

LOCAL PLAN REVIEW

COMMENTS FROM THE ENVIRONMENT GROUP

LOOKING AT THE ENVIRONMENT, TOURISM AND HERITAGE

Cllr Chris Reed and Cllr Brian Spoor

With support from Cllr Dolley White and Cllr Linda Brinklow

- **Para 2.0.5 The key challenges addressed by this Local Plan Review**
- **How to deliver a carbon zero borough by 2030**
- How to meet the varied housing needs of the growing population in the right places
- How to support the needs of the local economy so that it can continue to be competitive and create quality local jobs (See comments from Cllr Foulds at the end)
- How to deliver the infrastructure requirements needed to support growth and create high quality places
- How to deliver sustainable growth while protecting and enhancing our historic and natural assets
- **How to manage change in our town centres so that they remain vital, competitive and attractive places to meet, live, work and enjoy**
- **How to embed sustainable and active travel options and behaviour into our existing and new developments to improve air quality**, reduce traffic accidents, reduce congestion and improve the health and wellbeing of residents

COMMENT - SAS = Support all statements

Suggestion that all new buildings & Houses & refurbishments to include Solar Panels

Continue Traffic Free High Street in Sheerness and the Broadway. Pollution levels need to be reduced. Not all of the most dangerous pollutants are recorded.

Para 2.0.7 Swale Borough Council declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency in 2019 (with a borough wide net zero by 2030 target) and in response to this developed a 'living' [Action Plan](#) in 2020.

COMMENTS SAS

Motor vehicles are one of the worst pollutants and yet very little has been outlined in the plans to make travelling more sustainably a major objective.

The recommended pathway requires: a 13% cut in carbon dioxide emissions each year from 2020; 80% reduction in annual emissions by 2030 and 95% reduction by 2042.

COMMENT SAS

Para 2.0.15 Conserving and enhancing our outstanding natural environment is at the heart of our strategy as Swale is recognised for the quality of its estuaries, woodlands, valleys and downlands. To achieve enhancements overall, this means protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geology and soils and co-ordinated working to secure coherent ecological networks and a reversal in declines in the quality and diversity of the environment. On a wider level, our strategy also recognises the value of ecosystems for the support they give to society, such as for food, water, flood, disease control, recreation and health and well-being.

COMMENTS SAS The important places that need to be included for Sheerness

THE SEA FRONT

BARTONS POINT (shared with Minster PC)

THE SHEERNESS LINES /CANAL

THE FLEET (currently in a very poor state)

PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS (well used but in some cases tired)

Para 2.0.19 Tourism is a major contributor to the local economy and there will be an emphasis on proposals that successfully integrate land based industries with **the Borough's heritage offers and the landscapes** of the North Kent marshes, the Blean, the Kent Downs and the horticultural belt.

COMMENTS SAS

Much more emphasis needs to be put on encouraging people to walk and cycle using our existing routes, particularly the Sheerness Way which passes a whole range of heritage assets.

The Royal Naval Hospital is an historical asset that currently is not available to the general public to see and yet it sits near to the railway station.

The key to the history of Sheerness and Bluetown, is the Royal Naval Dockyard. The story of Sheerness cannot be told effectively until the 17 dockyard buildings of historical interest, become part of the history trail for the town.

More Parking Facilities at Shellness for the Bird reserve & the Beach

Para 4.2.5 Tourism is a major contributor to the local economy and we will capitalise on reduced travel and spending abroad to bring in greater local spending. There will be an emphasis on proposals that successfully integrate land based industries with the Borough's heritage offers and the landscapes of the North Kent marshes, the Blean, the Kent Downs and the horticultural belt. Specifically, given its location and proximity to other tourist centres at Canterbury, Whitstable and Herne Bay, Faversham has strong potential to diversify its economy around tourism, especially its food and drink based offer. On Sheppey we need to address declines in its traditional seaside tourism offer through modernisation and improvements in quality.

COMMENTS- SAS

The Isle of Sheppey is one of the areas where improvements to the tourism offer is really vital.

-Sheerness lacks a Visitors Centre – Centre planned for the Sheppey FM Building to be unveiled shortly.

