

Land North of Little Green Lane

Planning appeal –Personal statement, Cllr Kingsley R. Jolowicz MA (London) MA (Brunel) PGCE (PC)

Thank you, sir, for the opportunity to speak.

I was born in Croxley Green and was brought up here and later in Sarratt. I am currently Vice-Chair of Croxley Green Parish Council. Although I represent the council, the words are my own. The themes that I would like to focus on are the planning balance, sustainable scale & developer obligations.

Introduction

The Parish Council remains concerned that the proposal does not comply with policies 1(c) (Engagement with the Community) and 3 (Heritage Context) of the Sarratt Neighbourhood Plan. In terms of housing and communities, the Parish Council remains concerned that the design, layout and density of the proposed housing do not reflect the established character of the surrounding area. The illustrative designs in our view would **NOT** be acceptable in the local context and landscape. In terms of infrastructure and utilities, the Parish Council remains concerned that acknowledged shortfalls in current provision – including, but not limited to, education, health services, water supply, water treatment and power networks – have not been adequately addressed by the Appellants. The Parish Council would invite the Inspector to satisfy himself that the necessary investment is planned and will be forthcoming before any development of this scale is approved

Planning Balance

The developer has not successfully engaged with the community, indeed over 600 objections have been lodged from the community. An on-line petition at time of writing has reached over 2100 signatures. There is no evidence that the community is satisfied with the proposal and the provisions offered. The current views across open countryside will be severely limited to a narrow view between new buildings, up to 4 storeys high. This doesn't protect the setting at all. The proposal does ~~material harm~~ to the setting of Durrants House.

The application does ~~not deal~~ with our concerns concerning the design, layout and density of the proposed development. **Density of Housing:** The proposed density is markedly tighter than the existing adjacent housing, Front gardens of 2m (cf 5m nearby in Croxley), back gardens of 10m (cf 20m nearby in Croxley).

Design code: This advocates three storey buildings across most of the site, with many four storey buildings. This is out of character with the adjacent housing in Croxley Green. The code shows inappropriate examples of buildings taken from central London as design examples. Four storey Georgian buildings for example

Topography: The whole assessment of the site seems to ignore topography. Parts of the site are comparatively level, but most is quite steeply sloped. The site is visible from several angles, but the proposed built form should be 3D modelled to show the visual impact. The application does not address our concerns about general overdevelopment and a significant cumulative impact on Croxley Green. The response that the HIA includes a qualitative cumulative assessment, concluding that no significant cumulative effects on health and social care services or housing have been identified is insufficient. The new NPPF names landscape character expressly as something planners have to consider. This matters to the parish council and the residents because part of our case has always been about what 256 houses on rising ground would do to the character of the estate itself, and the appellant has never really assessed this. Their own landscape witness accepted at this inquiry that the character would be affected. Under the old wording that was mainly a design argument but under the new NPPF wording it engages a national policy directly.

Sustainable scale

It is a key requirement of the NPPF Chapters 9 and 12 that any proposed development is sustainable in terms of location, infrastructure provision and placemaking. We are concerned that non-compliance with NPPF Chapter 9 on sustainable transport will cause material harm to the village.

Access to the site by vehicle is limited and only from the south through existing residential areas which will be seriously affected by additional traffic. The roads most notably will be affected are Little Green Lane, Links Way, Durrants Drive and Baldwins Lane and then onto Watford Road. I urge the inspector to witness the volume of traffic along these roads and Baldwin's Lane on a school day/workday and imagine a further 900 cars being added to the school and work traffic along this already busy road. Public transport provision to the proposed site is limited, with access to the limited rail services of Croxley Green station over one mile away from any part of the site. Existing bus services are limited and, in common with County bus services generally, unreliable with schedules subject to amendment. A development of the proposed magnitude is likely to be almost entirely car oriented and thus challenge sustainable development principles.

Developer obligations.

I now wish to refer to developer obligations. My colleague Cllr Stungo last week mentioned the broken promises from the Killingdown Farm development. If this development is to go ahead, we need signed binding agreements on all aspects of the 106-agreement rather than being accepted based on the appellant's general willingness and these need to all agreed to by any future developer. Following prorated negotiations led on the parish council's part by our chair, Cllr Natalie Reed, a new community centre is planned in the heart of Croxley on the Barton Way Red Cross site, with the intention of uniting and strengthening our community spirit by reviving the activities enjoyed in Croxley before the Red Cross returned the lease to TRDC. This project is very close to the hearts of our residents, as it was to their parents and grandparents. When it was first built, in the 1960s, families donated 2 shillings and sixpence per brick until there were enough bricks to build it. This included my late parents and indeed my mother was a Red Cross volunteer nurse and NHS midwife. The Parish Council will move their office here to be more accessible to the public and in the heart of the community. Croxley is already investing in central community facilities, so duplicating them on-site isn't essential.

In terms of the proposed health centre first, it is not in the centre of the village and second if the new health centre is built it may give the opportunity for the Hertfordshire and West Essex Care Board to rationalise the existing doctor's surgeries in Croxley Green. The development of the 600 houses and a new health centre would in fact be an example of the law of unintended consequences. Another concern is that it will not be readily accessible to our residents especially those from for example Byewaters and from the Scots Hill areas. It would take these patients up 40 minutes to get there adding to the congestion in the area, going by bus would be extremely difficult.

My colleagues Cllr Gallagher and Cllr Holland have referred to in their evidence to section 106 obligations regarding a series of remedial measures for dealing with the impact of the development on the nearby roads and for an independent bus route. So, I will not repeat what they have said except to say, it is my view that if the appeal is granted a new bus route should be officially registered prior to consent being granted. The route to be in operation from the date the first residents move into the development. The Section 106 agreement should make sure that the developer guarantees through subsidies to support the route as an **independent** route, separate from other current commercial routes from first occupation. I suggest the third condition is for 10 years from the substantial completing of this development-perhaps say 95% occupancy. All these developer obligations are in our view essential. Pre-commencement planning conditions such requiring the bus route to be up, running, and subsidized before the first resident moves in. These are conditions that you perhaps could mandate Richborough to agree to if you decide to approve the scheme.

Speaker Conclusion:

I would like to echo and endorse comments from other residents and councillors. When evaluated strategically, the speculative proposal represents unsustainable overdevelopment. The cumulative planning harms to highways, Green Belt, and local services far outweigh the theoretical public benefits, and the appeal should be dismissed. When the yellow legal pads have been put away, and the teams have moved on to another public inquiry, it will be the people of Croxley Green that will have to deal with many years of disruption, congestion, misery and noise for many years to come. The fields, footpaths and woodland around this beautiful village is what makes it so special. As children, my sisters and I road our bikes, climbed trees and skinned our knees around Little Green Lane in the summer sun of our youth. This development threatens all of this. Benjamin Disraeli said trust the people. Well sir, please trust the people of this beautiful village who oppose this development, and advise the secretary of state to say No to this development and keep Croxley special.

I would like to thank all those who have worked so hard at this public inquiry, residents, all my colleagues on Croxley Green Parish Council, the staff of Three Rivers District Council, their lawyers as well the appellant's lawyers and finally and most importantly to you sir and your staff.

