

NORTON ST PHILIP PARISH COUNCIL

MENDIP DISTRICT OF THE COUNTY OF SOMERSET

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Tracy Aarons
Deputy Chief Executive
Mendip District Council
Cannards Grave Road
Shepton Mallet
Somerset
BA4 5BT

27th May 2020

By email

Dear Tracy

MDC Local Plan Part II

Thanks for your letter of 4th May. It is a disappointment to us that the Council cannot take the opportunity of raising the principle of the '505' in the note requested by the Inspector in ED27. This could have been a vehicle for the Council to give its view on what the Inspector describes in Para 3 of ED27 (the para referred to by the Inspector as that on which he would like the Council's preliminary view) as *"Some of the new arguments brought forward since the examination hearings that I want to explore"*.

As you know there is wide concern in the affected parishes about the proposed allocations. These same concerns- about the principle of the proposed allocations- have also been widely expressed by both Officers and Members of the Council at Public Meetings. Indeed, both Officers and Members encouraged Parish Councils and members of the public to express opposition to MM5 during the Consultation. Over 300 representations were subsequently submitted specifically objecting to MM5. The Inspector has recognised that he should hold further hearings *"in the light of the representations that I have read so far, new arguments introduced by representors, and my reconsideration of evidence in the context of the representations."* It is therefore disappointing that the Council is not taking this opportunity to underline the position that the proposed allocations are not in accordance with LPP1's Spatial Strategy and in any case had already been allocated in the submission version of LPP2.

The three Parish Councils continue to have very great concerns about the possibility of a Virtual Hearing and have written to the Programme Officer expressing these concerns. A copy of that letter is attached. The update issued by PINS on 13th May requests that Local Authorities discuss how best to progress Examinations with the Inspector. We consider that MM5, being the subject of such widespread and well-articulated opposition, can only be fully and properly considered at a Hearing which members of the public are able to attend in person. Some of the reasons for this belief are set out in our letter to the Programme Officer; additionally, the presence of a large number of the public would reinforce the opposition to MM5.

We appreciate that the Council is not currently being asked to withdraw its Plan; however, the Covid crisis has changed so much that the arguments for deferring consideration of the 505 are now even stronger than before. A 'neutral' deferral would provide the opportunity for MDC to review all potential housing allocations across the District (including to meet its increased housing need) and determine the most suitable in accordance with national policy and guidance and the spatial strategy of the Local Plan.

It would seem to us that the Inspector might recognise that if withdrawal of the Plan was the only other option, he might accept such a 'neutral' deferral. Thus the LP Review could run alongside the B&NES LP Review and potential Neighbourhood Plans or reviews of adopted NPs.

We would be most grateful if you could acknowledge receipt of this letter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K. Wilson", is positioned above a horizontal line that spans the width of the signature box.

Pp

Clive Abbott, Chair Norton St Philip Parish Council

Mark Wilson, Chair Beckington Parish Council

Pat Banwell, Terry Morrow, Peter Travis, Joint Chairs Rode Parish Council