



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Mr Robert Mellor, The Planning Inspector
c/o Louise St John Howe
Programme Officer, PO Services
PO Box 10965
Sudbury, Surrey
CO10 3BF

23 January 2017

Our ref: HG/BS/6527/Grant

Dear Mr Mellor

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION

I write with reference to your interim findings to express my concern at the direction of your conclusions. I do so in advance of the final hearing which is scheduled for tomorrow.

Whilst I welcome the small reduction in the number of houses targeted for the borough, I am alarmed by the lack of attention given to the serious constraints highlighted by a number of stakeholders, including myself and Kent County Council, with regards to transport.

I am aware that an extensive amount of transport modelling was jointly commissioned by both local authorities prior to the submission of this plan. This work clearly demonstrated the existing severity of transport congestion, particularly in the south and south eastern parts of the borough. Maidstone Borough Council chose to ignore these joint findings and commissioned a new study independently, which has made relations between the two authorities extremely difficult. I expressed this in my original statement to you at the hearing on 17th November 2016.

The areas noted above are due to see additional growth in the emerging plan and if appropriate mitigation is not found, existing residents will severely suffer at the hands of uncontrolled congestion. Unfortunately it seems that you have identified these major developments as sustainable if the Sutton Road bus lane is extended. Although the Sutton Road is not within my constituency, it feeds into the Loose Road and affects my constituents travelling around Loose and to areas such as Coxheath, Linton, Marden and Staplehurst. It will additionally affect those living in areas such as Cranbrook, Sissinghurst and Benenden, which also fall in my constituency, who have to use the Wheatsheaf junction.

On this recommendation, I must disagree with you in the strongest terms possible. I do not feel that extending the bus lane can solve the problems faced in this area and I do not believe there is compelling evidence to demonstrate this. In addition to this, local people are not supportive of this measure either. An appeal has already been won locally in Boughton Lane due to the clear and present constraint of congestion. I feel that the people of Maidstone deserve the right for investigations to be made into a possible relief road, which would divert a significant amount of

traffic away from this area of the town. I am also disappointed to read that you feel that the existing levels of poor air quality in areas such as the Wheatsheaf junction, are not a sufficient reason to reduce development in these areas – keeping in mind the detailed case I made in my statement to you in November

Furthermore, I would like to reiterate my comments made regarding the inclusion of Invicta Park Barracks in my earlier letter to you, a copy of which I attach here. I hope that you can take heed of the important points I have made in advance of your final report, particularly with regards to public consultation.

As I indicated in my presentation to you previously, the most common concern raised with me as the MP for the area is regarding the rate, scale and impact of housing developments around the county town. I do not feel that your interim report has recognised the severity of these concerns especially with regards to congestion. I therefore very much hope your final report can recommend mitigation and in doing so will recognise the objections raised by local people.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Helen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

HELEN GRANT MP