



HELEN WHATELY MP
Member of Parliament for Faversham and Mid Kent

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Cllr Roger Truelove
Leader of Swale Borough Council
By email

3 February 2021

Dear Cllr Truelove,

I have just been briefed by Swale Borough Councillors about the latest stage of the Local Plan. I cannot stress to you enough how alarmed I am, not only about the amount of housing planned for in and around Faversham, but the lack of any meaningful public consultation. I am particularly concerned given how different the current proposals appear to be from those consulted on before.

I believe Full Council will be meeting tonight to approve the 'viewing' of the Local Plan and I urge you not to proceed with the current timescales and procedures. I strongly encourage you to include more public consultation and scrutiny of a process that could completely change the look and feel of our community, and scale back the amount of housing proposed for Faversham and the surrounding villages.

I am seriously worried that the current proposals are only giving Parish Councils and residents 6 weeks to respond - which I understand is the bare minimum. Due to the pandemic and current restrictions, groups cannot hold public presentations and meetings. As not all residents have access to the internet or are unable to view documents online, this will inevitably lead to some residents being unable to fully engage.

Secondly, I am concerned about the huge amount of housing planned for Faversham. This is totally disproportionate and would drastically change the look and feel of Faversham, a historic market town, and the surrounding villages. Of course we need some new housing to support the local population and to play our part in meeting housing needs of young people, but from what I am hearing, the proposals coming out of SBC are of a different order of magnitude.

I appreciate that as one of the Members of Parliament that represents the Swale Borough, I do not have a formal role in planning decisions at the local level. I understand the Revised Local Plan is the domain of locally elected Borough Councillors. But, as an elected representative I have a duty to represent the thousands of people whose lives would be affected by these proposals.

People feel strongly about housing, and rightly so. Housing developments can change the look and feel of a community, and potentially mean more traffic on our roads and more pressure on local services. It's vital we get these crucial decisions right - decisions that will have an impact on our town for generations to come.

It's clear, many of my constituents are shocked and deeply unhappy about the amount of houses planned for Faversham, the surrounding villages and the lack of meaningful consultation. I urge you not to ride roughshod over local opinions and feeling, to listen and engage with people in the town and surrounding villages - and rethink the current proposals. Faversham deserves so much better.

Yours sincerely,

Helen Whately MP
Member of Parliament for Faversham and Mid Kent

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