

LYNSTED WITH KINGSDOWN PARISH COUNCIL CORRESPONDENCE WITH CEO SWALE BOROUGH COUNCIL REGARDING THE DRAFT LOCAL PLAN HANDLING

Letters dated:

- 3rd February 2021 – LKPC Chairman (the day of the proposed Extraordinary Council Meeting)
- 2nd February 2021 – Ms Reed’s Response
- 26th January 2021

3rd February 2021

Dear Ms Reed

Further to my preliminary response yesterday.

Your reply is not satisfactory. In fact you have simply copied and pasted from documents you have sent to others.

On 27 April 2018 SBC published the “Looking Ahead” consultation and commenced the Local Plan Review process. This was a general discussion to gauge public opinion. It did not mention any specific areas where development could go and didn’t really touch on practical matters. It stated there would be a second stage where detail would be given and options outlined so that local residents could comment, prior to SBC deciding on its preferred scenario.

In September 2018 the LPP agreed the LDS. Again it was clearly stated there would be a second stage to the Reg 18 consultation which would commence in October 2019. However, because of the change in administration, this did not take place.

Five options (A-E) were evolved by officials. At the meeting on 23 September 2020, option C was singled out for policy development.

It is between this meeting and the one in October that clarity and process completely derailed.

The five options that had emerged from the ONLY (generalised) public consultation, Looking Ahead (back in 2018) were discarded, without consultation with PCs or others.

At the meeting on 29 October 2020, recommendation 3.48 was introduced for the first time under item 223.

Once again, there has been no consultation with either Parish Councils or residents on this recommendation.

In fact, we have never been consulted on the new administration’s ideas at all.

We now understand that, if agreed today, the plan will go out for Reg 19 consultation but comments can only be made on the 'soundness' of the plan. There will be no choice for the local community to consider different scenarios. Therefore, it is unlikely to be re-visited by SBC and will simply be submitted to the Planning Inspector.

This process has made a nonsense of the principle of public consultation. This Parish Council has not been given the information necessary to enable us to represent the interests of our residents. Indeed a meeting was held on Monday attended by seven local Parish Councils and the feeling was unanimous that we have not been consulted on this "Teynham Area of Opportunity" and the bypass running through the village of Lynsted, with all the associated issues of air pollution running down the A2 both East and West.

We further understand that the Planning Inspector will take a dim view of failure to consult properly.

We require an urgent response to the above points; to the three separate points in my email to you timed 10.34 yesterday (in particular point 2); and to the remaining points in my letter of Monday to all Councillors, copied to yourself, that have not yet been addressed.

We call on you to withdraw the "Teynham Area of Opportunity" and Lynsted bypass from the Local Plan. We also note that as at 08.00 this morning, the full consultation draft had still not been posted up on your website.

Yours sincerely
JULIEN SPEED

PS I expect you have seen the media article yesterday.

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Dear Ms Reed

As a preliminary response to your letter I would make the following three points.

1. Your letter fails to answer the point that this Parish Council has not been consulted on proposals to build a bypass in our Parish.

In plain English, please explain why not.

2. You make the following statement:

All town and parish councils have already been notified that the consultation is due to start
Please provide me with evidence to support this claim.

3. You make several references in your letter to Teynham. Like everyone else at SBC, you have failed to grasp that the site of the proposed bypass is NOT in Teynham. It is in the

rural Parish of Lynsted with Kingsdown. The Council's misunderstanding of local geography beggars belief.

Yours sincerely
JULIEN SPEED

On 2 Feb 2021, at 08:56, Larissa Reed wrote:

Dear Mr Speed

Thank you for your emails, I confirm receipt of the email you have sent to all councillors. In this email, I would like to focus on the points you have raised in your email of 26 January 2021, where you have raised concerns about the Parish Council not being consulted on the Local Plan Review and your feelings that we have brushed aside established protocols for consultation. I think we can all agree that this is a very challenging time, however the council is committed to consultation and every person who wishes to comment on the local plan will have the opportunity. I also think it is important to point out that the review of the Local Plan is not something that has started in the last 2 or 3 months. This process has been happening since 2017. I have taken the opportunity to set out below the process we have undertaken in the review of the plan, which has had the largest public engagement and response to any Local Plan.

The Council voted to commence the Local Plan Review (LPR) at the same meeting the current Local Plan 'Bearing Fruit' was adopted (Council minute 44 July 2017). This was due to emerging government policy, which indicated that the Local Plan Review would be likely to include a significant uplift in housing requirement. In considering what potential options would be available for locating new development, the Council commissioned a specialist report (Report on the High-Level Strategy – Options for Housing Growth and Implications for Swale Local Plan Review) to look at the constraints/opportunities within the Borough. This report was reported to the Local Development Framework Panel on 8 February 2019. As a result of this report, 5 proposals were submitted, indicating that an approach of 'New Garden Communities' had the potential to form the development strategy in a local plan review.

