

Christopher R Dobson



21<sup>st</sup> October 2020

Representation in relation to Otham Neighbourhood Plan

I wish to provide my support for the adoption of the Otham Neighbourhood Plan.

As noted in Chapter 2 of the plan, Otham is an historic village in a rural setting which provides opportunities for both residents and visitors from neighbouring parishes to enjoy the open spaces, views and historic buildings. When the sites identified in the Maidstone Borough Council Local Plan current at the time of this submission are completed the village will have experienced a growth from under 200 dwellings to approximately 1000 in under 10 years. Whilst it may be possible to add a small number of individual dwellings, any further large scale development of the kind already implemented or planned risks destroying the rural nature of the village, its heritage and its separation from the Maidstone urban conurbation with such eventualities being contrary to the policies within Maidstone Borough Council's own Local Plan.

I wish to support Policies HC1 and HC2. Walking the heritage trails is a joy and an education for many and their continuation needs to be supported. Individuals within the village have made great efforts to provide these opportunities for others and this must not be lost. Views of the village and from the village consequent on Otham's elevated position must be preserved.

I wish to support all of Policies GS1 to 6 which protect existing green spaces within the village providing for recreation. These policies seem to be entirely consistent with the National Planning Framework and will protect precious woodland.

I wish to support Policy AC1 which will ensure the separation of Otham from the Maidstone urban area in support of Maidstone Borough Council's own plan.

I wish to support all of Policies ST1 to ST5. As a keen walker and cyclist I support Maidstone Borough Council's desire for modal shift in transport. At the moment the footpaths within the area of the plan are quite well managed, however I should strongly endorse the need to improve KM94 in order to provide a good pedestrian connection between the large new housing estate at Bicknor Wood and the retail outlets on the Sutton Road. Without such improvement residents will not be encouraged to make that modal shift. However it cannot be said that the provision of cycle ways is equally well managed. Because of the huge amounts of traffic on Church Road and Willington Street, there is currently no safe route for cycling into the town centre. So I support the proposal in the plan for the Parish and Borough Councils to work together to solve this problem.

I support Policy BE1 for reasons already outlined above.

I support Policy BE2 but know that Maidstone Planning Committee routinely insist on good design standards.

I support Policy BE3. Observation of the dwellings already built in Otham shows that very little beyond lip service has been paid to environmental matters. No doubt they have been

built in line with current building regulations but more needs to be done to reduce climate change.

I support Policy CL1. To date little onus has been placed on the developers to help create a sense of community. The current village hall is not really compatible with a community of nearly 1000 dwellings which is a challenge to the village nature of Otham.