

Thursday 2nd February 2017 at 10.00am

**Matter 4: All other new site allocations @ Swale Borough Council
817898 Mr Stephen Aldous**

I have of course made many submissions previously but as requested this is new material and it is in the form of a three point narrative which, although specific to my particular objection to an omission site being included in the local plan, also has far wider implications and ramifications for the Local Plan itself. The site itself is known as AX1 viz; the land between Barton Hill Drive and the Lower Road A2500 on Sheppey. As requested 4 x paper copies will be posted as well.

My first point concerns: Matter 4: Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) (4.2.26) and questions the figures for housing requirements from the OAN now that the political landscape in our country has changed and will continue to change, drastically affecting housing requirements. Prior to this and at the time an 'objectively assessed need' was being put together i attended meetings where it was generally accepted that half of the need for housing was due to immigration numbers being at record highs, the other half of the equation being the 'modern' trend of families splitting up and starting further families with new partners thus producing extended families with extended housing needs (as stated by an ex head off Swale Planning). I imagine there has been little change in the second cause of the perceived housing need but the first will surely change in the light of the referendum which clearly showed the people wanted to 'take back control' on the numbers coming to our country. Of course these effects will take some time to work through but seeing as the Local Plan covers the timespan up to 2031 it is surely as relevant as the OAN is now looking out of date with regard to potential requirements.

The second point i should like to make concerns: Matter 4: Distribution and Phasing of Housing Development (4.3.4-4.3.8, Table 4.3.3, ST3-ST7) i. What is the justification for the reduced scale of growth at Faversham and the two planning areas?

I should like to make the point that the historic split between housing allocations made in Faversham (currently planned to be 15% of the total) as compared with the Sheppey/Sittingbourne area (currently planned to be 85% of the total) is totally unjustified, considering that they are all under the remit of Swale. This of course is nothing new but the concept that this imbalance is due to the old Thames Gateway Project, which only extended down to Sheppey and not Faversham is now showing it's age as well. This is because the TG has now been superseded by the Thames Gateway Commission 2050 and it's remit now covers Faversham and beyond to Thanet. Faversham has had a modest increase in it's housing requirement allocation but it still has a lot of catching up to do to take it's fair share, especially with regards to how long this enormous imbalance has been in place. Also surely it is time for Faversham to lose it's monopoly with the protective 'historic' tag as this surely serves an injustice on Sheppey with it's twin claims of both aviation and naval history which is so ripe for the development of tourism itself.

My third and last point concerns: Matter 4: Has the Environmental and infrastructure Constraints to delivering the Full OAN (including 4.2.8-4.2.11 and 4.2.12) on the borough's environmental designations, agricultural land and locally designated landscapes been rigorously tested?

There were many claims even prior to the referendum that we were in this country on the brink of a crisis with regard to agriculture being unable to feed us all for very much longer without vast quantities being brought in from Europe (BBC). This problem will surely be exacerbated by our decision to leave that market place making it more essential than ever for us to preserve our depleted and remaining agricultural sites, in the south east particularly, to keep food on our tables at a price we can afford. Added to this situation we now have the Governments Environment Secretary promoting the idea of 'The Great British Take-away' i.e. making the British food industry a 'global powerhouse that will see the shelves of foreign supermarkets stacked with UK agricultural produce'. Hard to see how that ambition if going to be

achieved if we plough up vast tracts of our remaining agricultural land in the south-east for housing estates.

In conclusion i feel that the Local Plan as it stands is based on at best out of date data within an out of date political situation and deserves to be revisited and revised in the light of how things have changed. I thank you for your attention and look forward to hearing your positive responses and hope not to hear about any more 'difficult decisions having to be made' at that forthcoming meeting.

Steve ALDOUS