

Lesley James,  
25a Clarks Lane,  
Halstead,  
TN14 7DG

Planning Dept,  
Sevenoaks District Council,  
Argyle Road,  
Sevenoaks, Kent  
TN13 1HG

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Subject: planning reference 19/05000 planning application for Fort Halstead

Dear sir/Madam,

I am a resident of Halstead, having lived here since January 2000 and brought up my two daughters in this beautiful friendly village and played an active part in community village life.

I am horrified that this planning application has been received which is a significant development in Halstead and a major change to the already approved planning application from 2015 which included amongst other things for 450 houses plus a hotel (reference 15/00628/OUT)

Most of the area surrounding Halstead is green belt and when Fort Halstead was built during the Second World War, it was agreed that the area would retain its greenbelt status, so future development should only be built on what has already been built on. I am in agreement with Knockholt parish council (KPC) Halstead Green Belt future group (HGBFG) and agencies such as the London Green Belt Council and other local Parish councils who object to despoliation of Green Belt land. Guidelines state that no single parish should be expected to deal with with more than one large development ( over 350 homes) in or adjacent to its village. Yet SDC is already including more than that in 8 other sites in our little area and including the major Planning application for the former broke Hill golf club from Quinn Estates.

The previous plans approved in 2015 were an employment lead application, this is purely residential properties, if the employment aspect has been removed then surely the previous application should now be null and void and hence no further major plans allowed. Unemployment in the Sevenoaks area has increased recently therefore more residents living in the area will further increase the demand on current employment resources. It is stated that housing is required in response to local demands, but there is no proof of this. With the prospect of less inward migration from Europe following Brexit, the declining birthrate, and an ageing population that needs smaller homes, is Sdc being pushed to over-provide to help National targets? Turning to current government ideas about destroying the greenbelt during Sdc's local plan consultation phase they were continually asked what exceptional circumstances could be identified to even allow large developments to be considered?

As was previously pointed out, and the following remains true today, the government's national planning policy framework regarding the greenbelt states that it should :

- Check against unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas
- prevent neighbouring areas merging into one another
- safeguard the countryside from encroachment.

This development breaks all three guidelines.

I also feel that the Developers should recognise that it's plan will create sheer urban sprawl in what is a Rural sector with many areas of outstanding natural beauty (AONB). It will create havoc on our appallingly badly maintained and narrow roads, congestion in our villages, environmental pollution, will harm wildlife, and restrict freedom of people's' movement in the surrounding countryside.

In addition, I am at a loss to understand how, in pursuing its scheme, the developers can fail to be aware of the impact such a development will have on existing inadequate infrastructure. It will be to the huge detriment of Sdc's northern parishes. Where are the doctors surgeries? hospitals? public transport? vital utilities ....?.etc.I will return to these points further, later in my letter. The proximity of the M25 motorway and Knockholt railway station, itself just a country stop and in no way a transport hub, cannot be used as justification for urban sprawl and erosion of the greenbelt. As Sdc is doubtless aware, rail services to London are amongst the most overcrowded and delayed in the UK. Sevenoaks Rail travellers Association has advised that services are already configured for the maximum of 10 coaches, so the likely 800 to 1000 new rail commuters that are development of so many houses would entail will need a new train. But the Kent route study shows there is no capacity for an extra train on the congested lines locally and into London.

Large developments in the north of the district may have access to the M25, But local journeys are on narrow road roads and singletrack lanes. The likely thousands of additional private motorcars and delivery vans, not to broke mention construction and other heavy vehicles, will inevitably increase the probability of accidents and this is especially true on the many local roads and lanes where there are no pavements or foot paths.

Existing roads around the proposed scheme are already inadequate. Kent county council (KCC) has a very poor record in maintaining them: most of the villages have had little or no proper resurfacing for over 30 years and are a patchwork quilt of bumpy pothole repairs. Lack of maintenance on PolHill Road for example has seen unaddressed structural carriageway issues develop over the years with the result that the downhill carriageway which has been cut in half. It is proposed that there are primary and secondary accesses to the site to be developed on both Star Hill and also Crow Drive which opens onto Polhill. Both of these roads have major structural issues and star hill in particular is a very steep and winding narrow road. Such a large development with the increase in volume of traffic would bring mayhem to the area.

