

As a resident of Paddock Wood since 1988 I have seen no improvements in infrastructure or facilities, with the exception of a three lane running track which the Paddock Wood Athletic club now wish to extend to six lanes and a Community Centre that although much needed was built on the Memorial Playing Field which residents told the Town Council through a Parish Poll was not the right site. The Community Centre project is partly funded by a £1.9m loan from the Public Works and Loans Board over 50 years which is now being paid for by Paddock Wood Town Council.

I was a resident member of the Paddock Wood Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and I have noted that there is very little reference to the Paddock Wood Neighbourhood Plan in the Local Plan and supporting documentation including the Master planning work despite the PWNHP passing referendum approved by the Full TWBC Town Council on 4 October 2023.

TWBC do not comply with their own Statement of Community involvement. Regarding Planning Policy activities, the Statement of Community Involvement states “To encourage the identification of issues and concerns at the earliest opportunity, the Council will follow two general principles:

1. To recognise the needs of different groups in the community by making communication timely, relevant, and accessible; and
2. To provide for community involvement in ways that make the best use of people’s time and available resources.”

There has been very little engagement with the Town Council since the local plan hearings commenced and since I was elected as Town Councillor in May 2023, I cannot recall any Borough Officer attending a Paddock Wood Town Council Meeting.

I have read The Troy Planning and Design report commissioned on behalf of Paddock Wood Town Council and I commend the document to the Planning Authorities at Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.

I accept that Paddock Wood might look like the ideal place for huge housing developments, however, it is not. The main issues are, flooding, lack of infrastructure, transport, and lack of essential facilities e.g. Doctors Surgeries and Dentists.

The Borough Councils strategy for Paddock Wood is flawed and not compliant with the National Policy Framework regarding Flood Risk. I have real concerns that failure to

apply the NPPF requirements proves it is not able to deliver a safe and sensible development strategy.

Why is Paddock Wood Town Centre not a part of the Paddock Wood structure plan? Surely the heart of the Town should be the Town Centre, TWBC seem intent on focusing on developments around the Town. Why don't you see the need in Paddock Wood as you do in Tunbridge Wells with the Royal Victoria Centre? Dealing with the Town Centre as a supplementary paper is disingenuous and not to include it in the local plan is a significant error.

We are all in a climate change emergency and the additional housing developments in Paddock Wood are only adding to the problem. The new developments will increase vehicle movements hence making our already congested roads even busier and there are no plans for a robust efficient and affordable bus network to connect Paddock Wood to Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge, or Maidstone. Residents will never consider alternative transport methods until one is put in place.

The revised strategy for Sports and Leisure with the town is unsatisfactory and does not reflect the reality of use in Paddock Wood. The new proposal for the Putlands site is flawed, we cannot lose any more playing fields to development, the notion of creating additional car parking space on the rugby pitch is not acceptable.

It is essential that the Borough Council start to listen and work with the residents of Paddock Wood and Paddock Wood Town Council.

Jeremy Thompson

Resident

Paddock Wood Town Councillor (Elected in May 2023)