

10<sup>th</sup> July 2017

Robert Symons  
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*Team:*

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*Your Ref:*

Dear Mr Symons,

## **ELECTRICITY SUPPLY CAPACITY, DAVENTRY**

I have been made aware that developers of new commercial property sites in northern Daventry are being informed by Western Power Distribution that there is currently insufficient capacity within the electricity supply infrastructure to provide the supplies that they need and that the capacity required will not be available for another 18 to 24 months. It is unclear how widespread the issue is, but it has certainly affected three areas ('Mustang Park', Royal Oak Industrial Estate and Heartlands Business Park) some distance apart, and may well affect other areas.

Clearly, this is an unacceptable position for both the developers and Daventry town to be facing. This two-year blockade is effectively preventing new commercial development from coming forward in a timely manner and to make the best of the current high demand for new commercial property as the economy seeks to grow. Moreover, it prompts the question, what other deficiencies in the electricity infrastructure of this area are likely to emerge as developers move towards delivery of their developments?

I attended your stakeholder engagement event at Villa Park, Birmingham in February 2017 and specifically gave feedback on the significant scale of both residential and commercial development that was proposed and approved to take place in Daventry District and the need for WPD to be ready to enable this development, rather than be a barrier. Sadly, the latter now seems to be the case.

The national, regional and local need to grow the economy is of paramount importance. If this lack of infrastructure is happening at a local level, I now have real fears that proposed growth at local, regional (including Local Enterprise Partnership level) and national level will be stifled by the delay in WPD's ability to



provide the infrastructure needed to support the growth. Daventry is located at the point where the Midlands Engine and England's Economic Heartland join and there is an immediate need for adequate electricity infrastructure investment to enable these areas to grow as intended and expected by the Government.

It is equally of concern that a lack of capacity may hamper Daventry's ambitious housing growth plans, with around 5,000 new houses due to be provided by 2029. If there is insufficient power for new commercial development presumably the same is true for housing.

Having read WPD's information on its Business Plan 2015 – 2023 and proposed strategic network studies my concern is that WPD's demand growth forecasts may be inadequate or are flawed in that they are not sufficiently thorough and/or detailed at local levels. For example, in the Regen report, on the non-residential demand scenarios map, Daventry has no demand shown. Furthermore, this work appears to be providing for a long-term view when we are clearly experiencing problems with available capacity now.

The message from your customers is clear. WPD is failing to provide the service that its customers deserve and that it claims that it is striving to provide and it is having a serious adverse impact on the economic well-being of this area and potentially regionally and nationally. Therefore, I would urge you to examine your investment priorities and bring forward the supply infrastructure improvements that are required in Daventry now.

Finally, if there are particular funding challenges due to your regulatory environment, the Council would be pleased to work with you to unlock these using the Government's Housing Investment Fund. Given typically your works do not require planning permission they would be well-placed to achieve the swift action the Government is looking for. Obviously, this would only apply if housing sites are indeed subject to the current constraints.

Yours sincerely

Ian Vincent  
Chief Executive

cc Chris Millar – Leader of Daventry District Council  
Chris Heaton-Harris MP  
Stephen Catchpole – Chief Executive, SEMLEP



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