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Dear Councillor,

Welcome back to the new municipal year.

You may be aware that at Local Plan Steering Group on 3 June, it was recommended that Hart start to plan to take the unmet “need” of 1,500-1,700 houses from Rushmoor Borough Council. This will increase Hart’s allocation of 7,534 houses over the 20 year planning period to an astonishing 9,134 houses. I would like to ask you to oppose this suggestion at the next council meeting on 25 June for the following reasons:

I believe you should change your approach to this for a number of reasons:

1. The SHMA on which the alleged “need” is based in flawed because it contains a number of dubious assumptions on inward migration, average household size and job creation that adds undue pressure to Hart, Rushmoor and Surrey Heath. If these assumptions were corrected the overall housing need for the whole Housing Market Area would reduce to more manageable levels and neither Rushmoor nor Surrey Heath would have any unmet need. For reference, see the recent submission by We **♥** Hart to the Hop Garden Road (Owens Farm) appeal: <http://wehearthart.co.uk/sdm_downloads/revised-submission-to-hop-garden-road-appeal/>

1. Rushmoor are not making the most of their development land by planning for very low housing densities on the sites they have. If they adopted policies to allow for higher densities they could achieve all of their inflated “need” and more. For an indication of what is possible with a little creativity and imagination, please see this paper by a young local architect, Gareth Price: <http://wehearthart.co.uk/2015/03/rushmoor-could-take-all-of-harts-allocation-and-more/>
2. Adopting this idea will effectively undo all of the good work that has gone into identifying sites for 2,360 dwellings on brownfield land since last November. This is already far in excess of the 700-750 units that Hart said it could deliver over the 20 year planning period. For more details see here: <http://wehearthart.co.uk/2015/05/brownfield-capacity-in-fleet-and-hook-keeps-on-rising>
3. Hart already has a £78m infrastructure funding gap with no ideas on how this gap will be closed. Taking on an additional 1,600 houses will add an extra ~4,000 people to the district and add to the already intolerable pressure on our schools, GP surgeries, roads and railways without making a large enough contribution to funding our infrastructure. This can only make the situation worse. <http://wehearthart.co.uk/2015/03/hart-district-council-in-disarray-over-infrastructure-costs-and-funding/>
4. In proposing to meet all of Rushmoor’s need, Hart is going much further than the advice it received from the Planning Inspector back in March 2015 that said:

*"Tactically, Hart should show to an inspector that it acknowledges the housing problem, and accept that it is likely to have to take an element of unmet need now. This would show an inspector that Hart is being reasonable in the circumstances. In practice this could mean taking****an element of Rushmoor’s need now****, but dealing with further shortfalls in Rushmoor and Surrey Heath through an early review once there is more certainty over what those authorities can deliver. Hart would need to quantify the amount of unmet need it is agreeing to take in its plan. It would also need to justify why it’s not taking all the unmet need."*

So, far from taking "an element" of Rushmoor's need now, they are proposing to plan to take the whole lot. <http://wehearthart.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Draft-note-of-meeting-with-Keith-Holland-30th-March-2015.pdf>

1. It is clear that Hart have not followed the advice in the legal opinion of Peter Village QC that they should pursue the duty to cooperate discussions in a "robust and inquisitive manner". <http://wehearthart.co.uk/sdm_downloads/peter-village-qc-legal-opinion/>

This is an important time for Hart and decisions taken today will impact the district for decades to come. I urge you to think again and change tack to protect our environment and the future wellbeing of the residents of the district.

Yours sincerely,