HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Ms Larissa Reed
Chief Executive, Swale Borough Council
Swale House
East Street
Sittingbourne
Kent
ME10 3HT

Reference No. HW41556 11 August 2025

Dear Larissa

I am writing to express the serious concerns local residents have raised with me, concerns which I share, about the proposed Highsted Park, Winterbourne Fields and Duchy developments which are all in the pipeline.

If all three of these developments go ahead the number of houses in the area will increase by more than a third of Faversham. In one generation, the rural character of our area will completely change with rural communities suddenly finding themselves consumed into a large urban conurbation.

It would be wrong to oppose all house building. I hear from constituents every day who are struggling to find homes – both to rent and buy. The fall in home ownership really does concern me, as does the generational divide between older people who were able to buy their own home and younger people who increasingly cannot. That said, the cumulative impact of these proposals is staggering and is likely to have a detrimental impact on local residents.

Since the Highsted Park decision will no longer be taken by Swale, I ask the Council to take into account the likelihood of the Government approving it when deciding on Winterbourne Fields and the Duchy developments. Although I appreciate that they will be decided as separate applications, it is vital that the cumulative scale and pace of development across all three is considered, particularly the increase in traffic and the impact on local roads.

These developments would inevitably lead to an increase in traffic on local lanes, which residents already find alarmingly busy with cars and lorries often trying to avoid queues on main roads. This will only be exacerbated if road improvements at Brenley Corner and Blue Bell don't go ahead.

While residents recognise these developments include GP provision and schools, many have asked me whether these will be available from day one. If provision of healthcare and schools lag the development that will make it even harder for the current community to access these services. Given the difficulties people already have getting healthcare and dental appointments, a worsening of this situation would be unacceptable.

A final concern for me is the impact on food security of agricultural land being built on, particularly where the land is high quality farmland. To help address this I have presented a Bill in Parliament to protect Grade 1 agricultural land for farming. I have also written to the Deputy Prime Minister pressing her to ensure that the protection of high quality agricultural land is a material consideration by whoever determines the Highsted Park planning applications. I ask the Council to do the same with the Duchy and Winterbourne Fields applications.

While people generally recognise the need for housing and the difficulty new generations face to afford a home of their own, there is an overwhelming level of concern about the impact these three large-scale developments will have on such a beautiful, rural area.

I would be grateful if you could pass these concerns onto the Members of your Planning Committee.

I would also be grateful if you or Swale Borough Council planning officers could give me some answers to the following questions:

1. How will the Council plan for the cumulative impact of all these large developments given that each planning application needs to be decided on its own merit – and one of the applications is no longer being decided by the Council?
2. With an increasingly out of date local plan which carries less weight as time goes on - how will the council ensure that if any of these developments go ahead, they will have the infrastructure to support them: roads, schools, medical facilities etc?

3. If some or all of these developments go ahead how will that impact the next Local Plan?
4. If the Council refuses any of these developments, how confident is the Council that it can successfully defend its decision at appeal, given the age of the current Local Plan?
5. If Highsted Park is approved by the Secretary of State, what contingency plans does the Council have to make sure there is sufficient investment in local roads (particularly any that do not get upgraded as part of the development permission)?
6. How will the expected local government re-organisation in 2027/28 impact the process of these developments and the next Local Plan?

Many thanks

Yours sincerely



Helen Whately MP
Member of Parliament for Faversham and Mid Kent