



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Luke Stephens

Head of Ministerial Correspondence

**Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local
Government**

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Our ref: 7185377

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Dear Dr Collins

Thank you for your open letter of 1 May, addressed to the Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP, about plan-making and the Green Belt in Oxfordshire. I have been asked to reply on his behalf. You will recall that the Secretary of State wrote to CPRE Oxford on 28 August 2019, setting out his response to criticisms made by your trustee Mr Michael Tyce, explaining his confidence in the robustness of the plan examinations carried out by the Planning Inspectorate, and declining to intervene.

The Department would contest your assertion regarding the City's housing need. The assumptions underpinning the housing need calculations for Oxford City and its own capacity to meet its needs in the round, including the need for necessary employment land, have been tested by independent Planning Inspectors at two concluded Examinations where plans were found sound and adopted (Vale of White Horse and West Oxfordshire), described as 'robust' in a third (Cherwell) and 'substantial and sound' in Oxford City's own Examination. In the latter the Inspectors also addressed the assessment of the evidence against the strong national policy protections for the Green Belt in their interim letter.

As the Secretary of State made clear in his letter, the Government supports appropriate planned development over the kind of speculative development which causes communities such concern. Local authorities must feel confident that they can take robust plans that follow national planning policies through the independent Examination process without undue concern of interference.

This Department values the Campaign to Protect Rural England as the passionate defender of the Green Belt and as an informed critic of development and planning policy. We both want to see the Green Belt and other designated countryside protected, and the efficient use of urban and brownfield land; and you will recognise that meeting affordable housing needs is one of the Government's highest priorities. Whatever extraordinary intervention you may have had in mind, we believe that our aims of sustainable development are best taken forward through the development plans of the elected local authorities of Oxfordshire, in accord with the conclusions reached with care and independence of mind by the examining inspectors. Nevertheless we are grateful to you for iterating CPRE's concerns.

Your sincerely

LUKE STEPHENS

Head of Ministerial Correspondence