

Dear Tom and Kris,

Can I start by thanking you both, and the wider MHCLG team, for the open and honest discussions you have held with Cllrs Cooper and Bennet, my officers and myself. It is genuinely appreciated and I realise a lot of work and effort has been put in by the MHCLG team at a busy time, as well as considerable efforts by Homes England in working with Oxfordshire County Council officers.

I understand from Suzanne, that in terms of the Didcot Garden Town HIF and the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth deal, we are approaching (or have reached) a point where the MHCLG team would be in a position to offer a definitive response to the question “Were South Oxfordshire District Council to withdraw the currently submitted emerging Local Plan from inspection, what would be the consequences of that action in relation to the Didcot Garden Town HIF bid made by Oxfordshire County Council and the Oxfordshire Growth Deal”.

In essence, the question is asking whether the department would be in a position to continue with the DGT HIF and the funding and flexibilities within the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal if the South Oxfordshire emerging Local Plan were to be withdrawn from inspection.

Previously, officers were asked by Council to “...explore with Oxfordshire County Council, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and Homes England options for protecting the HIF funding whilst enabling the council to address concerns about the current emerging Local Plan 2034 including (but not limited to) climate change issues and Oxford City’s unmet housing need, and to report back to Cabinet and Council”.

As you are aware, we have sought to do so, and I recognise the commitment of time and resources of Oxfordshire County Council in supporting this work.

We are now in the process of finalising our reports for publication (early next week), which is in line with the timeline I previously shared with Tom and other colleagues. I also believe that the County Council will have finalised their review with Homes England exploring whether there are alternative housing commitments that would support the DGT HIF by the end of this week.

I am mindful that there are some potential major national developments around several areas at present, which are no doubt creating some additional pressures on you and the team, but I and my officer colleagues wish to be able to provide the most accurate and timely information to our members as part of their consideration (and to ensure appropriate transparency for our partners and residents) and

therefore a full response to this email at your earliest convenience would be much appreciated.

Kind regards,

Mark Stone

Chief Executive

South Oxfordshire District Council and

Vale of White Horse District Council