

Foreman Appeal: Effect on quality of life - pressure on residents, infrastructure, flora and fauna and designated Areas of Special Quality Landscapes

Good morning, my name is Gillian Marshall and I am local resident, who lived on Romsey Avenue for around 5 years.

In my presentation I hope to further illustrate why I believe the proposed development to the fields south of Romsey Avenue will place untenable pressures on local residents, infrastructure and the environment. I also wish to explore the recent Areas of Special Quality Landscapes designation of the development site and the other fields in the total 40Ha of land - the last remaining coastal agricultural land in Portchester.

In FBC's current adopted local plan, it was determined that Portchester would play a limited role in accommodating future development - consisting of small-scale development within identified settlement boundaries. It was stated that Portchester had a relative lack of facilities, limited local employment opportunities and poor accessibility in coastal settlements.

The proposed housing allocation for Portchester from 2010 to 2026 was for 57 dwellings. However, from 2011 to date, Portchester has seen planning permissions given for around 271 dwellings. Yet, the factors which were determined as limiting development in Portchester in the current local plan have not changed.

Around 70% of these dwellings are in the catchment of Wicor Primary School. Despite this, the only permanent increase in school places in this time has been 15 additional Reception spaces at Northern Infant School in 2016. The pressure on school places has been immense - particularly difficult when moving to the area. In that time, no attempt appears to have been made to provide more places at Wicor. Parents are offered places at schools in Gosport, Portsmouth or to stay at current schools, sometimes with the inducement of funding for fares for infant children only. Costs for other children and adults are not covered, plus using public transport is usually not feasible - inevitably adds extra cars to road network.

Paragraph 95 of the NPPF is very clear that there should be *a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. And that they should identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted.* There is no evidence that dealing with the problems already faced by parents in Portchester and what practical solutions there are to ensure that a choice of places are available to alleviate pressures on parents, children and the wider community. I strongly believe the effect of 225 extra households on nursery and education facilities will be untenable for current and future families.

Traffic and parking has become a major problem in the 7 years that I have lived here. My children and other relatives have been prevented from attending after school activities due to the travel times involved. The journey from Portchester Community School to Shearwater Avenue at 5pm regularly took 40 minutes to 1 and a half hours, regardless of tweaking the route. It became undoable - children lost out.

The pressure on our coastal recreational land and adjacent waters is already under severe strain.. It is understandably extremely popular with local residents and visitors, participating in sport, dog walking, water sports and general leisure. Despite frequent collections, rubbish bins overflow. New signs have been installed this year highlighting the importance of not disturbing birds and walking on the crops. Volunteer litter picking groups have been set up to try to keep the area in a decent condition.

New signs reminding recreational users of the sensitivity of coast



Services Under Pressure

It is not clear what, if any, public open space will be available. It has been proposed that the public open space would be shared with the Cranleigh Road development. However, this land is a relatively small and unattractive waste site, with no sign of completion in sight. Therefore, the Cranleigh Road development has provided no mitigation and the potential Romsey field development will add even greater to pressure to this sensitive coastal strip.



