

The Parishes

Opposition Group

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Inquiry date set

The Kent Science Park has been allocated a date for the inquiry into the Swale Local Plan on Thursday 23rd March. This will be divided into two sessions running from 9:30 – 13:00 and 14:00 – 17:00.

Paul Sharpe, representing the Kent Science Park and Kevin Attwood, one of the two landowners, are to put their case forward during the morning session.

Our representative, Rosemary Lansdowne, along with Derek Wyatt MP, the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) and other individuals will speak at the PM session.

How long is the inquiry expected to last?

The programme officer has provided some indication that there will be 12 weeks of sessions which are split into four groups, each lasting three weeks. Looking at some initial dates, there are also gaps in between these groups with the very first session starting on week commencing the 6th March and the last, week commencing 26th June. Sessions only run from Tuesday to Thursday with a half day on Fridays.

How long will the Inspector take to reach his conclusions?

Based purely on past experience, it is our view that it is unlikely the Inspector will publish anything in 2006 and it may even be optimistic to expect anything early 2007.

How does this fit in with the Kent & Medway Structure Plan?

This is a question everyone has been asking, since the Kent & Medway Structure has not yet been published! The inquiry was held over a year ago, the inspector published his report in February 2005 and Kent County Council has just issued further documents for deliberation. In short, the Swale Local Plan has had to proceed without a formal Structure Plan in place.

Further Proposed Changes?

Swale Borough Council has issued yet another set of changes to the Local Plan.

These 79 individual changes to policies across the plan will be part of a further public consultation exercise, with representations to be made by 20th February 2006, just two weeks before the inquiry starts.

Of particular note is an **increased** housing provision of 800 units, in response to accept the September 2005 Kent & Medway Structure Plan Modifications on housing numbers for Swale. The Kent Science Park is also dropping its "specialising in life sciences" tag.

A2/M2 link now part of the Swale Transport Strategy

Swale Borough Council have included the A2/M2 link road as part of their new Transport Strategy, though it is not included in the Local Plan.

Swale Borough Council has confirmed that the road will commence in Bapchild where the Northern Relief Road (NRR) joins the A2. This is anticipated to be in the area of Bapchild Cricket pitch although Swale Borough Council have not at this point ruled out the other options.

"The current anticipated route will continue southwards from the A2/NRR interchange near Bapchild and connect with the M2 approximately 2 miles east of junction 5."

Since the Kent Science Park made its proposals available, Swale Borough Council has made great strides to divorce the new A2/M2 link road with the Kent Science Park development, especially the housing element required to fund it. However the council says:

"The road would provide opportunities identified within the Borough Council Draft Economic Development Strategy by facilitating development around the Kent Science Park."

The strategy document suggests that:

"Further feasibility and development scenarios need to be developed."

And how...

"Work being undertaken by the Kent Science Park."

FPOG believe this road is being floated purely on the grounds of enabling further expansion of the Kent Science Park and not because of any strategic importance in terms of transport infrastructure.

It is conspicuous by its absence from the Local Plan and begs the question of funding, given that Swale Borough Council could not fund this road without resorting to the housing element.

We have until 23rd February to make representations on the Transport Strategy.

The elusive Economic Development Strategy

Swale apologise after Parish Councils were not given the opportunity to consult during the original 12 week consultation exercise. We now have until the 14th February to make our representations.

It greatly concerns FPOG, that Swale wish to support the delivery of strategic employment sites **'as a matter of urgent priority'**. Also stating that:

"It is crucial to the delivery of a step change in economic performance that access to Kent Science Park is improved, in a manner that enables a significant expansion of the site."

This implies that only a major expansion of the site will do, the FPOG feels its concerns over the viability of such a large scale expansion have been ignored.

Greens condemn 'costly expansion of parks'

Proposals to extend the park at Woodstock will be costly to the environment and the community, says Kent Green Party.

Spokesman Steve Dawe has issued a statement about the proposed development of the Woodstock park and three other science sites in east Kent - one at Wye and two near Canterbury.

If Wye is given the go-ahead, the four science parks will all be within a 10-mile radius. Surely, there simply is not the demand?

The real reason for the A2/M2 link road:

“The road would provide opportunities by facilitating development around the Kent Science Park”

Swale Transport Strategy

“access to Kent Science Park is improved, in a manner that enables significant expansion of the site”

Swale Economic Strategy

How to make our voice heard.

Full details on how you can make your own representations can be found on our website www.fiveparishes.org.uk

You might well ask Wye!

Why on earth are we still discussing a major expansion of the Kent Science Park when it has emerged that a £1 billion science research centre will be built in Wye near Ashford?

It's a reasonable question. After all, the new world-class centre planned for Wye is backed by Kent County Council, Ashford Council and Imperial College, London.

Could the Wye development threaten Kent Science Park's plans?

"Kent Science Park is not linked to a university and is a private science park. My guess is that they will find it pretty difficult to find science companies that want to go there rather than Wye."

Derek Wyatt MP

"I accept that it might do."

Swale Council leader
Cllr Andrew Bowles

"We do not see Wye as a threat. Ashford is a self-contained growth area, whereas we are part of the Thames Gateway. And Wye has significant issues to do with infrastructure."

Kent Science Park
project director Simon Reynolds

Science for London

Far from being alone in the Thames Gateway, the Kent Science Park will be fighting for tenants alongside of The London Science Park at Dartford.

This major new initiative in the Thames Gateway comprises a 250-acre innovative mixed-use development on land owned by Dartford Borough Council.

1,600 extra houses for Swale

KCC has just issued a further set of proposed modifications to the Kent & Medway Structure Plan.

The Structure Plan originally allocated 7,500 new dwellings for Swale between 2001 and 2016.

In September 2005 this number had jumped by 800 units to 8,300. Swale has already agreed to this and have included these in the latest changes to the Local Plan, which is also currently out for consultation.

Now KCC have added a further 800 taking the total to 9,100 over the 2001 to 2016 period. This means that Swale will account for 10% of all new housing in Kent.

We are not presently aware of how or where the first 800 dwellings will be situated. The FPOG is concerned the additional houses could fund the proposed A2/M2 link road.

Representations on this alteration and other changes should be made to KCC by Thursday 16th February.

Kent Science Park to downgrade the "Science" tag

Are the KSP owners already trying to downgrade their aspirations for a Science Park?

We have noticed that in the proposed changes to the Kent & Medway Structure Plan the word 'Science' is to be removed and replaced with 'Technology and Knowledge'

In the changes to the Swale Local Plan, the sentence "centre for technology based businesses, in particular life sciences" has had the "in particular life sciences" part removed.

Science Parks the new vogue

A 'Science Park' - every good town should have one.

The Green Party have highlighted this better than anyone recently when they jumped on the fact that with the addition of Wye there would be four Science Parks in a ten mile radius.

But it doesn't end there, like fashion seekers everywhere, Local Authorities in Kent seem to be queuing up to be next.

There is the Kent Science Park, Wye, The London Science Park at Dartford, a Science Park at Rochester, two sites near Canterbury and the possible expansion of sites at Kings Hill, East Malling, Fort Halstead, and Sandwich.

Each and everyone of them claiming their site to be unique and impossible to replicate elsewhere, we might otherwise build these parks on the underused and empty business parks we have in abundance across Kent.

It may come as a surprise to learn that Swale has more land allocated for economic purposes than any other authority in the entire South East of England.

FPOG to petition the House of Commons

We will be starting a new petition against the major development of the Kent Science Park and all this entails.

This time, however, we are to tackle a new audience, namely the House of Commons.

Please look out for details of where you will be able to sign, we'll keep you posted on this.