



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Backbench Business Committee

Representations: Backbench Business

Tuesday 15 March 2022

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Members present: Ian Mearns (Chair); Bob Blackman; Patricia Gibson; Nigel Mills.

Questions 1-7

Representations made

I: Andrew Selous

Written evidence from witnesses:

– [Add names of witnesses and hyperlink to submissions]



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Andrew Selous made representations.

- Q1 **Chair:** Good afternoon and welcome to the Backbench Business Committee. We have one application in front of us this afternoon from Mr Andrew Selous on general practice capacity for large-scale housing developments. Andrew, over to you.

Andrew Selous: Thank you very much, Chair, for hearing me in person. My constituency issue that I have 14,000 new homes being built, which I think you would all agree is quite a large number, but there is no clear plan at all for how to scale up general practice capacity. It is frankly a muddle. The capital allocation from the Treasury, I am told, comes too late in the day to be useful, and it disappears just as quickly. I have raised this with the Treasury, and I don't think they are in disagreement with me. I have talked at length to the Health Secretary about this, and I've talked to the Levelling Up Secretary.

Whenever I raise this matter in the House, there are, "Hear, hears," and nods of assent from both sides of the House. I am not alone; I would guess probably 100 colleagues have similar issues. I am aware of 15 Government Members for whom this is a pressing issue. I am certainly aware so far of two Labour Members who have identified themselves and said that they would like a debate. I am sure there are more on the Labour Benches, because this is not a party-political issue; it affects the whole country.

You could go to the housing infrastructure fund, you might get the money from your local authority, or the Treasury might just come up trumps. The thing is a mess. In this country, as you'll know, housing development is often opposed because the infrastructure doesn't come with it, and no infrastructure is more important than being able to get to see a doctor. I just think we really need to challenge the Government on this for clarity and certainty. I think we would do all our constituents a favour if we could get that, hence the reason for the debate. I am confident that it would be well supported.

- Q2 **Chair:** I am sure that it would. It isn't just GPs. There used to be a Department for Education calculation that every hundred homes generated six children per year group, so if you've got 14,000 homes, that would be like 840 children per year group.

Andrew Selous: I am very careful when talking about this to always talk about general practice capacity. That includes GPs, but it is not just GPs; it is the practice nurses, the clinical pharmacists, the musculoskeletal specialists, the social prescribing team—the whole primary care team. You cannot do it without GPs, but it is the whole team. That is why I always refer to general practice capacity.

- Q3 **Chair:** I am just throwing in an added thing in terms of school capacity. A number of schools would be required for that as well. I would just add that in there, because when you're talking about infrastructure generally, that is another added frisson, as it were.



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Andrew Selous: You are quite right. Schools are obviously absolutely vital as well. My experience is that I have never been short of school places, which have always arrived by hook or by crook. I cannot say that with general practice at all. I don't have the same degree of certainty whatsoever. It is not that other infrastructure does not matter—it clearly does—but my experience at the moment is that the system is not delivering with clarity and certainty. It should come with the rations. You are getting 5,000 houses; you are going to get x uplift in your general practice capacity. It should be clear and certain. That is what we don't have, and that is what I want to try to get the Government to assent to.

Q4 **Chair:** Fourteen thousand homes is quite a lot of people. That would probably mean, if you use the English average, you would be wanting something like eight GPs.

Andrew Selous: In my area, we are under-provisioned for GPs anyway compared with the England and East of England average, on the figures that I have seen so far, so we are starting below what we should have anyway, and then we are adding to it. My constituents are just going apoplectic about it.

Q5 **Chair:** Andrew, would the answering Department be communities and local government, or would it be the Department of Health?

Andrew Selous: Or the Treasury. Why not stick it to the Cabinet Office, or the Office of the Prime Minister? It is a very good question, and therein lies the problem, because everyone slightly points at some of it. I talked to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care about this only last night. Of course, he has run six Government Departments now. He ran the local government Department. He said, "That is why we had the housing infrastructure fund," but he doesn't always come up with the goods. Bob might be lucky, because he is probably a better negotiator than me, and he might get it, but then you and I might fall foul, Ian, and we would have to go begging or borrowing somewhere else. It is the lack of clarity and certainty that I just can't take at the moment.

Q6 **Chair:** The reason I am asking is that Levelling Up, Housing and Communities would be down to answer in Westminster Hall on Tuesday 29 March.

Andrew Selous: I would go for that, because the Secretary of State for Levelling Up owes me a meeting, for which I don't have a date in the diary, so I will have a formal one with one of his junior Ministers, to set me up for my meeting with him. I will take that as a starter.

Q7 **Chair:** If we were to offer you that 90-minute debate on Tuesday morning, 29 March, you would be happy to take that.

Andrew Selous: Yes, absolutely. Let me just check very quickly.

Chair: It is the last week before the Easter recess begins, but it is the Tuesday.



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Andrew Selous: I don't think I know any reason why not but let me just quickly go to my diary. That is absolutely fine. There is nothing. What time? Would that be 9.30 am to 11 am?

Chair: Yes.

Andrew Selous: That sounds perfect. I will take that very willingly and extremely gratefully, Chair.

Chair: We will contact you immediately after the meeting and confirm that, if that is the decision that we make.

Andrew Selous: Is there hot competition for this slot?

Chair: We have quite a number of debates on the list, but it seems to me that you are in front of us and it would be one that would fit.

Andrew Selous: Perfect. Thank you so much. I really appreciate you giving me a hearing.

Chair: Nice to see you. Thank you very much indeed. That concludes our public deliberations.