



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Cllr Robert Gordon CBE DL
Leader of the Council
Hertfordshire County Council
County Hall, Pegs Lane
Hertford
Herts, SG13 8DF

Ref: OD/FJE

25 April 2017

Dear Robert,

Re: Site for the proposed Strategic Rail Freight Interchange near Radlett

I am writing to you following a meeting I had last month with the Housing & Planning Minister, Gavin Barwell MP and Cllr Julian Daly, Leader of St Albans City & District Council.

At our meeting, also attended by Mrs Anne Main MP, we discussed the options available for removing the green belt designation of a site where there is extant planning permission due to nationally significant infrastructure status. The Minister confirmed to us that the fact a site has extant planning permission does not preclude releasing it for alternative use as part of a green belt review. The Minister also indicated to us that his Department will be publishing a consultation on determining new housing numbers in the near future.

I believe that there is now a significant possibility that St Albans Council will have to begin drawing up a new Local Plan following the Planning Inspector's rejection of their Draft Local Plan due to its failure to meet the duty to co-operate.

In order to meet this duty in any new plan that comes forward, the Council may well need to release additional land for housing. This could be only be achieved by initiating a review of the green belt. It is also likely that the Department's review of housing numbers will further increase the number of sites that will be required.

One of the sites that would likely come under consideration would be the site of the proposed Strategic Rail Freight Interchange near Radlett.



As you know, I do not believe Hertfordshire County Council are required to sell the site to Helioslough. As I have said before, I would urge you to vigorously challenge any legal advice that suggests you are under a fiduciary duty to sell.

However, should you be required to sell, I believe that the proper discharge of this fiduciary duty would require you to consider the potential value of the land should its green belt designation be altered. Given the situation described above, there is a distinct possibility that this will happen. Should that happen, the potential value of the land would clearly increase enormously.

I am therefore writing to urge you not to agree to any sale of the land until St Albans District Council has an agreed Local Plan which has been approved by Planning Inspectors and which accommodates the new housing numbers that are likely to be issued by the DCLG in the coming months. Any expeditious sale of the site risks significantly undervaluing it and would not achieve best value for the taxpayer.

I had intended to write to you about this issue once we had greater clarity from the DCLG about the new formula for determining housing numbers. However, given the unexpected General Election and the possibility that you will receive an offer for the site from Helioslough before 8th June, I felt duty bound to write to you now.

I would be delighted to have the opportunity to discuss this further. Given the considerable local interest in this issue I will be placing a copy of this letter in the public domain.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'O Dowden', written in a cursive style.

Oliver Dowden CBE MP
Member of Parliament for Hertsmere