

SUPPLEMENTARY COMMENTS BY COUNCILLOR STEPHEN PHILPOTT

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to add a few words to my written submission presented in advance of proceedings. I have been able to watch much of the evidence and I wish to make some clarifications that I hope the Inspector will find helpful.

I offer a unique perspective in this Inquiry in that I am the only elected representative from the neighbouring Borough of Gosport to give evidence.

In his reports to the Planning Committee on 24 June 2020 Fareham Borough Council's Planning Officer recorded 126 individual objections to application P/18/1118/OA and 391 individual objections to application P/19/0460/OA.

He also reported that one petition opposing P/18/1118/OA and P/19/0460/OA had attracted 901 signatures and another had attracted a further 132.

In total, 1,550 people felt moved to write in opposition to these applications. Even notwithstanding some potential for double counting this represents a very substantial popular rejection of these proposed housing developments.

At the same time, Fareham's Planning Officer reported that just one single solitary individual had felt moved to write a letter in support. This despite the love-bombing exercise by the Applicant who delivered glossy leaflets throughout my ward and county division followed by a well-attended public consultation event in May 2018 in my Bridgemary county division.

On the subject of Bridgemary and my borough ward of Peel Common I thought it might help the Inspector to gain a greater understanding the political geography of the area because it seems the Appellant demonstrates a limited knowledge in this regard.

I have been the councillor for the Peel Common Ward in the Borough of Gosport since 2004. Boundaries were redrawn in 2002 and prior to this the entirety of my ward was in the Rowner Ward. The Peel Common Estate, which makes up the significant proportion of my ward, has *never* been part of Bridgemary and has *never* fallen within the Borough of Fareham. There is not a single person locally who would identify Peel Common as anything other than part of Gosport and no one who would consider it to be in Bridgemary.

The housing in Newgate Lane referred to during this Inquiry as "Peel Common" is, in fact, in Stubbington, within the Borough of Fareham.

This is not mere semantics. It goes to the heart of understanding the proposals and their relationship to the political geography. For example, when a witness is asked about the relationship of the so-called "Peel Common" to Stubbington, it should be appreciated that the area to which he is referring is every bit a part of Stubbington.

Turning to the input of local people in this Inquiry I would observe how little time has been spent referring to their opinions. In fact, I cannot remember anyone mentioning that at all. It is as though the views of more than 1,500 people and their elected representatives count for nothing. These residents may not possess an encyclopedic knowledge of the National Planning Policy Framework, but they instinctively know that putting houses on Newgate Lane – and, by definition, more cars – will materially damage their quality of life as they struggle in the interminable and unavoidable crawl along Newgate Lane East and the A32 to and from work. They also instinctively sense that this is the thin end of the wedge so far as the Strategic Gap is concerned.

These planning applications have attracted more than virtual unanimous opposition from the residents of both Gosport and Fareham. They are also opposed by Gosport Borough Council, Hampshire County Council and Fareham Borough Council. The development location falls outside Fareham Council's housing allocation areas in both Fareham's existing Local Plan as well as their emerging Local Plan.

The planning applications are seen by everyone in the locality as hostile and there is a great deal of cynicism about a process that can even contemplate that these housing schemes be approved.

Were these applications to be approved it would thoroughly and comprehensively undermine the faith of many hundreds of people in the democratic process. In less than three months' time residents in Gosport, Fareham and Hampshire council areas will be asked to go to the polls to choose their elected representatives. It is rare when views of councils and their residents are in alignment as they are in this case. People will rightly question a process that ignores the views of local people and their democratically elected representatives in favour of a small number of remote people who have demonstrated a worryingly limited grasp of the local political geography.

I would ask, when deliberating on these applications, that consideration be given to the damage to our precious democratic process that a decision in favour of development would demonstrate.