

Leesfield
Starhill Road
Knockholt
Kent
TN14 7JW

Planning Department
Sevenoaks District Council
Argyle Road
Sevenoaks
Kent TN13 1HG

30th October 2019

Your Reference: 19/05000/HYB
Revised planning application for Fort Halstead

SEVENOAKS DISTRICT COUNCIL

REC'D 31 OCT 2019

COMMUNITY & PLANNING SERVICES

Dear Sir/Madam

I object strongly to the revised planning application above. I feel that the area north of the M25 in the (now to be withdrawn?) Local Plan is being targeted with a disproportionate number of residential developments—no fewer than NINE sites in our little area, entailing destruction of significant areas of the Green Belt.

Fort Halstead was addressed by Sevenoaks District Council in its 2010 Core Strategy, and in a SDC public statement in January 2011 that said: “As part of its development, the Core Strategy was examined at a public inquiry last October, held by the Planning Inspectorate. Planning agents acting on behalf of the owners of Fort Halstead tabled a proposal to re-allocate the site for a residential development of up to 1,000 homes with local facilities. “Sevenoaks District Council did not support this proposal and it was opposed by the Kent Downs AONB Unit at the inquiry. The Planning Inspector rejected the idea: “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’. It's only assorted governments' various targets for housing that have seen the Green Belt increasingly under threat. As a reminder, 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.

I feel there are absolutely no 'exceptional circumstances' that should allow Fort Halstead to breach those aims. With the collapse of the current 'Employment-Led' excuse to despoil the Green Belt, I would ask SDC to reject the application.

Whilst I support the use of PDL, or brownfield land, to protect the Green Belt, expansion of the proposed development from 450 to 750 properties - alongside the 62 existing residential properties - will dwarf surrounding village communities, which typically do not exceed 500 residences. During consultations for the previous application for outline planning permission ref: 15/00628/OUT, the developers stated that the new scheme would be of a size comparable to nearby villages. Suddenly, this 'village' is in danger of turning into a town!

A major issue for Knockholt and Halstead residents throughout the long, long saga of planned developments at Ford Halstead has been the exit onto Starhill Road, which is currently restricted for DSTL security reasons. Both villages already have an issue - main roads through Knockholt and Halstead are used as rat-runs and speeds of 60mph on our 30mph-limited roads have been recorded. Should the entry/exit onto Starhill Road be allowed for general use, despite Sevenoaks District Council's (SDC) pledge not to do so, the traffic impact would be devastating. It is imperative that the Star Hill Road access remains restricted - emergency services vehicles and buses only.

As for Star Hill itself, it's very steep, narrow, has no pedestrian pavements, has a series of hairpin bends with no visibility, and over weekends is heavily used by cyclists and cycle clubs as part of the Seven Hills challenge. **Starhill Road has been the scene of several major accidents, including a fatality on the Old London Road/Starhill bend.** Starhill Road - no pavements - (towards the North Downs Way) is used on a regular basis by groups of schoolchildren doing practice walks for the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. Should the existing (though as said, currently restricted) exit from Fort Halstead onto Star Hill become available for general use, congestion and the accident risk will rise hugely.

In March 2015, a previous application for outline planning permission (reference number 15/00628/OUT) provided for 450 houses and 900 residential parking spaces. With the new proposal for 750 properties, this would presumably mean an extra 600 parking spaces - that will likely see at least 1,500 more cars spilling onto our narrow, rural lanes. Local journeys are on narrow rural roads and single-track lanes. The likely thousands of additional private motor cars and delivery vans - not to mention construction and other heavy vehicles - will inevitably increase the probability of accidents. That's especially true on the many local roads and lanes where there are no pavements/footpaths.

I would urgently request the Council to reject this application.

Yours faithfully



Neil McKenzie Rae