



The Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP  
Secretary of State for Housing,  
Communities and Local Government  
Ministry of Housing,  
Communities and Local Government,  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

**Councillor Howard Sykes MBE**

Our Ref: HDS/KR/

Date: 19 February 2019

Dear Minister,

### **Greater Manchester Spatial Framework, Green Belt and housing numbers**

I am writing to you in connection with the current proposals under the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework, which identifies several Green Belt and OPOL land sites for future housing development within, or adjacent, to the wards of Crompton and Shaw in the Metropolitan Borough of Oldham that are represented by six Liberal Democrat colleagues, including myself.

Between them these sites are expected under current plans to accommodate 3,818 new homes and 201,270 square metres of industrial development.

Oldham itself is expected to build an extra 14,290 homes by 2037.

In the Government's housing white paper, 'Fixing our Broken Housing Market', published in February 2017 it states that, whilst expecting local authorities to establish their 'objectively assessed need' for new housing, that the government is committed to 'maintain existing strong protections for the Green Belt, and clarifying that Green Belt boundaries should be amended only in exceptional circumstances' and that 'the presumption should be that brownfield land is suitable for housing unless there are clear and specific reasons to the contrary' with 'great weight...attached to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes.'

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Leader of the Opposition, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group Oldham  
Council, Member for Shaw Ward, Member for South Ward Shaw & Crompton  
Parish Council.

5 Ballard Way, Shaw, Oldham, OL2 8DU

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This is all highly commendable. Like the government, the Liberal Democrat Group on Oldham Council believes strongly that any proposed new housing development should take place on brownfield sites first and we are opposed to any encroachment on Green Belt and OPOL land whilst such brownfield land still exists.

There is however a contradiction in the government's position.

Because in large part, Greenbelt and OPOL sites have only been allocated for development because of the instance by the government that the ten local authorities in Greater Manchester continue to utilise figures issued by the Department of Communities and Local Government in 2012 to determine the local 'objectively assessed need' for new housing. These figures estimated a need for a far larger number of houses than was indicated by data published in 2016 by the Office for National Statistics.


The 2012 figures published by your department indicated that households in Greater Manchester would grow by 213,380 by 2035 or 18.75%, yet the more recent figures published by the Office for National Statistics in 2016 predicted an increase of only 164,006 or 14.55%.

The staggering difference is almost 50,000 homes – for Oldham the difference amounts to 2,587 properties less to build.

So I am writing to you to confirm whether the Government is totally insistent on local authorities using the 2012 DCLG figures for household growth projections in setting 'objectively assessed need' or whether in fact we are permitted to use the much lower 2016 ONS figure in making this assessment and so potentially save much of our irreplaceable and much loved Green Belt?

Thank you for giving this matter your attention. I shall look forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely



Howard Sykes

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