

Notice has been given pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 12 of the intention to present a petition in the following terms:

Save Staplehurst from more development - remove Henhurst Farm from Maidstone's Local Plan

Staplehurst Parish Council prepared a Neighbourhood Plan which was put to voters in a referendum on 3rd November 2016; the Plan was overwhelmingly approved (93% versus 7%). This plan was prepared with extreme care and consulted residents meticulously at all stages.

However Maidstone Borough Council have ignored the will of the residents of Staplehurst and have overturned parts of this Neighbourhood Plan. As a late addition to their own Local Plan, Maidstone Borough Council are looking to approve development in land to the North of Henhurst Farm (policy H1(51) in the Local Plan). Overturning the outcome of Staplehurst's referendum gives the impression that Maidstone Borough Council is subverting local democracy.

Access to the proposed development appears to be via The Bartons (a new development off Oliver Road). The Bartons is a narrow residential road which children regularly play on. It is barely wide enough for larger vehicles to pass down if cars are parked on the road. The site also borders a nature conservation area that is home to protected species (such as slow worms and snakes). Further, Staplehurst does not currently have the infrastructure to support increased development - local schools, doctors and roads are all under pressure; there is now no bank; there is no major supermarket; and the future of the post office is uncertain.

The Maidstone Local Plan is due to be considered for adoption by Maidstone Borough Council at a meeting on 27th September. In contrast to the democratic way in which the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan was prepared, the Maidstone Local Plan seems to have been prepared in a rather less open way. It is concerning that a democratically adopted plan is simply being ignored.

This petition seeks support for the stance of Staplehurst Parish Council in opposing this development. As such it requests that the development on land to the North of Henhurst Farm be removed from the Maidstone Local Plan.