



Villagers are worried Boughton-under-Blean, pictured, will become a suburb of Faversham

Picture: Wayne Bruce

# Villages 'under siege' by housing draw own plan

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Villages left "under siege" by major housing schemes and heavy traffic have written up a plan to help protect their parishes.

Boughton-under-Blean and Dunkirk have joined forces to draw up a draft Neighbourhood Plan, outlining how they feel their villages should develop in the years up to 2038.

If approved by both local people and the Planning Inspectorate, it will sit alongside Swale Borough Council's Local Plan, to help inform decisions on future planning applications.

Boughton and Dunkirk parish councils have canvassed villagers' thoughts on issues ranging from housing and traffic flow, to services like schools and medical facilities.

They have now revealed their draft plan, which explains how both villages "feel they are under siege" from increased traffic and proposed housing projects in the area.

Swale Borough Council's Local Plan - the blueprint for future development across the borough - already outlines 14,000 new homes to be constructed across the area by 2038.

But the authority has controversially been tasked with

**'The increase in population would only exacerbate strains on our public services such as education and health provision...'**



Cllr Jeff Tutt



Duchy of Cornwall land is earmarked for 2,500 homes

adding another 10,000 to this figure.

SBC is now primed to add an additional 3,410 new builds to Faversham, in what has been described as the town's biggest expansion since the Victorian era.

The south-east area of the town is set to bear the brunt of the new homes, with estates stretching all the way along to Brenley Corner, shortening the green space between Faversham and Boughton.

Boughton and Dunkirk's Neighbourhood Plan says: "One of the biggest planned developments as Faversham expands is proposed by the Duchy of Cornwall for 2,550 new homes. Almost one-third of this development lies in Boughton Parish.

"If approved, the anticipated increase in population would only exacerbate strains on our public services such as education and health provision, and would increase the risk that Boughton and Dunkirk will simply become a suburb of Faversham.

"We will aim to retain green spaces separating these settlements and resist any attempt to encroach on existing parish boundaries."

The plan also voices concerns over traffic, adding: "Our roads were not designed for the amount of vehicle traffic they now bear.

"We sit at the head of the

bottleneck leading to the Channel ports; Brenley Corner is among the nation's blackest of black spots."

The Neighbourhood Plan puts forward a long list of policies that aim to "protect and enhance" the two villages; ensure future developments are sympathetic to their look; boost local employment prospects and ensure "cohesive and safe communities".

It aims to limit further large-scale housing developments within the area, while supporting "small-scale, sustainable development and the provision of 40% affordable homes".

Setting out its vision for the villages in 2038, it says: "Boughton and Dunkirk will be parishes where those who work or grow up here can afford to live, where families can raise children and the elderly can remain in the small rural communities of which they have long been part, with access to necessary education, health and leisure facilities."

SBC says it is "pleased" the two parish councils are putting forward a Neighbourhood Plan.

A spokesman said: "Their comments regarding the potential impact of encroachment from new development is shared by many communities within the borough.

"However, we have to

respond to government-imposed housing targets and have put forward a draft local plan for consultation that we believe has the least environmental impact and maximises opportunities for new infrastructure to support new and existing communities.

"This has required some very difficult decisions and we will be looking closely at how communities respond to the current consultation before moving forward with the Local Plan."

Jeff Tutt, chair of Dunkirk Parish Council and the Neighbourhood Plan Group, said: "We hope residents will read the draft Plan and give us their comments as soon as they can.

"The Plan has been written to reflect the views of people in both parishes who engaged throughout the process."

The consultation will be open for eight weeks, closing on May 14.

Once the final Plan is submitted and approved by a Government Planning Inspector, it will be formally presented to residents in the form of a referendum.

The Neighbourhood Plan is not to be confused with Swale Borough Council's Local Plan Review, which is out for consultation until April 30.

Full details are available at [www.boughtonanddunkirk-neighbourhoodplan.org.uk](http://www.boughtonanddunkirk-neighbourhoodplan.org.uk).