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**From:** Planning Policy  
**Sent:** 27 July 2020 10:09  
**To:** Planning Comments  
**Subject:** FW: Amended Application—proposed development of 635 houses at Fort Halstead

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**From:** Caroline Shufflebotham [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 25 July 2020 18:47  
**To:** Planning Policy <Planning.Policy@sevenoaks.gov.uk>; Alison Salter <Alison.Salter@sevenoaks.gov.uk>; DC North <dc.north@sevenoaks.gov.uk>; Cllr Fleming, Peter <cllr.fleming@sevenoaks.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** Amended Application—proposed development of 635 houses at Fort Halstead

Your ref 19/05000/HYB

To Whom it May Concern

I am writing to object to the amendment to the proposed development of 635 homes at Fort Halstead.

As a resident of Knockholt who will be severely impacted by this needless development on Green Belt land, this amendment is the continuation of the ongoing nonsense over the years involving various different developers - it's about time SDC stopped wasting tax payers' money.

In 2011, the possible development of Fort Halstead was not supported by SDC and it was opposed by Kent Downs AONB Unit and the Planning Inspector rejected the proposal as "not being a sustainable location as its inhabitants would have to travel a considerable distance to access transport, shopping, and other facilities and the development was not needed to meet the District's future development requirements." SDC concluded: "In practice, this means that large-scale housing development at the site is unlikely to be granted planning permission."

In December 2015, however, SDC included a proposal ([15/00628](#)) in its local development plan - despite huge opposition - and subsequently granted planning permission for the development of Fort Halstead as "a Major Employment Site in the **Green Belt** and a Major Development Site." This would include *only up to 450 units* providing it formed part of a mixed use scheme delivering an employment-led development. The inclusion of appropriate community facilities and infrastructure to support the sustainable development of the site consistent with the policy was also a requirement.

Promises were:

450 one to five-bedroom houses, of which 15% to 20% would be affordable housing;

3.6 hectare business park providing 1,026 jobs + 10.2 hectares for QinetiQ's ongoing operations providing approximately 250 jobs;  
131 jobs at the 0.6 hectare village centre;  
80-bedroom four-star hotel on 1.6 hectares, providing 76 jobs  
village centre and green with a small shop and community space, which could include a crèche and surgery;  
military heritage museum and retention of the existing Fort scheduled monument.

Changes from 2015 until 2020 include an application to build an additional 300 houses (making a total of 750), with the loss of all the additional 1,483 jobs. *SDC could throw out the entire scheme and rescind the 2015 permission on the basis that none of the promises above can be met.* Currently the average housing density locally is 15 to 18 dwellings per hectare: this application's density is *25 to 50 dwellings per hectare*. The development will be a sprawling housing estate far bigger than Knockholt; potentially home to around 2,500 people, and probably 1,500+ cars without the community facilities and infrastructure demanded in 2015.

I am particularly concerned about the aspect of road safety, especially as the existing outlet to Star Hill Road is integral to the new amendment. Condition 14 of the 2015 permission required that: "before the development could proceed, we require details to show how the Star Hill access would be restricted and maintained for use only by buses, emergency vehicles, cyclists, pedestrians and horses". Kent County Council does not adequately maintain Star Hill Road: it has no footpaths; is narrow; has a series of completely blind bends; is over-used by cycling clubs because of the challenge of the gradient; has been the scene of numerous accidents. Star Hill would not be able to cope with the potential 1,500+ new cars, as well as heavy goods vehicles/delivery vans likely to service the extra homes. If permitted, the Star Hill access will turn Knockholt and surrounding villages into rat runs with all the inherent dangers. Over the years, living in Main Road in Knockholt, the speed and quantity of vehicles has already made the environment comparable with a busy road in the more suburban Orpington. Heaven knows what it will be like with the proposed development. It would be extremely dangerous to allow free flowing traffic to use the Star Hill exit onto a derestricted road as visibility is limited and traffic from the north is on the brow of a blind hill. Any proposed speed limits on Star Hill Road are unlikely to slow approaching traffic and will have no effect on the poorly-maintained condition of this road.

With regard to the traffic estimates which were presented for the 2015 application, Knockholt Parish Council's (KPC) planning committee accurately described them as an insult to the intelligence of everyone living in the area. I can certainly vouch for that: please reference my comment in the paragraph above regarding Main Road, Knockholt. The statement that there would be an increase at peak times of 26 vehicles was absurd. It's time a proper, up to date survey is taken on Main Road - perhaps try when the M25 is either slow or closed as well.

As highlighted in D. Barton's report in 2015, this was (and is) a development remote from essential services with car ownership being essential. The development should be employment-led, especially in the light of the current Covid pandemic when there are already frightening increases in unemployment. Additionally, despite the temporary lifting of Stamp Duty, the banks are not lending money to buyers, so SDC could have many empty/unaffordable homes on their hands with successive contractors going out of business with more expense in the longterm to the taxpayers. Conversely, the current Covid pandemic has shown how important Green Belt land, the environment, and the ability to access open spaces is for this, and future generations, so let's keep it.

I look forward to hearing that SDC Leader Peter Fleming keeps his word on page 22 of In Shape issue 114 a few months ago: Spring 2020: "While we consider our options, one thing is certain; we will continue to stand up for our residents and our environment." Coincidentally, according to a report in *The*

*Times* newspaper on 9th July 2020, Kent had the greatest increase in built-up area of *any* county in the country between 1990 and 2015. Instead of being the Garden of England, Kent will become part of the biggest conurbation of England - London

Yours faithfully

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