

Mr Roy Foster MA MRTPI
c/oClaypit Hall
Foxearth
Sudbury
SuffolkCO10 7JD

25th November 2010

Dear Mr Foster,

I write with regard to your examination of the Greater Norwich Development Partnership's Joint Core Strategy (JCS). Please do accept my apologies for writing towards the end of your review; however I wished to ensure you are aware of my concerns regarding the current proposals.

As the Member of Parliament for the Mid Norfolk constituency, I have a particular interest in the development and housing plans for the Wymondham area. A principle part of the JCS is the proposal to place 2,200 new houses in Wymondham, however developers have also aggressively pushed to have that number increased to 4,000, possibly by transferring the 1,800 homes that are currently scheduled for Long Stratton over to Wymondham.

There is significant opposition from residents in Wymondham to development on this scale. The numbers involved in this partnership are a legacy of an old, top-down planning regime that the current Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government has already indicated has no place in our planning system. Whilst I am aware of Mr Justice Sales's ruling that Eric Pickles acted unlawfully in his decision to abolish Regional Spatial Strategies, the well-known intentions of the Coalition Governments – and the imminent Devolution and Localism Bill – are arguably material considerations to be taken into account when examining all outstanding developments.

The Government is committed to creating a planning system that provides an enhanced role for communities and those with local concerns. The lack of consultation regarding the scale of development with the residents of Wymondham is a significant weakness of the JCS, and given the Government's commitments (and the new approach to planning outlined by the Conservatives in their 'Open Source Planning' document before the election) it would be unfortunate to accept the JCS in any form without significant further (local) consultation.

It is my understanding that the JCS will also be significantly affected by the Northern Distributor Road (NDR). Whilst the fate of the NDR remains uncertain, the significant amount of development proposed for the surrounding area must surely also be in doubt, as the development without suitable infrastructure would create unsustainable sprawl on North Norwich.

My Colleague for South Norfolk, Richard Bacon MP has already written to you and outlined his support for development in Long Stratton, where there is strong

localsupport for growth. However the residents of Wymondham fear that their town will be dramatically changed in character without adequate consultation and without benefit to the existing residents.

Whilst individual councils are at their liberty to revoke their Local Development Frameworks and thus remove the Regional Spatial Strategy figures they were previously required to meet, this option seems unavailable to those involved in the JCS. Considering the attempts to bring a Unitary Authority to Norwich have failed, and the planning system is about to be completely reformed, it would be particularly unfortunate to allow the (unpopular) ghost of the RSS figures live on through the JCS. The urban sprawl that would be created if this level of development were to go ahead would seriously damage the identity of Wymondham, undermineThe Greenbelt and open the flood gates for long term over-development of this part of South Norfolk.

Yours sincerely,

George Freeman MP
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA