

1st November 2016

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To: Mr Robert Mellor BSC DIPTRP DIPDBE DMS MRICS MRTPI
Planning Inspectorate

Dear Sir,

Sutton Valence – Larger Village

Further to my presentation at Session 6A of your examination of Maidstone's Local Plan, I would be grateful if you would consider some important points I failed to make, given my inexperience with such events.

The reasons Sutton Valence Parish Council have requested the deletion of Sutton Valence as a "Larger Village" in the draft Local Plan are:

1. Maidstone Borough has been actively encouraging developers to look for building sites in our Parish. Since this designation our Parish has had 10 planning applications in the small area of Warmlake Crossroads, a known accident black-spot on the A274 (Sutton Road); 5 in other parts of the Parish.
So far 26 houses have been approved and two sites have gone to appeal because MBC did not determine on time.
2. All these sites are outside any defined settlement boundary, therefore in the countryside in draft local policy terms. They are in a pleasant semi-rural area. To reach the shop/post office, doctor or school, the A274 has to be crossed three times.
3. In the draft Local Plan, our Parish was allocated one site for 40 homes (40% social housing), which are being built. However, our Parish has an emerging Neighbourhood Plan and consultation with our residents has shown a need for starter homes for young people and accommodation for the elderly.
4. Our Parish Council's main concern is that the Warmlake area is being urbanised and over-developed and what was a pleasant place to live is becoming polluted and a major traffic problem.
5. The "Rural Service Centre" and "Larger Village" classifications invented by the Borough ignores substantial differences between the nominated areas, as explained below.

The five Rural Service Centres are very different in look-and-feel (including size and population), while they each have a range of facilities to support some needs of the local community. However, none is an island and their communities, to varying degrees, depend upon major facilities elsewhere for employment, shopping and sporting and cultural activities.

Those disparities become even more pronounced for so-called "Larger Villages," while their population range overlaps that of the Rural Service Centres. Their available facilities vary widely.

For Sutton Valence:

- a. we do not have reasonable travel facilities and cars are condemned to use the A274, which is often a nightmare experience and will only get worse.
- b. we do not have a railway station, the bus service is infrequent and expensive and walking / cycling to major service centres is just unrealistic.
- c. Our 1 shop/post office is not easily accessible, major shopping must be done by car or bus.
- d. while we have a primary school, state secondary schools are a very time-expensive commute.

In summary, we very much hope you will challenge MBC's classifications, requiring them to look at the sustainability of our Parish and consider its unique characteristics. In particular, we ask that the label "Larger Village" is removed from Sutton Valence.

Yours sincerely,

Eileen Riden

Chair, Sutton Valence Parish Council