

FAWKHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Pav Ramewal, Chief Executive
Sevenoaks District Council
Argyle Road
Sevenoaks
Kent
TN13 1HG

25th September 2018

CC: Peter Fleming Leader Sevenoaks District Council, Pat Bosley Chair Sevenoaks District Council, Richard Morris Chief Planning Officer,

Dear Mr Ramewal

RE: Fawkham Parish Council complaint regards draft local plan consultation

In our letter dated 4th September to Richard Morris we expressed concern that the Sevenoaks District Council's local plan consultation process in regards to development MX52 and MX53 was both ineffective and led by the developer rather than the Council. We were concerned that the Council did not provide enough opportunity for our parishioners to understand the proposals, and that the Council allowed the developer to change the proposals mid consultation.

It has now come to our attention that the developer proposing sites MX52, MX53, HO165 and HO51 has again been allowed by Sevenoaks District Council to lead and drive the consultation process. David Bedford of DHA planning has been allowed to post the developers response to consultation on the Council's comments page. This is a page dedicated to consultation comments and all content is reviewed by the Council before it is placed on the site. Clearly someone in the Council feels that it is correct that the developer is allowed to propose new plans without residents, key stakeholders and the wider community being consulted. What is the point of a consultation process if the proposal is then allowed to be changed without further consultation?

The changes that have been allowed to be promoted on the comments page are wide ranging and impactful for our parishioners.

MX52 and MX53. It is now proposed that an additional 15 houses will be built adjacent to the proposed country park and a further 9 houses will be built on Castle Hill. Neither of these proposals were presented during consultation.

HO165 Fawkham Business Park. It was previously proposed that 31 residential units would be placed on this site. The developer after consultation now proposes that this site is merged with that of Salt Farm to provide a total of 61 houses. No mention was ever given of the proposed housing on Salt Farm in the local plan consultation.

Fawkham is classed as a hamlet with 220 houses. If the post consultation changes alone are included in the local plan then the number of houses in Fawkham would be increased by 25%.

As a Parish council we understand the need for new housing and the pressure that Sevenoaks District Council is under to hit its government enforced targets. However, any consultation on the local plan should be transparent and fair to all. In order for us to provide greater clarity to our parishioners I would kindly ask for you to answer the following questions.

1. When the Council meet to discuss what is included in the local plan which proposals will be reviewed? Will it be the one presented during consultation or will it be the amended one?
2. If Sevenoaks District Council deem that the second document should be used how are you going to communicate these changes to stakeholders and residents?
3. If the second document is used will consultation be reopened before a decision is made whether to include it in the local plan?
4. Why has the Council seen fit to include the changed proposals on the comments page as forwarded by David Bedford of DHA planning? We understand from the DHA planning website that Mr Bedford “formulated evidence that underpinned the current Sevenoaks District Council core strategy on DPD.” We also understand that Mr Bedford has on two occasions been employed by Sevenoaks District Council for a total of 8, once as a planning officer and then as a senior planner. We are concerned that he has unfair influence in the Sevenoaks District Council planning department and maybe affecting the fairness of the consultation process.

The proposals as presented in the draft local plan represent the biggest potential change in the history of the hamlet of Fawkham. Understandably the community is very anxious. This anxiety has not been helped by the fact that Sevenoaks District Council has provided no real clarity on what happens after consultation and exact timescales. Could you please let us know when it will be decided what proposals will be included in the local plan and the timescales there after.

We understand that we are not the only community who are faced with such changes however we really do need to have greater clarity on the transparency of consultation and process moving forward. With this in mind we would request that you answer the questions above in writing to us (email:alunevansrtw@hotmail.com, or post Cllr Alun Evans, Beech House, Valley Road, Fawkham, DA3 8EQ.) no later than **Wednesday 10th October.**

Kind Regards

On behalf of Fawkham Parish Council

