



11th September 2017

CPRE Kent supports request to ‘call in’ Maidstone Local Plan

CPRE has called upon the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government for ‘call-in’ and reconsideration of the Inspector's recommendations on Maidstone’s draft Local Plan.

CPRE has pointed out that the Inspector only paid scant attention to the reports from two previous Inspectors on the KIG and Waterside Park inquiries, both dealing with proposals for commercial development on the site near J8 of the M20.

Both Inspectors gave considerable time to the situation and heard from expert witnesses including the Director of Leeds Castle.

The three reasons given for refusal of both previous appeals were:

1. The heritage asset of Leeds Castle (Grade 1 Listed) and grounds (Grade 2*)
2. The closeness to a very important Area of Outstanding Beauty (AONB)
3. The availability of more accessible and sustainable alternative locations nearby in other Local Planning Authorities for providing employment opportunities.

A letter from Historic England sent to Maidstone Council pointed out that the proposed site near J8 designated in the draft Local Plan for office and warehouse development would be visible from Leeds Castle, and would therefore adversely affect the setting of this important heritage asset. The contents of this letter were not mentioned either by the Council or the Inspector, despite a legal requirement to do so.

Richard Knox-Johnston from CPRE South East Region said “We fully support Helen Whately’s request for a ‘call-in’ of this decision”.

“Two Inspectors and a High Court Judge have heard very full evidence and have agreed that there should be no development at this site, whereas the Inspector at the Local Plan Inquiry has given the matter cursory attention with no evidence of a site visit.”

“This is not the way important planning decisions should be made”.

“The report from the Inspector into the draft Local Plan is only a recommendation in law and the Council have the ability not to accept the Inspector’s recommendation on Junction 8. We hope that they will listen to people in Maidstone and reject calls for any development at Junction 8.”

End

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NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. CPRE, the Campaign to Protect Rural England, is a charity which promotes the beauty, tranquillity and diversity of rural England. We advocate positive solutions for the long-term future of the countryside. www.cpre.org.uk
2. CPRE Kent is one of the charity’s largest county groups, with more than 3,000 supporters, campaigning to promote the beauty, tranquillity and diversity of rural England by encouraging the sustainable use of land and other natural resources in town and country.
3. Registered office: Queens Head House, Ashford Road, Charing, Ashford, Kent TN27 0AD, Telephone: 01233 714540, www.cprekent.org.uk, email: info@cprekent.org.uk. A company limited by guarantee, registered in England number 4335730, registered charity number 1092012.