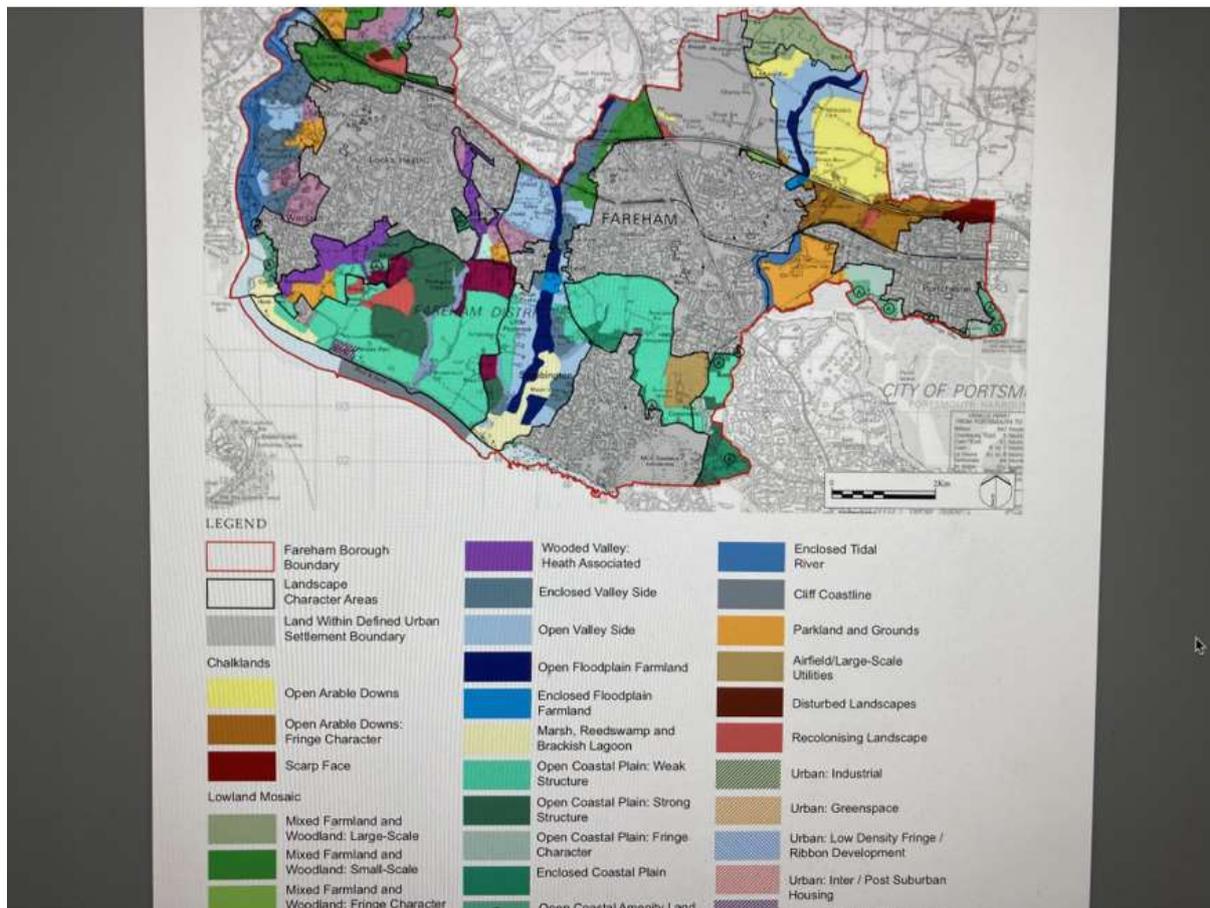




Loss of agricultural land and open countryside -

I am very concerned about the displacement of wild animals by building. We have had several incidents over the past year where deer have been bolting along residential streets in the middle of the day. Badgers and bats are not being seen as regularly. What will happen to them with a huge potential habitat loss?

Not enough has been done to explore the effect of the proposal on the fields to the south and west of the proposed site. The land is considered as homogeneous in the Fareham Landscape Assessment 2017, classified as Open Coastal Plain Fringe Character and also described by Natural England as one of the last remaining agricultural areas in this part of Fareham Borough. Continuity as illustrated by the blue shaded areas in the borough map and when seen from above.





The fields from above

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If the loss of one field leads to the remaining fields becoming unviable for farming, this will result in the loss of 40Ha of the BMV land, taking it over the key figure of 20Ha and subsequently a significant loss.

Both the NPPF and FBCs current and future local plans are clear on this. Para 174 states that plans should recognise “the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land” and “Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality.” The potential loss of 40Ha grade 1 and 2 agricultural land is significant. In fact, since 2011, Fareham has lost around 137 Ha of BMV land. The future of BMV land in Portchester is very worrying. 55Ha are identified as developable, 5 is developed and 40Ha could be at risk to the fields south of Romsey Avenue. Current policies and the piecemeal approach is failing to consider the cumulative impact of this very worrying and significant potential loss of our best quality agricultural land.

Moving on to the recent designation for the entire 40Ha agricultural land, proposed in the Fareham Landscape Assessment 2017 - area 12.1b on the map. Although FBC undertook a landscape assessment in 1996, only limited areas in Fareham were given special landscape status. The fields were simply confirmed as countryside. 2017 was the first time the fields were considered for ASLQ status. An aim of the 2017 review was to help the Council to identify options for development outside the urban boundary for the proposed 2036 local plan.

Maps of the Cams Coastal LCA and expanded view of the 40Ha fields





Recommendations were :

- based upon the professional judgement of the qualified landscape architects/planners within the consultant team and have not been influenced by, nor tested against, the opinions of the Council or the public
- The assessment was undertaken purely from a landscape perspective and as objectively as possible, although an element of subjective judgement is inevitable. It has not been influenced by any knowledge of the amount of development land that might be required to meet future targets or by any other environmental, socio- economic or planning considerations which may influence development potential.

It was not possible within the scope of the study to involve local communities or stakeholder groups in the evaluation process but anecdotal, written or visual evidence of local community values was taken into account where available. Any further evidence of landscape value/sensitivity at a local community level that may come to light through future studies or proposals for development should be considered as an additional layer of information augmenting the findings of this assessment. Yet it is part of assessment criteria to consult and consider community views.

