



Mr Mike Fox BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI  
c/o Local Plan Programme Officer  
Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council  
Civic Offices, London Road  
Basingstoke RG21 4AH

15 December 2014

Dear Mr Fox,

Further to the Exploratory Meeting which you held in Basingstoke on 11 December, I am writing to set on record the key questions which I raised at that meeting.

My overriding concern is to ensure that the amount of house building in Basingstoke over the period of the Local Plan is truly sustainable and does not have an adverse impact on important environmental and infrastructure problems. I am also concerned about the adequacy of the Council's evidence base in these areas.

#### Housing figure

Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council has set a housing figure of 748 dpa, which they assert to be both 'policy off' and 'policy on', as they have indicated that their evidence base shows that this number of homes can be delivered without an adverse impact on the pollution of the River Loddon and the serious congestion on Basingstoke's roads.

Council officers indicated at the meeting that they did not have to hand the evidence to identify where a 'tipping point' would fall – where a higher level of house building would become unsustainable because of sewage disposal or road congestion. It seems clear if the figure of 748 were to be increased, this could bring into question the validity of the Plan.

Clearly, any increased house building figure would need to be considered as a 'policy off' figure, unless and until the Council is able to demonstrate that a higher figure is sustainable. It is essential that water pollution and road congestion are properly seen as constraints on higher house building figures.

#### Adequacy of Evidence Base

I am concerned about the adequacy of the Council's evidence base relating to both water quality and transport and the validity of further extrapolation to substantiate a higher house building figure.

The Water Cycle Study, which is the Council's key piece of evidence on water pollution, does not cover the last six years of the Plan, and is therefore not capable of providing the evidence that the Plan is sustainable in terms of water quality over the whole Plan period.

The May 2014 Transport Study, which is the most up-to-date analysis of the congestion problems in Basingstoke, identifies the need for significant upgrading of a further 13 junctions in Basingstoke (over and above other upgrading already previously identified) at a cost of more than £26 million. The Council has not identified the funding for this essential work, nor set out how the works would be phased and completed to ensure the infrastructure in place prior to occupation of new housing developments.

#### Past over supply of housing

Finally, in Basingstoke there has been a consistent delivery of housing over and above the housing need. The previous house building target under the South East Plan was some 30% higher than the figure identified by the Borough Council as meeting the housing need, and was in fact exceeded over a number of years. Now that the Government has clarified that past over supply of housing can be taken into account in setting a housing figure, I would like to know how this oversupply will be taken into account in Basingstoke.

I hope that you find these comments helpful.

Yours sincerely,