**Consultation: Councillor Diane Taylor**

**23/03120/FUL at Land At Oakdown Farm Winchester Road Dummer Basingstoke Hampshire**

May I start by copying below an email that I sent to the CEO, the Head of Law & Governance and the Development Manager expressing serious concerns that I have regarding the handling of this application.

**I was extremely concerned about the recent meeting between councillors and Newlands Development regarding their latest forthcoming application for Oakdown farm.**

**It really was a full-on sales pitch in which the Newlands team used every means to present their case for approval, including some quite spurious claims that, at this early stage, it would have been difficult to dispute at the time.**

**For instance, the Newlands team assured us that the NHS was fully on board with their plans and were working closely with them.  This is not at all what the North Hants Hospitals CEO, Alex Whitfield, said a few days later.  She was quite clear that they were keeping abreast of Newlands plans and keeping an open dialogue with them, but were by no means aligning themselves with their proposals.**

**Newlands were keen to point out – even in their headlines – that Basingstoke has an “ongoing significant unmet need for logistics”.   In their introductory letter they informed us that the site is “proposed for storage and distribution uses in the emerging Local Plan Update”.  The cabinet member for Strategic Planning & Infrastructure” has said this “need” requires further investigation (EPH 28th Sept 2023).  So Newlands assertion is extremely premature – but they said it, and it cannot be unsaid.**

**The whole tenor of the presentation was one of persuasion and hard sell.**

**All this would perhaps have been acceptable if there hadn’t been several members of the Development Control committee present – the people that will be determining the application.  Most were feeling positively persuaded after the presentation by professionals.  I, by contrast to that lengthy presentation, will be allowed four minutes to state my own case when it comes before them.  I and others will be speaking to committee members whose minds have been fully filled with positives of the scheme.**

The following are further comments in opposition to the application:

Landscape

The Appeal Inspector’s report states that “the site’s character and contribution to LCA17 would be irreversibly diminished due to the proposed extensive changes to landform”. It states that “adverse landscape and visual impacts is the determining issue in this appeal”. Consideration of this revised scheme will therefore major on landscape impact.

Despite the applicant’s assertion that this scheme proposes a reduction in landscape impact, when observed from the significant viewpoints considered in the appeal application, there is hardly any difference in the appearance of this new scheme. It seems surprising that the applicants made this new attempt to gain approval when it is clear that any configuration of the size proposed is going to have a devastating effect on the landscape and visual amenity of the area. Oakdown Farm is simply not the right site for buildings of this type, and juggling with dimensions and configurations is not going to make it so.

There is now justification for researching the visual impact of the proposed warehouses from additional viewpoints such as the recent development of Hounsome Field (south). I will send in further comments on this.

Economic Need

I understand that the determination of economic need is a quite fluid exercise and is still under consideration. Whilst I am sure there are various algorithms and calculations to arrive at the estimation of “need”, nothing will outweigh the simple fact that the Borough of Basingstoke has no need whatsoever for this quantum of warehousing and the employment that it will generate. Instead, even according to the applicant’s calculations, a large proportion of the workforce will travel along the M3 daily from many miles away.

It is unacceptable to impose these vast warehouses on this town when it is neither wanted nor needed by its residents. Basingstoke has built a good reputation as, amongst other things, a hub for technical and IT industries. Further, it will accommodate a new hospital which will provide a variety of employment opportunities far more suited to the Borough’s residents.

All of my comments made regarding Newlands’ earlier application at this site 22/0067/FUL, which was dismissed at Appeal, apply to this new scheme.