



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Alison Dyson  
The Planning Inspectorate  
Temple Quay House  
2 The Square, Bristol, BS1 6PN

By email: ALISON.DYSON@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

Reference No. HW63013

3 December 2024

Dear Alison

**Highsted Park Planning applications in Faversham & Mid Kent – Application reference: 21/503906/EIOUT, Appeal reference: APP/V2255/V/24/3355314**

I am writing to express the serious concerns local residents have raised with me about the proposed Highsted Park developments and the detrimental impact they are likely to have on existing residents. I would also like reassurances that you and other decision makers will be visiting the locality on a regular basis during different times of the day to experience first-hand the increase in traffic that this proposed development will inevitably have on local country lanes.

This area is new to my constituency but since I was re-elected in July, I have met with hundreds of people living nearby, and without doubt this is their biggest concern. Taken together, the extra 8,400 houses of Highsted North and Highsted South will more than double the population of the two wards. They will fill green fields between villages with houses, completely changing the rural character of the area. The sheer size and scale of this development will mean residents who currently live in the countryside will suddenly find themselves consumed into an urban area.

As I have already mentioned, one of the concerns most frequently raised with me by residents is traffic and the capacity of the local road network. I am aware that there is a plan for a new junction on the M2, but residents are sceptical about whether (or when) this would materialise. In any event the M2 already struggles to cope with the

volume of traffic on it, and accidents bring it to a standstill – along with nearby A-roads. There is no likelihood of it being expanded to a 3-lane motorway any time soon to address this.

The development would inevitably lead to an increase in traffic on local lanes, which residents already find alarmingly busy with cars and lorries often trying to avoid queues on main roads. It would also lead to more traffic coming into Sittingbourne.

The development is not served by a station so road travel will be the only option for residents. Buses could of course help, but given the struggle to provide a viable bus service in rural areas like ours nobody feels this can be relied upon. Therefore thousands more cars on local roads is inevitable.

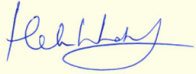
While residents recognise the development includes GP provision and schools, many have asked me whether these will be available from day one – given the current shortage of GPs in Sittingbourne and the pressure on school places. If provision of healthcare and schools lag the development that will make it even harder for the current community to access these services.

A final concern raised with me is the impact on food security of agricultural land being built on, particularly where the land is high quality farmland. This is in line with the Government's commitment to maintain the existing strong protection for safeguarding Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land. As you know the NPPF is clear that where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer-quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality.

While people generally recognise the need for housing and the difficulty new generations face to afford a home of their own, there is an overwhelming level of concern about the impact a development of this scale will have on such a beautiful, rural area.

I would urge you to take these concerns into account when you and your colleagues consider the Highsted planning applications.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Helen Whately', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Helen Whately MP  
Member of Parliament for Faversham and Mid Kent