



Edenbridge Town Council

Town Clerk: Caroline Leet



17 November 2021

Tom Tugendhat MP
Member of Parliament for Tonbridge and Malling

Email: tom.tugendhat.mp@parliament.uk

Dear Tom,

APPEAL: ALLOWED - EDENBRIDGE - Kent and Surrey Golf and Country Club

It is hugely disappointing that the Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State () has allowed the appeal for the site of the Kent and Surrey Golf Club redevelopment with a substantial new clubhouse and hotel, along with creating a continuing care retirement community with 100 residential units in the Green Belt.

The Planning Inspector agreed that this application “**would result in a significant loss of openness both visually and spatially thereby causing significant harm to the Green Belt. Therefore, it would be contrary to the objectives of the Framework**” (point 16 of the report).

There is also acknowledgement that the application plan presents more as residential dwellings, “it seems to me that the proposed development would contribute 100 residential units” (23). Yet they are classed as C2 and therefore exempt of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). However, the Inspector allowed substantial weight to affordable housing need, yet these properties will be delivered as market housing aimed at retired people downsizing.

Whilst the report recognises the reasons why this application was rejected by Sevenoaks District Planning Authority, it leans on material considerations presented to argue the very special circumstances that outweigh the harm on the Green Belt.

It is clear that the appeal was allowed only because the current older Local Plan policies hold little weight, and the emerging Local Plan which was unsuccessful at the recent Judicial Review holds no weight in the decision making.

This decision is extremely difficult to accept as the emerging Plan has been long in the making and has had a tremendous amount of work looking at the housing needs for the district and the preferred sites to help deliver these.

Following consideration and consultation, Edenbridge had already supported releasing some Green Belt land for the emerging Plan with the site at Four Elms Road for 340 houses, which includes older persons

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and affordable housing, and the new medical centre. There was a further 82 dwellings allocated in the Plan, and there is the new development at St John's Way for over 300 homes.

The concerns are now for the wider impact of this decision and with several Green Belt sites contiguous to the built-up area, these have now become vulnerable with the precedent set by this appeal decision. Because there is not a Local Plan in place any other developer could now look to develop. Edenbridge is a small rural town, not an urban sprawl.

Edenbridge also does not have the infrastructure for significant housing development. The nearest A-road is about 12 miles away, and the roads around the town are windy country roads. There are already pressures on the drainage systems and large areas in the flood plain.

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2015 is out of date, yet weight is put on it throughout the Inspector's report, referring to the need for specialist housing including sheltered and extra care housing for older persons categories (older persons are referred to as aged over 65).

This application is for the over 55s and is not specialist housing or extra care for older persons. Edenbridge has recently had the Manor Care Home open and already has older persons housing which is not fully occupied. The report quotes 240 units. This supports that Edenbridge already has sufficient older persons housing.

It is so wrong that this appeal has been allowed on these technicalities. The consequence of this decision now has the potential to completely overwhelm and change Edenbridge.

I appreciate that this is out of your control, but you do have a voice at Parliament, and we urge you to express the concerns. After all, this is not happening just in Edenbridge, it is a nationwide issue where developers seek to take advantage without regard for protecting the natural beauty of the countryside and our towns and villages using this loophole where a Plan has been refused.

Yours sincerely,

Caroline Leet
Town Clerk