



## STRATEGIC REBUTTAL: The "Evidence Base" Paradox

**TO:** Gillian Pinna-Morrell (Case Officer)

**FROM:** Strategic Policy Team, Burntwood Action Group (BAG)

**DATE:** 8th January 2026

**RE:** Internal Contradiction between Housing (Gemma) and Spatial Policy (Hannah)

Dear Gillian,

Upon reviewing the various consultee responses, the Burntwood Action Group (BAG) has identified a significant internal contradiction in the Council's evidence base that threatens the legal soundness of any forthcoming decision.

### 1. The "Cherry-Picking" of the 2025 HEDNA

We note that the **Housing Officer (Gemma)** has correctly utilised the **2025 Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA)** to challenge the applicant's proposed housing mix. This confirms that the Council accepts the HEDNA as the most up-to-date and robust evidence for local housing need.

However, the **Spatial Policy response (Hannah)** ignores the HEDNA entirely in favor of the "Standard Method" to declare a 3.65-year land supply deficit.

**The Legal Conflict:** The Council is attempting to use the HEDNA as a **"Sword"** (to control the developer's mix) but refusing to use it as a **"Shield"** (to protect the community from unsustainable growth). Under the **2026 NPPF**, an evidence base must be applied consistently. If the HEDNA is the "gold standard" for *what* is built, it must also be the standard for *where* and *how much* is built.

### 2. Failure to Account for "Qualitative Need"

The HEDNA 2025 highlights a critical deficit in **infrastructure-led housing**. By reverting to the "Standard Method" (a generic mathematical formula) to justify Green Belt release, Hannah is ignoring the HEDNA's warning that Burntwood cannot sustain further market-led housing without a proportional increase in clinical and educational capacity.

### 3. The "Tilted Balance" Misapplication

Because the Spatial Policy team is relying on a 3.65-year deficit derived from the Standard Method, they are incorrectly suggesting the "tilted balance" should apply.

- **The BAG Position:** As established in our Master Objection (submission imminent), **Footnote 7** of the NPPF (2026) provides a "Hard Stop" for Green Belt and Heritage assets.

- **The Policy Trap:** Even with a 3.65-year supply, the presence of the **Fulfen Heritage Cluster** and high-performing Green Belt means the Council **cannot** legally apply the tilted balance. The Council is giving the developer a "free pass" that the law does not actually allow.

## **Conclusion**

The Council's internal logic is fractured. You cannot cite the HEDNA to demand more 2-bed bungalows while simultaneously ignoring its warnings about infrastructure saturation and local delivery constraints. We urge you to instruct the Spatial Policy team to re-evaluate their position in light of the **HEDNA 2025 qualitative data** and the **Footnote 7** legal protections.

Yours sincerely,

**The Strategic Policy Team Burntwood Action Group**