

Professor William Brown CBE  
Chair, Hinxton Parish Council  
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Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP  
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government  
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government  
2nd floor NW, Fry Building, 2 Marsham Street  
London SW1P 4DF  
United Kingdom

18 January 2019

Dear Minister,

Recovery of planning appeal by the Secretary of State ref APP/W0530/W/18/3210008

I am writing on behalf of the parish councils of Hinxton, Ickleton, Duxford, Whittlesford, Pampisford, Great Abington, and Little Abington in South Cambridgeshire to seek a meeting to express our concern at your decision to 'recover' South Cambridgeshire District Council's decision to refuse the outline planning application for a business park on arable land in Hinxton close to these other parishes (S/4099/17/OL).

Our concern at your taking powers to overrule the Planning Inspector is partly because the only stated reason is that 'the appeal involves proposals for significant development within Green Belt'. This is entirely inconsistent with the evidence and the legislation. Only a small and subordinate detail of transport arrangements for the application would encroach on Green Belt. The proposed business park itself would be completely outside it. By no stretch of imagination could such an encroachment be considered 'nationally significant', as the statutory grounds for intervention require.

The application was refused on nine different grounds by South Cambridgeshire District Council last March. The Planning Committee was unanimous. The application is also contrary to the Council's approved Local Plan. Our parishes are not opposed to development in general and there is much development going on around us which we are facilitating. But this proposed general purpose business park, misdescribed as being for 'Agritech', is without justification for this farmland site and has serious and unmitigated traffic and other implications for us.

As parish councillors we have noted the recent Raynsford Report's sharp criticism of the failure of England's planning procedures to reflect the concerns of local communities. But we are aware that your Ministry has recently encouraged greater 'localism' and also that you spoke to the LGA earlier this month of your own vision of self-sufficiency in local government. We do not know who called for or who made this decision to 'recover' the planning process, which is unusual in the circumstances, but we have been shocked at actions of the company behind the development in question which could be taken as seeking to influence decisions.

Last October this company funded a reception at Westminster focused on promoting the Hinxton application which did not include our own constituency MP. In addition, according to Electoral Commission records the company also made a substantial political financial contribution shortly before the application was submitted. That is extraordinary. You will appreciate how this undermines the credibility of your Ministry's stated commitment to local accountability.

We should appreciate the opportunity to meet you so we can demonstrate the strength of local feeling and explain why the recovering of this appeal decision is inappropriate.

Yours,

William Brown (Chair, Hinxton PC) also Sian Wombwell (Chair, Ickleton PC); Aureole Wragg (Chair, Pampisford PC); Arthur Greaves (Chair, Whittlesford PC); Peter Brunning (Chair, Little Abington PC); Ed Harris (Acting Chair, Duxford PC); Bernie Talbot (Chair, Great Abington PC)