

Hook Park Development (Case Ref: ED67811)

From: Ed Davey MP (edward.davey.mp@parliament.uk)

To: familyvine@aol.com

Date: Thursday 20 November 2025 at 10:33 GMT

Dear Julie Turner

Thank you for writing to me about the proposed Hook Park development and for sharing your concerns about this, many of which I share.

Let me first apologise for the delay in replying and explain my reason for waiting before replying.

Put briefly, ideas around this area of Hook have been floated for over 5 years now and each time I see any details, they seem to change. **So I wanted to wait to see if an actual application would ever be submitted** - and now one has, it's easier to know what we are dealing with. I'm grateful for your patience.

I understand your local councillors have been in communication to explain that the Council's Planning department has now published the application and that this can be seen at: <https://www.kingston.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control> Reference: 25/02749/OUT

This application is for Outline only. This means the applicants are looking to seek approval for the 2,000 homes and the access to and from the site, including proposed changes to Clayton Road, without providing all the detailed designs of the development itself at this stage.

I have now found the time to read key parts of this planning application to decide for myself whether the applicants have fully dealt with the concerns of local people and my own concerns, and my conclusion is, they have not. **Therefore, I will be opposing this application.**

I plan to work with local councillors and residents to work out how best to do this. This will not be easy, not least because the latest planning reforms just announced by the Labour Government this very week are deeply alarming, as they could take away decision-making on this application from Kingston Council and thus our local community. (see below)

Before I deal with the substance of your concerns - on issues from traffic to social infrastructure, biodiversity and sheer scale of the development - let me comment on the Government's key strategic planning policy changes that directly affect this site.

Greybelt / Greenbelt

When Poppymill first put forward ideas several years ago, I felt no application in this area would stand any chance at all, due to protections given to greenbelt land like this. Kingston Council, local councillors and my party have always been very strong in supporting greenbelt designation in general and have always opposed attempts to water them down.

However, Labour's manifesto at the last General Election in 2024 proposed a massive shift in planning law with respect to greenbelt land. When combined with the London Mayor's change in policy towards greenbelt in his developing London Plan, the protections we were relying upon are much weaker. The Labour Government is legislating to give effect to these proposals and are pushing to re-designate some greenbelt land as "greybelt". This is a new factor and fundamentally weakens the planning law protections for sites like this.

Indeed, Kingston Council like other local authorities must now review greenbelt designations in the light of new planning law and guidance. While there will be some scope to challenge such re-designations - for example, on the grounds that a proposed site is rich in biodiversity and is not therefore "greybelt" - the outcome is much less certain than before. I am particularly worried about this process for the Hook Park site given the stance of the London Mayor and the Greater London Authority and how the Council must take into account the GLA's evolving policies.

In short, the greenbelt protections that we had been relying on to defeat any development on this site are already much weaker and may offer little or no protection now. That means we may have to rely on other planning law arguments to oppose this application successfully.

New Government "call in" powers may impact how this application is decided

Moreover, this week the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Steve Reed) made a surprise and shocking written statement to Parliament called "The Next Stage of Planning Reform". In this statement, he said:

"Second, while planning decisions are principally for local authorities, I hold powers that allow me to take over applications and determine them directly – ensuring the right decisions are taken in the local and national interest.

Given the scale of the housing crisis, and the imperative of building the homes we need, I want to use these powers in a more focused and active way. I will require local authorities to notify me where they intend to refuse an application for 150 homes or

more – providing me with the opportunity to decide whether to take it over.

This will be enforced through a new Consultation Direction and a change to legislation, and supported by a revised call-in and recovery policy.”

The full statement can be read at:

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2025-11-18/hcws1062>

As you can immediately see, applied to the Hook Park application, this means that if Kingston Council intends to refuse this application, they would now have to notify central Government, and Ministers would be able to call-in the application and determine it themselves, over-riding local opinion and our locally-elected council.

I have immediately written to Steve Reed to seek clarification and to express my alarm and total opposition to this proposal. I have also consulted with my party's Commons Spokesperson on this, Gideon Amos MP, who is a planning expert, and he is going to work with me to expose and oppose this undemocratic, centralising proposal. My letter to the Minister is attached to this.

My response to your specific concerns

Setting aside for a moment both the likely greenbelt redesignation and these latest shocking and unfair changes to planning law being pushed forward by the Labour Government, let me address the many points you have raised about the proposed Hook Park development.

While I have yet to talk to planning experts - who we will need to take advice from in opposing this application - the rest of this reply sets out both my response to many of your detailed comments made to me on the “pre-application consultation” (which is similar in many ways to the actual outline application we now have) and my initial view on issues we will need to raise in opposition to this proposals having now read the key documents - in terms of planning law and wider concerns for our community.

Traffic and transport infrastructure

While I have yet to read every single document in the application relating to highways infrastructure, transport assessments and the impact on local traffic and parking, I have read the main ones, and I am not convinced the application has fully dealt with our concerns locally.

The impact of this proposed development on the level of traffic going down Clayton and Somerset Roads, as well as many other surrounding roads, has not been properly dealt with. Coupled with the likely spread of parking onto the existing adjacent residential area, the level of disruption for local residents could be significant.

