

Planning Decisions and Policy Petition

Final Decision-Maker	Full Council
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Alan McDermott – Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation
Lead Director	Lee Colyer – Director of Finance, Policy and Development
Head of Service	Jane Clarke – Head of Policy and Governance
Lead Officer/Author	Mark O’Callaghan – Democratic Services Officer
Classification	Non-exempt
Wards affected	All

This report makes the following recommendations to the final decision-maker:

That the petition be considered and resolved accordingly.

This report relates to the following Five Year Plan Key Objectives:

- A Confident Borough

The Council welcomes petitions and recognises that they are one way in which people can let us know their concerns. A healthy democracy builds confidence, trust and satisfaction.

Timetable	
<i>Meeting</i>	<i>Date</i>
Council	26 July 2017

Planning Decisions and Policy Petition

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 A petition has been received. Whilst the petition was conducted outside of the Council's e-petition platform available on its website, the Council has accepted the petition in good faith and agreed to consider it under the terms of its published scheme. The petition was signed by more than 1,000 people and will therefore be discussed at a meeting of Full Council.
 - 1.2 This report sets out the terms of the petition, the procedure for dealing with petitions at Full Council and some background information on the issues raised by the petition.
 - 1.3 Members are asked to debate the issues and determine a response.
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2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The petition

- 2.1 The petition was hosted on the change.org website and a paper version was distributed by hand in and around Tunbridge Wells town centre. The two versions had slightly different text therefore we will use the online version which had the greatest number of signatures.
- 2.2 The petition states:

"Sign to stop ill-considered planning and development in Royal Tunbridge Wells.

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council is allowing developers to fill our town with inappropriately large-scale property developments, with second rate architecture and little to no parking. Our planners and councillors are not listening to experts so it is time for the community to be heard. They do not have the will or skill to shape developers applications. They also do not have a firm plan this town.

- 43 units planned for Good Station Road (near Fenwicks) with not enough parking.
- 112 flats are planned at Calverley House in the town centre with not one parking space.
- 110 room Premier Inn hotel on London Road, with only 20 parking spaces, approved for London Road, despite the Transport Manager saying the town won't cope..
- 110 apartments on the old cinema site.
- 127 flats at Union House at the Pantiles.
- 20,000+ sq ft soon to be converted to flats at Vale House, off London Road.

- 48 flats and no parking at 7-9 Lonsdale Gardens.
- ...and many more.

The impact is significant. Our roads, on street parking bays and car parks cannot take the extra pressure. And air quality is suffering from the pollution. Development is being permitted with very little consideration to whether the infrastructure can cope.

Although some developments are replacing bland 1960's architecture, our planners and conservation officers are allowing poor and obtrusive architecture to replace it. There is an opportunity to put right the wrong, but TWBC are simply making bad, worse. Where has the pride in our towns architecture gone?

More and more office buildings are being converted to residential blocks. There is little office space left in the town. Where will people work? They will drive out, on our already congested roads, to their office job elsewhere.

Progress is good, but we deserve much better. Sign this petition and demand Tunbridge Wells Borough Council listen and develop a strategy for quality development. Having a list of objectives for the town is not enough, we need a Master Strategic Plan. And in the meantime stop saying 'yes' to large. Obtrusive developments that are not sympathetic to the town, and have major impact on the towns infrastructure."

- 2.3 A copy of the front sheet of the petition is attached at appendix A. A copy of the paper version and a covering letter from the petition organiser are attached at appendix B and C respectively.
- 2.4 As the online version was available worldwide through change.org we have omitted any signatures of people with an address outside the United Kingdom.
- 2.5 At the time the petition was submitted, the online version was electronically signed by 1,024 people and the paper version was signed by 19 people. 26 signatures were discounted as duplicates therefore a total of 1,017 are acknowledged as having validly signed this petition.
- 2.6 To allow elected Members, the petitioners and members of the public to consider the issue in more detail, a short background report summarising the main points is attached as appendix D.

Meeting procedure

- 2.7 The petition organiser(s) have up to 10 minutes to address the Council and set out their argument.
- 2.8 Members of the public who have duly registered may speak on the Petition, under the Public Speaking Rules. A maximum of four people may speak for up to three minutes each. Places are usually allocated on a first come first served basis except that where there are several people with the same view groups may be asked to elect a spokesperson.

- 2.9 A representative of any Town or Parish Councils within the Borough, having duly registered, may give the official view of their Town or Parish. Each representative may speak for up to three minutes. This time is in addition to the time allowed for public speaking.
- 2.10 Following the speakers, the relevant portfolio holder will speak first and propose a motion; the proceedings will then follow the usual rules of debate.
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3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 Members are asked to consider all the issues in determining their response to the petition. The resolution may take various forms but will fall into one of the following broad categories:
- 3.2 **To take the action the petition requests** – The petition is not specific enough to be adopted as a resolution in itself; however, members may determine a resolution that accepts the petition in principle and starts a process of reviewing relevant Council policies.
- 3.3 **To take no action** – Members may disagree with the premise of the petition and resolve to take no further action.
- 3.4 **To commission further work** – Members may agree in full or in part with the petition and determine that further consideration is needed. The matter may be referred to a committee for investigation – possibly the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Council should identify the terms of any referral and specify whether authority for making a decision is delegated or retained. If authority is retained the view of the committee would be reported to Full Council for decision.
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4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 This report and its appendices sets out the issues and options to be considered but do not make a recommendation.
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5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 5.1 The petition organiser will be informed in writing of the decision taken by Full Council. The decision will also be published on the Council's website.
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6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 The report is procedural and not subject to consultation.
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7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Legal including Human Rights Act	The Council's published Petition Scheme and the Constitution (Council Procedure Rule 9) set out how a petition will be dealt with. This report is in accordance with the scheme.	Estelle Culligan, Interim Head of the Mid Kent Legal Partnership 14 July 2017
Finance and other resources	This report is procedural. There are no specific implications arising from this report. However, it is noted that any proposed actions in response to the petition may have their own implications. If the Council intended to take any such actions the decision may be subject to a separate report.	Mark O'Callaghan, Democratic Services Officer 11 June 2017
Staffing establishment		
Risk management		
Environment and sustainability		
Community safety		
Health and Safety		
Health and wellbeing		
Equalities		

8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with and form part of the report:

- Appendix A: Front sheet of the online version of the petition
- Appendix B: Front sheet of the paper version of the petition
- Appendix C: Petition covering letter
- Appendix D: Response to the petition

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Constitution:

<http://www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/council/councillors-and-meetings/how-the-council-works/council-constitution>

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Petition Scheme:

<http://democracy.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/meetings/ecSDDisplay.aspx?NAME=SD973&ID=973&RPID=377178>