

Ms Rebecca Fenn - Tripp
Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council
Civic Offices
London Road
Basingstoke
Hampshire RG21 4AH

26th June 2009

Dear Ms Fenn-Tripp

Open Letter Re: Planning Application BDB/67609 Boundary Hall

Following our discussions regarding the proposed new housing development on the old Boundary Hall site in Tadley, I am writing to you in my capacity as ward member representing the people of Tadley Central in order to set out my views on this application.

I am regularly being approached by Tadley residents stating that it is very difficult to buy a house in Tadley if you grew up in the town and wanted to stay local close to your family and friends. Residents constantly complain about the lack of community, youth and shopping facilities in town too. For that reason, I welcomed the approach by Cala Homes to meet with me to discuss their plans prior to submitting a planning application. It is clear that the Boundary Hall site is need of regeneration and I will support any genuine application to achieve this which reflects the wishes of the community and offers tangible benefits to Tadley and enhances the well being of the town as a sustainable community. Sadly, it appears to me and many residents of Tadley, that the current planning application exists to maximise the number of dwellings on the site with no regard to the needs of the community, the existing infrastructure or the sustainability of the proposed development. You may recall me writing to you on the previous attempt to develop on this site which foundered; although some of the concerns that I expressed have since been removed in the current application, sadly I find myself repeating many of the points in my letter of February 2007.

The following is a list of my findings in support of this opinion.

1. The plan for the construction of 115 homes plus additional non-residential B1 properties will cause additional traffic through and onto the A340 and other roads. I do not accept the developer's traffic statistics as it is evident just by observing the traffic between 08:00 - 0900 and 16:30 - 18:30 on weekdays that the roads surrounding this proposed development are already congested. The traffic levels have further increased as a result of the expansion of AWE Aldermaston; a factor that has not been taken into account. The development will push even more traffic onto Almswood Road which is already busy at peak periods.
2. The plan places communal areas immediately next to the A340. In addition, these communal green areas are not overlooked by the properties. As these areas will be used as a recreation and play area by children, these factors represent a safety hazard.

3. The site cannot sustain 115 dwellings because of the poor water and drainage infrastructure. The evidence that Tadley suffers from poor drainage is well documented with cases of flooding throughout the town whenever there is a heavy rainfall. It is also a widely accepted fact that water pressure is already unacceptably low despite being just within the "legal" limits. It is common sense that the building of another 115 dwellings will significantly worsen this situation.
4. The pressure on health and education facilities is also an issue that has not fully been considered. Recently, a large residential development has been built in Tadley in West Berkshire up to the border with Hampshire. The residents of those properties use Tadley amenities including primary medical care and their children go to Tadley schools. This puts more pressure on overstretched services. An example of this is the number of Tadley residents who contact me in desperation because they are unable to secure places in Tadley schools for their children.
5. The local plan states a minimum of 100 homes should be built on the site. It is my position that despite my efforts to convince the inspectors during the local plan review process that Tadley could not sustain such a large development, that this site was driven through due to perceived government pressure on housing density. The targets set by the then "Office of the Deputy Prime Minister" have since been shown to be flawed.
6. It is on public record that I asked the then portfolio holder for forward planning, Cllr Alex Green, in the council chamber whether he agreed with me that in view of the poor infrastructure in Tadley, that any further large scale development was unsustainable. His answer was an unequivocal "Yes." If this planning application is to be approved, I would like to know what has changed since I asked this question in 2005.
7. There is insufficient parking capacity for the proposed development. I do not accept that these guidelines are set in concrete by central government. At one stage, planning guidance on parking ratios was issued but has in the past been successfully challenged. It is within the power of the planning authority to make exceptions to the planning guidelines set for residential parking by central government. If you have any doubt over the weakness of central government planning guidance on parking, you need only take a walk down Bond Close in Tadley where you will see cars blocking both sides of the pavement due to inadequate parking provision caused by blind compliance with central government guidelines.

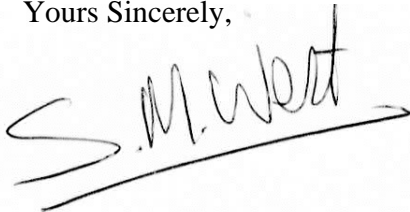
I hope that you will also note that much of the opposition comes from residents who were not directly affected by the planning application but who could not bear to see the town where they live being scarred by a development which is in my opinion, wholly inappropriate. In meetings with representatives of the developers, I laid out quite clearly what I felt was needed in a plan to regenerate the Boundary Hall Site. I made it clear that there must be an abundance of green common land as "breathing space" for the community that was central to the site and overlooked by the properties. It was also made clear that I wanted to see a significant contribution towards community amenities so as to encourage social enterprise to set up badly needed facilities for our young people.

We also discussed the need to ensure that adequate parking and access was built into the plan. The planning submission shows no evidence that any of these key requirements have been catered for. I have stated my willingness to engage in further discussion with the applicant along with other Councilors if it means that this plan could be turned into a development that Tadley Town could be proud of. In closing, I am of the view shared by many of my fellow residents that planning application BDB/67609 fails to show a plan for a sustainable housing development that is in line with the current character of Tadley or takes into account the needs of the community.

The HSE have also objected to this planning application as a matter of course. I do not support the view held by some that the comments from the HSE can be dismissed. Indeed the HSE objection indicates a fact that everyone in Tadley knows; the indisputable fact that the town has already grown beyond a sustainable size.

Therefore, I am asking you to refuse this application.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S. M. West". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Cllr Stephen West.

cc) Cllr Anne Court