

[RETROSPECTIVE NOTE: I made the point that TRDC having withdrawn two of its previous objections was a complete capitulation]

Words are hugely important, they're the means by which we construct argument, express a point of view, challenge and debate. But some words seem to carry more weight than others.

Where planning applications are concerned the key word appears to be 'acute' and one the peppers the narrative and rhetoric. Here are some examples:

M25 Service Station: Colne Valley Regional Park warned major developments threatened "the very existence of the park", while the applicant's agent, Sebastian Tibenham, said motorway service areas were essential and "the need here is **acute**".

Chalfont St. Peter (AONB): The applicant "The proposed development would secure up to 975 homes addressing an **acute** need for housing"

Hill Developments, our very own Killingdown Farm: "We are delighted to have been granted consent to develop 160 high-quality new homes in Croxley Green, helping to address the **acute** shortage of homes in the area. "

And finally, though it took a little digging, but eventually I found it, and bringing it right back to the matter in hand, **Proof of Evidence – Planning - Land to North of Little Green Lane, Croxley Green**, page 21, point 5.2: "yet the Council remains in a position of **acute** housing land supply shortfall".

It had never occurred to me the power of that simple adjective, so I'm encouraged to put it to good use here.

How about an acute and blatant disregard for the opinion of local people and councillors. We're only here today because the Applicant has chosen to ignore the wishes of a significant number of Croxley residents and the decision of the Three Rivers planning committee. It strikes me as extreme arrogance that the desires of those people who will be so adversely affected, indeed the whole of Croxley, should be swept aside. This community now faces an uncertain future where the wrong decision will fundamentally and adversely affect our village and environment.

I'm also acutely aware that if any of the Applicant's team lived on the roads adjoining and leading to the proposed site then they would view things very differently. If this proposal goes ahead, it will inflict years of misery on the residents of Links Way, Rousebarn Lane, Durrants and of course Little Green Lane. Not only will they have to endure the disruption of the initial build phase, with a plethora of heavy vehicles and machinery that it entails, but the high levels of traffic thereafter.

Looking down my street I see most houses have, on average, two cars. For the sake of argument and taking a conservative estimate, let's go with 1.5 per household. For the

proposed development that's the potential for 900 extra cars on our roads. I'm not suggesting for a moment the potential for these cars to be on the road at the same time, but it gives an indication of the extra vehicular burden on what are small roads.

No need to labour the point, but it doesn't stop there of course – Prime, DPD, Post Office deliveries, home improvement construction traffic etc. etc.

[RETROSPECTIVE NOTE: I made the case here that the opening statement from both sides made no mention of the incumbent – the Croxley residents whose lives would be affected by this development and that the process would proceed without due regard to this point.]

That's 'acute' out of the way, what about biodiversity? That comes up a fair bit on both sides of the debate. However, my attention is drawn to a couple of quotes. The first lifted verbatim from the Cratus Group, verbosely titled document Richborough - Land to North of Little Green Lane, Croxley Green, Statement of Community Involvement.

The scheme will deliver a biodiversity net gain in excess of 10%. The potential to maximise net gain within the boundary of the Scheme has been explored based on the scheme's design parameters and targeting realistic and deliverable habitats as part of the scheme's soft landscaping. The mandatory requirement for 10% BNG has been achieved and surpassed for the scheme and the Trading Rules have been met.

It's a bit wordy, but worth closer scrutiny:

- By its own admission the development will cause harm but through some mitigation, we'll all benefit from a 10% biodiversity net gain. Now, call me old fashioned, but I can't see for the life of me how a development of 600 houses will be anything other than damaging to the environment, whatever the mitigations.

Richborough aren't alone in the use of the persuasive and misleading rhetoric, here's a very similar statement from Hill Developments relating to Killingdown Fram:

Our plans also include biodiversity enhancements such as extensive new planting and habitat creation, resulting in a 10% gain in biodiversity across the development.

Us fortunate Croxley residents – we're already 10% up on the back of the Killingdown Farm development. If this proposal gets the go ahead, that's 20% BNG! We won't be able to move for bees and butterflies.

The important point here is accountability. The applicant can make whatever claims they want about biodiversity, but they will never be held to account. And what if they do fail to meet contractual or regulatory targets (however they would be measured)? Any penalty will be of little consequence given the level of financial gain from the proposed development.

Making these claims is a nonsense – it's a blatant attempt at appeasement - address the green concerns and you're almost there. I'm not fooled, nor are the other Croxley residents that see such statements for what they are.

I've done acute, covered biodiversity, how about a bit of green vs grey belt?

My opinion is much the same as any right-thinking person.– changing the label of an entity doesn't change what it is or its function - calling it grey belt doesn't change anything – it's nothing more than semantics, a tool with which to rush through absurd central government housing targets and undermine local planning procedures.

The M25 service station development noted previously supports this position entirely. Bucks County Council had refused this application. Thereafter, the proposed green belt site was re-classified as grey belt and the council had no option but to approve. We're seeing the same here – by attempting to reclassify the proposed site as grey belt is a blatant attempt to dilute objection and weaken the case against the development.

Before closing I'd like to point out that I've referenced Kiillingdown Farm a couple of times to highlight the fact that the dust has barely settled on that development and here we are again, facing an even bigger and more harmful development. The fight for our village and environment seems never ending.

At this point I'll address you directly Planning Inspector – what I've said here may have fallen on deaf ears – I said one thing, you heard nothing of consequence. But whatever the case, let's be clear about one thing – the consequences of the decision you make, if the wrong one, will endure beyond your existence, beyond everyone's in the room and all generation to come. Given what's at stake I therefore I ask, on behalf of all concerned Croxley residents, that you make the only decision that can be made and that is to refuse this application.

