



CRISPIN BLUNT MP
Member of Parliament for Reigate

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Eddie Hughes MP
Minister for Rough Sleeping and Housing
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
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London SW1P 4DF
(by email: eddie.hughes@communities.gov.uk)

Our reference CB/GO

6 September 2021

Dear Eddie,

I am writing to you in connection with recent correspondence between yourself and The London Green Belt Council (which I attach for your reference) concerning recent appeal decisions at Roundhouse Farm, Bullens Green Lane, Colney Heath.

During the previous parliament I co-chaired the APPG for London's Green Belt, such was (and still is) my consternation that the planning process continues to put housing-need and the speculative profit of developers above protection of the Green Belt, evidenced by the large number of approved planning applications for house building on the Green Belt, which is consequently being eroded at a rapid and alarming rate.

The case referred to above is yet another most obvious example of so called housing-need being used as a very exceptional circumstance to justify the removal of more Green Belt from what is becoming a dwindling supply of land. Other options, such as urban development on Brown Field land should always be completely exhausted before housing need can be even considered when it comes to the further despoilment of the Green Belt and the re-drawing of its boundaries.

I particularly draw your attention to the letter from Richard Knox-Johnson dated 30th August to which, I understand, a response is yet to be forthcoming. In this letter he has made some compelling points, quoting statements by Government Ministers, which need considering, especially the fact that the Roundhouse Farm application was not made as a result of the Local Plan process, and it did not have the support of local people, or their elected representatives. Clearly this is not a 'locally-led' change to the Green Belt. This fact seems to have been completely ignored by the Inspector.

As stated, if this appeal is regarded as a precedent, then most of Green Belt boundaries will be under threat in the future.

I am at a loss to understand how the Inspector was allowed to override the appeal with apparent scant comprehension of the nature and importance of the London Metropolitan Green Belt.

I would very much appreciate being copied in on your reply to Mr Knox-Johnson's letter of 30th August and would also like to request an urgent meeting with you to discuss the concerning implications of this decision on the value of Ministerial Statements which seem to be being overridden by the Planning Inspectorate and not, instead, used to clarify the intended objectives the NPPF.

On my reading of the Inspector's conclusion she has just smashed any pretence that Green Belt policy is the core of driving development into areas consistent with the wider long-term London and indeed

British national interest. If inspectors are able to play fast and loose with our policy and its purposes, they have betrayed you, their profession and their country. This judgement must not be allowed to stand and this inspector not allowed anywhere near these kind of determinations again.

If Ministers side with this inspector I'm afraid you cannot possibly expect your colleagues to side with you.

Yours Ever,

Crispin Blunt.

Crispin Blunt

Copy to:
The Chief Whip
Rebecca Harris MP, Government Whips Office