

Dear WEAG Supporters

Update - Planning Applications Committee Meeting 10 February 2016
Taylor Wimpey proposed development reference 15/0884

Further to our brief note with the podcast of the meeting here is further detail.

You will have realised, if you've listened to the podcast that this was a very contentious and emotive meeting. The Planning Applications Committee (PAC) gave approval on Access subject to the Access being reviewed. Other issues in dispute on this application, including flooding and the suitability of the highway, a narrow and twisting country road, are to be reviewed. Approval has been given subject to a legal agreement and conditions.

The meeting began with the Planning Officer summarising why the SHBC officials were recommending reversing the Committee's earlier decision and giving approval to the application (basically, the Inspector's verdict on the Kings Road application). Two West End residents then gave 3-minute speeches opposing the application: Edmund Bain in his well-known robust manner, and Guy Consterdine, WEAG Secretary, arguing that the application should be rejected in order to send it to a formal appeal, where the complex issues could be thoroughly worked through. After a Taylor Wimpey representative gave a 3-minute speech, one of our Borough Councillors, Adrian Page (not a member of PAC), gave a strong endorsement of WEAG's position. There was then a lively debate between PAC members and council officials.

When the committee Chair, Edward Hawkins, failed to get reaction to his call for a proposer and a seconder he made it quite clear that if it was the decision of the members to go against the precedent of the Kings Road Inspector's decision and the Planning Officer's recommendation they alone would be required to give firm reasons as to why, adding that they were not going to take all night to debate. This veiled threat altered the hands down into a vote of 8 to 5 in favour of the development (subject to certain conditions and legal agreements).

This takes the number of approved new dwellings for West End to 169. As you are aware, a further application for 95 dwellings on land at Malthouse Farm was refused by the PAC on 13 October 2015, and the developer has applied to appeal (not yet validated). We fear that this, like the Taylor Wimpey development, may turn into another 'free go' re-application, and be passed by SHBC without the full arguments being heard at an appeal.

WEAG believe the key is the non-applicability to the reserve sites in West End and Windlesham of the NPPF's 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. Jenny Rickard and her colleagues do not accept that it is not applicable; yet the legal advice we have heard is clear that the reserve sites should be an exception, for the reasons summarised in our earlier correspondence.

We have written to Mr Gove our MP asking if he is able to help us by pressing SHBC to reconsider their view about the applicability of the NPPF, in time to affect the Malthouse Farm appeal or re-application.

Meanwhile we must examine closely the detailed planning applications that come forward on the Taylor Wimpey development and the William Lacey development of 84 houses south of Kings Road. Although the odds appear to be against us we will continue in our endeavors to oppose the Malthouse Farm proposals and to mitigate the adverse impacts of these unwelcome developments on West End.

Best Regards

Beulah Kingston

Chair West End Action Group (WEAG)

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