

Annex 1.

Subject: Feedback on Planning Concerns arising out of the Call for Sites FAO

To: <clerk@mardenkent-pc.gov.uk>

Mon, 25 Nov 2019 20:33:16 -0000

Dear Amanda,

I should like the following general comments taken into consideration when discussion is taking place on sites submitted under the Call for Sites.

I have made these comments based around the advice list provided by the Parish Council; supplied at the recent open evening.

I had a very useful conversation with the MBC representative at that event. Whilst understanding that there is a commitment to provide a certain level of housing supply going forward I feel that the Marden area has had a high enough level of development already in the recent past, and feel there would be detrimental effects of increasing this further. In my opinion, there are other more suitable sites in the MBC area, especially to the North of Maidstone. eg. adjacent to the A249/Detling Showground where expansion of local infrastructure would be more feasible. I would suggest that the maximum the Marden area should take on, would be to have the much smaller sites accepted which are already within the central area envelope (subject to constraints). All the undertakings to provide additional services and facilities often come to nothing, when the developers decide that there is no funding left – this has been the case in other areas of the Country. Also, resourcing such additional facilities is not an easy fix. To date, all pledges by Government to train and attract healthcare, teaching and emergency service staff have not materialised.

My comments are made on the following bases and are my own opinions:

Impact on the transport network (road and railways)Railway Network:

There must be a finite capacity of the rail network into London from the Marden area; or indeed to other towns. So, regardless of the potential plans to provide an additional rail hub, further car parking and footpath access to the existing station/hub I have not seen that Network Rail are planning (or able) to increase that capacity, or upgrade the lines. Other adjacent Local Planning Authorities (eg Tonbridge & Malling and Ashford) are also under the same pressure to provide the additional housing, and this would have a further deleterious effect on the existing rail network. There are no links in this local area (or space to provide one) to the fast train line to the North of Maidstone, such as exists around Faversham and the A2. Different transport approaches in the future will I'm sure be taken by workforce- electric autonomous cars/buses/trains etc, along with more home working. However, there still would need to be sufficient capacity in each area to service the huge potential number of those vehicles associated with the additional residents.

Road Capacity and Suitability.

I have similar comments regarding capacity of the roads. In addition, without a major Maidstone Bypass (not just a small link between the A299 and A249), there is insufficient capacity of the roads to accommodate existing traffic in this area – let alone if 1000s more dwellings are built to the South of Maidstone. Regularly roads to and through Maidstone are logjammed. Measures taken in the recent past have either added to the problem, or at best done nothing to improve flow (viz the town centre gyratory, traffic lights at the Swan PH junction). I would suggest that the planned roundabout at the Wheatsheaf junction will not make any discernable difference either. The problems will continue at Linton Crossroads, Swan PH, Wheatsheaf, Armstrong Road and on through to the town centre gyratory). In the recent past, two of the Park and Ride facilities have been removed from outside of the town – Armstrong Road and near Eclipse Park. The reasons given by the Borough Councillor (at the open evening) were that people won't use them – they want to use their cars, the bus services are expensive and they want to drive directly to a car park facility. Other large towns/cities provide good park and rides with prohibitive centre car park charges (eg. Canterbury), but the Council feel they'd be accused of killing town trade if they took this approach. So I would question whether the developer's promise to firstly improve junctions with the A229 at the Maidstone and Heath road junctions, along with additional provision (and improvement) of bus services would have any positive effect on local road capacity.

Flood Risk

Marden is surrounded (to the North, West and South) by designated flood zones (2 and 3). The area as a whole is one where London Clay prevents good drainage, this is a problem even at current levels of development. The past approach also has been seemingly to override floodzone concerns and permit building anyway. When additional large scale development takes place, even with those provisions, the surface water from those areas will still end up in one of the local rivers. Other areas, not currently designated as being floodzones, will experience the knock on effect of not draining so well into existing smaller watercourses (eg around the Eastern parish boundary) which feed into rivers. They themselves will be at risk of being designated floodzones. A recent similar example would be Fishlake near Doncaster.

The insurance risk to properties in this area could increase also and have the potential for decreasing housing demand. – in deterring people from moving to the area.

Impact on Conservation Areas , Habitat and the sider countryside

The additional flood risk could affect the local countryside, such as the existing SSSI Nature Reserve to the East of the village, along with land adjacent to the low lying local lanes (Park Road for example). One of the large sites especially, if developed, would effectively merge Marden with Staplehurst.

Impact on existing amenity

Marden and its surroundings has already experienced problems in dealing with the higher levels of traffic and additional population, associated with the recent high level of development. Further development would only add to this problem. In addition, light pollution has increased significantly in the recent past to the South of Maidstone – this would be made even worse.

Design, layout and Appearance of Development

If there is a genuine need for more housing, such properties should be in the form of maisonettes and low level apartments/studios. i.e. genuinely affordable to the local population and with less visual impact. Invariably, any smaller properties seem to be taken up by housing associations and not available for existing locals and those unable to stretch to purchasing 3+ bedroom properties –

especially in a commuter belt. I feel that the local and national planning authorities should be more consistent in managing the developer companies' intentions and actions.

Unfortunately, I'm unable to make the meeting on 3rd December, due to a prior commitment.

A copy of this submission has been offered to the MPOG, who I understand will be present.

I should be grateful for acknowledgement of this communication.

Regards,