

CHRISTOPHER CHOPE, OBE, MP.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Greg Clark MP  
Secretary of State  
Department for Communities & Local Government  
2 Marsham Street  
London, SW1P 4DF

30<sup>th</sup> December 2015

*Dear Greg,*

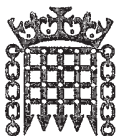
I am writing formally to request that you call in for your own determination the planning application made by Dorset County Council to itself (Application No. 8/15/0665) to develop a site wholly within the Green Belt for the construction of a new school.

I have already put down a written question for answer on 5<sup>th</sup> January pursuant to the helpful reply given by Brandon Lewis to my topical question on 14<sup>th</sup> December.

The closing date for objections to the proposed development was 24<sup>th</sup> December. Although the three week window of opportunity for objections between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> December coincided with the start of the festive season, more than six hundred individual letters of objection have been received by the County Council from local residents. This demonstrates the strength of local feeling about the matter.

The Christchurch Borough Council Core Strategy was adopted following a long period of consultation culminating in a public inquiry in 2014. This new Local Plan introduced changes to Green Belt boundaries consequent upon the removal of some land from the Green Belt for development. But the Green Belt status of the land off Marsh Lane, Christchurch, which is the subject of this controversial planning application, was specifically confirmed in the Plan. It had originally been proposed to be removed from the Green Belt but, following a very large number of objections which identified the adverse impact of the proposal, it was withdrawn during the inquiry process. Those objectors and many more are now incredulous that Dorset County Council is intent on giving itself planning permission to depart from the Local Plan in defiance of the adopted strategy. The County Council now asserts that the land is needed for a new school. Yet during the Core Strategy process the County Council consistently denied that there would need to be any additional school provision even following the construction of approximately one thousand new homes included in the Plan.

../...



-2-

There is a widespread belief locally that the reason that the County Council is seeking to build a new school on Green Belt land is because such land is far less expensive than land which is not in the Green Belt. Indeed, some alternative sites which have been identified have been rejected by the County Council on the grounds that they would cost too much.

I enclose with this letter a copy of one of the letters of objection which helps explain why this proposal is so contentious. It also exemplifies the nature and extent of local opposition.

I hope you agree that the only way in which the integrity of the Local Plan process can be maintained is for such a contentious proposal to be subject to a Public Inquiry before an independent Inspector.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Chope'.

CHRISTOPHER CHOPE

Enclosure