



HEADCORN PARISH COUNCIL

The Clerk, Parish Office, Headcorn Village Hall, Church Lane
Headcorn TN27 9NR
Phone 01622 892496 Email clerk@headcornpc.org.uk



Mr. Gavin Barwell
Minister for Housing
House of Commons
London
SW1A 1AA

19th January 2017

Dear Mr. Barwell

Re: Headcorn Neighbourhood Plan

Headcorn Parish Council (HPC) handed their completed Neighbourhood Plan (NP) to their local planning authority, Maidstone Borough Council, in November 2015, having alerted them in October 2015 to its imminent arrival. It is now approaching the end of January 2017 and HPC are still waiting for the results of the examination which finally took place in October 2016.

It is absolutely wrong that the efforts of an army of volunteers who put together the NP should be let down so badly by those whose job it is to progress Neighbourhood Plans without undue delay.

The first delay was caused by MBC, who failed to start the Regulation 16 Consultation as promised, before the end of 2015, delaying it until after Christmas 2015. Then there was delay in appointing the NPIERS examiner. This should have happened during the Regulation 16 Consultation. Why the examiner was not appointed during the consultation, when all documents were available, remains a mystery.

Approximately 6 weeks into the examination the appointed examiner lost their NPIERS accreditation and a new examiner had to be found. We are still waiting for an explanation.

MBC then offered us a choice of inspectors and subsequently refused our first choice. Thus causing further delay whilst this was progressed.

Eventually another examiner was appointed who finally reported on and carried out an examination hearing of the NP in October 2016, commenting that they would report in 6 weeks. That was 3 months ago and the latest communication from the examiner on 16th January 2017 is that they will need another 3 weeks to report on the examination.

During this period of time developers have had a field day as they take advantage of the lack of an up to date local plan and lack of a five year housing supply, resulting in development being granted permission in the wrong place, the wrong type and the wrong time, ignoring local views and this has led us to the conclusion that localism is only a myth and it rests in peace here in the Borough of Maidstone.



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It is fair to say that the volunteers and parishioners of Headcorn have either lost or are quickly losing any faith they had in the NP/Localism agenda. We therefore write to you in the hope that you can intervene and restore some faith here in Headcorn in localism, in line with your recent Commons Statement HCWS346:

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2016-12-12/HCWS346/>

We look forward to your comments and any intervention that you can make that will deliver our NP sooner rather than later and that will also prevent further decisions on applications in Headcorn until the plan has passed its referendum stage and becomes a material planning consideration.

Yours sincerely

Mrs. Lyn Selby
Chair Headcorn Parish Council

cc: Helen Whately MP
Shellina Prendergast Maidstone Borough Councillor
Martin Round Maidstone Borough Councillor
Alison Broom Chief Executive Maidstone Borough Council
Rob Jarman Head of Planning Maidstone Borough Council