



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Cllr Phil Knowles  
Leader  
Harborough District Council

Sent via email

31<sup>st</sup> May 2023

Dear Cllr Knowles,

I am writing to you as one of the leaders of the new coalition formed in Harborough District Council. You will be aware that there will be a vote in Council about whether to accept a proportion of the City of Leicester's housing need as part of the Strategic Growth Plan.

If approved, it would mean that Harborough District would be expected to build an extra 123 houses each year until 2036, to help the city make up its shortfall. This would see the District having to build around a quarter more houses each year than if it were just meeting its own needs. Whilst all districts in Leicestershire are also being asked to meet the shortfall, Harborough would have to build more overall than any other district, other than Charnwood.

I have always said that the City must do more to identify sites for housing. There are several brownfield sites around Leicester that would be perfect for development, but these have not been properly considered. This dumping of the City's housing need on our District is unfair. The council in Harborough went through a detailed process to put its local plan in place, and it is one of relatively few councils which has an up-to-date plan and is judged to be delivering for the needs of its own residents.

I also have concerns about the Strategic Growth Plan's impact on the local environment. Regeneration in the City would mean more walking and cycling and fewer traffic jams in places like Kibworth. In contrast the sprawl-based model Harborough is being asked to sign up to as part of the Strategic Growth Plan would mean more traffic trying to get in and out of Leicester.

As one of the leaders in the ruling coalition, I hope that you will vote against this plan. When I was a minister in the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, I took through legislation last year which abolished the longstanding "Duty to Cooperate", a piece of legislation the City are trying to use to put pressure on Harborough to take on their housing need. As such, there is no longer a need to take on this additional housing. We don't need this additional housing dumped on our District. Leicester City has more than enough brownfield sites it should be developing.

Yours sincerely,

*Neil O'Brien*

**Neil O'Brien OBE MP**

Member of Parliament for Harborough, Oadby and Wigston

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