

Joint Statement from Cllrs Frost and Hastie, Woodford & Weedon Ward

We accept that, because of national requirements placed upon us, West Northamptonshire Council must identify capacity for around 10,000 new homes between now and 2043. The question is not whether we build, but where and how we do it.

During the Rural Areas member briefing in February 2025, members were reminded that our rural areas already account for around 29% of the population and 30% of the housing stock. Spread across 150 parishes and more than 200 settlements, that is a significant and diverse rural footprint.

Under the original Joint Core Strategy, only 11% of housing growth was intended for rural areas. However, those areas have absorbed 24% of the district's growth since the start of the plan period so our villages have already taken more than double what was originally envisaged.

In our ward Woodford and Weedon, that pressure is felt acutely. We have communities ranging from Woodford Halse, with around 4,000 residents, to hamlets like Catesby and Fawsley with only a handful of homes. These are not areas designed to absorb continuous growth at scale.

The consequences are visible. Infrastructure particularly highways was already under strain and is now, in the words of our own Highways Dept. it is in "managed decline". That is not a sustainable position.

Against that backdrop, applying what appears to be a blanket 10% growth expectation across primary and secondary villages risks repeating and compounding the mistakes of the past. It does not reflect the different capacities of our settlements, nor the reality on the ground.

We also share the concerns raised by parish councils regarding errors in the points-based assessment, which have led to some villages being incorrectly positioned within the settlement hierarchy. Those concerns deserve to be properly addressed.

If we are serious about getting this right, then we need to shift the focus. That means prioritising brownfield development in and around our towns, where infrastructure and services already exist. It also means properly considering the strategic opportunities already identified including Rugby Parkway, Harrington Airfield, Old Stratford, and south of Long Buckby and extending that thinking to areas such as the south of Roade and Northampton Vale.

As matters stand, we do not believe this Local Plan strikes the right balance between housing need, sustainability and fairness to our rural communities. Unless that changes, we will not be able to support it.