

Town and Country Planning Act 1990

Appeals by Fareham Land LP, land at Newgate Lane, Fareham

Ref: App/A1720/W/20/3252180 and 3252185

Statement by Councillor Jim Forrest

I am a Fareham Borough Councillor representing the Stubbington ward, which contains the Peel Common community of Newgate Lane, Woodcote Lane and Albert Road. I am also the Liberal Democrat spokesman on Planning and Development on Fareham Borough Council. Though that is an opposition role, I supported Fareham's Publication Local Plan when it was considered at the Full Council meeting on October 22, 2020.

I believe either or both of these two developments would have serious implications both for my constituents in Stubbington, and for the borough as a whole.

As a Fareham councillor, my greatest concern is to see protection for the Strategic Gap which prevents Fareham's distinctive communities from merging, and prevents those in turn from merging with the Gosport urban area. I note that the Statement of Common Ground refers to the proposed sites as being "directly adjacent" to the Fareham/Stubbington Strategic Gap. (Paragraph 5.7 in each case). However, the Policies Map attached as Appendix B to Fareham's Publication Local Plan shows the Strategic Gap as extending beyond Newgate Lane East to the Gosport borough boundary.

As well as the core benefit of physical separation of settlements, recent rulings concerning other parts of that strategic gap have focussed on the concept of "valued landscape". While I note that the Statement of Common Ground (para graph 5.6 in each case) suggests that Peel Common is not a valued landscape for the purposes of paragraph 170 of the NPPF, it is certainly valued by residents there and in the wider Fareham and Gosport communities.

Peel Common has recently been given added value. Over many decades Newgate Lane had been degraded from a quiet country road to a major route between Stubbington, Lee and western Gosport and the employment and retail areas of Fareham, choked with traffic at all times of day.

Since the construction of Newgate Lane East, a more welcoming vista has been opened up for travellers along that route: Tree-lined paddocks, a sensitively restored farmhouse, traditional brick houses, and some cottages going back to Victorian times and beyond.

Though the landscape includes the major infrastructure of Southern Water's treatment plant, the experience of that site for residents and travellers is of the wooded bund around it, which is a haven for many species including deer and buzzards. The development proposed here would more than triple the

population in the immediate vicinity of that haven.

The value of the Peel Common landscape, and the views beyond it stretching towards Titchfield, also includes the sense of place it offers. Travellers between Fareham and Stubbington or Lee leave behind an urban landscape at HMS Collingwood and the Speedfields retail park. They pass through countryside surrounding a largely unspoiled hamlet, before returning to an urban fringe landscape at Solent Airport.

This part of the Strategic Gap, as well as being an area to enjoy in leisure times, gives residents on either side of it a real sense of their distinct communities. A modern estate set down in the heart of it would damage it irreparably.

As a ward councillor I'd be bitterly disappointed to see my constituents in Peel Common lose the peace they have only just regained.

Residents in Newgate Lane, Albert Road and Woodcote Lane endured decades of non-stop queues of traffic on their doorsteps. The creation of Newgate Lane East brought respite, restoring Peel Common as a cul-de-sac where residents no longer needed to fear constantly for their children's safety.

Peel Common is effectively a hamlet once more, with just over 80 households on the voters roll. The addition of 190 households would mean hundreds of cars once more disgorging onto Newgate Lane. And it would triple the pressure on the difficult exit to Newgate Lane east, across a 40mph traffic flow.

It would also have an impact on residents in my ward and in the neighbouring Gosport wards who cycle regularly into Fareham. The Newgate Lane cul-de-sac now offers cyclists a safe route with minimal vehicle traffic, where before they had to share a narrow road with heavy commercial and commuter traffic. The additional vehicle traffic from 190 extra households can be easily imagined.

I appreciate there has been reconsideration of Housing Supply by HMG since these applications were considered by Fareham's Planning Committee.

But the projections of housing need we are now working on were drawn up before the Covid pandemic. It will be many months, perhaps years before the results of the economic upheaval can be assessed. Employment and retail patterns, incomes, transport usage are all likely to be altered and may lead to further re-estimates of housing need.

And even without such a re-assessment, I do not believe there is a need which justifies a fundamental alteration of the character of Peel Common.