

Representations

Two representations have been received from CPRE Kent on behalf of the Joint Parishes Group, CPRE (Maidstone), Bearsted & Thurnham Society, and Leeds Castle; and from a resident raising the following (summarised) points:

- The item should be withdrawn from the agenda.
- The development of this land would be intensely damaging to the local environment and has poor environmental credentials.
- There is not published evidence to support the officer's conclusion on the risk of costs.
- How do officers know the case is lost and on several occasions, the belief that an appeal would be lost by officers has not materialised.
- The report is unbalanced and does not mention strong objections from various parties.
- Members should stick to their original decision and it is perfectly reasonable to defend the reason for refusal.
- Officer's refused to help Members frame the reasons for refusal.
- The lack of a costs warning was officer's fault.
- Officers should mount a robust defence of Members decision.
- It is premature to jump to conclusions about what the Inspector will conclude until all arguments have been heard and there is no certainty over the site allocation.
- The Interim Findings cannot be relied upon as evidence that the allocation policy will remain intact when the examination is concluded.
- The call by the Local Plan Inspector for an assessment of job requirements and employment land allocations in the wider economic area needs to be considered, and in the light of any submissions made within the consultation period. Any conclusions should also be made against the background that the 2022 review provides opportunity to consider other sites that have or are about to enter the market.
- The additional work carried out by the Council does not support the need for the land to be developed as a matter of urgency to meet either Maidstone's or the wider economic area's needs.
- The time to review the decision is when the Inspector has delivered his final findings.
- The Council should think again about the decision to support development at Woodcut Farm through the Local Plan.
- Reference to a dismissed appeal for 57 houses in Headcorn.

Members have also been sent lobbying material in the form of a letter from the Kent Association of Local Councils.

Officer Comment

The representations and lobbying material are not considered to alter the recommendations in the main report.

RECOMMENDATION: My recommendations remain unchanged.