

Dear Councillors

Firstly, may I thank the officer for her thorough report. I should outline why we felt the need to submit an Appeal. Members will recall a committee was due on March 26th, although previously we were expecting to go to earlier Committees but were delayed several times due to the Transport Assessment Addendum. Given lockdown however we recognise the Council had to defer. We agreed extensions to the end of May, but unfortunately after 2 years, and with no firm 'virtual' committee, we couldn't extend any further, as we had a contractual obligation to Appeal if not determined by 31st May, having extended on numerous occasions. So the Appeal partially arises from the circumstances we have all faced, and is not entirely a criticism of the Council. We have continued to liaise with officers and as the report explains, agreed some amendments to improve the development, whilst progressing the Section 106.

On the substance I'll draw out 5 points.

Firstly, principle. This site was first chosen by Havant in 2016, and has been in every subsequent draft Local Plan, including that approved at Full Council just weeks ago. This recognises the site's closeness to facilities, relationship with existing development, and the need for a spread of sites including on the Island. For some time the Council had earmarked the site for 210 dwellings, but the policy now reflects our proposals.

Secondly I'd stress the urgency of this scheme given that, as the officer acknowledges, it is necessary to maintain a 5-year supply. But this is not about arithmetic, it is about real people's lives, at a time when the need to have space to live has been shown more than ever. Through this development Barratt will provide 58 homes in affordable tenures; one of the biggest single contributions in the Island's history, and 137 further households will benefit from ownership.

Thirdly transport. We realise highway conditions on the Island are difficult, and this is why even before Covid-19, we accepted over a years' delay as the Council undertook its further Transport Addendum work, and identified and approved mitigation packages. Arising from both HCC Highways and your officers' hard work we have agreed a Section 106 package including over £700,000 worth of highway and walking contributions for the Island.

Fourth, the economic and social benefits are substantial. Development investment on this scale, and in this location, is rare. And the boost to jobs is all the more important in the current downturn. We will also (over and above the highway packages) be contributing over £1.7 million pounds in Infrastructure Levy, an education contribution of £872,000, plus sizeable contributions towards Health, a community worker, and the Billy Trail. Combined, these will provide real benefits across the Island.

Fifth and perhaps most importantly, the environment. About half of the application site will go to the RSPB as Winter Bird Mitigation land, in perpetuity, and the Section 106 for this is well advanced, ready for signing subject to the Inspector's independent review. The Application is able to create biodiversity "net gain", and unusually for a large site in Havant, is Nitrate Negative. For these reasons there is no objection from Natural England or the County Ecologist. Our approach to drainage has also been accepted by Havant, Hampshire and the Environment Agency. Combined with other measures on energy efficiency, electric charging points and landscaping, the development is sustainable.

So I commend the officer's recommendation.

Although this application will be decided by an Inspector, and we share your frustrations that Committee was unable to make a decision in March, what Members resolve tonight is still important. There are few areas of disagreement and if the officer's recommendation is carried we can expect a Hearing, where the Inspector will chair a structured discussion, involving the public. Alternatively if Members reject advice and introduce Reasons for Refusal, this could prompt a costly and needless Public Inquiry running against the Local Plan and the Council's corporate aims.

If the Committee votes to support the Officers' Recommendation, we would work with the Council and submit a fresh application while we await the appeal. Given delays with the Inspectorate currently, the new scheme could be determined early in the New Year before the appeal takes place, saving the Council time and money. Hence, I will conclude by saying that we are receptive to hearing Members' considered views on any revisions to the application that they may wish to see, if we took that approach.

Thank you.

