



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Larissa Reed  
Chief Executive, Swale Borough Council

By email only.

14 September 2021

Dear Larissa

Re: Local Plan

Thank you for updating me on the Council's decision to revise the Local Plan process.

While I welcome the Council's decision to engage more with residents, there are many unanswered questions about this new process. I'm concerned that what the Council is proposing could be even more confusing and won't solve inherent problems with the current Local Plan proposals.

I would be grateful if you could explain to me how the new process and timescales will work. It would also be helpful to fully understand the reasons behind the rethink from the Council. I have set out some comments and questions below:

i. While I welcome this extra consultation, I would like to know why the Council feels it is necessary when it was adamant that skipping Regulation 18B and jumping straight to Regulation 19 was sufficient before? Is the Council now treating the previous Regulation 19 consultation as a Regulation 18B, and do you believe that a 4-week consultation is sufficient given that other local authorities usually allow at least 6 weeks of consultation?

ii. As you know, I have previously raised concerns about the lack of infrastructure to support the new homes in the borough. The proposed development to the east of Faversham in the Local Plan hinges on plans to upgrade the junction at Brenley Corner. Although I will do everything I can to ensure the scheme will be brought forward, that is no guarantee that it will be. Can you please confirm that the revised Local Plan process will include a much greater focus on infrastructure improvements – including a “plan B” in case Brenley Corner upgrades cannot be delivered in the next Road Investment Strategy (RIS3).

iii. Changing the process mid-way through the development of the Local Plan is clearly going to add to the time and cost of this work. I know it is also causing huge frustration and uncertainty for local residents. Can you please update me on the work the Council is doing to make local residents aware of these changes. In the interests of transparency, I hope the Council will also be publishing information on how much the revised process for the Local Plan will be costing taxpayers.

The Local Plan will shape the future of development in our borough for the next two decades so it's vital we get it right.

Any changes to the Local Plan process should aim to give local residents a much

greater say in the proposals and allow for proper consideration of the infrastructure improvements we need to support new housing in our community.

This rethink from the Council is a welcome step, but there is clearly still a lot of work to do in making sure we get a Local Plan that delivers for local people.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,  
Helen

**Helen Whately MP**

Member of Parliament for Faversham and Mid Kent

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