

Councils come together to oppose housing plan

Politicians from 13 parishes sign letter against development sites

By Michael Havis

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AN open letter opposing plans that could see thousands of homes built on green belt land has been signed by 13 parish councils.

The letter to Councillor Lynda Needham, leader of North Herts District Council (NHDC), takes issue with a document outlining preferred sites for future development around the area.

Over two pages, the letter raises concerns about the council's method of deducing housing need and argues that the "exceptional" circumstances needed to build in the green belt have not been proved.

Adequacy

It also questions the adequacy of the plan, saying the selection of sites was "opportunistically based" on willing landowners rather than long-term sustainable development.

Citing evidence from the University of Hertfordshire, the letter argues for a new garden city to fulfil housing need – a scheme endorsed by MPs Oliver Heald, Peter Lilley and Stephen McPartland.

The parish councils of Barkway,



UNITED: Parish council representatives and countryside campaigners have united against the plan

Bygrave, Codicote, Graveley, Kimpton, Knebworth, Langley, Newnham and Caldecote, Offley, Pirton, Sandon, Weston and Wymondley have signed the letter.

Weston Parish Council member Alistair Schofield said: "This development plan purports to be the result of a strategic review of the housing needs of North Hertfordshire.

"Yet NHDC have failed to explain how they came to the conclusion that the district requires a 26 per cent increase in housing.

"They have not explained how our already-congested infrastruc-



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ture will cope with such a large increase or why 60 per cent of those additional houses have to be built on green belt land.

"This is a really poor piece of work – the population of North Hertfordshire deserve much better."

Councillor Needham said: "We are absolutely confident that we have followed the correct process when preparing the draft local plan.

Support

"We understand that not all residents support the preferred options, as new housing development is always a sensitive issue.

"Following the recent period of public consultation we will now undertake a detailed review of the comments before presenting the next draft later this year.

"I will be sending a detailed response separately to Mr Schofield."