

Council 18 October 2017: Questions submitted from Members of the Public

Question No.	Question from	Question:	Question to:	Responsible Officer:
1.	Mr Simon Clark	The MP for Sittingbourne and Sheppey Gordon Henderson is reported to have said that if the Government Presses Swale Borough Council to increase its Local Plan housing allocations from 776 a year to over 1000 a year to meet affordable housing needs, Faversham and its hinterland should accommodate the bulk of extra houses. Do you agree with him?	Leader	James Freeman
<p>Response: The Council has recently adopted its Local Plan for the Borough which sets out a settlement strategy for new development. This Plan identifies the Thames Gateway area as the primary focus for growth with Faversham taking some growth but recognising the town’s environmental and heritage constraints. This is reflected in the housing numbers agreed as part of the housing need figure agreed with the Planning Inspector at the Local Plan Inquiry – set at 776 dwellings per annum across the Borough.</p> <p>The Government is currently consulting on a new standard methodology for setting future housing growth requirements. The Council will be expressing its concerns about a one-size-fits-all housing target imposed on local authorities which according to the consultation would require the Council to increase its annual housing requirement to over 1,000 dwellings. I believe this would take the numbers of homes expected to be built from what could charitably be described as ‘optimistic’, into the realms of fantasy. The housing numbers being quoted will not be able to be delivered by the housing development sector and will lead the Council to being vulnerable to adhoc greenfield development proposals being agreed by planning appeal.</p> <p>Whatever the outcome of the Government’s consultation, we have been tasked with producing a new Local Plan within the next four to five years. We have started the process of collecting the necessary evidence to support the preparation of that Plan, including a recent ‘call for sites’ and the production of a Borough wide transport model. This evidence will be presented to Councillors over the next two years with a view to considering the most appropriate way forward for meeting the expected housing growth.</p> <p>It will ultimately be for the BC to determine, in consultation with local communities, having regard to the evidence that is to be prepared. As a result, at this stage I am not in a position to advise on how any future growth would be distributed.</p>				