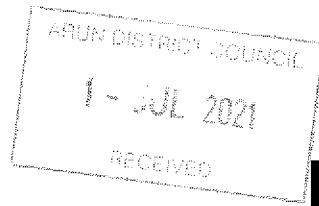


Commander and Mrs Rupert Head, Royal Navy



Hobbs Farmhouse
Bilsham Road
Yapton
Arundel
West Sussex, BN18 OJY

Mr Neil Crowther
Group Head of Planning
Arun District Council
Arun Civic Centre
Maltravers Road
Littlehampton, BN17 5LF

Copy: ~~Mr Simon Davis, Case Officer~~

29 June 2021

Dear Mr. Davis,

**PLANNING APPLICATION FOR DWELLINGS AND ASSOCIATED
DEVELOPMENT – LAND AT LITTLE MEADOW AND EAST OF BILSHAM ROAD
- REFERENCE Y/71/21/OUT**

This outline application, which follows close on the heels on the 2020 application for 83 dwellings, and which included a village hall and more light industrial units (Y/70/20/OUT), is strongly contested. There is a raft of objections, but the core objection presented below arises from the fundamental impact of this proposed development upon the small but historically significant Hamlet of Bilsham.

In addition, there are clearly serious difficulties with major questions about road capacity. This area is also addressed in order to provide collateral to the many objections which have already been submitted recently from local residents.

Bilsham is one of the few rural farming collections of dwellings which have largely retained their identity over some 500 years. Bilsham Hamlet now faces being 'swallowed up' by a hugely expanding Yapton to the north and the large coastal conurbation of Bognor Regis (incorporating Middleton and Flansham) to the south. But this proposed development actually adjoins the hamlet and would totally alter the nature and character of Bilsham.. In fact, it would erase, for ever, the identity of this small community. A piece of West Sussex rural history would be lost. Nearly all the arable land around the hamlet is actively farmed and the remainder constantly grazed; farming is, of course, an essential element of the local economy.

Bilsham does not have a formal designation as a conservation area or is an Area of Character but a high proportion of the 30 buildings are listed and there has been a farming community here going back to medieval times. The Old Chapel on Bilsham Lane, for example, dates back to 14th-Century. In addition to the chapel, Old Bilsham Farmhouse, Bilsham Manor, Hobbs Farmhouse and associated buildings (all in the curtilage of the farmhouse), and the cottages at 84 and 85 on Bilsham Road are all listed.

Under the proposal, according to the plan submitted, a sub-plot of five new dwellings would sit in the “L” shaped land behind the nine existing houses on the Bilsham Road and Gravatts Lane West. There is no buffer between the hamlet and the proposed development or indeed the industrial estate which will be enlarged with three new buildings. There does not appear to be any dedicated parking areas for visitors or commercial vehicles (Although it would appear that the some of the new houses on the western border have garages),

The Principal Conservation Officer in his submission dated 10 November 2020 (in response to the previous application) stated, “The proposal would represent a substantial increase in the number of dwellings in the hamlet and would be out of character.” He went on to say, “Ultimately, such a development would suburbanise the area and erode the semi-rural character.”

Whilst the need for affordable and social housing, particularly in West Sussex, it is widely acknowledged, Yapton has been targeted for unprecedented development on a massive scale. The Little Meadow/Bilsham development is not, of course, on the same scale but it is strongly submitted that the addition of 73 dwellings would have a disproportionate impact on a very small but significant corner of West Sussex. Furthermore, in the context the public benefit, the development would add only 22 new Affordable/Social/Intermediate Rental houses (but meeting, of course HMG’s requirement to reach 30%); this would be at the cost of a disproportionate effect on Bilsham.

Hobbs Farmhouse borders the light industrial estate and the impact, in terms of noise, heavy commercial traffic and a shared driveway access onto the Bilsham Road, is significant. Any expansion of this industrial estate, which in any event is totally out of keeping with the nature of this area, should not be contemplated.

As has been pointed out in nearly all the recent letters of objection, there are fundamental and well-measured concerns about road congestion and associated road safety. These concerns must be addressed. Looking at the wider context, there can be no argument that the additional population of Yapton will have an extremely large impact upon the local roads and infrastructure. The road system around Yapton and, indeed, Bilsham was never designed to carry the current level of traffic, let alone the number of cars and heavy good vehicles which is anticipated over the next ten years or so.

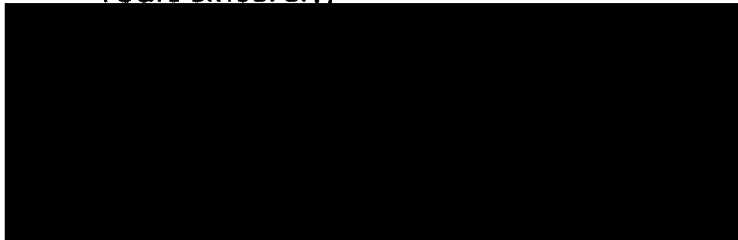
It is recognized that some of the associated local road improvements, in particular a new roundabout at the Comet Corner intersection, will help but these cannot alleviate the fundamental problem of sheer volume of traffic on the Bilsham/Yapton Road. The 90 degree corner at Bilsham Corner is, as we know from personal experience, a very dangerous accident ‘blackspot’. It is difficult to see how the closure of the western access onto Gravatts Road West and the opening up of a new access road a short way to the south will help the problem.

As was pointed out in 2020 and in recent submissions, there is no footpath alongside most of the road (pedestrians are often obliged to walk into the road) and the many cyclists add a further problem for drivers. This is also a bus route; the buses incidentally find great difficulty in negotiating the Bilsham Corner.

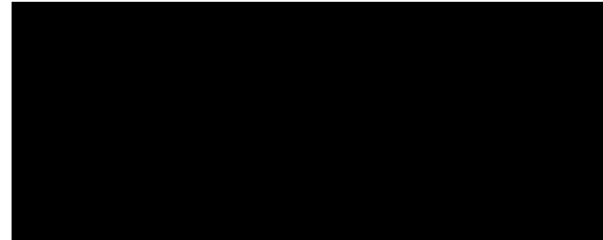
The infrastructure to support this growing population, around Yapton in particular, must include adequate schools, general practice surgeries, pharmacies, retail outlets, churches, household waste collection and much else. It seems that there are simply not the resources available to meet these very real needs and the local infrastructure requirements are taking second place to the overriding priority which is to build as many houses as quickly as possible in any land which can be made available. The Little Meadow development is one part of this inexorable tide.

The wider infrastructure considerations fall outside the remit of this letter but transport, access and the roads around Bilsham are clearly a major concern. The Transport Assessment in response to both this application and the 2020 application lacks vision and fails to provide a realistic long-term plan.

Yours sincerely,



RUPERT HEAD



STEPHANIE HEAD