

# West End Action Group (WEAG)

## Planning approval granted for Malthouse Farm application

Regrettably, the Planning Inspector Andrew Dawe has approved the plans to build 95 houses on the fields around Malthouse Farm. It is what WEAG feared and anticipated, considering the array of forces and events against us, but it is still a blow when the official verdict is published.

The Inspector's report may be downloaded from WEAG's website at [www.weag.info](http://www.weag.info). WEAG's committee has only just seen the report, and may circulate another newsletter when we have fully absorbed the details.

You may recall that during the Hearing in front of the Inspector on 20 September, the Borough Council disgracefully sent no-one from the Council to represent them, even though it was the Borough's refusal of permission which led to the developer's appeal. The Hearing became a contest between WEAG/Diane Doney and the developer's lawyer and planning consultant.

WEAG still believes refusal of planning permission would have been the correct decision; the strong planning reasons for this were summarised in our newsletter dated 24 September, following the Hearing. I reproduce them here:

"Our arguments deployed a wide range of planning issues, based on the Borough's own Local Plan, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and a number of other planning documents. These arguments included:

- The land is 'safeguarded' against development until at least the end of the SHBC Local Plan period in 2025
- The alleged (but disputed) shortfall in the supply of land available for housing does not override the 'safeguarding' function, which remains relevant
- SHBC's Core Strategy proposes large-scale development only in the west of the Borough
- West End's Village Design Statement describes the rural and semi-rural character of the surrounding areas; a housing estate here would destroy the character of this part of the village
- The earlier decision by Planning Inspector Mr Boniface to grant permission for houses on land off Kings Road is not a binding precedent
- Malthouse Farmhouse itself, and its granary, are Grade II listed buildings, and the housing estate would create severe harm to its protected setting
- The plan to have two new road entrances joining Benner Lane - so crowded on school days with children, parents, and densely parked cars - is very dangerous for everyone
- The village does not have the infrastructure to cope with another 95 houses: schools, roads, traffic congestion, medical facilities, etc. The application is not sustainable
- There are objections on grounds of wildlife, habitat, birds and the Special Protection Area
- The NPPF's "presumption in favour of sustainable development" does not apply here, for the reasons above
- And a number of other issues"

However, as that newsletter continued, "being realistic, the odds are stacked against us, after Planning Inspector Mr Boniface granted permission for the 84 homes off Kings Road; SHBC's refusal

to challenge that decision in the High Court, though urged by WEAG to do so; SHBC then giving way over the Beldam Bridge Road 85 houses; and now SHBC withdrawing its objections to having housing around Malthouse Farm.”

There is the possibility of an appeal to the High Court against this planning approval, but since the Borough Council no longer opposes this development, and refused to appeal against the Kings Road Inspector’s decision, it would have to be an appeal by WEAG. Obviously, we do not have the enormous funds to mount an appeal, and the prospects of succeeding in an appeal are not encouraging. Unfortunately, unless a fairy godmother materialises, we have to accept that the houses will be built, another sector of the village will have its character destroyed, a further 200+ cars will be generated, and so on.

On a separate front, there is now a scheme to close Fair Oaks Airport and build a mini-town of 1,500 houses there!

Regards

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