

## Written evidence from the Maids Moreton & Foscoate Action Group

On contacting Helen Hayes (MP, Member of the Environmental Audit Committee) concerning our experience of the planning system and its devastating impact on the environment, Ms Hayes has encouraged us to submit evidence to the inquiry on the Sustainability of the Built Environment.

Our involvement with planning concerns a relatively small development of 170 houses on the edge of Maids Moreton, a village in North Buckinghamshire. Two documentaries have now made about this site, with a possible third broadcast documentary in the pipeline. Both documentaries, 'Maids Moreton: Beyond the Boundary (Parts I & II)' can be viewed at <https://maidsmoretonmatters.org/>.

We would urge members of the inquiry to watch both documentaries because, if they persevere beyond the first five minutes, they will see that the documentaries are **not site specific** but instead highlight the problems in the planning system which are experienced by residents across the county and, we suspect, throughout the country. The documentaries perfectly encapsulate the reality of a planning policy which holds planners accountable for the delivery of housing targets only. The documentaries have been viewed by over **13,000** people which suggests they have struck a chord way beyond Maids Moreton and across the whole county.

Essentially, the problem is that planning officers are held accountable for reaching almost unattainable housing targets, but there is absolutely **no** accountability for 'sustainable development'. The outcome of this pitiful system is that when a developer announces a desire to build on a particular site (generally because the site is a desirable location that will generate the greatest profits), planning officers see the site as 'deliverable' - a **very** valuable asset to boost their housing numbers - so they will do anything to secure planning permission on behalf of the developer. We have, in essence, a '**developer-led**' planning system.

In a developer-led planning system, 'Sustainable Development' - the golden thread which runs through the NPPF tackling flooding, preservation of BMV agricultural land, protection of historic assets, ensuring net biodiversity gains etc, and which Mr Jenrick goes to great lengths to preserve in his proposed planning reforms - is simply an inconvenient obstacle which planning officers work with the developer to push aside. In effect, without accountability for sustainable development, the concept of 'sustainable development' is just a bundle of fluff which can be swept under the carpet. The resultant environmental impact of the current planning policy is devastating as a 'deliverable' development becomes a juggernaut which cannot be stopped regardless of 'sustainability'.

We should be grateful if you would accept this, together with both documentaries on the Maids Moreton site, as evidence to the inquiry accordingly.

Kind regards,  
Kate Pryke  
(on behalf of the Maids Moreton & Foscoate Action Group)

*August 2021*