In the spring of 2018, the Council undertook a formal 'Regulation 18 consultation' with the document titled "Looking Ahead". As you may know, the purpose of the Regulation 18 consultation and engagement with local residents and relevant organisations is to identify how planning policy can be used positively to help address key issues within the local authority area.

The 'Looking Ahead' consultation proactively sought views on various scenarios for future spatial development options including the use of new garden communities and where they could be located.

“Looking Ahead” consisted of 46 questions and was supplemented with a “quick questionnaire”, that was shorter and anonymous. Notification letters were sent to 2,000 individuals and organisations on the planning policy consultation database. All Parish Councils were included in this consultation.

283 parties responded, making 3308 separate representations. 460 quick questionnaires were returned, and an additional 30 questionnaires tailored to local school students were also received.

The response rate to ‘Looking Ahead’ was greater than for any previous Local Plan consultations within the Borough. The Council received significant opposition generally from parish councils and residents towards this, particularly around the Sittingbourne area and support for more development to be located at the eastern end of the Borough.

The draft local plan has responded to these views by seeking to deliver a more dispersed spatial strategy overall that excludes the use of new garden communities.

In addition to this consultation, five stakeholder events were held:

- Developer/landowners: 27 April 2018. This coincided with the launch of the Council’s New Garden Communities Prospectus, but the event was also used to consider the approach to meeting future development needs in the Borough and how such issues as improving delivery of housing and infrastructure could be tackled.
- Infrastructure and utilities: 12 June 2018 and attended by 11 services and organisations, including most of the principal infrastructure providers. This considered the big infrastructure issues affecting future growth, but also took the opportunity to look at the initial expressions of interest made to the Council’s New Garden Communities Prospectus.
- Natural Environment: 22 June 2018 and attended by 15 organisations, including most of the principal environmental organisations. This considered the main natural environmental challenges ahead for the Local Plan, but again, also took the opportunity to look at the initial expressions of interest made to the Council’s New Garden Communities Prospectus.
- Heritage and Culture: 28 June 2018 and attended by 11 organisations, including Historic England. This considered the main challenges to the historic environment, but also its links with tourism and culture, as well as culture and tourism issues generally.
- Rural Communities: 4 July 2018 and attended by 9 organisations, including CPRE, and Action with Communities in Rural Kent as well as English Rural Housing Association. This considered the main issues affecting the future of rural communities and considered their role in meeting future development needs

Notes of these work shops were reported to and agreed by Councillors at Local Plan Panel (LPP) on 29 October 2018. The main issues raised during the ‘Looking Ahead’ consultation were reported to the same Local Plan Panel meeting and have been central to the progress on drafting the Local Plan Review. A report on how the Council has addressed the main

issues raised at this Reg 18 consultation will be required with the formal submission of the Local Plan.

Following the reporting of the Reg 18 consultation, officers continued with the evidence gathering required to support the Local Plan Review, this being presented to, and agreed by the Local Plan Panel and Cabinet. In addition, the potential for New Garden Communities continued to be explored with assessments undertaken by independent experts of the sites put forward (4 sites, one of the initial sites having been withdrawn).

Initially, the Council had envisaged an additional Regulation 18 consultation but in the light of the quantity and quality of the 'Looking Ahead' consultation responses (and after discussions with the independent 'Planning Advisory Service'), the Local Plan Panel and the Cabinet unanimously concluded that this additional stage was not necessary and that the 'Looking Ahead' consultation had been sufficiently comprehensive to inform the development strategy options. Consequently, the Local Development Scheme agreed by the Local Plan Panel in March 2020 was fundamentally informed by the results of the Regulation 18 consultation and public engagement exercise.

Furthermore, the Council has been engaged with informal Regulation 18 consultation with neighbouring local planning authorities, KCC, infrastructure providers and other bodies including the Environment Agency. This has taken the form of a significant number of meetings in the second half of 2020.

The Regulation 19 pre-submission consultation was advertised in the Council's newsletter "Inside Swale" January edition that is distributed to residents in the borough. Later this week, emails and letters will be sent out to over 1,200 individuals and organisations registered on the planning policy consultation database to notify them of the consultation and explain how they can get involved. All town and parish councils have already been notified that the consultation is due to start and they will receive a formal notification when the time comes.

