

Mr Chairman and Members of the Planning Committee. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to talk to you this evening. Cllr. Wilcox and myself are the Ward Members for Watling Ward, where the bulk of this site is situated, we are speaking tonight against this application. Cllr. Wilcox will cover topics that I do not so that we present a comprehensive case for refusal. A small portion of the site is in East Downs Ward and it is unfortunate that the Swale Member for that Ward is unable to be present.

I feel a heavy weight of responsibility not only as a Ward Member but as the Cabinet Member for the Environment and Rural Affairs. I often challenge but rarely disagree with advice given, but on this occasion I think the advice given to the planning committee is wrong. Planning is quasi-judicial and members will have to make a decision based on the soundness of the merits of this application alone.

You can see from a map of Faversham that historically the vast amount of development exists north of the A2. That has occurred by design and not by accident, if approved this application will destroy the rural landscape approach to Faversham, will have a hugely detrimental visual impact on the historic setting of Faversham and unlock the door to further developments leading to the cumulative impact of urban sprawl. To use someone else's phrase. "It will be a carbuncle on the face of Faversham".

The report is contradictory about the cumulative impact. At 4.12 the report uses the inspector's decision on the Brogdale Road/Brogdale Place Appeal to support this application all be it in a much larger scale. Whereas, at 4.11 the report says " Whilst planning permission here would no doubt lead to pressures to develop other sites south

of the A2, there are clear differences between many of these and the application site, which together with other material considerations, would by no means inevitably lead to a situation that planning permission would have to be granted for these sites as well". In other words "THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS" I leave you to make your own minds up about that.

There is no doubt that local government finance is being restructured and revenue support grant will have all but disappeared by 2020. This application represents a significant financial windfall for Swale Borough Council. Adding together council tax, with retained business rates and New Homes Bonus will come to a large sum. And that is without Community Infrastructure Levy, which if introduced could provide finance for infrastructure improvements on Sheppey, where CIL will not be applied. My argument against this development is not on these grounds, they are not material grounds.

I believe that the necessary housing could be supplied, on much more suitable and sustainable sites elsewhere in The Faversham and Rural Areas, providing income to the Council. Plus, significant additional housing, in both the West and East of Faversham, more than 900 dwellings, is already planned, most of which will use a two mile stretch of the A2, with no real infrastructure improvements for highway access.

4.10 quotes from the recent Examination in Public of Bearing Fruits 2031. In summary this says that "The Objectively Assessed Need of 776 dwellings per annum should be delivered whilst maintaining the settlement strategy of two planning areas, and that the Council should NUDGE the housing target upwards across the Borough, with a proportionate boost to allocations in the Faversham and rural areas". With the applications already approved locally, an additional 310 houses, initially, at Perry Court, is a "disproportionate nudge".

Does anyone really think it will be physically possible to build 776 houses per annum between now and 2031? There are just not enough builders available with the required finance and skill to deliver that quantity not just in Swale but in every other District in the South East.

Turning to the loss of Best and Most Versatile farmland.

Comparisons with the Brogdale Road Appeal, para 4.3, are flawed, for a start this site is 9 times larger. In Paragraph 29 of the inspectors report, he concludes that 3.4 ha does not involve a significant loss of BMV land, but concludes “that each proposal south of the A2 needs to be determined on its particular merits, including its overall scale and relationship with existing development”.

Paragraph 112 of NPPF makes it clear that “local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality”.

I find the argument that there is no poorer quality land in this locality, very weak. Ask yourself why was a settlement established here in the first place? Because there was a navigable waterway surrounded by high quality farmland. You could argue that at 75 acres Perry Court represents a small area in national agricultural output. If it remains in Agricultural use it will produce crops not only in 2016 and 2017, but year after year after year for decades. Whilst, once this valuable asset is built on it has gone forever. If the Council is worried about having a five year building land supply, why not build higher on urban sites already allocated within the local plan, to increase housing numbers.

RESPONSE TO OFFICER UPDATES.

There are many more points I would like to make, but others have or will make them. I understand that the number of representations, that is objections, is not a material consideration. I have never known more widespread opposition to an issue in Faversham than this. The only comparison I can think of would be a proposal to close Faversham Cottage Hospital.

Mr Chairman, I urge Planning Committee Members, to look carefully at the evidence before them and vote to refuse this application 15/504264/OUTLINE, Land at Perry Court, Faversham.

Thank you