

Robert Howard.

- **Matter 26 – villages ‘for growth’**

26.1 Main modification MM010 amends the settlement hierarchy in Policy SP2. It removes five villages

(Barkway, Codicote, Ickleford, Knebworth and Little Wymondly) from the ‘category A villages’ tier of the hierarchy, identifies them as ‘villages for growth’ and, along with the towns, assigns housing figures to each. This modification was advanced by the Council at my suggestion. I suggested it for two primary reasons:

- For effectiveness – to ensure that the Local Plan’s strategic policies provide a clear indication of the distribution of development proposed in the plan
- To ensure that the hierarchy is justified – as originally drafted, the ‘category A villages’ tier of the hierarchy included villages with significantly different levels of new housing development

In suggesting the modification, it was never my intention that the actual distribution of development between the villages concerned should change, or that the Local Plan should permit a greater level of growth than that originally proposed. Rather, my concern related to the soundness of the way in which Policy SP2 illustrated the housing already proposed through the Local Plan.

The Council’s response to my letter of 9 August 2019 confirms that these changes simply reflect in a clearer way what the Local Plan as submitted already proposes, and does not confer any sort of new ‘status’ on the five villages. It also confirms that the modification does not result in a more (or less) permissive approach to windfall development, and does not allow for further growth at the five villages than if they were identified under the ‘category A villages’ tier. This is in line with both my intention for and reading of the main modification.

Given the above, it will be necessary for anyone who objects to these changes and wishes to be heard at the hearing session to clearly demonstrate:

- a) why they are not necessary for soundness;
- b) why separating out the ‘villages for growth’ from the ‘category A villages’ is not justified;
- c) why including the level of new housing proposed through the Local Plan (as originally submitted) at each of the five ‘villages for growth’ does not assist the effectiveness of Policy SP2; or
- d) that the proposed main modification does alter the level of new housing that may be delivered at each/one of the five villages involved.

I simply can not understand that designating the Five – **villages ‘for growth’** instead of **‘category A villages’** will not influence the decision making in the regards to development of WY1. By categorizing Little Wymondley as a Village for Growth to me implies that the proposed development of WY1 has already been agreed and the WY1 and Little Wymondley are ear marked for large sale development without the need for the Local Plan to be inspected.

A referendum was held in the parish of Wymondley on Thursday, 29 August 2019 to decide on the question below:-

**‘Do you want North Hertfordshire District Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for Wymondley to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?’**

**The result of the Wymondley Neighbourhood Plan Referendum was a YES vote in favour of NHDC using the Wymondley Neighbourhood Plan to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area.**

**The turnout was 28.74% of the 901 electorate,**

**The number of votes cast in favour was 238; with 16 votes against.**

Clare Skeels has notified me that, on 26 September 2019, Ian Fullstone (NHDC Service Director - Regulatory) formally took the decision to **"make"** the Wymondley Neighbourhood Plan. This means it is now part of the statutory development plan for the District, (the Local Plan), and will be a material planning consideration when considering development proposals in the designated neighbourhood planning area of Wymondley.

As you can see the Parish of Wymondley now has a fully functional Neighbourhood Plan. There is no mention what so ever in the Local Plan and the Main Modifications to the Wymondley Neighbourhood Plan, which now forms part of the planning law in regards to development within the Parish of Wymondley. All planning applications in Wymondley including WY1 must be tested against the Wymondley Neighbourhood Plan. The Wymondley Neighbourhood Plan clearly states the wishes of the Wymondley Parishioners to protect the Green Belt the Wymondley Neighbourhood Plan was broadly based on a survey carried taken during 2015, see below. For this reason alone, I believe the Local Plan and the Main Modifications are unsound and the WY1 should be omitted from the Local Plan.

- **“In July 2015, we conducted a survey of each property in the Parish, providing a questionnaire which sought views on how residents would like to see their village develop over the coming years. The survey results conclusively identified the following key issues as being the top five in terms of importance to parishioners:”**
- **92% of respondents want to preserve the Green Belt in its current form.**
- **72% of respondents are concerned about flooding in Little Wymondley.**
- **70% of respondents are concerned about traffic management.**
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- The Wymondley Neighbourhood Plan is available on line for scrutiny at [www.wymondley.org](http://www.wymondley.org) or [www.wymondleypc.org](http://www.wymondleypc.org) or NHDC’s website.

