

Helen Whately

Helen Whately is the Conservative MP for [Faversham and Mid Kent](#), and has been an MP continually since 7 May 2015. She currently undertakes the role of Shadow Secretary of State for Work and Pensions.



Written questions

Review the written questions submitted by Helen Whately.

Q: To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government why the decision was taken for the Highsted Park outline planning applications to be made by you, rather than locally elected councillors who know the area well?

A: The decision to call in this application was made on the basis of the policy set out in the Written Ministerial Statement of 26 October 2012. In line with the Written Ministerial Statement of 26 March 2019, we do not give specific reasons for calling in planning applications.

A public inquiry into the proposals will now take place, overseen by an independent Planning Inspector. Once the inquiry has concluded, the Inspector will prepare a report and recommendation for Ministers. A target date for determining the applications will be set when that report is received in MHCLG.

No discussions or meetings have taken place with the developers. Correspondence which outlined the scheme, and requested a meeting, but which did not seek call in of the applications was received. In addition, among a number of written requests to call in these applications, one was received from a project director of the developers, and one from their planning consultants.

Q: To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government if you or any of your deputies or officials have had any conversations or communications with the developers of the Highsted Park outline planning applications?

A: The decision to call in this application was made on the basis of the policy set out in the Written Ministerial Statement of 26 October 2012. In line with the Written Ministerial Statement of 26 March 2019, we do not give specific reasons for calling in planning applications.

A public inquiry into the proposals will now take place, overseen by an independent Planning Inspector. Once the inquiry has concluded, the Inspector will prepare a report and recommendation for Ministers. A target date for determining the applications will be set when that report is received in MHCLG.

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Q: To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government if she will be deciding on the proposed M2 motorway junction at the same time as the proposed Highsted Park outline planning applications in order to claim the housing development is of national significance.

A: The decision to call in this application was made on the basis of the policy set out in the Written Ministerial Statement of 26 October 2012. In line with the Written Ministerial Statement of 26 March 2019, we do not give specific reasons for calling in planning applications.

A public inquiry into the proposals will now take place, overseen by an independent Planning Inspector. Once the inquiry has concluded, the Inspector will prepare a report and recommendation for Ministers. A target date for determining the applications will be set when that report is received in MHCLG.

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Q: To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government how safeguarding the Best and Most Versatile agricultural land will be taken into account when she considers the Highsted Park development.

A: Call-in decisions are inherently about process and not the merits of any given planning application. I refer the hon Member to the Written Ministerial Statement made on 26 March 2019 (HCWS1452), and on 26 October 2012, columns 71WS-72WS.

All relevant matters relating to the Highsted Park development will now be considered via a public inquiry.

Q: To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government what steps she is taking to safeguard the Best and Most Versatile agricultural land

A: This Government places great importance on the value of our agricultural land. The National Planning Policy Framework sets out how the best and most versatile agricultural land should be reflected in planning policies and decisions. The Framework is clear that where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality. How this is applied is a matter for local planning authorities in the first instance, through their plans and decisions.

Q: To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government how the commitment to safeguard the Best and Most Versatile agricultural land is applied to planning decisions

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Q: To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government how she plans to report on the effectiveness of her safeguarding of the Best and Most Versatile agricultural land in line with the National Planning Policy Framework.

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Q: To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government if she will publish how many hectares of the Best and Most Versatile agricultural land are (a) protected, (b) under consideration for development and (c) approved for consent in each (i) local authority area and (ii) constituency

A: The information requested is not held by the Department.

Q: To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government for what reason she called in Highsted Park outline planning applications 21/503906/EIOUT and 21/503914/EIOUT.

A: Call-in decisions are inherently about process and not the merits of any given planning application. I refer the hon Member to the Written Ministerial Statement made on 26 March 2019 (HCWS1452), and on 26 October 2012, columns 71WS-72WS.

All relevant matters relating to the Highsted Park development will now be considered via a public inquiry.

Q: To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government what criteria she uses to call in planning applications before they are discussed by local councillors.

A: Call-in decisions are inherently about process and not the merits of any given planning application. I refer the hon Member to the Written Ministerial Statement made on 26 March 2019 (HCWS1452), and on 26 October 2012, columns 71WS-72WS.

All relevant matters relating to the Highsted Park development will now be considered via a public inquiry.