

[REDACTED]

From: Barrie Blundell [REDACTED]
Sent: 24 July 2020 09:50
To: Planning Comments
Subject: Fort Halstead 19/05000/HYB Amended

Dear Sir/Madam

Fort Halstead 19/05000/HYB – Amended

I have already commented on the earlier application (my letter to you dated 12 November 2019 refers) and I understand that my comments made in that letter will be taken into account when considering this latest version of the planning application.

I would like to add the following points:

The “employment led” scheme with 450 houses on which SDC granted planning permission in 2015 has been abandoned with an initial new proposal for 300 more houses, now reduced to 185 more. This reduced figure still represents a 40% increase and a housing density of up to 55 dwellings per hectare (dph) whereas the local housing density is only 15-18 dph. This is not a sustainable location for 450 houses let alone the revised proposal for 635 and the surrounding infrastructure is not robust enough to support a development of this magnitude.

Contamination on site is something which appears to have been conveniently kicked into the long grass. Given the site’s history as an MOD test site standing on a porous chalk outcrop it would seem obvious that the one thing prospective occupants would wish to be assured of is that all traces of any noxious substances have been fully identified and eradicated and that proper, qualified certification to this effect is provided.

It is interesting to note that it would appear that Highways England are not currently prepared to endorse the development because of its likely impact on M25 Junction 4 and the spur to the Hewitt’s Roundabout with the A21.

The Star Hill access is now proposed as a panacea for traffic movements on and off site. It is noteworthy that SDC’s 2015 permission expressly stated that the Star Hill access could only be used for buses, emergency vehicles, cyclists, pedestrians and horses. The configuration of Star Hill Road has not changed. It is still a narrow road with sharp bends and a steep gradient and as such totally inadequate to meet the challenges of the traffic demands that this proposed development would place upon it.

The exit onto Polhill can prove challenging even now. The additional vehicle movements engendered by 635 houses would result in grid lock.

The roads and lanes around Halstead and Knockolt are widely used by horse riders, walkers and particularly cyclists with this latter group having grown significantly in the past five years in line with the increased popularity of cycling countrywide. At a time when, as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, we are all more conscious of the benefits of rural areas, it is something of a paradox that SDC should even be considering

blanketing an area of outstanding natural beauty with a huge housing estate. In fact, it is contrary to SDC's own Policy LA1.

It must be recognised that the original "employment led" application for 450 houses has been cynically replaced with these proposals for 750 and now 635 houses. One can only hope that SDC have the courage to protect the countryside for which they are the elected custodians and reject this whole sorry scheme lock, stock and barrel.

Yours faithfully

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