bid to central government. It is just some of the specific sites that they may wish to review.

Given that both district councils, the County Council and your department all appear to want the Didcot HIF bid to go ahead, I cannot understand why you are not getting around the table to discuss a pragmatic way forward.



I have worried for some time that the Oxfordshire Growth Deal is too inflexible to take account of local public opinion. The current argument over the SODC Local Plan has done nothing to reduce my concern. However, it is within your gift to ensure both the HIF and Growth Deals go ahead, albeit perhaps in a modified form. These deals will deliver critical infrastructure across Oxfordshire, a county already over-delivering on both housing and growth compared to surrounding areas.

I further worry that this interference represents a change in policy from the Government. The Department and previous ministers are quoted as saying that undue interference from central government is not desirable. The homepage of your department's website states: "The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's [...] job is to create great places to live and work, and to give more power to local people to shape what happens in their area." Do you think that the actions the Department has taken in this case are compatible with this mission statement?

I hope you will agree with me that considered discussion, and compromise, is everyone's preferred option, and that you will seek to work with the district council leaders to find a positive way forward.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Layla Moran".

Layla Moran MP

Member of Parliament for Oxford West and Abingdon

CC: Cllr Sue Cooper, Leader of South Oxfordshire District Council

CC: Cllr Emily Smith, Leader of Vale of White Horse District Council

CC: Cllr Barry Wood, Leader of Cherwell District Council

CC: Cllr James Mills, Leader of West Oxfordshire District Council

CC: Cllr Susan Brown, Leader of Oxford City Council

CC: Cllr Ian Hudspeth, Leader of Oxfordshire County Council