

## **APP/X1735/W/20/3259067 Land at Lower Road Havant**

### **Closing Statement on behalf of Bedhampton Heritage Alliance.**

My opening statement referred to the Value Judgement, benefit versus harm, exercised by the Development Management Committee. This responsibility is now being passed to Mr Castle. He will decide what weight to attach to the various components and indeed which components to include in his appraisal of harm versus public benefit.

As we have heard, this is a requirement of the NPPF but there is nothing in the NPPF that dictates Mr Castle needs to mention every detail in his conclusion. Inspector Sue Turner who handled the Allocations Plan in 2014 reached a simple conclusion. Any development here would result in harm that outweighs public benefit. Nothing has fundamentally changed. In the public's view, heritage protection should still outweigh housing need here.

The Alliance is not anti-housing in the right locations but are convinced that a temporary shortfall in projected housing numbers is no basis for reaching a different conclusion from the Development Management Committee. Particularly, when the proposal would make such a small contribution (less than 0.1%) to the assessed need. This could and should be made up in less sensitive locations and brownfield regeneration sites. The 5-year delivery time frame used to justify the inclusion of this greenfield site will have passed before any dwellings can be delivered.

The Alliance have used local knowledge and experience to set out what will be harmful to Bedhampton's designated and non-designated heritage assets, their rural coastal setting, and the ambiance, amenity, and safety within public domain throughout the Conservation Area. They have also voiced their concerns regarding the significant impact upon two species of protected wildlife. Approving these intrusive proposals will generate so much harm that it requires a heavy cost of mitigation measures to try to make alternative provision.

The geological and geographic landscape setting of the area suggests that some of these assets have their origins in pre-settlement times. The tell-tale position of Portsdown Hill in relation to the connection of the Forest of Bere with Langstone Harbour that straddles east/west ancient movement routes along the coast provides historians with future scope to study and interpret centuries of the development of this special place. Much existing and potential knowledge will be lost.

The village and its setting provide a readily accessible 'open air classroom' for a wide range of interests: Geology, Geography, Archaeology, Biology, Environment Science, Architecture, History both ancient and recent, Creative Writing and Recreation. The setting to the south west is an integral part of this amalgam.

It is quite remarkable that a large section of the open setting of this connection through Narrow Marsh Lane remains to this day with the railway bridge giving physical testimony to its size and significance. Having survived for so long, now is not the time to destroy what section remains of this evidence.

In addition to the potential physical harm of the proposals arising from their intrusive location, the significant consequential daily 40%+ increase in traffic movements will impose serious ever present detrimental impacts throughout the ambiance of the whole village, on its amenities, and on its existing relative tranquillity.

The public's safety concerns have not been reduced. They appear to have been dismissed using '*a simple calculation*' and conjecture but they remain and the failure to give them serious consideration has reinforced them. A wide spectrum of disagreement remains.

In the heart of this concern is the harm the proposals will detrimentally have on the setting of The Elms (Havant's gem) where they could consequentially also threaten the future viability of its use and upkeep. Initial harm followed by long term greater harm.

Bedhampton enjoys and provides a sense of place. It has a place in the Domesday Book. It is inclusive and has a timeless quality but provides evidence of gradual and sympathetic incremental changes over time which it can absorb. The proposals will have too great an impact in themselves and through the spread of the activity they will create.

The village is unique oasis, a special place with a range of notable architecture. It provides an experience that is available to all who find it and make frequent returns. It contributes to their health and wellbeing, very welcome in the light of the pandemic. National Health, free to all at the point of delivery and worthy of safeguarding.

The appellants will have known before they decided to submit their application that the current statutory plan does not support this site. They would also have known they may not be able to rely on the emerging Local Plan in advance or the Examination in Public. They have tried to attach great weight to it but have failed to show that they are 'fully compliant' with it. There are still some 22 outstanding issues to be addressed to test its soundness.

In addition, residents are concerned about what will happen to the three residual plots of farmland? The fear is that by upholding this appeal there will be further accumulated erosion of the status of the Conservation Area, its setting and heritage assets. This will in return make it ever more difficult to protect the village against further attempts to develop this farmland. The Hippocratic Oath should apply here. One of the promises within this oath is "First, do no harm" or (*primum non nocere*).

Doubts remain regarding how the development of the common areas will be managed and particularly the replacement of the shelterbelt in such a way that it will provide satisfactory screening during the early years of this element.

The appellants have sought to dismiss the local knowledge and expertise of residents and tried to minimise the legitimate issues they have raised. Unfortunately, In face-to-face meetings with some residents they have demonstrated condescension bordering on arrogance by implying that everything has been already agreed. These concerns are real, plentiful and widespread. This is not a NIMBY

manifestation from adjacent residents. The application file representations show it comes from 131 objectors, including 25 who do not reside in the Bedhampton PO9 3 postcode.

The principles of the UK planning system have their origins in the 1947 Act. This Act was attributed to Sir Desmond Heap, who was at my grammar school at the same time as my father. He inspired my career choice. The start of my career coincided with the adoption of the Skeffington Report 'People and Planning' in 1969. In 2005 I had the privilege of explaining to professional planning bodies around the world the changes then proposed for the current system.

The UK system is valued worldwide. It is founded above all on two components: democratic decision making at the local level and embracing public involvement. It makes engagement legitimate and recognises its value within the process.

The Development Management Committee unanimously exercised their democratic responsibilities and discharged their duty of care for heritage assets over two sessions in the full knowledge of the consequences this might have for the Borough Council's local planning process. Based upon the values they placed upon the issues, they refused consent for perfectly valid planning reasons and should be commended and supported.

The residents remain unconvinced that any benefit that results will outweigh the harms. The appeal should fail.

Ron Tate, Keith Mayor, Dave Hindley, Iain Fairley.