



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Dear Constituents,

11/04/2019

I am sorry that I cannot be there this evening due to commitments in Westminster.

However, I have asked for this statement to be read in my absence as I appreciate the importance of this, from the number of emails I have received on this application.

I ran a survey last year which had 700 responses across Grange and Uplands wards, with the following key findings:

- 70% were not aware of the Council's Local Plan, or this development proposal, prior to my letter
- Overall, 70% do not feel this should go ahead, 15% are unsure and 15% are in support
- 83% felt this proposed development contained too many housing units

Residents cited a range of concerns, primarily around congestion on local roads and pressure on local schools and GP surgeries.

The Council and I have a difference of opinion concerning the Local Plan, and the population data which underpins this.

I'm sure the Council will articulate their own position at this meeting, so residents should hear both sides to the debate.

This Local Plan which contains this proposed development uses the population data which was current at the time the Housing Needs Assessment was carried out.

However, in 2018 the Office for National Statistics issued revised projections.

For Oadby and Wigston the projected population growth over the period 2016 – 2026 is now 600 rather than 2,400, so just a quarter of the previously assumed rate.

Oadby and Wigston council could have revised its plan and pressed for the up to date forecast to be used.

Planning guidance states: "Local planning authorities may decide that exceptional circumstances justify the use of an alternative method, but they will need to identify these reasons and can expect them to be tested by the Planning Inspectorate during the examination of their plans"

By 2023 the number of households in Oadby and Wigston will be 5% lower than previously forecast – a bigger reduction than any other Leicestershire district.

It is my view that the particularly dramatic downward revision in numbers is part of the case that this is indeed an "exceptional circumstance", and I am disappointed that Oadby & Wigston Council has not pressed for this new data to be used in its local plan.

As such, the local plan which locks in this development is in my view, flawed, and based on numbers that are already out of date.

This application will have a significant impact on local communities and I'm sure we can all agree on the importance of taking such decisions on sound, reliable and up to date data. I would encourage all Councillors to consider these facts carefully in deciding how to vote tonight.

Yours faithfully,

*Neil O'Brien*

Neil O'Brien OBE MP

Member of Parliament for Harborough, Oadby and Wigston

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