-Lack of motorway signage advertising the delights of Sheppey – The problem is currently being looked at. Signage is a problem throughout the island

- Lack of Public toilets and changing facilities in the sea front area- currently being considered

The Bridge over the Historic Queenborough Lines allowing access to Bartons Point for hundreds of local residents & tourists needs to be replaced as a matter of urgency.- the matter is being dealt with

- The Coastal Path needs to be urgently made more accessible; in particular the Promenade at Sheerness especially the Steps at Neptune Terrace which completely cut off one end of the Promenade from the other making it

impossible for bicycles, buggies & wheelchairs to get from the Tesco End to the Yacht Club end & Vice versa

(contrary to the 2010 Equalities Act)- STC have been considering the problem and coming up with a solution

Making the Promenade accessible along its whole length would greatly encourage cycling into the town and could encourage many more people out of their cars as well as enabling students to cycle to the College and the Oasis Academy.

There are also numerous really steep & dangerous access steps all along the promenade which make it difficult for any but the fittest to negotiate eg In the Carpark opposite The Ship on Shore .

In certain weather conditions the gates are closed to the sea front. An alternative walking and cycling route would be ideal.

-If we want to encourage tourism, we need to supply adequate parking for visitors and residents

-The blocks blocking off the shingle bank should be removed.

-Designated spaces for Coaches either in the Rose Street Car park or the carpark in Blue Town opposite the old Steel works (apparently the closest coach spaces are in Faversham)

Para 4.2.166 The Local Plan strategy ensures that consideration of the historic environment is central to decision-making. Within each Core Policy, allocation or development management policy, there will rarely be a situation where there is not a relationship with heritage in some form, whether from green infrastructure, landscape, regeneration, economic development, transport,

infrastructure planning, tourism, town centres and climate change. Policy CP8 recognises this interrelationship.

COMMENTS SAS

LISTED AREAS OF SHEERNESS

BLUE TOWN- is having a makeover

MILE TOWN- needs some love

THE ROYAL NAVAL DOCKYARD- not currently available

THE QUEENBOROUGH LINES- history not much understood by the public

MARTELLO TOWERS/GUN EMPLACEMENTS

HISTORIC WRECK

FORTS

THE WATER TOWER?

Para 4.2.156 Swale's 111km coastline is one of the borough's defining features and an essential part of its green & blue infrastructure network. However, it faces particular threats, including from climate change (including coastal squeeze of habitats, flooding and erosion) as well as the pressures of development generally. [Policy DM 31](#) and [Policy DM 32](#) aim to balance the needs of development with those of the coast's sensitive and changing environment, within the context of a wide range of plans and policies at work along the coast. It is also important in meeting the Local Plan's vision of coastal rejuvenation and ambitions for Swale's visitor economy.

COMMENTS - SAS

PEEL PORTS' PLANS will affect access to the sea front and the overall look of the town should the marina be constructed.

SEA WALL- Murals have been painted at intervals along the wall

Ensuring the vitality of town centres

Para 4.2.11 Our town centres are facing considerable challenges at present and it is the Council's approach that there should be flexibility in the range of uses that are provided in these shopping areas, especially to encourage unexpected opportunities that occur on the fringes of the Primary Shopping Areas. This flexibility will help to enhance the vitality and viability of the Borough's town centres and maximise their contribution to the local economy. A wide range of uses can potentially have a key role in maintaining a diverse and commercially prosperous centre without undermining their primary retail function.

COMMENT SAS

SUGGESTIONS

Bring the Market into Sheerness High Street

Encourage Events & other Street markets such as Craft , Farmers Markets & Bric a Brac -

Welcome people to the town – Currently a new arch way leading to Beachfields and the sea front is being considered

A safe swimming area – Improvements are being made currently

We Need imaginative ideas to solve the problem that the Seawall cuts off Sheerness Town from the Beach

It is this sense of dislocation which inhibits tourism as well as deterring the local residents from using the beach more



A possibility would be to install beach hut style kiosks accessible from the Beach Side and the Town side through the seawall with metal flood defence doors which could be closed during flood alerts and in the winter . These could be either in Beachfields or in the green space at the side/back of the swimming pool - which would be easier as the land is higher

The Lighting along the Promenade Needs to be Reinstalled - being discussed

Both Practical lighting for Safety & festoon style Lighting between the lamp posts to give the Promenade a SeaSide Feel

