



Medway Council
ME4 4TR

Ref: HOUSING INFRASTRUCTURE FUND - CONSULTATION

Date of Submission: 5th April 2021

Dear Sir,

At either the last General Election or Local Election, I don't recall Bellway, Berkley Homes, Countryside or Redrow being on the ballot paper, yet these are the names that are controlling our Central and Local Government.

We have a Housing Crisis. There are homeless people sleeping on our streets, homeless people staying with friends and relatives and people living in cramped and squalid conditions. There are thousands of people on waiting lists for social housing and thousands more waiting to find affordable accommodation to buy.

Over the last fifty years, the functions of both central and local government have been gradually handed over to the private sector to use as their own money-making enterprises. This is because the authorities won't charge sufficient taxes, to pay for an equitable society, for fear of losing votes.

As part of the volume house builders' money-making enterprise is a market led premise that shortages increase demand and raise prices.

Following this business model, the volume house builders have created a housing shortage and vast sectors of the population have suffered and continue to suffer as a consequence.

Part of the strategy is to obtain planning approvals and then not to construct any houses until their revenue can be maximised. In this way the volume house builders can completely control demand and ultimately price.

In Medway, the volume house builders have seen an opportunity to obtain approval to build on agricultural land, which is much cheaper to build on than brownfield sites, thus maximising their profits even more.

In 2020 a report by the CPRE, the countryside charity, stated that there is enough brownfield land for 1.3 million houses, and that what we need is a genuine 'brownfields first' policy from the Government. In the same report it was noted that the Local Government Association had found that over one million homes had been granted planning permission but not yet built out.

Medway Council is currently faced with a very small population growth that cannot sustain the services that it is obliged to deliver and needs new residents to provide much needed council tax revenue.

Unfortunately, Medway Council cannot see the longer-term implications of their acquiescence to the volume house builder's antisocial and environmentally disastrous demands.

Medway Council have acknowledged that we are facing a climate emergency yet haven't apparently decided to act on the reality staring us in the face.

The Medway Council area has a stunning physical geography inextricably linked to water, in the form of the River Thames and River Medway Estuaries.

Scientists tell us that globally there is, potentially, the equivalent of 70 metres of sea level rise, in the form of ice floating around in the polar regions of the earth.

This ice is slowly melting and the best-case scenario is a 300 mm rise by the end of the century. Unfortunately, there is also a more realistic worst-case scenario for a 2.5 metre rise by the end of this century.

As decisions about our future well-being are being taken in the boardrooms of volume house builders rather than by our elected representatives, it must be up to the volume house builders to now pay for the damage that they have had a major role in creating.

The housing infrastructure included in the Medway Council bid will generate a massive carbon footprint which presumably must be offset by other means, as asphalt doesn't sequester carbon. To be in line with Government policy, the infrastructure's carbon footprint would need to be offset, by the houses being carbon negative.

Our volume house builders haven't seemingly got a clue how to make houses carbon neutral, let alone carbon negative. So, until they have, let's build where we already have roads leading to our brownfield and urban sites.

Rather than spend tax payers' money on highway engineering works to open up grade one agricultural land for exploitation by the volume house builders, we should assess the damage that they have inflicted on the population and environment and, at the very least, force them to build out the planning approvals that they already possess.

In February 2020, The Local Government Association found that over 1 million homes have been granted planning permission, but not yet built. Currently, according to Shelter, 40% of homes granted planning permission go unbuilt.

We are told that the post covid-19 bill to the tax payer is greater than anything seen since the end of World War Two.

A bankrupt country in 1945 didn't prevent the introduction of the National Health Service, the introduction of free education for all and a massive social house building programme.

There would be no reason why similar heroic undertakings cannot be made now to save our environment while still housing all those who are in need.

We have gone a long way down the road to being subservient to business interests.

People who have worked hard to acquire professional qualifications are now expected to ignore their professional ethics and agree to proposals that they know are wrong and not in the interests of the people they aspire to serve.

It is not too late to put the genie back in the bottle, see some sense and protect our environment and our children's future.

Bernard Hyde
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