In normal circumstances, hard copies of the plan document would be available for inspection at the Council Offices and at all libraries in the Borough. Unfortunately, the coronavirus pandemic does not allow us to do that. As with the Parish Council, we have been forced to do things differently, but the commitment to consultation is there. If people have access to the internet, they will be able to access all the documents. If people/groups have a computer but no internet, a cd version will be made available and if there is no computer access available, paper copies (or extracts, if appropriate) will be available on request.

In addition, our planning policy officers will also be reachable by telephone. They will be able to talk people through the plans and answer any questions people have. A press release has also been developed to the maximum number of people know the consultation is underway. No person or group who wishes to view or comment on the proposals will be denied the opportunity to do so.

The Local Plan review has been subject to long running community engagement and consultation including a comprehensive engagement in 2018 regarding various settlement and development distribution options across the Borough. This has informed the preparation of the Draft Local Plan which is intended to be submitted to the Secretary of State in accordance with Government Regulations following a formal period of consultation during February and March.

In relation to the comments, you have made about Air Quality, 'The Draft Local Plan Review (LPR) and accompanying Draft Local Transport Strategy have been drafted to support proposals which would support significant modal shift, improving air quality and reducing traffic congestion at Teynham and across the Borough.

The Teynham policy makes it clear that the issues of the Air Quality Management Areas, the narrow roads and the need to secure significant modal shift will need to be high on the agenda when the masterplan is worked up. Initial transport and air quality modelling has indicated that subject to achieving significant modal shift, there should be capacity to enable the scale of development proposed to be accommodated.

The details about the link road and the development as a whole will come through the development of a masterplan in response to its identification as an 'area of opportunity' and will involve significant consultation with the Parish Council, local councillors and the community in its drafting. This would be informed through more detailed and updated transport modelling which will be available in the Spring. As part of the masterplan's development, a feasibility study for a new link road to the south would need to be undertaken by those with interests in developing sites across Teynham and to also ensure adequate connections north of the A2, including those to the rail station, are brought forward. This will require further review of potential impacts on the AQMA's along the A2.

I am happy to for either me, or our planning policy team to discuss this with you further if this would be of help.

Sincerely

Larissa

Larissa Reed | Chief Executive | Swale Borough Council

26th January 2021 – Letter to Chief Executive of Swale Borough Council

Dear Larissa Reed

I am the Chairman of Lynsted with Kingsdown Parish Council. At last night's PC meeting, outrage was expressed at the undemocratic manner in which the draft Local Plan for 2022-2038 is being rushed through without proper consultation.

This Parish Council has not been consulted on the plans, nor have our Ward Councillors, despite the fact that they include provision for 305 new homes on the "sensitive edge" identified in our Parish Design Statement. This represents a housing uplift of 60% in

Lynsted. Nor have we been consulted on the proposed “movement corridor”, which threatens to slice our 14th Century village in half.

Established protocols for public consultation have been brushed aside. The proposals have been buried in a dense 600 page document and overturn all five previous options that were publicly consulted on.

There is no transport plan. There is no identification of where the bypass will go, or landowner agreements. There is no plan for air quality. There is no clarification of what development will take place in this supposed Teynham “Area of Opportunity” - nor has any input been sought from the local community.

Addressing the seriously harmful air quality issues along the A2 in Teynham by building a bypass and filling the surrounding area with over 1,400 new homes (and therefore at least that many additional cars) is positively schizophrenic.

The Government’s housing algorithm was abandoned in December and all local authorities have been informed that housebuilding targets will be re-assessed. The seismic shifts of Covid and Brexit indicate distribution of housing away from the South East and into areas of investment in the Midlands and North of England. Yet SBC is pressing on regardless, with unseemly haste, with a proposal to build 1,405 houses in Teynham & Lynsted Ward.

A six week public consultation after the plan has been rubber-stamped is inadequate engagement with residents. It comes far too late in the process and is too short a period for a plan as complex and important as this. Because of Covid, there can be no public meetings and no viewing of paper plans at the Council’s offices or libraries. Lockdown limitations and postal delays make the delivery of informational literature difficult. It is wholesale disenfranchisement of your voters over a matter of Borough-wide importance.

Further, we have been advised that SBC will simply parcel up all resident/consultee comment and dump it on the Planning Inspector without analysis, scrutiny, validation or challenge - yet these are the functions and responsibility of SBC as the executive body.

In summary, democratic and representative debate has been stifled. We believe that the entire local plan should be put on hold until residents can fully engage. Anything less is an abuse of process.

Should SBC continue to progress this plan, we reserve the right to take further action against the Borough Council on the grounds of maladministration.

We expect a personal response from you prior to the special council meeting on 3 February.

Yours sincerely

JULIEN SPEED, Chairman - Lynsted with Kingsdown Parish Council