

Dear Cllr Crozer

Thank you for taking the time to write to me on behalf of the High Halstow Parish Council and Neighbourhood Forum regarding the Local Plan and Medway Council's approach to development on the Hoo Peninsula.

As your MP, I have been deeply concerned by the latest draft of the Local Plan and the scale of development expected on the Hoo Peninsula. I appreciate that this has caused a great deal of anxiety for residents in High Halstow, especially as around 800 new homes have been earmarked for development in the surrounding fields.

You rightly point out the severe problems with traffic congestion and road access to and from the Peninsula, and how residents can be cut off from the rest of the world if there is a serious accident on the Four Elms Roundabout. I know that this has happened a few times in recent years and these incidents have served as a sobering example of the poor infrastructure currently in place and how the road network will be further impacted by the large developments expected from the Local Plan.

You also point out that developments in villages such as High Halstow and Hoo St Werburgh have been opportunistic and there is no firm detail on how the development will support the existing community. Unfortunately, all the time that we remain without a Local Plan, the Peninsula will continue to be threatened by large and predatory housing applications from developers – and that is why we must all unite together and stand up to housing developers who seek to destroy our greenspaces.

When the draft Local Plan is published, it will be entirely dependent on Medway Council's £170m bid from the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) to deliver a new road network, rail links, and preserve the environment. I am not satisfied that the funding is anywhere near enough to deliver what has been proposed and I remain deeply sceptical of the Council's plans. I have consistently asked to see further detail about the proposals, but a very limited amount has been shared with me as your Member of Parliament.

I understand that both High Halstow and Hoo St Werburgh have also faced similar problems in obtaining detailed information about the Local Plan and HIF, despite submitting Freedom of Information requests to Medway Council. I realise that this has caused much ill feeling and consternation with your relationship with Medway Council, and you feel that fair consultation has not taken place with the parishes as it should have done under the provisions of the Localism Act 2011.

I note that you have asked me to personally intervene and seek urgent consultation amongst the parish councils prior to the signing of the Grant Development Agreement (GDA) which effectively allows the Council to pursue their plans outlined in the HIF bid.

I am aware that the parish has asked Medway Council to see the Environmental Impact Assessment and also a copy of the Business Case for the HIF.

I have recently spoken to Council officers to see why this cannot be shared with the Parish Councils – I understand that the Environmental Impact Assessment has not been completed yet and this is why it is unable to be shared. Furthermore, it is a requirement for this document to be shared in the public domain so the Council should publish as soon as it is available. With regards to the Business Case, I have been advised that whilst the document is commercially sensitive, a redacted version will be shared once the GDA has been signed.

I understand that you have suggested to the Council that they should publish an Area Action Plan for the Hoo Peninsula, but that this idea had fallen on deaf ears. From my most recent meeting with Council officers, I understand that work is ongoing on a 'Hoo Development Framework' which will give more detail on how the new infrastructure will be delivered on the Peninsula. This is scheduled to be published at the same time as the draft Local Plan.

I am now having regular monthly meetings with Medway Council's Head of Planning, Mr David Harris, and the HIF Bid Manager, Mr Martin Hall, to receive a further update on progress and to raise concerns that I have received from residents or organisations about the emerging Local Plan and the proposals in the HIF.

Today, I have written to both Mr Harris and Mr Hall with your concerns about the lack of consultation and have asked the Council not to sign the agreement until the parish council have received sufficient information about the proposals included within the HIF. Of course, once I have received a response, I will send this to you as soon as I can.

With regards to your post-script, I would be delighted to attend a Neighbourhood Forum meeting and would be pleased to discuss these issues in more detail. Please let me know the dates of your meetings.

Yours sincerely  
Kelly

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