Area 12.1b, was described as having **no direct connection with the coast**. It discusses views as if they are restricted to ground level and, as has been noted, no account was taken of community opinion. Whilst this land may be unremarkable in the eyes of a surveyor, what it offers in terms of views and the support it provides is of great value to locals, visitors and wildlife. This landscape is rare; unique in this part of the borough. It **clearly** does have direct connection with the coast. (add photos) The approximate 50 metre gap opening out between the trees offers expansive views of the countryside and of Portsdown hill. In fact, it is the only part of the Cams/Wicor LCA along the entire coast where such views can be had.

**Views from the coast
looking through the gap to
the fields and beyond to
Portsmouth Hill.**



Views of Cams Lake taken from the rear garden of 64 Romsey Avenue.



It was felt that some development - not quantified could be potentially accommodated without adverse effects and that changes could not only be mitigated through appropriate design, but they could strengthening of the existing landscape framework by for example, creating 'parkland settings in line with the landscape of the Cams Hall estate. Substantial open space and habitat for wildlife would divert pressures away from the more sensitive parts of the coastal margins. Development would be required to avoid damage or disturbance to features of recognised ecological value within the area (SINCs), and sensitive ecological resources within the adjacent Portsmouth Harbour. It would also need to avoid the

introduction of buildings or structures that would be visually prominent within the open, flat landscape.

I have to ask how can major housing development be adequately mitigated for to compensate for the loss of visual amenity, the feeling of remoteness and the relative tranquility currently afforded by the open countryside for all inhabitants - human or animal? It is absolutely impossible to incorporate substantial networks of open space and wildlife habitat, that does not damage or disturb Portsmouth Harbour SPA and avoids the intrusion of buildings in open, flat landscape on area 12.1b. Or, it would leave such little space for development that I cannot imagine it would be viable.

In spite of a review having been undertaken only 3 years prior in 2017, Hampshire County Council Landscape team undertook further analysis, producing the 2020 Technical Review of Areas of Special Landscape Quality and Strategic Gaps areas for the proposed 2037 local plan. This time, it was recommended that the Cams to Portchester coast be newly designated as an area of special landscape quality.

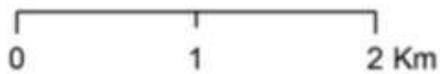
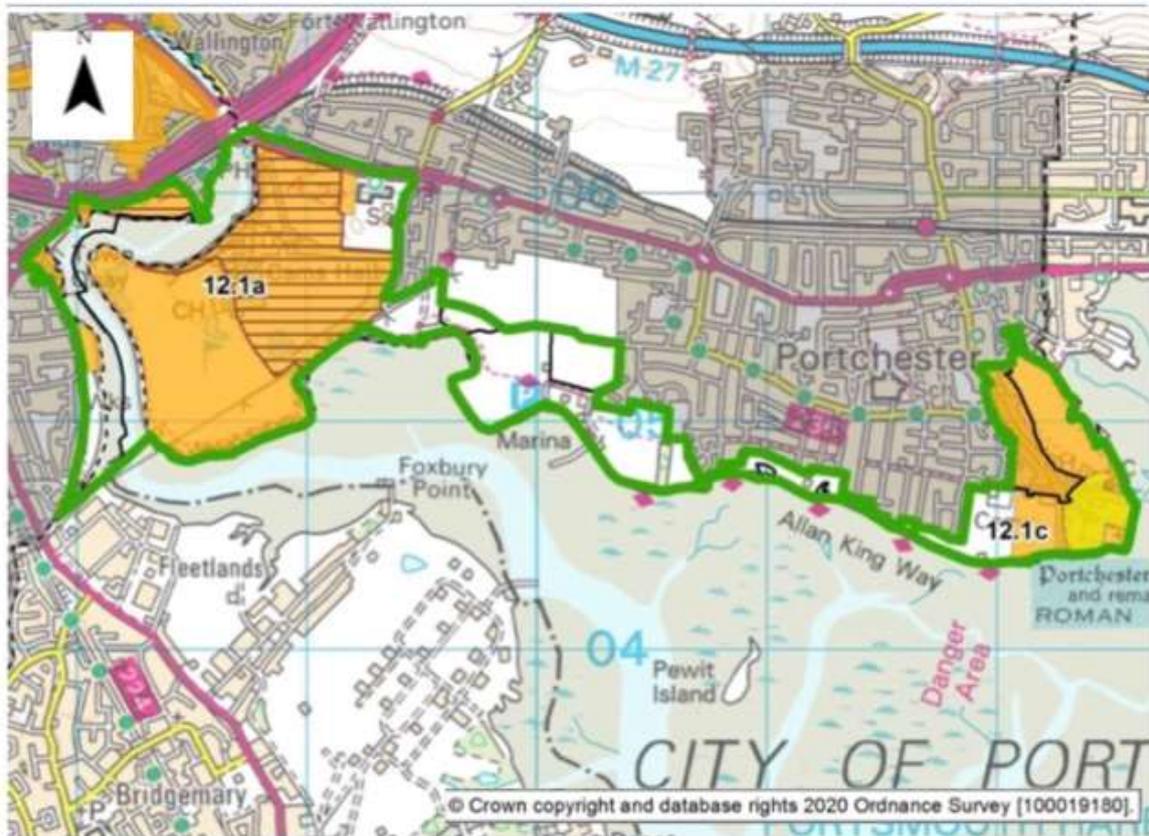
Briefly, the reasons for applying the ASQL designation were

