



Save Dreamland Campaign
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9 May 2006

Dear Councillor

Thanet Local Plan: Proposed Modifications, February 2006
Objector Ref: 4006/10277-10279 Objections to Modification M8.6

On 11 May 2006, you are being asked to consider the results of the public consultation on the Proposed Modifications to the Thanet Local Plan following receipt of the Inspector's Report.

By far the biggest response to the consultation was on the subject of Policy T11 – Dreamland, which prompted an astonishing 442 of the total 452 responses. The vast majority of the 442 people who made representations on this policy agreed with us and were objecting – as far as we can tell only one representation was made in support of the policy (and this came from Barton Willmore, the site owner's agents). Crucially, one of these objections was from English Heritage, who (like us) asked for the Inspector's recommendations to be accepted in full.

Your officers are now asking you to go against the results of the consultation exercise, as well as against the recommendations of the independent inspector. Indeed, in his report your officer describes the approach of the Inspector and all the hundreds of objectors as 'short-sighted'. You do not need us to point out that the government inspector is an expert in his field, as, of course, are English Heritage. We therefore ask you to think seriously about whether you are being asked to make the right decision for Margate.

In their report, your officers have not addressed many of the key points we made in our letter, including:

- **The issue of land value:** This policy is increasing the land value of the Dreamland site, making it impossible for amusement park operators to acquire it. Your officer's response, that "if the current owner chooses not to sell the site to another amusement park operator then retaining a policy that simply allocates the site for such a use would not necessarily deliver that aspiration", shows that officers have either missed the point or not properly read the Inspector's Report. As the Inspector pointed out, the current Local Plan policy is encouraging the current owner not to sell the site to an amusement park operator by creating hope value.
- **The contradictions in the Policy:** Both the Save Dreamland Campaign and English Heritage have pointed out the internal contradictions within the policy, particularly between Parts 1 and 2. The Policy fails basic tests of soundness.
- **The setting of the Scenic Railway:** The officer states that a green parkland setting is "most appropriate to its character as a listed building". On what basis? Surely an amusement park setting is "most appropriate" to its setting. It is highly unusual for a Local Plan to encourage harm to the setting of a listed building. **This could result in the Plan being called in by the Secretary of State.**

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In his conclusions the officer states that “there are in our opinion no new arguments being brought forward that suggest this decision should now be set aside.” He recommends no change as a result of every single one of the 442 representations. Yet there are actually a number of new arguments that were not previously raised from both this Campaign and others. The contradictions within the policy, the setting of the Scenic Railway and the detailed drafting issues raised in our letter are examples. The points raised by English Heritage are almost entirely new ones.

The report is full of many incorrect and misleading statements. Clearly we cannot go through them all in this letter, but some of the most surprising ones are:

- That the policy recommended by the Inspector will cause planning blight, when all the evidence (including the Inspector’s Report) suggests that it is the Council’s policy that will blight the site (indeed, we would argue it already has);
- Comments about the full extent of the site not being used in the past are, of course, disingenuous and do not stand up to scrutiny, as car parking will form a part of any proposal;
- Stating that the amusement park has “ceased to exist” and that the council is faced with an “underused” site fails to recognise that Policy T11 has actually created that situation;
- The officer lists a number of issues that the Local Plan apparently cannot resolve, such as: influencing whether an owner sells to an amusement park operator; assisting negotiations between council and landowner; and compulsory purchase. These statements are patently untrue.
- The fact that the policy does not recognise that part of the park may be viable even if the whole is not (the “sink or swim” approach) is not properly addressed.

These issues are of great importance to so many residents and businesses of Margate. We therefore ask you to ensure that the matter is properly debated at Thursday’s meeting – Margate’s future depends on it.

Yours sincerely
for the Save Dreamland Campaign

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Campaign Coordinator

cc. Richard Samuel, Chief Executive, Thanet District Council
John Bunnnett, Corporate Director, Thanet District Council

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