



THE RT HON MARK HARPER MP
Working for Gloucestershire West of the Severn

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA



Mr Alistair Cunningham OBE
Chief Executive
Tewkesbury Borough Council
Public Services Centre
Gloucester Road
Tewkesbury
Gloucestershire
GL20 5TT

8th March 2024

By email: Caroline.Yates@teWKesbury.gov.uk

Dear Alistair

I am writing to respond to the Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury Strategic Local Plan (SLP) currently out for consultation. As you know, the Tewkesbury Borough Council Ward of Highnam with Haw Bridge is located both within my Forest of Dean constituency and the SLP area.

As outlined in Scenario 4 of the Consultation Document, one of the options currently under consideration is to meet the SLP area's current housing needs by delivering development "*through one or more comprehensive, master-planned new settlements, of a minimum of around 4,000 new homes with supporting infrastructure*". One of the potential locations identified for such a settlement is the area between Churcham and Highnam, which straddles the boundary of Tewkesbury Borough and the Forest of Dean District.

I would strongly object to this option. You may be aware that in 2021 the Forest of Dean District Council (FODDC) proposed a similar idea to locate approximately 5,000 new homes in the Churcham area. This proposition garnered much criticism, manifesting in the creation of the 'No New Towns' campaign group and a 7,000-signature petition opposing the development. Many of the criticisms levelled at the FODDC plan equally apply in this circumstance, and I would like to briefly outline them below.

Firstly, such a settlement would cause severe congestion and traffic issues in the area as it would be situated along the A40 and the A48. It has previously been estimated that this road network carries in excess of 10,000 vehicles a day to Gloucester and beyond. Adding potentially thousands more will only exacerbate this issue further and lead to even more congestion at this critical pinch point for the County.

With regard to environmental considerations, much of the area around Churcham is low-lying and prone to flooding. Parts of the A40 and A48 have additionally flooded on multiple occasions over the past few years. Plainly, adding thousands of new homes to this area will only make matters worse. Not only is the development itself likely to flood, but problems could also be created in surrounding areas as a result of an increase in the amount of impermeable surface, increasing the peaks of run-off of surface water.

My view on matters such as this has always been consistent: new housing should be in keeping with the surrounding area, both in scale and style, and any significant new settlements should be targeted at already developed brownfield sites. The creation of an entirely new settlement at Churcham would risk diverting much-needed investment from already established towns across both the Forest of Dean and the rest of Gloucestershire. It would also require significant amounts of infrastructure to be built, given that much of the site is currently designated as greenfield land.



I would strongly urge Tewkesbury Borough Council not to pursue this option.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mark Harper'.

The Rt Hon Mark Harper MP