

Louise St John Howe
PO Services, PO Box 10965,
Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 2FY
email: louise@poservices.co.uk
Tel: 07789-486419

Uplands Hogbarn
Lane
Harrietsham
Maidstone
Kent
ME17 1NZ

19th October

2016

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION

SESSION 7 – RURAL SERVICE CENTRES

Qn7.10 Is it realistic to expect the remainder of the H2(3) Lenham Broad allocation for 1,500 dwellings to be delivered within a 5 year period (2026-2031) at an average rate of 300 dwellings each year?

INTRODUCTION

No, this is completely unrealistic and catastrophically damaging to Lenhams residents. The number is disproportionate to the community's size and space to allow this proposal,

SOCIAL INTEGRATION

Integration on this huge scale into the social fabric of the village is unrealistic. Whilst clubs and societies would welcome new members, the facilities for leisure and sport would be unsustainable for a massive increase in population. The recreation and leisure within Lenham would be hugely impacted by large scale development. In order to access this provision villagers, would again be forced to travel out of the village with the knock on effect being an increase of traffic on the roads.

The village growth has, in the past, been proportionate to allow the community to manage and integrate the new residents into Lenham life. A large increase in such a short period of time does not allow this necessary integration.

Our inclusive community has been created by a consistent growth over the last fifty years, this has allowed the community to develop its own social cohesion, working towards the well-being of all, and creating a sense of belonging where residents have made people feel welcome; involving them in clubs and societies.

SOCIAL IMPACT

The number of employment opportunities within the community will not support a trebling the population in a time frame of 5 years. This would bring increasing traffic to an already overloaded highway network. The A20, already overburdened due to increasing development in Harrietsham, has and will be further compounded at peak times.

Most families need a second income just to survive, impacting this further. There are limited affordable child care facilities within the area, which would leave families with

financial difficulties and again necessitating increased journeys.

There is already a lack of connected public transport, which is expensive and infrequent. Trains and buses run only hourly at best, with buses only operating for parts of the day.

Lenham is very poorly served by public transport leading to rural isolation for many which will increase with a huge growth in population.

MEDICAL AND COMMUNITY CENTRE

The community centre was reborn, replacing a hall in the middle of Lenham square, which had sustained the community for nearly 80 years. This community centre was constructed to meet the needs of its growing community. This community centre does not have the space to accommodate this huge increase, nor land to expand. It struggles to cope with the joint parking for the medical centre on this shared site.

The medical centre has expanded and provides a forward thinking approach from its medical practitioners and staff. However the surgery, already struggles to cope with existing numbers and this has a knock on effect on the quality and quantity of care.

These factors, along with Lenhams growing elderly population, will render this centre increasingly unsustainable.

PRIMARY SCHOOL

Any additional school expansion would have a detrimental effect on the children attending and upon local residents struggling to cope with increasingly difficult access problems.

There are no areas suitable for a further school that could sustain travel links nor adequate parking provision without compromising safety.

Additionally there would be an impact on greenspaces which enhance the learning environment for pupils.

THE NORTH DOWNS WAY

The Kent Downs AONB to the north and its setting seems to have slipped in importance with regard to this area. This area needs protection, Lenham is a recreational facility for town's people, with one of 15 national trails in the country and with its historic memorial cross one of about 50 chalk hill carvings in England. The local and national importance of this area to the local and wider community is huge. The area and surrounding footpaths is very well used by many walking and cycling groups including those within the village and others from areas throughout Kent and beyond. Lenham is a walker's paradise with significant beautiful countryside surrounding it.

Tourism is important and with the market square, its conservation area, and historical walks leading from it to form part of Lenhams heritage and a focal point for all.

LENHAM CROSS

The heritage site of the Cross, soon to be listed, is one of only 2 crosses created as memorials, the Lenham cross being twice the size of the Shoreham cross.

This chalk hill carving is a significant landmark, not just for the locals but the wider community in and around Kent. Screening any development would screen the setting of the AONB and destroy views of this historic feature. The heritage of this cross, created in 1922 from donated funds from Lenham village, will be destroyed and its value diminished if development is allowed to be constructed to the south of the village.

The cross commemorated the memory of the 42 men from the parish who fell during the Great War. The highly visible landmark was constructed upon the Downs and forms a constant reminder for all who pass of the sacrifices made. Tranquil views from the south facing slope roll towards the A20 across open fields. Any development in this area will destroy the impact and setting of this highly significant piece of social history.

The historic cross can be viewed from different vantage points within the village, perhaps the most important being from the graveyard but significantly from where development at Tanyard farm H1(42) is proposed. These views to the cross are irreplaceable.

CONCLUSION

To secure Lenhams future, whilst expansion is accepted, it needs to be done in a way which will allow social integration, whilst allowing historic and important landscape areas to be protected. The broad location number will destroy this community and affect the lives and wellbeing of its residents.

The social fabric of this community that has existed and grown over 100s of years must not be allowed to break apart in the drive for more houses.

It is homes that families need, homes from which they can access local recreation and leisure to thrive, where local facilities are available to them, where they can learn, support and be supported and above can be fully integrated into their communities.

The concerns and views submitted by the Neighbourhood Plan Group on behalf of the community has support from us and the overwhelming majority of residents.

The overarching vision of the Neighbourhood Plan is to;

“protect the heritage features of Lenham village and the hamlets of the Parish and their setting in regard to the AONB and the rural parts of the Parish by allowing appropriate growth”

Regulation 14 Submission February 2016 page 13.

We ask that the inspector reviews the Broad Location allocation in line with the NHP proposal

Tom & Janetta Sams
Maidstone Borough Councillors
Harrietsham & Lenham Ward