Cllr Lindsay Ferris,

Executive Member for Planning and Local Plan

Wokingham Borough Council

Shute End
Wokingham
Berkshire
RG40 1BN

4th August 2022

Dear Cllr. Ferris

**Re: Will the Lib Dem Leadership of WBC preside over an increase in housing numbers?**

Since you replied on 30 Jun 2022 to the letter we sent to Cllr. Jones, we have become increasingly aware of the difficult balance that has to be achieved. You said that you will be addressing the points we raised ‘in due course’. We do hope ‘in due course’ will not become ‘too late’.

In our letter, we raised the possibility of developers benefitting from a weak 5 Year Land Supply (5YLS) and you raised the issue that some 3000 houses have been built across the Borough in excess of the annual quota that will not be counted. As previously discussed, regardless of the number of homes that are actually included in the Local Plan (LP) – the rate of build is controlled solely by the developers at the expense of the LP, Residents and Voters.

We would like to share another concern with you.

We can only speculate at what is going on behind closed doors as the new administration decides what to do about the latest version of the LP. We would imagine that Hall Farm is high on the agenda because of certain election pledges which may or may not reflect the views of all in the Liberal Democrat/Labour/Independent grouping.

Hall Farm was selected for a number of compelling and logical reasons (proximity to work centres, access etc.) and would spread the new build required up to 2036/37 more evenly across the Borough. Should Hall Farm be removed from the next version of the LP, alternative sites would be required to make up the lost numbers.

Is it realistic to expect the University to give up the very sizeable proceeds they would realise if the area was sold to developers for building purposes? Most unlikely.

Surely, the University will make an application to develop the location regardless of what may be included in the LP in the same way as Berkeley Homes’ application to build some 350 homes at Blagrove Meadows. The Local Planning Authority will no doubt refuse the application, it will go to appeal but WBC will be in a weak position to defend - it can hardly object on technical grounds as Hall Farm is the mainstay of the current version of the LP and a weak 5YLS will only exacerbate the situation.

So, even with the LP adjusted to present the right numbers, additional housing could still be built as WBC loses planning appeals because it has not taken control of the 5YLS and dithered in agreeing yet another version of the LP for whatever reason.

Barkham is vulnerable to alternative and opportunistic developments. We would be pleased for you to join one of BPC’s regular council meetings to discuss how this difficult balance can be achieved to avoid inappropriate and unfair distribution of new builds across the Borough.

Can we help further?

Kind Regards



Ellen Tims

Clerk to Barkham Parish Council

For and on Behalf of Barkham Parish Council

Cc Cllr. John Kaiser

 Cllr. Clive Jones

 Sir John Redwood

 Steve Moore

 Trevor Saunders