



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

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Government
3rd Floor
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2 Marsham Street
London
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Dear Ms Russell,

Thank you for your petition to the Prime Minister opposing the proposal for the creation of a garden community on land in Marden, Kent. As this relates to the planning system, this Department has been asked to respond.

I regret that due to the Secretary of State's quasi-judicial functions in the planning system, we are unable to comment on the details of a specific Local Plan or planning application. However, I can provide the following general comments.

There is an urgent need in this country for more homes and the Government believes that new garden villages and towns can play an important part in addressing that need over the medium and long-term.

The Government currently supports 48 garden towns and villages across England, with support being focused on enabling Councils to take on dedicated staff and plan for development that is sustainable, where the right infrastructure is provided at the right time, and which delivers a high quality new community that stands out from the ordinary. However, I can confirm that Marden garden community is not one of the 48 settlements receiving Government support.

Local Plans set out a long-term strategy for development. In preparing the plan the council will assess the housing and other development needs for the area and identify appropriate locations for development to meet this need. It may be that some local authorities believe that garden communities are a model which would support their development needs, and decide to put forward proposals in their Local Plans.

Local plans are tested at examination for conformity with national planning policy, which makes clear that they should make as much use as possible of previously-developed or 'brownfield' land and, wherever possible, allocate land with the least environmental value. Councils can only adopt a plan that is sound - it must conform with national policy, be supported by evidence and take the views of local people into account. Each plan is subject to a public examination in front of an independent Inspector, who plays an important role in examining plans impartially to ensure that they are legally compliant and sound.

I understand Maidstone Borough Council are currently carrying out a Local Plan Review - Scoping, Themes and Issues consultation. I would encourage you to engage with this process to ensure local views are heard.

Yours sincerely,

Andrea Hall
Development Plans