From the sheer scale of the development to the current details of how traffic will enter and exit the site, I do not think the applicants fully understand how busy these local roads are now. The proposed “improvements” to Clayton Road are not only controversial in themselves for local people but I am not convinced they will properly tackle the many problems already experienced down Clayton Road when large vehicles get stuck behind other vehicles, creating delays and congestion. With more vehicles going down Clayton Road, including many more buses, the potential for significant extra disruption is severe.

The proposed new road on and off Hook Park from the A309 Kingston by-pass and the proposed new carriage way to the junction with Woodstock Lane South and the A309 may help divert some existing traffic away from Clayton Road, but with the sheer number of people who will be living at Hook Park, it is hard to believe that this will offset the extra journeys down Clayton Road.

Moreover, from what I can tell, these proposed new roads and junctions on and off the A309 do not yet have any agreement or substantial engagement from the different Highways authorities. They would need to agree on everything from road safety to the capacity of these roads to absorb the extra traffic. There must be serious doubt as to whether that will be possible, and I think this should be one significant area for opponents of this application, like ourselves, to explore.

Public transport proposals

The viability of this application may also depend on the credibility of the public transport proposals being put forward. From diverting existing buses to a new shuttle bus service to link the site with mainline train stations, the applicants clearly hope that their ideas will be sufficient.

I have mentioned one major problem with their proposals already - namely the impact on Clayton Road from these extra buses - but I am also not convinced these plans will be sufficient given the scale of the development proposed and the location of Hook Park itself. While I have yet to study the huge number of Transport Assessments published alongside these plans, this is another aspect of this application we should challenge: to deliver even what is proposed would require a number of authorities to agree and would have traffic impacts across Hook and Chessington.

Water infrastructure

The applicant does not appear to have given sufficient consideration to the water and sewage infrastructure needed to support this development, and the knock-on effects to existing homes and businesses.

Over the years talking to local people, one complaint I have occasionally picked up relates to water pressure in our area. I

think it is essential that we demand much greater information about how this proposal would not only invest in water and sewage infrastructure to meet the needs of the residents of Hook Park, but also deal with longstanding problems for existing residents too.

Social infrastructure (health and education)

One of my biggest concerns relates to the impact of this scale of development on our local primary health care services - from GPs to dentists and pharmacies - as well as local nurseries and schools. Once again, given the sheer scale of this development, it is only right that we know what investments are planned to make sure our local NHS and education services are not overwhelmed.

The applicants make what appear to be largely unsubstantiated claims about school numbers and places, concluding that there is capacity in current schools. They may be correct and I understand local schools are supportive of the proposals but this issue will need to be tested in depth as until relatively recently local school places were in short supply.

For the NHS, the applicants are incredibly vague, with promises of potential funding for existing or new health centres. Given the local NHS has failed to deliver on investment in existing GP premises over many years - such as Hook's Gosbury Hill clinic - I remain highly sceptical about this. Indeed, I think this is a serious weakness of the whole proposal. I have long campaigned for improvements to primary healthcare in our area, and I know the effort required to win investment in premises like the Merritt Medical Centre many years ago and Surbiton's Health Centre over 15 years ago. It is not acceptable that the impact on our local health services has not been fully and comprehensively considered.

It has long been my party's national policy to require proposals for significant local development to be accompanied with infrastructure investment that both meets the need of the new homes being built but also reassures existing residents that their services will be improved not worsened. **I do not believe the application submitted does this and I consider this an essential requirement.**

After these key physical and social infrastructure objections, there are a range of other issues you and others have raised, which I have a great deal of sympathy for.

From the proximity of some of the proposed development to existing homes, most notably Oaklands Close, to the sheer scale of this proposed development, it doesn't seem the developers have listened to local residents. We all know there are now national and London-wide housing targets, but I remain unconvinced that a "top down" approach is necessary or appropriate.

One of the reasons I and my party have opposed the way the last Government originally proposed "top down housing targets" and have opposed this Government's approach too, is that a "top down" approach can never fully reflect the nature and needs of every local community.

While I do believe every local authority does need to build more homes, including more social homes, the truth is Kingston Council is doing just that. The current council home building programme by RBK is the biggest seen locally for over 40 years, and our council is leading almost every London Borough in that regard - but Kingston Council is building new homes with the consent of local people, taking into account the impacts on the local community.

Moreover, Kingston Council has given permission to private developments for many new homes in the Borough, but some developers are currently failing to build out their approved planning permissions, as is the case in much of the rest of London. Therefore, we do need to question the sheer size of the housing targets being foisted on our Borough as they represent a significant argument used by the applicants for Hook Park Development.

I hope this letter responds to your concerns and reassures you that I share many of your objections to the Hook Park application now submitted.

Indeed, now there is a live application, I would be grateful for your detailed thoughts on what is actually proposed, even if they are likely to repeat your previous concerns.

As a community, faced with the new Government's approach to planning and the changes being pushed by the London Mayor, we do need to think carefully about how best to make our objections effective. I am personally convinced that the infrastructure objections are our strongest but I am keen to collect views.

Thank you again for contacting me and for your patience.

With best wishes,

Ed Davey

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