



HARTLEY PARISH COUNCIL
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5th September 2018

Dr P Ramewal
Sevenoaks District Council
Council Offices
Argyle Road
Sevenoaks
Kent TN13 1HG

Dear Dr Ramewal,

SEVENOAKS DRAFT LOCAL PLAN

I am writing to express the deep concerns that Hartley Parish Council have regarding the Draft Local Plan and the processes involved. (We will separately be submitting our specific objections to the Draft Local Plan).

The timing of the consultation over the Summer Holiday period has been most unsatisfactory in terms of residents being able to make comments or seek advice. The Parish Council in conjunction with a local residents group has circulated 3 leaflets, held public meetings in Hartley and Fawkham and organised 3 drop in sessions for residents that might need help. Despite all of these efforts, it is quite clear that holidays have meant that the information has not got through to everyone. There was a second public meeting in Fawkham on the 30th August and there was considerable anger voiced by residents who stated that they had only just heard about the Plans and suggestions that the timing of the consultation period was deliberate.

Furthermore, it has been difficult to navigate the documents and all the appendices as none of them have an alphabetical index. The Parish Council did not receive its own set of documents and has had to rely on the set provided for the Library and one borrowed from a District Member. When we tried to purchase some sets we were told that none were available. This hardly represents consultations with Communities.

The large development of 800 houses proposed in Hartley and Fawkham appears to have been received by Sevenoaks District Council in March and yet there was no advance knowledge received by Hartley Parish Council of its inclusion in the Draft Plan until July. Neither were our District Councillors or indeed our Member of Parliament informed in advance. In fact, in a number of cases the first knowledge came by way of a letter sent to parents of children at our local school.

The Council had been previously informed that there would only be 4 much smaller developments totalling less than a hundred units in Hartley. Three of these have now been removed and only the one that will benefit the development of 800 units has been included.

Councillor Piper assured residents at our Annual Parish Meeting in May 2017 that the District Council would not allow development in the Green Belt and he confirmed that Corinthians would not be used for development. He writes in the 'In Shape' article that it is necessary to look at 'Exceptional Circumstances sites' in the Green Belt. There are no Exceptional Circumstances in Hartley or Fawkham. Our villages have all the infrastructure we need.

Sevenoaks District Council were elected on a platform of protecting the Green Belt and should be honouring that for **all** the Green Belt even that which is at the furthest point in the district.

We realise that there have to be some new houses but have grave concerns about the numbers that have been quoted for new houses as they appear to be based on outdated data from 2014. The ONS has recently issued new figures for 2016 which state that the UK growth rate is slower than the 2014 based projections, meaning that the projected figures for population in 2026 is 0.6 million less and in 2041 2 million less.

The population figures given for Sevenoaks are now much lower than the growth of 20,000 shown in the Draft Plan and are now a growth of 5.9% until 2026 and 12.1% until 2041. With national occupation levels at a ratio of 2.3 persons per household, the housing units required are also therefore much lower.

The Parish Council has also had difficulty in trying to establish how the Government has produced its housing targets and presumably these also were produced prior to the revised population projections? A 2 million population reduction would reduce housing need by some 870,000 units. Furthermore the Minister who introduced the targets to the Commons in September 2017 stated that they were not "firm and fast" targets as there would be constraints in some areas in meeting the targets. Bearing in mind that some 93% of Sevenoaks area consists of Green Belt and the current Plan seeks to remove just under 2 square miles. What steps have been taken to contest the government's target?

It has also been noted from the Kent County Council's 2016 Midyear Ward population figures that since 2015 the population of Sevenoaks District had risen by 700 persons and that all of that growth had been in the urban areas whereas the Rural Wards had seen a drop in population.

The process going forward is unclear and both the Parish Council and Residents are keen to know what the District Council's programme is to deal with the next stages of the Draft Plan including the timeframe. In particular any dates of meetings that the public may attend and /or speak at? What is the process for any appeals that Developers or Parish Councils may wish to make? When the plan goes to the Inspector for examination what rights do we or residents have to make comments to them? None of this has been made transparent.

We would be happy to meet and consult with yourself and planners before any final decision is made on the Local Plan.

Yours Sincerely

Anne Oxtoby, Chairman

CC Sir Michael Fallon
James Brokenshire MP
Gareth Johnson MP