



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Cllr Phil Knowles
Leader
Harborough District Council

Sent via email.

14th September 2023

Dear Cllr Knowles,

As the three Members of Parliament representing the Harborough District, we call on you to abandon plans to sign up to the Statement of Common Ground next Monday 18th September.

If you decide to sign up to this huge, one-quarter increase in the number of homes to be built here, it will not be possible to reverse this decision later, and Harborough will be locked into higher housebuilding for years to come.

This decision is being rushed through with minimal debate and no proper consultation with local people.

It is not necessary to sign up to this increase. As made clear in a letter from the housing minister; "There is no formula imposed by the government through which housing need for an area or unmet need must be transferred from one area to another."

You claim you are required to sign up because of the duty to cooperate. But this has never created any obligation on Harborough to take any amount of Leicester's overspill housing. The Housing Minister has also explicitly pointed out to you that the Duty is being abolished anyway.

Harborough's current local plan was recently adopted in 2019 and runs until 2031. According to the House of Commons Library only around 40% of local authorities have an up-to-date local plan and are in as good a position. Looking at the review criteria set out in the current local plan, there is no reason why Harborough's next local plan must be submitted by June 2025 at which point the Duty will no longer exist.

Your proposed increase is not fair. Under the plan Harborough would be building about twice as many homes per person as Leicester. You have never explained why you regard this specific increase as fair.

It is bad for the environment. Shifting this overspill housing from the city to Harborough means more commuting, more pollution, higher energy use and more traffic jams.

We think you are rushing through a mistaken decision which will have negative consequences for the District for years to come.

When a housing development of 2,000 homes was mooted in 2021 you said it would be “catastrophic” because our infrastructure is “bursting at the seams”. Yet you are now proposing to voluntarily sign up to take around 2,000 extra homes.

When the population statistics came out last summer you stated that “the entire Harborough district is close to breaking point” because “we’ve got so many new housing developments going ahead”. You complained that “our own District Council have got to think of the needs of the people who already live here as well as the people moving here.”

You are now the Leader of the Council – it is your direct responsibility to put forward proposals that benefit all of Harborough’s residents. As the MPs for our local area, we strongly urge you to listen to our constituents. As this is a local authority planning matter, MPs do not have any role in this decision-making process. It is your decision and that of your councillor colleagues now running Harborough District.

We call on you not to sign up to this unfair, unnecessary, un-green statement.

Yours sincerely,

Alberto Costa MP,

Alicia Kearns MP,

Neil O’Brien MP