

Please vote against the proposal to send the draft Local Plan out to Public Consultation

To all Members of Swale Borough Council

I am writing to you as Chairman of Selling Parish Council urging you to vote against the proposal at Full Council on the 3rd February 2021, to send the draft Local Plan out to Public Consultation.

There has been a woeful deficit in consultation with Parish Councils. This is particularly relevant due to the significant changes introduced since the regulation 18 Consultation was carried out.

Government advice has always been that a 12 week consultation period is best practice. 6 weeks is, I believe, the bare legal minimum. In the present circumstances, due to the Covid Pandemic, engagement with your residents cannot be carried out in a normal manner. There can be no public meetings held as has happened previously when officers from the Local Plan Department can present and explain the plans and answer questions. Nor can hard copies of the draft plans be deposited in Council Offices and Local Libraries for local residents to scrutinise.

The obvious deficiencies in public consultation would, in my view, lead in due course to multiple requests to the Inspector to reject the plan and refer it back for re-consultation. This would throw open the whole question of Swale Borough Council getting a new plan approved by the date requested at the previous enquiry.

There appears to be effectively no transport modelling. Consultation with Kent County Council has been almost non-existent.

The Government has abandoned the proposed algorithm of housing numbers and is reassessing. There is every indication that the distribution of housing will be more aimed towards large Cities and Conurbations and towards the targeted growth areas in the Midlands and the North of England. How ironic it would be for Swale to push ahead with unnecessary haste and tie itself to greater housing numbers than they are eventually asked to provide.

Please reject this proposal at this time. By all means, publish your plan but agree to a best practice of a 12 week consultation period commencing once the current Covid restrictions are eased.

Sent on behalf of our Chairman
Wendy Gregory
Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer
Selling Parish Council