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-----Original Message-----

From: Julie Cruickshank [REDACTED]

Sent: Tuesday, April 2, 2024 8:54 AM

To: Karl Roberts <Karl.Roberts@arun.gov.uk>

Subject: Objection to Planning Application for up to 400 dwellings on land east of Westergate Ref AL/11/24/OUT

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Dear Mr Roberts

I am emailing you the full copy of the objection I drafted, which came to more than the restrictive 3800 characters permitted. I believe part of the issue with this development is not within your control, in that the area under discussion consists of three parcels of land owned by different "land banks" and with different builders submitting plans. This makes it unnecessarily difficult to come up with sensible options, since as a governing body you should be able to look at the bigger picture but now need to make decisions piecemeal starting with the smaller portion in this case.

As I understand it there is enough room for the total number of houses proposed across the three sites, and the environmental benefits which could be achieved, but the restrictions of land ownership are forcing builders into bad decisions. But these bad decisions cannot be tolerated – their impact will last for many generations.

There have also been several recent items I would like to remind you of:

- Our MP Andrew Griffith's latest newsletter which says "My crusade for cleaner rivers is one reason why I insist our local councils must stop granting planning permission to concrete over greenfield land or including it in their development plans: it's often run-off from housing estates which overwhelms sewers.

The government has ended mandatory housing targets so councils need to wean themselves off letting developers write their plans for them."

- The Environment Agency objected to a planning application for 1,400 new homes near Barton in Oxfordshire, until sewage works have been upgraded.

- The WSCC Environment and Climate Change Newsletter of 14/03/2024 says “One in six of our UK species is at risk of extinction and urgent, locally coordinated, efforts are needed to reverse this decline.”
- “Shared ownership schemes are drastically failing to deliver an affordable route to homeownership for too many people and subject buyers to rising rents, uncapped service charges, and a disproportionate exposure to repair and maintenance costs, says the cross-party Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (LUHC) Committee in a report published today (Thursday).” From Shared ownership is failing to deliver an affordable route to homeownership, say MPs - Committees - UK Parliament 28/03/2024

The objection I have submitted is a condensed version of this:-

This application fails to meet several requirements of the agreed Development Plan:

- Infrastructure no longer meets the needs of residents as some of the new housing is now in use, the GP surgery has not yet been updated and there are fewer doctors than before, the local school is oversubscribed, both surface water and foul water disposal and water supply have all been heavily impacted by the conditions this winter (2023/24) - it is already acknowledged by ADC, WSCC, EA and SWS that a large portion of the parish has problems with these conditions, but the Environmental Survey precedes this breakdown in services.
- Delays from Woodgate level crossing are a concern to emergency services and at peak times can extend over a mile, going beyond Eastergate roundabout. With the anticipated number of additional journeys this could easily go back to Fontwell roundabout.
- Future development must be sustainable and address biodiversity, climate change and enable adequate facilities for residents, this application does not address biodiversity in a positive way. There are notable species at the location plus ancient woodland, it forms a wildlife corridor not replicated in the near area. An established corridor cannot be moved. The WSCC Environment and Climate Change Newsletter of 14/03/2024 says “One in six of our UK species is at risk of extinction and urgent, locally coordinated, efforts are needed to reverse this decline.” The new rules on biodiversity don’t just require a 10% increase in space but in quality. This application does the opposite and must be turned down.

In specific terms:

EH1 It threatens significant harm to biodiversity and has unacceptable environmental, amenity and traffic implications, including an increased risk of groundwater flooding. This development was previously to be preceded by a rerouted A29 (or so we were led to believe). It seems this is no longer planned which will exacerbate problems at Woodgate level crossing. All possible access routes identified are on to the A29 on the stretch prior to the crossing, requiring another set of traffic lights to accommodate a potential 8000 additional car movements a day, if all of the proposed developments in this area use the same access point. It will also mean 4 sets of traffic lights between the War Memorial and the level crossing. I understand that analysis of the level crossing has established it is currently closed 38% of the time, this is on the current train timetable, but the number of trains is to be increased on some routes which will increase this closure time. This crossing is a risk point for the emergency services, more traffic and another set of lights is going to make this worse. The previous plan for this development which I read, the Lichfield plan I think, was for access from the rerouted A29, this would make far more sense and resolve some of the existing issues as well. If this isn’t possible then access should be found onto Barnham Road to at least split the loading on our roads and allow a route that doesn’t include a level crossing. With either route I believe there is precedent with the Grampian conditions which preclude the implementation of development permitted by a planning permission until all the infrastructure is in place, in this case this would be roads, relieving undue stress on the level crossing, adequate sewers for foul water and run-off, and security of water supply.

EH2 Threat to wildlife corridors, ecology and biodiversity, trying to move corridors will drive out the resident fauna, and destroy the mycorrhizal networks underground. Planting semi-mature, or even mature, plants will not reconstruct this. The corridor will be destroyed, and starting from scratch will have to hope to attract some of the previous residents, if they have survived. The previous plan I saw, the “Lichfield” plan, showed this land as a “recreational area” which retained the wildlife corridor and added trees and a footpath. This was a better solution and is all lost in this version.

EH4 The rife, or chalk stream which it is, must not be used for surface water drainage, at best this is polluted with chemicals, rubber and plastic particles. In the current circumstances it could also be polluted by foul water and agricultural fertiliser run off. These streams are uncommon in the UK and rare in the world, they need to be protected, no drainage into them is acceptable.

EH5 In this winter, 2023/24, we have had many days when each route out of the parish has been blocked – either closed or flooded – one weekend they were all blocked. It is already acknowledged by ADC, WSCC, EA and SWS that

a large portion of the parish has problems with these conditions, and yet more houses are being built and more planned without any noticeable action to rectify the situation. Fewer permeable surfaces are going to make it worse. Successful corrective remedial work by SWS is essential before more homes are built, the work they have done so far has not yet had any noticeable effect. At this point we have to assume that these very wet winters will continue, we can't assume its once in a decade, they will be more common, possibly every year. How are these new residents going to feel when they find they can't leave the parish, they have to rely on the local shop, or they can't get back home? I think they will feel tricked and cheated, especially if they are flooded and are unable to insure against it.

EH6 Loss of mature trees and hedges cannot be replaced by planting saplings, as with the ecological corridors the birds and mammals will have to move away or die. There are many varieties of bats, and several different owls, plus many insects and spiders which are the bottom layer of the food network and would be lost.

EH12 As with EH6 and EH2 disturbance to habitat will disrupt the bats and may lead to their loss, it's vital these wildlife corridors are maintained in situ.

H4 There is insufficient affordable or social housing for local young people, but it seems that recently completed new builds are not selling. Has this been investigated? Is it price, fear of flooding or the type of funding - shared ownership? This needs to be established before more of the same are potentially built.

LC8 Local infrastructure, shops, schools will struggle to cope when looking at the total new expected population. The school is already oversubscribed and there are horror stories about children being offered school places up to 30 miles away.

In conclusion I respectfully request that you oppose this application.

Yours sincerely

Julie Cruickshank, 31 Ivy Close, Westergate, PO20 3RF