HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Alison Broom
Chief Executive
Maidstone Borough Council
Maidstone House, King Street,
Maidstone ME15 6JQ

Reference No. HW29506 22 May 2025

Dear Alison

Reservations about the Heathlands Garden Village

As you know I have always been against the Heathlands Garden Village as I don't think it is the right location for 5,000 extra homes. It will not only destroy acres of beautiful countryside, but I don't believe the transport infrastructure can support a development of this size.

Despite assurances by MBC and Homes England at the recent consultation about lots of infrastructure and services included as part of the development, there is still no guarantee that any of these - like the station - will actually be built.

I am particularly concerned that developers will claim some or all of the promised infrastructure is unaffordable, leaving the worst of all worlds: hundreds of new residents isolated in the countryside relying on an already strained road network, existing hard-pressed doctors surgeries and so on. I know many local residents share these concerns.

I also have the following reservations about the development and I would be grateful if you could address them as part of this consultation:

Indicative phasing

Stage 1 of the development, between the A20 and the railway line, will be the most straight forward section to develop. If the rest of the development is unable to proceed, that would leave an isolated community without any infrastructure.

When I pressed this possibility to representatives at the consultation, I was not given any convincing assurances of how this scenario would be addressed, if it were to occur.

Keeping the separate identities of Heathlands and Lenham

The current plans separate the existing Lenham community with the new Heathlands development with some fields. It is essential that these two communities maintain their distinct identities and are prevented from merging into one large, urban conurbation.

Again, I was not convinced by assurances of a ‘green buffer zone’ around the new development and would like the Council to explore other planning designations that have stronger protections in the planning system.

Infrastructure

Related to my first point, people are concerned that some of the promised infrastructure will not materialise as has happened with other developments.
I know there have been doubts that the development won’t be able to fund the station, but MBC and Homes England seem confident this will be paid for as part of the development by the landowners.

That said, I am concerned that if there is not enough footfall Southeastern won’t stop trains there or will prevent trains from stopping at other stations on the line. I would like more concrete reassurances that MBC and Homes England will negotiate with Southeastern and confirm that they are prepared to service this station and the other stations along the line.

I strongly believe that no existing residents should be inconvenienced as a result of this development.

Affordable housing

There is no doubt that we need more affordable housing. In my experience the demand for affordable housing - specifically social rented - is in the town centre, where residents have easy access to facilities such as the Council offices, local employment, and Job Centre Plus.

I am concerned that if development costs escalate the affordable housing contribution will be reduced or disregarded altogether. If this does not happen, I am concerned about this location for social rented homes as it is so far away from the Town Centre and the facilities social tenants rely on.

Accessible housing

I would like to see an allocation of accessible housing made for older people and disabled people as I know there is huge demand for this. More purpose-built older peoples' housing will also help free up family homes across the borough helping to meet more housing need without building more homes

I would like to thank representatives from Maidstone Borough Council and Homes England for taking the time to go through these plans at your recent consultations. I hope you take these comments and all the other comments you have received into account.

Yours sincerely



Helen Whately MP
Member of Parliament for Faversham and Mid Kent