

BLAKE STEPHENSON MP
Member of Parliament for Mid Bedfordshire



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Robin Porter

Chief Executive Officer
Luton Borough Council

Dear Robin,

I trust this letter finds you well.

As the Member of Parliament for Mid Bedfordshire, I recognise the important role that Luton plays in the lives of my constituents and our local communities – often as a place to work, spend time or travel from.

I also know that Mid Bedfordshire and Luton Borough will share a number of common interests and challenges over the coming years. In particular, I recognise that communities like Bushmead in Streatley and the future occupiers of the North of Luton development will rely on a wide range of services provided within Luton Borough.

As Luton Borough Council shapes its thinking about its new Local Plan, I hope that the Mid Bedfordshire perspective I provide in this letter will help to ensure that we can continue to work closely together to deliver for people right across our communities.

Firstly, I want to emphasise the importance of Luton meeting its housing targets through urban regeneration and sites within the Borough as much as possible. Your Issues and Options document sets out your desire for urban regeneration and I believe that – particularly given Luton's strong transport links (a direct train to London, a major international airport, and a future link to Oxford and Cambridge through East-West Rail) there are significant opportunities for densification in the Borough to deliver the housing target that the Government has asked of you.

I also note your consideration of developing industrial sites and previously developed land. I believe that these should be a top priority – particularly where mixed use, dense development would allow the retention of employment uses alongside new residential dwellings.

Central Bedfordshire has committed to deliver 7,350 homes for Luton as part of its most recent Local Plan. With significant pressures of our own and more limited opportunities for densification, any further housing unmet by Luton that is met in Central Bedfordshire will likely be more urban sprawl into our countryside. I believe that for both Luton and Central Bedfordshire this would be a decidedly sub-optimal outcome.

I would now like to explore some opportunities where I believe that we can work together across our area to deliver economic growth and new jobs for all of our residents. As you will know from our previous discussions, I am working to grow the tourism economy in Bedfordshire. As the home of a major international airport, I believe that Luton can play a significant role in ensuring that visitors stay in our county and I welcome that tourism is considered in the *Luton's Economy* section of the Issues & Options document.

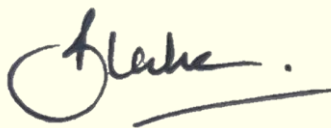
One of the considerations given in the report is about the provision of new hotels and accommodation. Obviously this must be balanced against delivering new housing, but I understand from my early engagement with local tourism stakeholders that a lack of accommodation in our county is inhibiting growth in the sector. I would welcome consideration being given to the role that Luton can play in addressing this shortfall.

The Airport itself must continue to be supported to grow and I welcome our shared ambition in this area. We must also ensure that that growth is well-planned and robustly prepared for. For example, I believe that the significant impact of expansion on Thameslink services from Bedford to London needs greater consideration.

Finally, I note that there is both a challenge and an opportunity presented by the future of the Stellantis site. Given the significant contribution that the site makes to local employment – both in Luton and more widely – I believe it is vital that the site continues to provide meaningful employment opportunities. If the site must be re-developed to attract new employers, I would welcome a mixed-use re-development that delivers both new residential units and suitable employment for industrial or specialised manufacturing.

I trust that this response is helpful and I look forward to continuing to work together for the benefit of people across our communities.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Blake', with a horizontal line underneath it.

Blake Stephenson MP
Member of Parliament for Mid Bedfordshire