



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

28th April 2021

Dear Anne,

Thank you for your email concerning misinformation from some quarters, including the “Community Campaign Hart” Party (‘CCH’). I am grateful to you for asking me to restate my position directly, in order to set the record straight.

CCH and others have been making potentially libellous statements that they may wish, on reflection, to withdraw. Nonetheless, for the avoidance of doubt:

- I do not support any major greenfield development in the next Local Plan – whether that is Shapley Heath or otherwise.
- The open letter on my website of November 2019, makes clear that “there is no need for Shapley Heath”.
- I did not support Shapley Heath in Hart District Council’s (‘HDC’) Garden Communities Capacity Funding bid in September 2020.
- It is clear, including in my letter directly to CCH of July 2019, and my letters to HDC dating back to 2018, that I have said that HDC should – very specifically – seek government funding to look at the huge infrastructure implications of the development, and only because HDC’s ruling coalition (CCH and the Liberal Democrats) decided to proceed with their plans for Shapley Heath.

Whilst planning decisions are, rightly, for District Councillors to make, these vital studies have – sadly – not been carried out by the ruling coalition. My support for any funding was conditional on these studies being undertaken before anything else. Such studies would enable the whole community to make an informed decision and, in my view, must precede any local debate and decision-making process.

It is disappointing that CCH and others are now trying to suggest that support for studies on infrastructure – which would inform the debate in a way that their rhetoric does not – equates to support for the policies of the ruling parties at HDC, on the principles that they seem to have adopted. Rather, my own views on planning are set out at: [ranil.uk/charter](https://www.ranil.uk/charter) – which many constituents have signed already, and I would encourage others to do today, without delay! Time is running out.

The purpose of the funding being to allow HDC to undertake infrastructure studies is a key point that I note that CCH have recognised themselves – as evidenced by their post that they had “*proactively, secured Government funding to validate the new settlement*” (emphasis added).^[i]

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Cllr. Dr. Anne Crampton



From other correspondence, I know local residents are as disappointed as me that funding has still not been used for the promised infrastructure studies, which would have been needed to “validate the new settlement”. Maybe the ruling coalition are afraid that – as countless residents have told me – such studies would show their proposals to be unviable and unnecessary?

I know that many residents have drawn the conclusion that the decision of CCH and the Liberal Democrats not to spend the funding on the promised infrastructure studies shows that they have no intention, or plan, to improve infrastructure locally. This is another huge disappointment to local people.

CCH and others risk allowing political shorthand to become their undoing. In one statement they included ‘wriggle room’ (emphasis added):

“If our MP was against Shapley Heath, he would not have supported a bid for anything associated with it.”^[iii]

It is a matter of record that I have supported infrastructure studies. However, they ought not to be slapdash in making other comments online that don’t give them any wriggle room. It is wrong for them to mislead the people of North East Hampshire.

Further, I couldn’t have been clearer that my support for infrastructure studies was “subject to the outcome of that Examination in Public, and final adoption of the Local Plan – and if a new settlement remains the administration’s policy” as Shapley Heath was in the ruling coalition’s proposed Local Plan at the time.

While building a new settlement at Shapley Heath may remain the policy of CCH and the Liberal Democrats in charge of HDC, HM Government’s independent planning inspector did not support this policy in the slightest. The findings of the Inspector were clear and unambiguous:

“I have a number of fundamental concerns with regard to the soundness of [Shapley Heath] [...]

In addition, there is little evidence to demonstrate that a site can actually be delivered in terms of infrastructure, viability and landownership within the identified AoS. The Council’s Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) does not include any consideration of the proposed new settlement other than a brief mention of the potential secondary school and the viability assessment has not directly considered a proposed new settlement in the AoS. [...]

Given my findings in terms of the housing requirement and that [Shapley Heath] is not required for the Plan to be sound [...] and in light of my findings above, I consider that for the Plan to be justified modifications [...] are required to remove [Shapley Heath], its supporting text and other references to the New Settlement from the Plan. The Council will also need to remove the area of search from the policies map on adoption for the Plan to be effective.”