Install a Tidal Pool to enable Paddling and Bathing and safe use of Inflatables at all states of the tide

Para 4.2.49 Given the outstanding environment in Swale, this policy seeks to expand our potential for sustainable rural tourism to benefit local communities and raise awareness and support for conservation of the environment. There is an important link between the quality of the environment (both historic and new) and economic development, in particular the area's ability to attract investment, jobs and population. Swale's historic environment has the potential to play a significant role in supporting enterprise, **especially in helping**

under-performing parts of Swale to transform themselves, such as at Sittingbourne town centre and Sheerness. Also important is our current portfolio of principal tourism assets (see Statement Box 3), with this policy supporting their growth and, if necessary, their protection from inappropriate development proposals.

COMMENT SAS

Although Barton's Point is not strictly speaking Sheerness, it is used by residents and tourists alike. It is much advertised but lacks investment.

The idea of leasing the land is not sound. No individual can invest the sort of money needed to make this a really top class visitor attraction.

A tired wooden boat house as a café.

Toilets not connected to the main sewer system.

A lake whose sides need shoring up due to erosion.

A metal cabin for the storage of boats – only available at certain times.

A very tired looking center for wind surfing.

RENOVATING BARTONS POINT

This is just the sort of scheme to attract grant money

Para 4.2.82 There are significant health and wellbeing issues in Swale, especially in its deprived communities. To address these issues, it is important that community needs are supported through appropriate physical and social infrastructure and by other facilities and key services which contribute to improving wellbeing and the overall quality of life experienced by residents. The Local Plan, therefore, makes provision for improved access to local services, healthy

transport choices such as cycling and walking, access to green infrastructure, open space and active recreation, good design in the built environment and recognises the role that mixed use developments can play in providing healthy communities. Specifically, to encourage healthy eating the negative impact of access to hot food takeaways (use class order sui generis) in close proximity to schools is addressed.

COMMENT SAS

COMMENTS ON EMPLOYMENT BY CLLR FOULDS

Comments regarding employment/self-employment toward SBC local plan. Employment & Business Support Now Covid 19 restrictions are starting to relax, more businesses are legally able to again start to trade. It is quite obvious that businesses have adversely been impacted over the past 12 months, due to the pandemic and it is vital that local authorities assist where they can to support local business and help the local economy. In recent years, businesses have been **gifted business rate exemption, which should continue** as one of many ways to assist organizations financially. By supporting a local business's financial position, this in turn would then help employers into a position where they would be able to then afford new staff and assisting in the unemployment levels.

With large commercial developments locally, similar to **'Neats Court'** it is also **important to consider that the newly developed retail outlets, focus their offer of employment**, or at least a large percentage, **to local residents**, which could be part of early discussions/agreements between the developers and the local authority. Could this be an agreement at the planning stage of a large retail development as part of a section 106?

Self-Employment Comments made as above relate to existing self-employment. **It is vital that local authorities support the self employed** businesses and traders to assist in the improvement of the local economy. It is understood that traders/businesses are not contributors to precept monies used by local authorities for services, maintenance and projects to the local area, this is why by continuing 'small business rate relief' is a great show of support. As an example, should Sheerness High street continue to be pedestrianised for the long term, authorities should seek alternative ways to support High Street businesses with their trading. This could mean lower or **free car parking, relaxing of legislation for table and seating areas outside of hospitality venues on the public footpath, or indeed the High Street during**

pedestrian times and events/attractions for the high street to entice visitors to create more footfall.

Start up businesses are increasing with budding entrepreneurs wishing to use their ideas, knowledge and skills by way of earning a salary for themselves, particularly since schemes like 'Zero Hours' contracts have been introduced.

Consideration should be given to the development of business start-up units that can be offered as a premises to these entrepreneurs at a low cost rent (below market value), which will help them get on their feet.

Authorities should also be showing support to projects, schemes and organisations that offer guidance, assistance and mentoring to new business start-ups.

Young Entrepreneurs It is particularly important to realize the above when it comes to young entrepreneurs that are key to society with fresh innovative ideas and need assistance with this once they have finished their educational studies (college/university) and then they are relaxed in that they will know where to go for support and assistance to start them off in their working life or career.

Cllr. Chris Foulds on behalf of Sheerness Town Council