A garden community-style development for Sittingbourne could see 11,500 homes created. It is backed by Swale council leader Cllr Andrew Bowles (top right) but Cllr Monique Bonney says it is not in the best interests of residents

Backing from the top for 11,500 home scheme

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Swale council's leader has backed plans for a new-style "garden community" to be built in Sittingbourne.

The scheme, by Quinn Estates, would create 11,500 homes, shops, GP surgeries and up to four primary schools on farmland in the Highsted Valley near Kent Science Park. It will also provide a new motorway junction and link road between the M2 and A2 at Bapchild.

Speaking at the council's Local Plan Panel Cllr Andrew Bowles, (Con, Boughton and Courtenay), ruled out rival schemes at Faversham for 2,500 homes, Sheldwich (5,000) and Bobbing (2,500).

He said the Quinn scheme would provide enough housing to meet government targets, fully fund its own roads, schools and health facilities, provide relief for Sittingbourne town centre, reduce A2 traffic and "do the most to remove the threat of large-scale development from the rest of the borough."

He dismissed a development at Sheldwich near junction 6 of the M2 at Faversham saying the promoters of this 'should be told its a non-starter.'

Cllr Mike Baldock (Swale Group, Borden and Grove Park) said: "The meeting was pretty horrific. The whole Garden Communities concept was being pushed through as just one option. Yet it is the only option that has been pursued to date."

He said all four models assumed the M2 would be widened between Gillingham and Canterbury but said that had not been agreed. He said more homes would lead to "significant" traffic congestion and "worsening air quality."

Labour leader Cllr Roger Truelove (Homewood) said he did not like the Highstead plan for "landscape protection reasons" and added: "My reading is that the developers and the council are over optimistic about its deliverability and viability."

Monique Bonney (Ind, West Downs) said: "This is not in the best interests of the area. Even officers admitted building garden settlements would have no benefit to existing communities which could end up even worse off." The public's view is yet to be taken into account, but council officers admitted some were "very unreceptive" to garden communities.

A real energy around science experiments held on special day

Children at Meadowfield School have been rolling up their sleeves and taking part in experiments for Science Day.

The Sittingbourne News Extra's Charity of the Year is based in Swanstree Avenue, Sittingbourne, and hosted a range of activities earlier this month.

A bird of prey display was one of the key attractions and took place in the hall. The

Free course will help build skills

Young adults in Sittingbourne can build confidence and develop job skills by signing up to a Prince's Trust programme.

People aged between 16 and 25 can register for the 12 week development course, run by charity CXK, to go on [illegible] action-packed trip [illegible]