

Copy of letter from CPRE Warwickshire

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Rt Hon Andrew Mitchell MP
House of Commons
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12 April 2016

Dear Mr Mitchell
SUTTON COLDFIELD GREEN BELT

CPRE Warwickshire strongly supports your proposal, set out in your speech in the Adjournment Debate on 26 January 2016, that the Birmingham Plan should be amended before adoption to omit the proposed loss of Green Belt to the planned 5,000 house urban extension east of Walmley (known as Area C) and the Peddimore employment land allocation (Area D) pending a Review of the Plan starting in 2021.

This exactly what CPRE advocated to the Examination when it heard interested parties on the planned Langley Urban Extension in Autumn 2014. You very kindly attended and addressed the Examination on this subject. CPRE and others who appeared supported you..

We are most grateful that you have advocated this directly to the Planning Minister, James Wharton. The Inspector's Report has been received by Birmingham City Council, but as of 12 April has not been released by the Council.

In our statement to the Examination in 2014 (key extracts attached overleaf) we argued as you do:

3.10 The Plan proposes to release the Langley area from the Green Belt at an early stage. However, the capacity of the urban area (even on the lower figure in the current Plan of 43,000 dwellings) means that no need for any release of Green Belt land can arise until after 2023. To release the Langley location earlier would be unnecessary and would undermine the incentive to use brownfield sites within the urban area.

3.11 **CPRE Warwickshire proposes that the Plan be amended to provide for a Review of the housing Policies (to commence in 2021).** This would enable the position on population and housing requirements to be reviewed after the first five years of the Birmingham Plan. The developing position on migration, household size, urban capacity, windfalls and the ability of the Black Country area to meet some of Birmingham's needs would all be reviewed at that stage.

3.12 **If at that stage there is still an overwhelming need for a major new housing location, options can be reassessed. In meantime the Langley area should remain in the Green Belt.**

Can you please pass on this letter and the attached map to the Minister with your support? If the City Council is not minded itself to accept your recommended approach, can Mr Wharton agree to look at the solution himself, and if necessary direct a modification to the Birmingham Plan to ensure that the Langley location remains in the Green Belt until the Plan has been reviewed from 2021 onwards? This outcome would meet both local wishes and the current needs for housing in the City.

Yours sincerely

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HANSARD 26 Jan 2016 : Adjournment Debate: starts Column 242

Sutton Coldfield Green Belt

Extracts from Speech by Andrew Mitchell MP (Sutton Coldfield)

Most important of all, I have put forward a compromise proposal that there should be a moratorium of between eight and 10 years while the rest of Birmingham City Council's building plans take shape before there is any question of building on our green belt in Sutton Coldfield. That will allow us to take account of updated figures and up-to-date developments, not least the inward immigration figures for Birmingham, which, each time they are examined, vary by a multiple of the 6,000 homes with which we are threatened. This compromise proposal will allow for further consultation in 2023 based on updated figures for housing needs throughout the wider area. That might arm officials in Birmingham with serious and credible arguments for building on the green belt, but such arguments are wholly absent today.

We offer our compromise proposal for an eight-year moratorium on this aspect of the overall plan, and we do so in a spirit of good will for the sake our town and of future generations. We fully understand the importance of building more homes for the future, but those homes must be built in the right place. We ask the Minister and the Government to heed our cry today, and we ask the Government to accept the case that we have made and to take the necessary action forthwith.

Extracts from Reply by Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, James Wharton

We issued additional guidance in 2014 to remind local authorities—and indeed planning inspectors—that, in planning to meet objectively assessed local housing needs, they must still have regard to national policies such as those protecting the green belt. My right hon. Friend will appreciate that Ministers cannot comment on draft local plans that are still before the appointed inspector, but in response to his speech I would make the following general comments.....

The current draft plan was submitted in July 2014. I note my right hon. Friend's comments and concerns and his hope that the plan can be stopped. The Secretary of State though found it appropriate to appoint an independent person to examine Birmingham's plan on his behalf, with power to call for more or better evidence if necessary, and to delay a decision if that proved essential.

Inspectors have a vital role in scrutinising plans impartially and publicly to ensure that they are legally compliant and sound. Only in very rare circumstances will Ministers intervene in the process. A plan will be found sound only if it is properly prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy in the framework. If the plan contains proposals to adjust a green-belt boundary—as here—it must demonstrate exceptional circumstances, and I hope that this debate will make it clear to Birmingham that local people want to see brownfield first, as national policy supports.

I can tell my right hon. Friend that the Government have heard his case loud and clear, and I would expect others with an interest in this process to have heard the comments that I and my hon. and right hon. Friends have made this evening loud and clear as well. I recognise the importance of this matter, the quality of the well-considered contributions that have been made, and I hope that, at the

end of this process, we will reach a place that pleases rather more people than appears to be the case at present.

BIRMINGHAM PLAN 2031 – Examination Hearings October 2014

Statement by CPRE Warwickshire - EXTRACTS

MATTER E - Green Belt, Langley Sustainable Urban Extension and Peddimore Employment Allocation - Policies TP10, GA5 and GA6

3.1 The Plan proposes to remove land from the Green Belt southeast of Sutton Coldfield (Proposal GA5), and allocates 6,000 houses on land between Walmley and the A38 and 80 ha of employment land north of Minworth at Peddimore (Proposal GA6). All the land is high-quality farmland which has been Green Belt since the 1950s. See marked-up A4 map extract (scale 1:25,000) attached.

3.2 The land proposed in the Plan to be taken out of the Green Belt currently makes a major contribution to the purposes for which land is included in Green Belt, and has done for many years. It is relatively high land which is seen from inside the city and is very open. There are small hamlets (Over Green, Grove End) and historic buildings (Old Langley Hall, Peddimore Hall). A particular feature is that it is well-drained arable land; it is farmed right up to the urban boundary and livestock grazing can be minimised. (Farming livestock is problematic next to a large urban area due to damage to fences, trespass, and risk of theft.) The A38 Sutton Bypass is well-landscaped into the countryside and does not intrude; it is not a prominent boundary up to which development could be allowed.

3.3 The land here meets all the purposes for a sound inclusion in the Green Belt.

3.4 The sole reason for proposing to locate 6,000 new dwellings east of Walmley and Sutton Coldfield and remove land from the Green Belt (5,000 by 2031) is the housing requirement specified in the Plan – 80,000 over the period 2011-2031.

3.5 The Secretary of State’s statement of 1 July 2013 establishes that in considering planning applications, ‘unmet demand’ for housing is unlikely to outweigh harm to the Green Belt to constitute the very special circumstances justifying inappropriate development.

.....

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3.11 CPRE Warwickshire proposes that the Plan be amended to provide for a Review of the housing Policies (to commence in 2021). This would enable the position on population and housing requirements to be reviewed after the first five years of the Birmingham Plan. The developing position on migration, household size, urban capacity, windfalls and the ability of the Black Country area to meet some of Birmingham’s needs would all be reviewed at that stage.

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