

## Planning Comments

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**From:** David Caldwell [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 05 November 2019 08:44  
**To:** Planning Comments  
**Subject:** 19/05000/HYB Objection to Revised planning application for Fort Halstead, 750 houses

**Categories:** Orange Category

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to lodge my objection to the expansion of the proposed development at Fort Halstead from 450 to 750 homes (19/05000/HYB).

Fort Halstead neighbours 2 small villages, Halstead and Knockholt, and a development of this size would effectively result in a new small town that would significantly dwarf the existing villages. The roads in the area are already poorly maintained and an increase in the volume of vehicle traffic that would result from such a development would see a significant detrimental impact on the (poor) quality of the road surfaces and a substantial increase in the congestion currently faced in the existing villages.

Equally, the public transport infrastructure can barely cope with the current volume of commuters. There is only one bus left servicing Knockholt every 75 mins during the week and the Knockholt train station, 2.5 miles away has limited parking capacity and is already standing room only at peak times. The Kent Route Study shows that there is no capacity for any extra trains on the congested local lines into London. Whilst there has been new bicycle parking installed at the station, it is not sufficient to cater for even 1% of the occupants of the proposed housing development.

Fort Halstead is within the Green Belt and, the Government National Planning Policy Framework regarding the Green Belt states:

- It should check against unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas
- Prevent neighbouring areas merging into one another
- Safeguard the countryside from encroachment.

750 new houses at Fort Halstead would justifiably met the definition of an “unrestricted sprawl of large-built up areas” with the addition of such a large development, naturally resulting in the merging of the 2 neighbouring villages into one.

The additional traffic created, both from residents and delivery vehicles, will increase levels of pollution, rubbish and urban blight in the area which can in no way be considered safeguarding the countryside.

It is also imperative that the Star Hill Road access remains restricted to emergency services and buses. Star Hill is very steep, narrow, with no pedestrian pavements, has a series of hairpin bends with no visibility, and over weekends is heavily used by cyclists and cycle clubs. It has been the scene of several major accidents, including a fatality.

The local services, shops, schools, medical facilities and under-developed infrastructure in general will all be overwhelmed by this small town-sized development. SDC's original excuse on approving 450 houses in 2015 was that the scheme would be 'Employment Led.' The original approved plan, for example, included a hotel, which is now no longer. An additional 300 houses, without any indication that employment opportunities are being created can hardly be considered to be employment led any longer.

Additionally, consideration should be given to the planning application for approximately 1,000 houses at the Broke Hill Golf Course, which borders Fort Halstead. Two such large developments in the Green Belt, right next to each other will have devastating effects on the countryside and the environment and both should be considered in conjunction, otherwise we will end up with the urban sprawl which the Green Belt is meant to protect against.

SDC has previously reviewed plans for the Fort Halstead site and the Inspector said the site was not in a sustainable location as its inhabitants would have to travel a considerable distance to access transport, shopping, and other facilities and that the development was not needed to meet the district's future development requirements.

"In practice," SDC stated, "this means that large-scale housing development at the site is unlikely to be granted planning permission." Since then, nothing has really changed in terms of it being 'a sustainable location.

Finally, there are no exceptional circumstances that should allow Fort Halstead to breach the aims of the Government National Planning Policy Framework on Green Belt land and I ask the SDC to reject the application.

Yours sincerely

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