

## Highsted Park meeting feedback

We held the meeting 19<sup>th</sup> July with a good number of villagers attending, both from Wormshill and wider afield. We heard more detail about the proposed development and about the Swale Local Plan, which does not contain this development. Whilst it is now being updated the revised Plan will not contain this proposed development either.

Aside from Paul and Sarah Stephen, who kindly gave an update from the Swale viewpoint, we also heard from Patrik Garten, who mentioned the issues they have in Maidstone. The same developer is also behind the Detling aerodrome development which is also not in the Maidstone Plan.

Whilst we may all accept the need for additional housing, it needs to be delivered sustainably and sensibly, taking account of factors such as local facilities, road access, the landscape and issues such as climate change. This development appears to conflict with many of these issues and seems to be in the first instance a way of funding an additional motorway junction near the Science Park. If this was delivered there is a very real risk that local runs such as the Hollingbourne – Sittingbourne Road and Bottom Pond Road becoming 'rat-runs'. Further, the 8,500 houses proposed would very significantly increase the size of Sittingbourne and put pressure on existing facilities.

We heard also that the promised additional facilities such as schools, hospitals, surgeries etc have often not been delivered, and even if they are, there are not the staff to operate them.

From a landscape viewpoint Highsted valley is noted in the Swale Local Plan as 'Land of High Landscape Value' and even encroaches on the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty near the motorway bridge. It is a chalk dry valley with an important but fragile eco-system and so would be irreparably damaged if the development went ahead.

From an objection viewpoint, we were advised that whilst we are not in Swale, we can still object when the plan goes on the Swale Planning website, somewhere in mid-August. Individual objections do count but it was suggested that we liaise with the ['Five parishes'](#) affected, who are gathering an overall objection.

I will monitor the Swale site and update the website and village Whatsapp group when more information is available. In the meantime James, myself and others will consider what we might do.

Thankyou to James Pearce for arranging the meeting and all who attended and commented. I think we were all more familiar with the planning arrangements and the importance of the Local Plan afterwards.