

Dover Fast Track, Rapid Bus Transport System

Report by KCC Cllr Geoff Lymer

The Government is overhauling its planning algorithm used to determine where a swathe of new homes will be built across England. The formula used to produce targets for each area is reportedly being "rebalanced" to focus on building homes in urban areas.

Former Prime Minister Theresa May was among high profile critics of the algorithm, claiming it threatened the Government's 'levelling up' agenda and would lead to more investment in London and the South East. Hopefully, this will mean that my argument to build more houses on brownfield urban sites in the Midlands and the North, rather than continually eating into our ever decreasing rural areas will hopefully lead DDC to have a rethink regarding their unrealistic strategy of intending to build thousands of new houses in Whitfield, when Dover and the surrounding areas do not have the number of jobs to cater for such an increase in population. All this increase in house build will do, is create more traffic on our roads, increase pressures on policing, more pressure on the NHS, more pressure on waste disposal, more pressures on our fresh water and sanitation systems and more pressure on the Department for Work and Pensions when there will be more people chasing fewer jobs. This will put greater stresses on our already local overstretched infrastructures. Dover District Council needs to be looking at investing for the future by improving upon the facilities that are present and not try fitting a pint pot into a quart. As a result, the government department, Housing England is giving Dover District Council £16 million to build a Dover Rapid Bus Transport System. The idea is to take shoppers and commuters from villages north of the A2 down to the rail station and shoppers to the shops quicker than they reckon could be done currently on a bus by saving up to 10 minutes on journey time.

The Rapid Bus Scheme is to be put in place ready to accept the occupants of thousands of new houses expected to be built in Whitfield. Whilst the government is offering £16million it will cost closer to £40million to build, that £24 million Dover District Council is contributing could put to better use improving the town centre. If the government is changing the housing algorithm to take housing development away from the South East to favour where it is rightfully needed in the Midlands and the North, then DDC does not need the Rapid Bus Transport System and should be considering investing money into the town centre.

Stagecoach cannot run full busses currently and runs their business relying on subsidies (tax payers' money) from KCC to run these routes via Whitfield. Will getting to the shops 10 minutes quicker want to make you take a bus, then having to lug back a heavy weeks worth of groceries on a bus, when you can shop on line or go by car which will be cheaper too over the bus fare?

Why go to Dover Priory rail station when Temple Ewell or Martin Mill rail stations are closer from north of the A2 road?

A Customs Transit lorry park at Whitfield

Is projected to be built by the Tory Government at the rear of the B&Q site on the White Cliffs Enterprise park Whitfield. The lorry park will be roughly two and a half times larger than the entire current business park stretching from B&Q right to Whitfield roundabout. Natalie Elphicke your local MP states she wants to keep the roads around Dover clear as we transit from the EU. This lorry park is simply not going to do that. I have tried contacting the Under Secretary for Transport Rachel Maclean to object and request answers to certain questions such as, will this house freight from Euro tunnel as well?

After a chase up email, she steadfastly refuses to reply to my emails. That can mean one thing. Yes, the site will be accepting Euro Tunnel freight, but clearly, she does not want to deny this.

Our main roads and rural lanes will become grid locked as we have experienced before, as foreign lorry drivers try to take short cuts across the country side relying on a " car sat nav" system not intended for HGVs, so no advance height or weight restrictions advised or unsuitable routes for HGVs. Our area will be damaged by these HGVs unless you can try to stop it now, by emailing the Under Transport Minister Rachel Maclean

on rachel.maclean@dft.gov.uk and your local MP Natalie Elphicke on email address natalie.elphicke.mp@parliament.uk not forgetting the leader of Dover District Council Cllr Trevor Bartlett on Cllr-Trevor.Bartlett@DOVER.GOV.UK. I would be appreciative if you would be so kind as to copy me into your emails to Rachel Maclean, Natalie Elphicke and Trevor Bartlett to ensure you receive replies to your objections. I intend to monitor whether all of you receive replies, to take me into my next fight to care for our community.

Finally, you will be told this will create 160 new jobs. That is not accurate, for currently HM Customs operate a Custom Handling Import and Export Facility, employing a similar number of staff. That will be closed down and thus the staff working under that heading appear to lose their jobs. But the new proposed lorry transit centre at Whitfield will be called the Customs Declaration System. So basically, just a change of name for a revised operating system, employing a similar number of staff who will be more than likely transferred from the old to the new system. So, in reality there will be a change of employment title, but not any new jobs created. So please do not accept this argument being suggested by your MP. The roads around Dover will be blocked by HGVs accessing routes they should not be accessing.

The Tory government received a bloody nose when they tried to impose this freight park on Stanford and they lost. This time the Tory government is appearing to be devious by only informing literally a handful of people whom they believe their properties may be affected by this development.

They and Dover District Council are not publicising the facts to the wider Dover Community and the government will be using a Special Development Order to bulldoze their way bypassing the scrutiny of the local planning office to have the work started in building the site by January 2021.

This is not a democratic process and I urge as many of you as possible to write in objecting. I believe the Under-Transport Minister is purposely not replying to correspondence in order to bulldoze over the local communities, but this may actually help my case for in numbers we may be able to achieve having our voices listened to by way of a judicial review. This is your home, your environment, your town, your peace and tranquillity and I intend that you continue to all enjoy those reasons why you reside here.

Together we must fight this undemocratic process.

Geoffrey Lymer
Kent County Councillor
Dover West Ward