



22nd July 2024

Dear Rt. Hon. Angela Rayner MP,

Congratulations on your appointment as Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Deputy Prime Minister.

I write concerning planning application P24/S1613/SCR for an Environmental Impact Assessment Screening. The application concerns a site with outline planning permission for 95 homes on an area called Thames Farm, granted on appeal in 2017. The local planning authority is South Oxfordshire District Council.

The site is of particular importance due to its proximity to an aquifer supplying water to the town of Henley-on-Thames (population ~12,000 people) and nearby villages. This water supply has no back up and if interrupted would potentially leave tens of thousands of residents without potable water. Its importance affords it SPZ1 (groundwater) protection. The site is also an unstable chalk dip slope, with the aquifer running through it, and is prone to sink holes. The applicant has been unable to date to submit satisfactory plans for surface water drainage to the local planning authority due to the complexities of the site.

The applicant, Taylor Wimpy, has now requested an Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Opinion.

You will note in reviewing the application (P24/S1613/SCR), responses from consultees including Oxfordshire County Council, Henley-on-Thames Town Council, Shiplake Parish Council, Harpsden Parish Council and Thames Farm Action Group that local authorities and residents believe this to be insufficient and a comprehensive, full Environmental Impact Assessment should be carried out.

I support wholeheartedly calls for a full and comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment to be required before construction on this sensitive local site is considered further. Failure to deliver this site to the highest possible environmental standards would be disastrous for the area.

My understanding now is that the decision on this matter rests with the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities as the local planning authority was unable to determine the application before the deadline while awaiting a response from the Environment Agency. The applicant Taylor Wimpy therefore referred the matter to yourself.

I would be grateful if you could take the concerns expressed in this letter, and the above-mentioned consultees and local residents into consideration.

Freddie van Mierlo MP
Member of Parliament for Henley and Thame