I know the ruling coalition have tried to claim “[*Shapley Heath*] was removed only to avoid delaying adoption of the Local Plan”.^[iii] However, whether they consider it within or in addition to the Local Plan, it is clear from the Inspector’s findings that a new settlement is not “deliverable”, “effective”, “justified”, “sound”, “the most appropriate long-term growth strategy” or supported by evidence and studies.

Not only did the Inspector find a new settlement “not justified”, but already-met housing targets mean it continues to be so.

CCH have claimed that “*central government counterparts who are the ones driving the policies which are, in turn, driving us to be proactive in looking at long term options to deliver future housing requirements*”^[iv] but, as you know, HM Government reduced Hart’s indicative new homes target to 286 each year – a reduction of 137 new homes per year. Even so, the ruling coalition decided to include 423 dwellings per annum in their Local Plan, far more than needed. This doesn’t only affect the Local Plan in place today, but they have set a course for future Local Plans too, which will require dramatic action locally to stop in its tracks. Again, time is running out.

I have always set out my view that we ought to build on brownfield first – in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF); with HDC buying up more brownfield land, reusing redundant employment land and protecting our green fields. On the other hand, CCH say that they “*‘know’ we do not have sufficient brownfield sites within existing settlements to sustain future housing.*”^[v]

I guess that, under the current leadership of HDC – or, rather, with the lack of leadership in this area – they are right. I cannot impress upon you more strongly how critical it is for HDC to show ambition and get on with brownfield land acquisition, and subsequent regeneration, in a meaningful way. District Councillors need to adopt a different mindset to the past.

There will be a clear choice – and it will be for District Councillors to take the decisions on land acquisition and planning, not HM Government or the local Member of Parliament. If the right steps are taken to encourage coherent and strategic regeneration, it will not be necessary to have large greenfield developments in the next Local Plan.

Many of my constituents and I am firmly of the opinion that the local centres of Fleet, Yateley and Hook are of a bygone era and are in real need of revitalisation and regeneration. They want to see regeneration, revitalisation and renewal of brownfield land guided by a joined-up, visionary ‘masterplan’. They are telling me that they want to see the demolition of old buildings – rather than their conversion – in order that we can have a place that is truly fit for purpose. This will allow for the creation of the right mix of new retail units, community and leisure facilities, workspaces and homes for local young people to get on the property ladder. Not only that, but these can all be in beautiful buildings, which fit in with the locale, on green, tree-lined streets – that will truly add value to the local area.

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That's why countless local residents have expressly called for this, and many more agree. The problem in Hart District – to my mind – has been the lack of strategic vision provided by HDC – and, in particular, the narrow focus on land HDC owns. That is the reason that ugly, outdated buildings are still there. While it is always preferable to work with landowners, HDC could support the demolition of old buildings, and prevent their conversion for residential use, right now by progressing with an 'Article 4' direction and/or their 'Compulsory Purchase Order' powers to acquire sites for regeneration.

Our heritage sites and green spaces can continue to be protected and preserved for the enjoyment of local communities and future generations, with development able to be more robustly focused on brownfield sites. Regeneration offers a win-win for local government finance, aspirant homeowners and high street businesses too. Whilst I do not have the power to direct local Councillors nor Officers of HDC, I fervently hope they will act – and act soon – getting on with regeneration in order to protect green fields. You can be sure that I will continue to speak up for local residents in encouraging the Council to do this, as time is running out.

Once again, I would encourage you, other local residents, friends, family and neighbours to support me in these endeavours by signing the Constituency Conservation Charter at: ranil.uk/charter as this will send a clear message to the ruling coalition of HDC on their current policies.

I trust this answers your correspondence fully. Thank you again for writing.

With best wishes,

RANIL JAYAWARDENA

[i] 14th April 2021, 11.20am, CCH Facebook Page

[ii] 25th April 2021, 7.43pm, *ibid.*

[iii] 16th April 2021, 4.45pm, *ibid.*

[iv] 15th April 2021, 11.27am, *ibid.*

[v] 25th April 2021, 1.49pm, *ibid.*