

Alex Cunningham MP

Stockton North



Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP
Secretary of State for Communities & Local Government
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London
SW1E 5DU

12th November 2013

Dear Secretary of State,

I was recently contacted by the Mayor of Stockton Borough Council with details of a Council motion calling for an urgent review of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). I have enclosed a copy of the Mayor's letter for ease of reference.

As you will read, the Motion expresses the concerns of Stockton Borough Council that planning control is being wrested from local authorities and communities and placed with private developers, at the same time that public funding to support the development of brownfield sites for housing is being cut.

These are concerns that I share, and I am particularly worried that too little is currently being done to incentivise housing developers to begin construction on well-suited brownfield sites. This in turn is having the knock-on effect of requiring local authorities, such as Stockton Borough Council, to approve developments on greenfield sites in order to meet obligations to deliver a five year supply of housing land.

A prime example from within my Stockton North constituency is the Norton Road area. Lying just to the north of Stockton town centre, this particular brownfield site has lain dormant for many years despite having planning permission for roughly 600 homes, being in an ideally suited location for housing developments, and the plans having the backing of the local community.

Instead, the private sector is focussing on alternative greenfield sites within my constituency that do not offer the same level of existing infrastructure and do not enjoy similar levels of local support. With the NPPF allowing this to happen, the voices of local people are being stifled and precious greenfield sites risk being lost permanently. Both of these factors are stirring angst in local communities across my constituency, and would appear to be undermining the Government's expressed goal of empowerment for local residents to shape their areas.

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I would appreciate your comments on this matter, and to those raised by Stockton's Mayor in the enclosed letter, to allow me to respond fully and appropriately. I would also welcome any details you are able to provide regarding the specific steps being taken by the Government to protect greenfield sites against development in areas where suitable alternative brownfield sites are available.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Alex Cunningham'.

Alex Cunningham MP

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