

PIPPA HEYLINGS

Liberal
Democrats



Liberal Democrat Campaigner for South Cambridgeshire

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State
Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF
United Kingdom

Dear Secretary of State,

I am writing to you today to urgently seek reassurance following the proposals published in the Sunday Times for up to 250,000 new homes in and around South Cambridgeshire.

The Greater Cambridge area is already a huge net contributor to our national economy, and it is right that we are ambitious for what more we can achieve here. The new joint local plan being developed by Cambridge City and South Cambs already proposes significant housing growth, to meet the needs of local communities and employers. However, it is essential that any housing growth is delivered sustainably, with water supply, access to green space, and quality of life for residents considered from the outset. Our natural resources in Cambridgeshire are already over stretched, with water supply at critical levels and several months of drought every year. Local essential services like doctors and dentist surgeries are already over capacity and unable to take on new patients.

Communities support housebuilding when the GP surgeries, schools and transport infrastructure are provided upfront to meet needs of both existing and new communities. Also when there is the critical infrastructure to address the water crisis without further abstraction from chalk scheme aquifers.

Proposing growth on such a radical scale - essentially tripling the size of the city - without setting out clearly how the natural and physical infrastructure needed to support and sustain such expansion would be delivered is hugely worrying. The added briefing to newspapers that you are actively considering weakening environmental protections makes this look like a developers charter, with little consideration for the residents living and working in South Cambridgeshire.

Our community deserves your immediate reassurance that you will listen to their concerns. Please can you therefore:

- 1) Clarify your plans and how relate to the current work to develop a Joint Local Plan led by Cambridge and South Cambs;
- 2) Confirm that the government will not pursue the weakening of environmental protections;

3) Confirm that the government will accelerate investment to bring forward regional water infrastructure to address the water crisis and to supply existing housing demand. The local plan makes clear that housing targets are contingent on an adequate water supply but your government is failing to deliver on this;

4) Confirm that the government will not be ditching the requirement on developers to contribute upfront infrastructure investment for GP surgeries, transport and schools for new developments as currently proposed in the Levelling Up Bill;

5) Commit to protecting Cambridgeshire waterways and clean up sewage already dumped in rivers on your watch.

I look forward to hearing from you.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Pippa', with a stylized flourish underneath.

Pippa Heylings

Liberal Democrat Parliamentary Candidate for South Cambridgeshire