



Hoo Saint Werburgh Parish Council

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FTAO Medway Council:
Cllr Alan Jarrett
Neil Davies – Chief Executive

Hoo St Werburgh Parish Council Vote of No Confidence

Hoo Parish Council unanimously passed a vote of no confidence in Medway Council at the Full Parish Council Meeting held on 1st July 2021.

Medway Council's proposal to build up to 12,000 new homes on the Hoo Peninsula is disproportionate, unfair and unjustified.

Medway Council's HIF project, which exists to enable such development, is completely inadequate and will not create the sustainable community it intends. In fact, the council's infrastructure and housing proposals, will exacerbate existing problems in the community.

The railway proposal is a 'complete white elephant' and 'money pit'. The scheme has already been effectively cut in half with the removal of the 'curve', which would have allowed passengers to travel into the Medway Towns. The Strood and Higham railway stations will continue to be more effective to use.

Experienced independent consultants have concluded that they would be pleasantly surprised if the rail proposal is delivered and Homes England themselves, the funder, have said that they don't believe that the service will cover its costs, hence it therefore needing significant subsidy from the council.

The expectation that the new station quarter would become the heart of Hoo, with new facilities such as a community centre and shops etc. is fanciful with little heed of the views for the existing population. Indeed, the council is already calling the existing centre of Hoo the old town and the station quarter the new town.

The road proposal will not accommodate the substantial increase in traffic, which will be generated by building 12,000 homes on the Hoo Peninsula. The so called 'relief road' is effectively useless. It will be restricted to 20mph in parts, it can't be used by lorries and busses and can be closed by the MOD at any time.

Rather than dealing with the seriously concerning air pollution at the Four Elms Hill Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), the council has failed still to put together an Air Quality Action Plan and intends to effectively bypass the area with a ridiculous 'relief road'.

The council admits that the road proposal is only designed to accommodate residential elements of their plans and yet ignores the council's ambitions to significantly increase industrial and commercial development on the Hoo Peninsula.

The environmental proposal attempts to mitigate the wholesale destruction and harm of a significant number of sensitive sites on the Hoo Peninsula. There won't be a net gain for the environment and the proposals contradict the council's apparent environmental attributes. The council's track record so far is allowing the destruction of hedgerows and woodland and the closing down of local sports and recreation sites, which of course would be needed if local population is to increase.

Medway Council is a relatively young local authority with no previous experience of equivalent major infrastructure projects. We have little confidence that the council can effectively deliver and manage such a large-scale project which is equivalent to Ebbsfleet Garden City. The council's track record so far still consists mostly of barren and derelict prime riverside development sites.

The destruction of the Hoo Peninsula is being led by a cabinet of Medway councillors, the majority of who represent and have interests in protecting greenfield sites in other parts of the Medway Towns. The council's proposals have no integrity. Indeed, there are many similarities with the council's former Lodge Hill proposals and its attitude towards the Hoo Peninsula.

The history of the council's planning decisions, and commentary by Medway councillors, shows a complete lack of consistency and a record of double standards being applied between the Hoo Peninsula and other parts of the Medway Towns.

The council's Planning Committee refused the original planning application for hundreds of new homes in Capstone as planners felt that the development would create an unacceptable impact on the Area of Local Landscape Importance. Yet, the council intends to destroy Areas of Local Landscape Importance on the Hoo Peninsula.

In response to planning applications in particular parts of the Medway Towns, Medway councillors have expressed concerns about the lack of GPs and the local hospital's capacity yet are indifferent or supportive of the council's more destructive proposals for the Hoo Peninsula.

The council has been secretive and reluctant to share information concerning their plans and demonstrate a complete lack of interest in the views of the residents of Hoo and the greater peninsula. The utter contempt that this council holds for Hoo is shown most recently by the first airing of the Hoo Development Plan not being held in Hoo itself.

Medway Council is only now trying to produce the Hoo Development Framework which confirms further the unrealistic timescales of the council's overall plans. The HIF project is literally falling apart by the day and the council is immensely behind schedule.

The council is being disingenuous by not informing us where they intend to allow development, yet they would have listed preferred development sites for Homes England's benefit as part of the HIF project and the Grant Determination Agreement (GDA).

The council fails to recognise the needs of a rural community and ignores its wishes to remain rural. Our area would be vandalised by unsustainable housing development and the rebranding of Hoo as a 'small rural town' with little concern for its history and heritage or for the wishes of its residents.

Medway Council continues to collect local council tax whilst decimating local facilities whilst spending significant sums on facilities in other parts of the Medway Towns as well as ludicrous and vanity projects.

This symbolic vote shows our complete disgust in Medway Council's attitude and behaviour towards the people of Hoo and the wider Peninsula.

Yours sincerely

S Babington

Mrs. S Babington
Parish Clerk

Copies to:
Neil Davies,
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Kelly Tolhurst MP