- a relatively high tranquillity close to urban areas.
- Largely secluded and peaceful. Woodland effectively minimising intrusion from the urban edge of Portchester
- few detracting features, other than residential areas and pockets of commercial development close to the shore, but offset by the expansive coastal setting.

As a rare resource within the densely populated borough, criteria to qualify as a 'valued landscape' was met. As residents, we were delighted that the area was rightly recognised as valuable. However, this turned to disappointment due to the exclusion of most of area 12.1b, leaving only the field south of Romsey Avenue and a minimum fifty-metre-wide swathe at the SW corner of 12.1b which it was said would ensure an adequate undeveloped zone alongside the coast.

Chapter 3: Area of Special Landscape Quality

ASLQ 8: Cams to Portchester Coast



Legend

- Proposed ASLQ boundaries
- Original ASLQ boundaries
- LCA Sub Areas
- Historic Parks and Gardens
- Scheduled Monuments
- Conservation Areas
- Urban Areas
- Fareham District Boundary

Close up of the ASQL boundary excluding most of area 12.1 b



In my view, the new ASQL designation effectively moves the urban edge of Portchester to within a short distance of the coast. Far from protecting an area of coastal countryside and BMV land - which is supposedly a priority of FBC, it's hard to see how it isn't inevitable that **two** fields, not one will be pursued for development. Why isn't all the land protected? After all, on the one hand, the area is described as a rare resource, relatively high tranquility, secluded and peaceful, protected from intrusion by woodland, only marred by residential areas close to the shore and pockets of commercial development. Yet the majority of the largest and last expanse of countryside is excluded from the ASQL classification i.e. the Romsey field - which is a primary support area for Brent Geese and waders and the field to the west? Why does the recommendation suggest that a 50m swathe be left undeveloped on the field to the west - inferring that development is not detrimental to the landscape, when it

is previously stated that residential development close to the shore is a detracting feature? These fields could potentially accommodate a high number of properties, shattering tranquility, destroying the sense of open countryside and blocking views to and from the coast. All three fields in 12.1b were scored as a partial match, with fair match for rarity and representativeness. Yet, only the south field - also a primary support area for BG & W qualifies to be part of the asql, despite being obscured by high hedgerows preventing views and being surrounded on two sides by a road, housing / industry and on the side, a car park and football club, obviously impacting on tranquility. To confuse matters further, the proposed ASQL borders other residential areas and the A27 - Cams Hill School remains in Area 12.1a - a high match to the ASQL criteria, yet bordered by the 4 lane A27 and housing on two sides. Cadour Drive and the end of Wicor Mill Lane also form one edge in area 12c - rated a good match. The decisions seem baffling and inconsistent - surely building closer to the coast should be discouraged, as it is currently described as a detracting feature. We discussed with FBC whether there had perhaps been a mistake. Despite several email conversations with a senior officer, they were unable to explain the rationale for these decisions. It was suggested by them to put these questions to the Inspector during the appeal inquiry.

I'd like to finish with a quote from Robert Jenrick, Housing Secretary made on 21.6.21 made in response to concerns about the planning system. He said

"They want good-quality homes, proper infrastructure, and they want to protect spaces such as the green belt. We have a duty to hand the next generation an enhanced natural and built environment."

"We are listening. Many of these worries hinge on the fact our current planning system is not trusted - it is seen as too complicated, too weighted in favour of big constructors and to the exclusion of smaller house builders and local people. I agree"

This quote encapsulates quite neatly how local people feel about the proposed development to the field south of Romsey Avenue. As an area, we are already struggling with services and facilities to cater for the current population. Nothing has effectively been done to improve or increase facilities, despite a four-fold increase in the proposed dwellings from 2010 to date. Please refuse this appeal on the many grounds provided by the council, myself, other residents and in line with his statement, the Secretary of State for Housing.