

CONFIDENTIAL

[REDACTED]

Shropshire Council
The Guildhall
Frankwell Quay
Shrewsbury
Shropshire SY3 8HB

Date 7th October 2026

Dear [REDACTED]

Re: Proposed use of new-build housing site in Shropshire by Enfield Council

We are writing to put on record our significant concerns regarding your proposals to use a 25 new-build housing site, at Dutton Close, Stoke Heath, in Shropshire as accommodation for households to whom Enfield Council owes a housing duty. While we understand that we have no legal grounds to prevent the placement of individuals at this site, we need to make you aware of the significant local issues, concerns and accessibility challenges and asked you are fully assured that these can be addressed.

The site comprises a mix of two-bedroom and three-bedroom houses. While we recognise that housing authorities face considerable pressures in securing accommodation, this specific site is not suitable for some of this type of accommodation for a number of reasons; the rural location of the site, the absence of any amenities within walking distance, the absence of a local bus service, as well as the impact on the residents. The development of these houses was supported by the community due to the need for additional housing to support local demands from within the community. Proposals to potentially open these properties up for relocation purposes, will only serve to resurrect the very recent community cohesion issues and the need for the community to have space and time to recover. There is a very real risk that any move to place households from London temporarily will create avoidable community tensions once again and place incoming households in a difficult and potentially isolating position.

By way of local context, although supported to respond to local needs, this site has recently, without local consultation, been proposed and begun use by Serco for asylum dispersal use. This generated substantial local concern and residents, along with the Parish Council have been clear that they expect the homes to be made available for local people to purchase or rent. At Dutton Close, in the past few months, there has already been a visible increase in police presence, online activity by auditors and commentators on Facebook and YouTube, and public protest activity, including involvement from the national group Raise the Colours. Along with this there was significant local and national press coverage and items on social media. Further to this last week there has activity on social media within Market Drayton, the neighbouring town, that required a police response with escalating concerns.



These events demonstrate that the issue has already attracted significant attention beyond the immediate local community and underline the need for any future use of the site to be approached with extreme care. In our view, it would be inappropriate to proceed with any proposal which removes these properties from local access, and certainly without a full assessment of the potential impact on the residents and households who may be placed there, the safety and wellbeing of those households, the capacity of local services, and the wider risk of escalating community tension. Further to this there is need to engage with the Town and Parish Council, Resident groups, local police and other significant statutory partners to fully understand the concerns regarding this site and potential impacts of your decision.

Shropshire is a particularly rural county, and this site is not located within a town or village (it is effectively a street surrounded by open countryside (fields) close to a prison and a military airfield). As mentioned above, access to essential services is very limited. There is no local train station, and the nearest bus stop is approximately 1.5 miles away with a limited service of one bus per hour (and no transport after 7pm). The walk to the bus stop involves a walk along a country road with an extremely narrow path, which is unsuitable for use by people in a wheelchair or those with buggies. In practical terms, households placed at the site will need regular access to a car in order to manage day-to-day life, including accessing shops, schools, GP services, employment, appointments, support networks and wider community facilities.

We do not believe that the location will be suitable for households used to a more urban environment, particularly those without private transport but requiring access to public amenities, for example; households with health needs, households reliant on public transport, and those who may require continuing access to support, employment, education, medical treatment or care.

Furthermore, as you are aware, the legal framework is clear that accommodation secured under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 must be suitable. Section 206 requires accommodation secured by a housing authority under homelessness functions to be suitable, and section 210 requires authorities to have regard to prescribed matters when determining suitability. The statutory Homelessness Code of Guidance confirms that suitability must be assessed in relation to the applicant and all members of their household, and that location will always be a relevant factor. It also states that suitability requires consideration of all aspects of the accommodation in light of the household's needs, requirements and circumstances.

Where accommodation is to be used to bring a homelessness duty to an end, including through a private rented sector offer under section 193 of the Housing Act 1996, the suitability assessment must be especially robust. The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012 requires authorities to take into account, among other matters, the location of the accommodation; its proximity and accessibility to employment, caring responsibilities, education, medical facilities and other support essential to wellbeing; local services, amenities and transport; and, where accommodation is outside the placing authority's district, the distance from that district.



Section 208 of the Housing Act 1996 also provides that, so far as reasonably practicable, a local housing authority should secure accommodation within its own district. Where accommodation is secured outside the authority's district, the placing authority must notify the local housing authority in whose area the accommodation is situated. We would therefore, as the Council, to demonstrate that it has properly considered whether accommodation is available within, or closer to, Enfield before considering placements in rural Shropshire, and that it has assessed the individual circumstances of any household before making any offer.

We would welcome urgent confirmation and a meeting to outline Enfield Council's intentions in respect of this site, including whether any units are being considered as temporary accommodation, settled accommodation, or a private rented sector offer intended to discharge the main housing duty under section 193 of the Housing Act 1996. A meeting would provide us, and other local partners, the opportunity to present and discuss the full implications of this site to you, noting impacts for households, local services and the wider community and to enable us to understand your intentions regarding the site, how suitability will be assessed for each household, what consideration has been given to the absence of adequate transport, access to services, education, health care, employment and support needs; what engagement will take place with Shropshire Council and relevant local services including statutory agencies; and how Enfield will safeguard the households it places in light of the risk of increased community tension.

The community and residents of Dutton Close have been through a significant period of distress over recent months, with genuine concerns and tensions, particularly given the uninvited involvement and attention of individuals and groups from outside Shropshire. There is a strong risk that the suggested proposal would result in a reoccurrence and potentially an escalation into public disorder. Residents now need a meaningful period of recovery and reset, and a fair opportunity for these homes to be focused towards meeting an identified local housing need. We recognise the acute housing pressures facing Enfield Council; however, our clear view is that this is not the right site, and this is not the right time. Proceeding with placements at Dutton Close would present real and avoidable risks to community cohesion, local residents, and any households placed there. We therefore strongly urge Enfield Council not to progress any use of this site, and certainly not without full engagement with Shropshire Council, Stoke upon Tern Parish Council, local residents and members, the police and other relevant statutory partners.

Yours sincerely,



Tanya Miles
Chief Executive
On behalf of Shropshire Council
Council

Graham Bould
Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer
On behalf of Stoke on Tern Parish

