



Rehman Chishti MP
Member of Parliament for Gillingham and Rainham

House of Commons
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Strategic Planning
Maidstone Borough Council
Maidstone House, King Street
Maidstone, Kent
ME15 6JQ

15 December 2020

Dear Sirs

Re: Representations against the proposal SP4(B) to construct a Garden Settlement at Lidsing of approximately 2,000 homes as proposed within the Local Plan Review of Maidstone Borough Council

I am writing to you as the Member of Parliament for Gillingham and Rainham to outline my total opposition to Maidstone Borough Council's proposal to construct a Garden Settlement of approximately 2,000 homes at Lidsing on the borders of my constituency at Hempstead in the Medway Unitary Authority, as proposed in your Local Plan Review to be available for construction from approximately 2027 (SP4(B)).

I consider this development to be completely unacceptable which is the view that has been shared with me by all of the constituents who have contacted me regarding this matter and also by Cllr Rodney Chambers OBE and Cllr Diane Chambers, the councillors for Hempstead and Wigmore, the ward in my constituency most impacted by this proposal.

Further to my representations to you today I presented a petition making clear my opposition to this development in Parliament on 9th December which has been co-signed by 10 local councillors representing the wards of Hempstead & Wigmore, Watling, Rainham North, Rainham Central and Rainham South. Please find a copy of the petition enclosed with my letter for your information.

Please find my reasons for my opposition to this development set out below.

1. Protecting Local Greenspaces

The constituency of Gillingham and Rainham contains the most densely populated wards in the Medway Towns, itself the largest conurbation in Kent and one of the largest in the overall Home Counties.



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The Capstone Valley is one of our most cherished greenspaces and is a vitally important green lung not just for my constituency but for all of the Medway Towns.

I therefore find it to be completely unacceptable that proposals are being made for the construction of a settlement that would bridge the entire width of the Capstone Valley and therefore irrevocably transform the rural nature of the entire area.

I understand that the Maidstone Borough spatial strategy, contained within the Adopted Local Plan of Maidstone Borough Council, includes the following clause:

'9. In other locations, protection will be given to the rural character of the borough avoiding coalescence between settlements, including Maidstone and surrounding villages, and Maidstone and the Medway Gap/Medway Towns conurbation.'

I do not understand how this development reconciles with the spatial strategy as it clearly does not protect the rural character of the area.

I have opposed other large-scale developments that have been put forward in the Capstone Valley such as those at East Hill and at Gibraltar Farm as they would damage our greenspaces and I will continue to oppose these developments also.

2. Disproportionate scale of the proposal

The scale of this development of approximately 2,000 homes extending across hundreds of acres is completely unacceptable.

Not only would it transform the greenspace of the Capstone Valley and its rural character, it would transform the urban environment of the Medway Towns.

Hempstead in my constituency of Gillingham and Rainham would become conjoined, via this new settlement, to Lordswood in the constituency of Chatham and Aylesford and therefore it would completely change the character of these existing communities which I fully oppose.

3. Local transport infrastructure

For the sheer size of this scheme and its transformative nature, the transport infrastructure it proposes is wholly insufficient for the scale of mass movement that would entail from the significant population the scheme would become home to.

There is a single main route and a small number of B-roads in the proposed area for construction. Your proposal as outlined offers four suggestions for providing transport in the area and none of these provide for more local road capacity.



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They do however propose a new connection to the M2 at J4 linking into North Dane Way on the Lordswood side of the Capstone Valley. Therefore, instead of supporting local transport needs this would simply lead to much increased congestion, gridlock, and pollution on local roads due to traffic accessing the motorway.

It should also be noted this development is not nearby to any train stations on the Chatham Main Line, the Medway Valley Line, or the Maidstone Line and therefore disproportionately greater congestion would be brought to bear on local roads than may otherwise be the case if the settlement was served by a train station which cannot be provided for at this location.

4. Healthcare provision

I note that this proposal does not provide for any GP services, therefore residents of the new settlement would need to attend existing services in the Medway Towns which is exceptionally unfair on local residents as there are already many challenges in the area.

I also find it unfair on my constituents as this development is geographically much closer to Medway Maritime Hospital in my constituency that serves the population of Medway Towns, than it is to Maidstone Hospital within your authority boundaries.

5. Schools

I understand that the Maidstone Local Authority has seen fit to include a primary school as part of this proposal but this will likely prove insufficient for a population of many more thousands of families living in the area, and that further to this the proposal does not provide for additional secondary school places.

Secondary schools in the local area and across the Medway Towns are close to full capacity and therefore this would create additional challenges for the existing population and new residents in finding a good school place for their children.

I find it to be completely unacceptable that a Local Authority in seeking to satisfy their housing needs are proposing a settlement on the fringes of their own boundaries and in doing so ensuring that the strains and impacts placed upon existing infrastructure and quality-of-life will fall upon residents of my constituency in a neighbouring authority and who therefore have no representation on Maidstone Borough Council.



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I have consistently opposed developments on our greenspaces and will continue to do so.

I am fully opposed to this development and I will continue to oppose it on behalf of my constituents in Gillingham and Rainham at every stage.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rehman Chishti." followed by a period.

Rehman Chishti MP