

## Planning Comments

---

**From:** Raymond Picot [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 13 April 2021 11:56  
**To:** Planning Comments  
**Subject:** Town and Country Planning Act 1990 - Amended Consultation 19/05000/HYB

**EXTERNAL EMAIL:** Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Ms Claire Shearing  
Case Officer  
Sevenoaks District Council  
Argyle Road  
Sevenoaks  
Kent  
TN13 1HG

Dear Ms Shearing,

We are writing in connection with your letter of 22 March 2021, in connection with the changes in the outline plan for Fort Halstead. We would have added our comments directly to the website but it was rather busy!

We have already expressed concerns over the viability of the plan and the latest changes do not alter our views in any way. With a cluster of villages of no more than 500 dwellings in the immediate vicinity (Knockholt, Halstead, Badgers Mount and Shoreham) this development threatens to overwhelm and dominate the area, and change it irrevocably.

The original plan with the hotel should have been retained as it would have added to local employment, whereas at present there is little demand for any more light industrial units, particularly as there is surplus capacity at units along Polhill. From that point of view it would be a very easy step for the developers (as they've done with the abandoned hotel scheme) to seek to replace them with more houses. This is the problem with outline plans, SDC will lose any real control of how the site develops, with a strong risk of damage to green belt areas, and the desire to place large detached houses in the best places, with good views. We think this will push the development over towards Star Hill, which will make the idea of providing circuitous traffic routes on the site to better use the Crow Drive entrance, irrelevant. Frankly this is fast becoming a housing led development, and should have been pegged at the level of 300 houses to protect the area.

The abandonment of a primary school will immediately send traffic to the closest schools of Knockholt and Halstead. The areas in which they are located are heavily congested at the best of times, and more cars will make this worse. Any idea of buses is a non-starter too as there is no room for large vehicular drop off outside the schools, and cost/flexibility will be a real problem for households with young families. In addition commuter traffic will just make the already busy roads in the area more congested. For example Knockholt has become a 'rat-run' for traffic coming up from Orpington and the other way from Sevenoaks, Westerham, Cudham and Biggin Hill. Our narrow country lanes and heavily parked village main roads will be simply overwhelmed. The environmental impact will be immediate.

As for the two roads serving the Fort, there are already serious issues which suggest they will be unable to adequately cope with the volume of contractor and residential traffic. Polhill had its width reduced as a means to avoid repairing the subsiding hillside and is not getting any better. This will need a considerable amount of expense from Kent Highways to restore the lost carriageway and reinforce the hillside edges which are moving. Star Hill was originally going to be a secondary access for emergency vehicles only and buses which was supported by the local community. However, this is being abandoned to which we most strongly object. Unrestricted access will force traffic onto the narrow lanes at all times of the day which represent the shortest routes for many. The road is steep with a strong camber, narrow and in places unsighted (cutting back trees does not resolve the difficulties), and attracts cyclists in considerable numbers as part of a challenging route. There is no lighting and part of it is residential, so increased traffic will impact the residents. The impact of traffic entering and leaving the Fort development has not been properly appreciated with a tendency to downplay the impact. It is illusory to think that bicycles will become the chosen transport route for residents taking children to school or going to work. The area as a whole has its own micro-climate, and along with Star Hill and is frequently shrouded in low cloud and mists.

We believe insufficient account has been made of the contaminated ground and the problems of water supply, even now. This is also an AONB area, with ancient woodland, greenbelt and important wildlife. The present plans will in time threaten these irrevocably.

The transport and road infrastructure in the area will not support the development with heavily cut back services already in the village and surrounding area. It is hard to see how the finances would be available to guarantee a longterm reliable public transport solution. It is suggested that people would use Knockholt Station, which carries a lower fare tariff than the stations in Sevenoaks, but for this reason it already attracts traffic from out of the area out of scale to its actual location. Parking and bus transport is very limited too, so this would make the use even heavier than it can arguably cope with, when most commuters to London change at Chelsfield, where the fast trains that stop, already at capacity, certainly pre-pandemic.

A real question you should ask is does the area have an immediate housing need, to which the answer is that there is little evidence, and the site will simply draw more people out of London.

There is a unanimous rejection of the expansion of this site from the local communities and we urge you to reject these plans and consult more effectively with the communities immediately affected and the environment, which seems to be a stated concern of the council.

Yours sincerely,

Raymond and Virginia Picot  
Rivendell  
Pound Lane  
Knockholt  
Kent  
TN14 7NE