



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

19 August 2020

Cllr Nicolas Heslop
Leader, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council
Gibson Building
Gibson Drive
Kings Hill
West Malling
Kent
ME19 4LZ

Dear Nicolas,

You will not be surprised to hear that I have had many residents in East Malling, Leybourne and neighbouring communities express their deep concern over the potential for development at Forty Acre Field in East Malling. Many were delighted when Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council's (TMBC) Area 3 Planning Committee rejected the application last month, and are disappointed that the decision was deferred until tomorrow evening pending further legal advice.

I am aware of the decision by the applicant to appeal to the Planning Inspectorate and I will be submitting the views on this application many residents have kindly shared with me over recent months. As you will be aware I have always made clear that the decision on the application in the first instance is for elected members of TMBC to make, which is why I have encouraged everyone concerned to speak with their Borough Councillors about this issue.

Ahead of the meeting tomorrow, many residents are extremely worried by the addition of a recommendation which states:

"Furthermore, in the event that an identical planning application is submitted to the Local Planning Authority, determination of that application will be delegated to the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health until 31 October 2020."

I am aware that TMBC has its own scheme of delegation and that many applications are determined under delegated powers by the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health. However, applications causing significant concern within the local community are, rightly, determined by elected Borough Councillors, who are there to represent the views of residents who placed their trust in them at Borough Council elections.

I know you rightly share my view that responsibility is held by the members and putting officers into the position of taking politically contentious decisions would not be fair on them and undermine councillors whose mandates depend on them speaking up for their community. I would be grateful for your assurance that any future planning application submitted to TMBC on Forty Acre Field will be determined by elected Borough Councillors. As any application is contrary to both the existing development plan, and the draft Tonbridge

Member of Parliament for Tonbridge and Malling

020 7219 4727 - tom.tugendhat.mp@parliament.uk - www.tomtugendhat.org.uk

and Malling Borough Local Plan, the fact that the application is a diversion from the development plan should provide sufficient grounds for doing so.

The letter has been copied to the Chief Executive, Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health and Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure at Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council, Borough Councillors for East Malling and West Malling and Leybourne Wards, and East Malling and Larkfield and Leybourne Parish Councils.

Best wishes,

Tom Tugendhat

TOM TUGENDHAT

CC:

Julie Beilby, Chief Executive, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council

Eleanor Hoyle, Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council

Cllr David Lettington, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council

Cllr Roger Roud, East Malling Ward, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council

Cllr Michelle Tatton, East Malling Ward, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council

Cllr Brian Luker, West Malling and Leybourne Ward, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council

Cllr Lee O'Toole, West Malling and Leybourne Ward, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council

Cllr Nick Stapleton, West Malling and Leybourne Ward, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council

David Thornewell, Chair, East Malling and Larkfield Parish Council

Bob Ulph, Chair, Leybourne Parish Council