



Ref: APP/ F2605/W/20/3256146 – Erection of 255 dwellings, Land East of Yaxham Road/South of Dumpling Green, Dereham, Norfolk

Having registered my opposition to this application when it was heard by the Breckland Planning Committee previously, I am writing to formally place on record my ongoing concern regarding the above application for the erection of 255 dwellings on land east of Yaxham Road and south of Dumpling Green in Dereham.

It is no secret, locally and nationally, that I have deep concerns about the high number of applications in many rural areas around the country and, particularly, in this part of Norfolk. Indeed, many of these applications are, often, highly inappropriate and on a scale that is unsustainable and out of keeping with the heritage and identity of such rural areas, clearly breaching the sustainable development criteria set out in the National Planning Policy Framework and 2011 Localism Act.

(It is for this reason that I have been so vocal about the need to reform the planning system and strength the “spirit of Localism” – and why I have made highly critical submissions to the recent ‘Changes to the Current Planning System’ and ‘Planning for the Future’ consultations)

I have also repeatedly emphasised how vitally important it is that public trust in the planning system is maintained. Decisions taken by the Council – on the advice of Planning Officers – or by Inspectors like yourselves must be based on proper due process and rigorous and balanced assessment of all of the relevant criteria. The views of residents, locally elected councillors and the MP should carry particular weight on issues in their areas.

As you will be aware, this site has been the subject of much controversy in recent years. When combined with the level of development that has been taking place, and is continuing to take place, in Dereham (which was largely unplanned initially, but has been forced upon the area without the proper infrastructure or services to support it, public anger and frustration is at fever pitch – especially as it increasingly looks like the applicants in question are determined to force through this inappropriate and unsustainable development despite the very real and serious concerns of the community and its representatives – which I will set out now.

The fact that several parts of the town regularly come to a standstill at peak times of the day (and, increasingly, at non-peak times) because of congestion is well known and a source of great frustration for many – with one of the most problem locations, the Tavern Lane/Yaxham Road junction (and surrounding roads), being situated just down the road from this site. As I have previously highlighted, in the absence of a proper, strategic traffic plan, such large-scale developments as the one in question here will only exacerbate this issue in the town and fuel local disillusionment further.

Furthermore, it is widely considered that the solving of the traffic problems at the Tavern Lane/Yaxham Road junction is so complex that there may never be a proper, satisfactory resolution. To proceed with an application of this size without a solution to this junction or at least the prospect of a positive solution would truly be neglect – and the town, and not to mention those that would move into this development, will not forgive or forget it.

Constituency Office

8 Damgate Street, Wymondham, NR18 0BQ



Walking and cycling routes are something that I have argued merit serious consideration within a wider traffic plan for Dereham and, although I understand that this application does make some provision for such a route through the site, I have been made aware of anxieties about its effectiveness in its current form – and fail to see how these issues have been sufficiently explored.

Given the traffic problems that I have outlined already, along with their proximity to this site, I am baffled as to why the applicant has not directed greater resources towards developing a far improved walking and cycling network for the application – one aimed at drastically reducing the amount of car users in the area. With such a plan, the application may have been closer to being appropriate, but without one, this application is in my eyes, and the eyes of so many others, so far away from being appropriate or sustainable at this location.

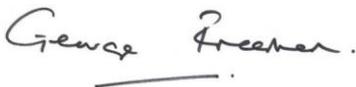
There also remain fears that large-scale development such as this, to the south-east of the town, add to an ‘urban sprawl’ that is consuming much of Dereham’s beautiful, green “lung” to the south-east and which may eventually see nearby communities, like Yaxham, swallowed up. Having spoken to thousands of constituents about this matter over the past nine years, I have encountered no one that believes this would be a desirable, let alone sustainable, outcome of development in this part of Mid Norfolk. In addition, this site is excluded from the Emerging Local Plan (a fact that I understand Hopkins Homes have not contested previously), which seriously raises the question as to why they now deem this site to be acceptable for growth now.

As society, and especially the planning system, looks to increasingly embrace a “greener, healthier and more sustainable” model, I truly do not see how a development of this size can be permitted at this location for the reasons outlined thus far. The strength of feeling about this development and the already high levels of distrust in our planning system in Dereham should also sufficiently highlight that the consensus of opinion is that this application is wholly inappropriate.

As I have consistently made clear, development should only be permitted where it is sustainable – accompanied by the necessary infrastructure and services to support it. This application is not – failing to adequately address a whole series of critical issues.

I would therefore like to formally request that this appeal is rejected.

Yours,



George Freeman MP

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