As for local public transport, we already have completely inadequate rural bus services.KCC and commercial operators continue to cut routes. For example, Halstead and its surroundings recently saw it's bus service slashed again despite many objections.

As for cycling routes, they are of little use to those unable to cycle, are planning shopping trips, or who live at the top of the many steep hills in the district – – – and we are an ageing population. To increase distances travelled for leisure, shopping, or medical visits will just further burden roads. That is exacerbated by car parking provisions for new houses. The current KCC specifications are woefully inadequate for the multicar households that are now the rule rather than the exception.

I also agree with K PCs definition of 'landscape and AONB': The landscape character of the district and the countryside, including areas of tranquillity, MUST BE Conserved and the distinctive features that contribute to the special character MUST BE protected and enhanced. Rural businesses, if set up, must remain so and not be a stepping stone to future conversion into residential units by alleged redundancy.

There is a further argument. As I'm sure Sdc, is aware, Kent county council is the second local authority in Kent (after Maidstone Borough Council) to declare a 'climate change emergency'. This is important in terms of greenbelt land as the London greenbelt Council pointed out in its 1 of July 2019 news release 'greenbelt and climate change'.

LGBC chairman Richard Knox Johnston states "the greenbelt is a vital green lung for people in London and the wider south-east. By protecting green spaces it is making a hugely important contribution to peoples health and well-being as well as maintaining essential ecosystems and providing wildlife corridors. Green spaces help to mitigate climate change because carbon is absorbed by vegetation and held long-term in soil emissions. They also help us adapt to climate change by absorbing rainwater and cooling our towns and cities. The more green space we lose, the more we are at risk from flooding and rising temperatures, two of the predicted effects of climate change."

LGBC is calling on all local authorities to state categorically that climate change mitigation requires the protection of the greenbelt the countryside and open spaces, and to agree to block developers proposals for building on greenbelt land. This is especially important, the LGBC points out at a time when London itself needs to become more resilient to climate emergencies..-Which means it needs to have plenty of green spaces around it.

LGBC is currently working with a wide range of partner organisations to produce a consultation paper setting out 'A vision for the future of London's green belt.'This emphasises the green belt's

value for bio diversity and environmental sustainability, it's crucial importance to the fight against climate change and to people's' health and well-being.  
The latter is particularly important, especially given government plans to cut pollution.

To return to my point regarding local infrastructure.  
All local schools are currently at full capacity, such a large development would include many families with children requiring education resources.

There are currently insufficient medical services for example doctors surgeries and dental services for the current population. The local CCG has said that they do not have any funding for another doctor's surgery, this is unlikely to change in the near future.

I come to the utilities such as water gas and electricity. It appears there is insufficient electricity capacity for the current population, we frequently have power cuts to allow the electric grid to conserve electricity. How can the providers supply to even more homes without a massive infrastructure program, at great cost and inconvenience to current local residents.  
Many existing residents in the area are not on mains gas, instead they rely on Calor gas or oil for heating and cooking facilities.

Many existing residents are also not on mains drainage that require a cesspit drainage, again a massive infrastructure program would be necessary.  
Recent radio for report named costing the Earth – dry me a river, proved that too much water is being drained from our rivers and aquifers leading to a loss of biodiversity and a threat to future water supplies resulting from over- usage, that's just at current residential levels, more houses will require more water supplies. It is suggested that all new homes should be built to standard that is highly water efficient and to fit water efficiency devices on existing homes. The environmental agency has quoted that without a massive reduction in consumption we will all have an existential crisis upon us very soon. That is with water demand at the current levels, increasing housing levels will only increase consumption and further increase the prospect of that crisis!

Positive evidence suggests that there is much contamination both in the Earth and in the water supply. They are currently restrictions on drinking water to both employees working at the Fort Halstead sites and also to current residents living on the Fort Halstead site. Many people seem oblivious to this and to the potential disastrous effect that building such a large development on this site could potentially have.

I put my trust in SDC to stand its ground and again I urge you to roundly reject this planning application.

Yours faithfully

Lesley James

Also sent by email to [planning.comments at Sevenoaks.gov.uk](mailto:planning.comments@Sevenoaks.gov.uk)