



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

**Formal response to consultation on  
North Hertfordshire District Council Local Plan 2011-2031**

I am disappointed by the draft Local Plan that has been produced by North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) and do not believe it is positively prepared, justified, effective or consistent with national policy, especially with regard to the sites in Knebworth, Codicote and north of Stevenage.

Why has NHDC not considered creating a new Garden City? NHDC is headquartered in Letchworth Garden City, which was the first in the world. The draft Local Plan takes no account of the need for highways, social and affordable housing, education, health and potential social and leisure infrastructure that will be required by this amount of housing in each community. A new Garden City located in NHDC could resolve all these issues and create a wonderful place to live, if 14,200 homes are really required.

Adding new developments of hundreds of homes on the edges of villages, such as Knebworth and Codicote, is hugely damaging due to the immense strain on public services in the Villages. The small Primary Schools, for example, that serve these communities would be expected to cope. Yet they cannot cope at the moment, as evidenced by the annual complaints I get from local parents that their children cannot get a place at the local school.

The proposals for 1,000 homes North of Stevenage state they are dependent on Stevenage Borough Council building on what is locally known as Forster Country. It is the last remaining farmland within the Borough of Stevenage and was home to E.M. Forster and the inspiration for Howard's End (1910). Stevenage Borough Council have stated this land is not market tested for housing and more suitable for employment. It is unlikely to be viably developed, so this area should also be removed from the NHDC draft Local Plan.

The National Planning Policy Framework states that Local Plans must be supported by a local evidence base. For housing, this means it must plan to meet objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing and identify a five year supply of specific deliverable sites.

The plan encompasses a twenty year period instead of only five and has identified a variety of sites to hit an arbitrary housing target that NHDC is not able to justify. On the 25<sup>th</sup> October 2013, I submitted a Freedom of Information (FOI) request to NHDC, challenging the constant change in housing numbers required and seeking the evidence that supported these changes. The text of the FOI is included at the end of this submission.

After a 2 month wait, my FOI request was refused and no justification for the arbitrary housing numbers were given. Several weeks of negotiations then followed and some information was released, but nothing that could explain the arbitrary housing numbers and constant changes in totals. In fact the totals have changed again and the draft Local Plan is for 14,200 homes.