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Planning Inspectors
c/o Folkestone & Hythe District Council
Civic Centre
Castle Hill Avenue
Folkestone CT20 2QY

17 July 2020

Dear Sirs,

I would like to take the opportunity to thank you for allowing me extra time to comment on the Folkestone & Hythe District Council Core Strategy review due to my having not received the Programme Officer's original e-mail. It is greatly appreciated.

Unfortunately, I do not feel able to continue my request to speak at the examination. [Redacted]

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[Redacted] It has been so long since the previous consultations that I cannot recall all the pertinent information. Furthermore, the Council opened two consultations at the same time, meaning there was an overwhelming amount of documentation to read, which seems unwise at best, or even a strategy to discourage participation. However, it has to be said that my greatest concern is a feeling of disconnect from the process that has been felt by others as well. As a member of the Shepway HEART Forum (HEritage and ARts Tourism), I was lucky enough to have participated in a presentation some years ago by Adrian Tofts. Unfortunately, it was more about dates than the nitty-gritty of how to comment, or indeed even explaining how an examination works or what we can and can't say at the hearing, further perpetuated by Mr. Toft's rush to get a train home, despite having booked our evening appointment in advance. The PPLP examination was an eye-opener for many who attended, including people who have been involved in the planning process for decades such as architects. I was even more fortunate to attend a presentation by the local CPRE chapter, who explained how to comment on the PPLP. Without their help, I would have been clueless as to what is 'sound', 'effective', 'justified' and so on. I am pleased to hear that the Council have taken my comments on board and would hope to see them 'make a day of it' and have a proper presentation explaining complex documents and language that baffles the layman when we next have a review of key local planning documents.

Many local people are very disheartened by the Local Planning Authority, as they repeatedly approve applications that clearly go against planning guidance and these draft documents, so we feel they are already not taking them seriously. You will see my comments on Policy SS11 regarding the applicant's attempt to remove all leisure activities from the development, which would see our seafront have no pleasure amenities and still leaves little for children to do. As a committee member of Folkestone & District Local History Society and a local historian, I am keen to see our heritage preserved, embraced and used as a tourist attraction. Sadly, Folkestone & Hythe District Council have no Heritage or Tourism Officers any more and scrapped the tourism budget, the Leader saying it was a "complete waste of £200,000" in a meeting where he chose to spend money on

renaming the district, because he felt that more important to attract people. Our Heritage Strategy is in draft after many years and was even removed from the consultation portal until I complained about it this week, as we were unable to see our comments. We have several Conservation Area Appraisals (<https://folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/planning/planning-advice-and-fees/conservation-areas/conservation-area-appraisals>), although one of the seven stated to be completed is still marked as draft in the title. Five remain in draft form, and often incomplete (e.g. the Folkestone one – it isn't even the right name for the area now) and were prepared in 2006, meaning the Council have not bothered to finish them in fourteen years! Other conservation areas, for example Brookland, Newchurch and two areas in Dymchurch, have no appraisal documents whatsoever. Those named were all designated in either 1971 or 1973, so it is quite appalling that they have been forgotten and not properly appraised. There are other heritage areas, such as the picturesque village of Old Hawkinge (separate from Hawkinge, but close by) and Hawkinge Aerodrome (which took part in WWII including the Battle of Britain, and the film of the same title) that should be considered for conservation area status, but instead the aerodrome has largely become a huge housing estate.

I find myself asking how a Core Strategy can be considered sound when it seldom refers to heritage and is completely unable to reference the Heritage Strategy or Conservation Area Appraisals, as they either are unfinished or don't exist? I would very much like the Core Strategy to ensure that heritage is identified, assessed and protected. Heritage tourism is a huge industry and one our district is shamefully ignoring for the most part. Heritage assets have been allowed to deteriorate, including important examples such as the Grade II* Leas Lift funicular railway, I believe one of only three left in the country that was operational when it closed. And our Local List has not even been started, and many interesting old buildings have suffered the wrecking ball as a result, with more at risk.

I cannot approve the Government's continued demand for even more housing. The demand is becoming so great on the area that Folkestone will soon not have any green spaces left. Turning the town centre into housing is poor strategy, as there is no parking and it leaves people parking on the pedestrian precinct at night, making it look untidy and discouraging people from visiting after hours. This has a negative effect on the town's night life.

I note that the water efficiency of 90 litres/person/day is quoted. As I mention in Policies SS8 and SS11, I am concerned that this is an under-provision and would leave us with insufficient water for daily routines. I also note that a target of 30% affordable housing is requested. Whilst I appreciate not much of that will be truly affordable social housing, it seems that developers all too often use the excuse that it is not achievable to get away with much lower targets, sometimes around 10% or even less. I've seen them argue the case for no social housing at all, even. I hate the phrase "subject to viability". If it's not viable to give something back or provide a minimum amount of housing for locals, don't build here!

Folkestone & Hythe District Council don't really have a proper development strategy. This should take into consideration the need for more GP surgeries, schools, truly affordable housing, the transportation network, water provision and leisure facilities. Instead, the biggest developments we get tend to be high-class properties with a view, demanding premium prices, bring the wealthy into Folkestone but not catering for the population who have lived here all their lives, often with the district as their family home for generations. The seafront development has not reconnected the town to the seafront, as was required. The restoration of the Leas Lift was not part of the original approved outline plans, merely forming part of the S106 agreement years later, and only to be funded after the first apartment is occupied. This means heritage is left to rot until the developer

gets what they want. It furthermore consumes four car parks. Whilst two more have been purchased by the applicant, they have opened them on one or two occasions in the past two years, so they sit unused. The railway station in the development was decommissioned, when keeping it open would have made sense as the wealthy occupants of 1,000 homes are likely to want to commute. Or it would have made a great heritage line or tramway, with car parking facilities on the old Folkestone East goods yard. Instead, a private owner has been granted permission to build more housing on the former railway land, even though the Council have purchased the line. In fact, the station saw many soldiers off to the battlefields during WWI so would be a huge heritage attraction, but the applicant was originally granted permission to demolish it in the outline application, though fortunately had a change of heart more recently and a S73 application reversed that, although they want to demolish the Station Master's House. We also have a long-disused industrial area, which is out of town and would make a great night activity hub e.g. with a nightclub, bowling, cinema, eateries etc. Instead, we get a drive-through KFC and a hotel. The applicant's agent personally told me that nightclubs are not wanted (the town is desperate for one, though!) and promised me something good at the second phase. That turned out to be... a second hotel!

Consequently, I do feel that the public are rather disconnected from the process – we aren't told how to comment and our comments are ignored, and indeed the Core Strategy documents are ignored when the decisions are made for developments the majority don't want... so what is the point in participating? It is most regrettable that we should feel this way, but several people who would otherwise be interested in shaping the district's future do indeed share that opinion.

Yours sincerely,

