

HERTSMERE BOROUGH COUNCIL CONSTITUTION

Code of Conduct for Members and Officers

4.6 Community Advocates

4.6.1 A Community Advocate, for the purposes of this provision, is a councillor who is speaking on behalf of a group or individual person.

4.6.2 A councillor for the ward to which a planning application relates has an entitlement to address the Planning Committee on that application as the Community Advocate. However, if a ward councillor is not available or is unable to speak as an advocate, then another councillor can elect to speak instead.

4.6.3 Normally only one councillor, as an advocate, will be permitted to speak and other councillors will be permitted only if they wish to express a contrary view of residents.

4.6.4 An exception to points 4.6.2. and 4.6.3 can be made on applications which are significant in planning terms when, with the agreement of the Chairman of the Planning Committee, other councillors may address the Committee as Community Advocates in addition to the Ward Member(s).

4.6.5 Community Advocates may speak for 5 minutes (and longer only with the Chairman of the Planning Committee's prior agreement).

**SPEECH BY COMMUNITY ADVOCATE
'AGAINST' SKY STUDIOS NORTH APPLICATION
as read out by CLLR CHRIS MYERS**

CLLR MILES PONDER (CHAIRMAN): *We were going to go with Cllr Oakley, but Cllr Myers can you speak on [Cllr Butler's] behalf:*

CLLR CHRIS MYERS: *Thank you Chair*

Yes I'm just going to read out Councillor Butler's speech as written:

"I speak tonight as the community advocate so whilst acknowledging SKY's engagement in the process to be clear my role tonight is representing the views of the community.

I also speak as the leader of Elstree and Borehamwood town council as such, I am obligated to advocate in the best interests of our town, our local economy and preserving everything that is special about this area. My personal view is that the economic benefits of expanding Sky's presence in our town are incredibly significant and cannot be ignored.

Tonight, members of the committee you have an invidious task you are being asked to balance the need to protect Greenbelt with the economic employment and skills need about town. This is a knife edge application that ultimately requires you to choose between two sets of interests.

I've studied the online debate I'm I have also spent many hours talking to local people. Large numbers have been in touch with me and the truth is that public opinion is split. There are those who do not want to lose one inch of green belt at any cost. There are those who are excited and enthused about the benefits that are SKY expansion would bring to our

town. The only way I can be a genuine community advocate this evening is to highlight that both sets of views exist. One side making more vocal than the other but there is no doubt that whatever decision is taken tonight one group of people will be unhappy but others will be pleased.

As I said you have an invidious task. Some residents say the application ignores local plans and very special circumstances are incorrectly assessed. As a committee you must scrutinise these matters, ensure they are fully debated and ultimately decide whether or not you are confident to accept the expert advice of our planning officers. You must also factor in the risks potential costs to the council a lot of time of time and of the benefits should you vote to reject officer advice and the matter ends up being determined by planning inspector.

At last night's local plan debate one piece of uncertainty was removed - it was made clear that should this application be approved it will not create any precedent that would allow the much larger proposed Media Quarter to be built on Greenbelt. It was made clear that it will not be included in the local plan and should this application be approved it will be the end of the studio development on Greenbelt in this borough. At least this means that whatever you decide tonight that clarity has been achieved.

Members you must also probe carefully the plans as they relate to the traffic impact. We need to get this right. Whatever [residents] think of the county council's highways assessment, if you are minded to approve, you may wish to press for more investment in mitigation to be added as additional conditions.

So to conclude, you have a difficult decision in front of you this evening. I have every faith that you will act in the interests of our town as you probe this application and remain mindful that in a situation where public opinion is split the only way forward is to examine the facts in an impartial and dispassionate manner.

Thank you Chair

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COMUNITY ADVOCATE SPEECH AS AGREED BETWEEN WELL END ERS/LOCAL OBJECTORS AND CLLR RICHARD BUTLER:

I speak tonight as the Community Advocate, so whilst acknowledging Sky's engagement in the process, to be clear my role tonight is representing to you the views of the community.

Residents say the application ignores Local Plans and Very Special Circumstances are incorrectly assessed. The site is not in the current Local Plan and was rejected by 18,000 residents in the previous draft, The media quarter was a primary objection. This site is not included in the latest Plan.

Residents ask why you ignore thousands of objections as a Local Plan must come first? So, 'much stricter' Very Special Circumstances apply. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to keep land permanently open. So residents ask how 10 very large sound stages are anything but Very Substantial Harm to openness? They see other places where these studios can be built, and are angry when they hear no Alternatives have even been considered.

The Council's own advisors say trees and protected hedgerows should not be removed. Residents ask why is this only moderate Harm to Landscape?

Residents also ask why traffic impact is not a Harm? Extra traffic from the north, east and west through their towns, villages and rural roads is a huge factor not assessed as a Harm or monitored. They say don't hide behind a Highways Authority assessment that's not fit for purpose. For

claimed benefits, residents see economic claims as contradictory and inconsistent.

Estimates of 1500 full time jobs across Hertsmere conflict with Sky's recent production with 600 jobs from within 10 miles, both numbers can't be true!

And if you believe any numbers, residents will tell you most freelancers drive in with their tools. These workers will not drive around the A1 junction but through Hertsmere. So that shows why traffic harm should be assessed.

Residents say the two claims for socio-economic and improved cycle and pedestrian routes are a general rather than a "necessary" planning benefit. If necessary, why were these benefits not also required for Sky's southern studios, Elstree's new Platinum stage and the East Enders upgrade? These items are immaterial in planning terms.

And finally, for claimed benefits, residents ask why is planning weight given to meeting sustainability and biodiversity obligations. If you put triple glazing in rather than double glazing will you get planning permission? The small increase in Biodiversity Net Gain will soon be the legal requirement so should only be given limited weight.

In summary, residents say you are wrong to ignore the current and draft Local Plans, and to remember those 18,000 objections. Thousands of residents have also objected to this application and say Harms have been understated, and Benefits overstated or are immaterial in Planning terms.

Residents tell me they are very concerned this report is flawed and the notification required to Government will lead to challenge and huge cost to the Council. Any costs will be paid by residents. They say the application must be rejected.