



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

To: Nick Rushton CC, Leader of Leicestershire County Council

County Hall
Leicester Rd
Glenfield, Leicester
LE3 8RA

Dear Nick,

20 June 2021

RE: MMDR – Southern section – Reply to Your Letter of 15 June

Thank you for your prompt reply to my letter on the 15th of June. You note that the Cabinet sets out in a factual way why the County Council is not in a position to accept the HIF grant. I question then why no other party assesses acceptance of the HIF grant to be unviable.

I reply in the understanding that the Secretary of State has written to you regarding the concerns of Government regarding LCC's plan to reject the HIF grant. I am sure the Department has read the report in detail, and I very much hope the points he raises will be taken with the seriousness with which they are owed.

Similarly, I have read the report, and I notice a few crucial omissions. For example, there is a claim made in paragraph 8 that Melton Borough Council had at one point proposed a contribution of £6 million. The report neglects to mention that this would have been the New Homes Bonus. It is unreasonable to equate this with LCC's subsequent request that Melton Borough Council mitigate risk through its core budget. It is similarly unreasonable to conclude that Melton's offer of £800,000, equating to approximately a fifth of Melton Borough Council's budget is not substantial enough while failing to mention how generous it is in the circumstances.

Similarly, I note no attempt in the report to explore the possibilities of a supplementary planning document, other than to mention in paragraph 10 that it is being explored by Melton Borough Council. I understand from a number of people who are authorities on planning matters that an SPD would go far in mitigating s106 risks raised in the report, yet this avenue remains unexplored.

Furthermore, you write in your letter that LCC's offer to MBC was "fair in the circumstances". I'm afraid that is most certainly not my interpretation, nor that of six of Leicestershire's District Councils, nor Government.

Despite near continuous dialogue at one point on the MMDR between you and I, I also cannot describe your engagement or dealings with MBC as fair either. I was disappointed to find that each time we reached close to agreement on even the smallest of issues, LCC changed the goal posts.

Additionally, given that Leicestershire County Council has made a strong case in the past for why Leicestershire deserves greater investment from central Government, a cause I and other Leicestershire MPs have championed on your behalf in Parliament, I hope you appreciate the glaring irony of Leicestershire now refusing UK Government grant funding after a most competitive process in which many other parts of the country were turned down. Indeed, throughout this process and since my



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election I have fought to ensure that the HIF funding was protected. It is deeply unfortunate that this commitment has not been reciprocated by the County Council.

I can only hope that Leicestershire County Council decides to accept the bid, because I would not want to see its actions deterring central Government's willingness to invest and work with Leicestershire in the future, nor business' confidence in the reliability of the County Council. Given some of the correspondence I have received from residents and businesses on this matter, I am deeply concerned it already has.

I continue to believe that the MMDR southern section is good for Melton, good for Leicestershire and good for the East Midlands. I know I am joined in this view by Homes England, and other elements of the UK government, as well as Melton Borough Council and the overwhelming majority of Melton residents.

I very much hope we can find a common resolution that recognises the importance of this development and the forward commitment central Government has given to this project.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alicia Kearns'.

Alicia Kearns MP
Member of Parliament for Rutland and Melton