**What opponents of Pedham Place need to do**

**before 11 January**

**Background**

Sevenoaks Council is consulting over its new Local Plan.

It has put forward three growth Options for the District and is asking the public to express their preferences.

Only Options 2 and 3 involve Pedham Place. Everyone must therefore vote for **Option 1**.

The draft plan only mentions in passing the possibility of a stadium complex for Wasps. This is a speculative venture, late on the scene, linked to Pedham Place. Defeating Pedham Place will be an important first step towards also defeating the stadium scheme.

**Action**

It is important that as many people respond to the consultation as possible. Numbers matter.

The deadline is 11 January 2024, 4pm. [THE COUNCIL DOESN'T SPECIFY A TIME, BUT THIS IS A SAFE TARGET TO GIVE PEOPLE]

You can either complete the online survey (<https://engagement.sevenoaks.gov.uk/strategic-planning/plan2040/>) or email the Council at planning.policy@sevenoaks.gov.uk.

**Points you may wish to make**

*The following are some suggestions, based on professional advice. Please, however, use your own words. The Council may apply less weight to "identikit" responses.*

1. The Council does not need Pedham Place in the Local Plan. The consultation acknowledges that Option 1 (i.e. without Pedham Place) "approximately" meets the District's needs.
2. The Council has been very conservative in its assumptions about the amount of development which can be accommodated by increasing densities in existing urban areas. This needs careful review before there can be any justification for proposing the release of Green Belt and/or loss of National Landscape.
3. Pedham Place is a speculative scheme by Gladman. Gladman are well known for such schemes: they do deals with landowners, try to manipulate the planning system to best advantage, and - when they are occasionally successful - sell the land to volume housebuilders. Although the scheme is referenced in the draft Local Plan, it has no more planning status than that.
4. The land is Metropolitan Green Belt. There is a strong presumption against almost all forms of development in the Green Belt.
5. The presumption is even stronger where the Green Belt serves one of the specified purposes of Green Belt. The Pedham Place land does serve all 5 of the purposes defined by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF):
* it checks the outward spread of Greater London;
* it prevents the merging of settlements (Swanley with Farningham/Eynsford);
* it safeguards the countryside from urban encroachment;
* it helps preserve the special historic character of Farningham; and
* keeping it green assists the recycling of derelict land elsewhere.
1. The Government amended the NPPF just before Christmas. It now specifically does not require Councils to review Green Belt boundaries. This is a significant change from the advice that pertained whilst the draft Sevenoaks Local Plan was being prepared.
2. Arup have prepared a Green Belt Assessment (Stage 2, June 2023) for Sevenoaks District Council. The Pedham Place site was assessed as performing strongly against the NPPF purposes for including land within the Green Belt, making an important contribution to the Green Belt.
3. The land is National Landscape (the new name for an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or AONB). The NPPF contains a strong presumption against major development in National Landscapes. This protection is quite separate from Green Belt protection.
4. Pedham Place would conflict with the statutory Purposes of the National Landscape designation (as set out in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000), which include:

(a) conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty, and

(b) increasing the understanding and enjoyment by the public of the special qualities of the area of outstanding natural beauty,

1. The proposed development would be in an elevated location and would be visible from important viewpoints within the National Landscape and the Green Belt, particularly those associated with the sensitive Darent Valley.
2. Where exceptional circumstances can be shown to justify the redrawing of Green Belt and/or National Landscape boundaries, it is essential that the development that is enabled is sustainable.
3. The development proposed at Pedham Place would be very unsustainable in two respects.
4. First, it would be heavily dependent upon travel by private car, which is at odds with national planning policy. The developer's claims about providing public transport are hollow. Swanley station is 5km away and Eynsford Station doesn’t have sufficient services or capacity to accommodate a development of this size. Providing buses is an easy thing for a developer to talk about, but it would be prohibitively expensive. The lack of public transport would be particularly problematic for a stadium. It is almost inconceivable that in 2024 anyone would propose a major sports stadium without good public transport.
5. Second, the proposed settlement of 2,500 homes would not be large enough to be self-supporting. It is generally accepted in the planning system that a settlement needs to be at least twice the size of what is being proposed to be able to support an adequate range of shops, local services, community facilities and a secondary school. Building a settlement of insufficient size would just lead to even more car journeys, as well as imposing an additional burden upon facilities in the existing towns and villages.
6. The existing golf facility is part of the community infrastructure of the area. It is well used and it provides an important recreational facility. There is no serious suggestion that it is unprofitable and would close if Pedham Place did not go ahead.
7. Because Pedham Place would lead to so much road traffic, the already congested local road network would be unable to cope without substantial upgrading.
8. The proposed development would introduce a significant urban feature which would further erode the dark sky qualities of the National Landscape.
9. It would harm the settings of Fort Farningham Scheduled Monument, Farningham Conservation Area (and the several Listed buildings within the village) and Eynsford Castle.
10. There is evidence of rare flowers and protected species within the proposed development area.

*There may be other planning objections. It is important NOT to make objections which are considered irrelevant in planning. Loss of property value and loss of a private view are NOT valid objections.*