

No Brook Green
Statement to Committee regarding 18/01065/OUT

1. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to speak at the consideration this application, representing as we do the opinions of a large number of local residents who are vehemently opposed to the granting of this application. I know you will have read with care all of the individual objection letters and seen even more who have signed the petition. Those objections are founded on sound planning criteria and they demonstrate on a human level the significant adverse impacts that this proposal would have on them, your residents. That is reinforced by the fact that both Rayne and Great Notley Parish Council object to the application.
2. Our position is that we wholeheartedly support the recommendation of your experienced planning officer, Mr Paggi, who has recommended that this application be refused. We agree with the reasons he has carefully outlined as to why this application does not pass the relevant tests you must apply. We implore you to accept his recommendation.
3. We also ask that this application is considered in light of the vastly reduced housing need figures.
4. The Committee are invited to consider the decision of the Secretary of State regarding the much larger Brook Green application where this very same parcel of land was considered. Many of the very good reasons that Brook Green was refused have equal force in this application. There is a real risk that if this application is granted it would lead to piecemeal further applications for further development equating to all or a significant proportion of the Brook Green application as many of the factors identified as the reasons for refusal would have been negated by this development. We know that the applicant refers to future phases.
5. Whilst there is a need for more housing in the District, this does not trump all other considerations. The most important policies for

determining the application carry significant weight. It follows that conflict with them must also carry significant weight.

Landscape considerations

6. The site has been independently assessed as having a low capacity for residential developments. It is also outside of the development boundary. It should be protected as a valued landscape and for its own sake as a valued area of countryside. There would be significant adverse impacts on landscape character and visual amenity, including unacceptable impacts on users of the Flich Way Country Park. The great benefit is that you, the local council, know this area and you know for yourselves the negative impact it would cause. You know that the Applicant has, in his reports, sought to be non representative in the assessment of visual impact and this is made clear by the council's own report which is far fairer.

7. Although there could be mitigation in the form of tree planting which has been suggested this would not be sufficient to overcome the issues and moreover would itself negatively impact on the visual amenity in terms of the countryside setting of the Flich Way by obscuring of countryside views. The committee does not, I'm sure, need any reminding of just how important the Flich Way is to the residents of the District and indeed those from further afield. Never has this been more true than in the recent months of Covid and lockdown.

8. The key elements in considering the site include the recreational value of the landscape, combined with its proximity to the urban Braintree. Local people speak not only of the recreational value of the landscape, but also of the importance of being able to see the open countryside, hear their footsteps and birdsong and enjoy a sense of wellbeing and tranquillity away from a built up area. It is the sense of openness and countryside that is important not just specific viewpoints. The landscape in the vicinity of

the site provides a means of quickly and easily accessing and appreciating the countryside which is out of the ordinary compared with other landscape areas around Braintree. That would be significantly compromised if the development were permitted.

Coalescence

9. Although there is no current development plan policy which seeks to maintain a rural edge to the settlements of Braintree and Rayne and ensure their separation, concerns about coalescence have underpinned both past and emerging local plan policy for good reason. The unrestricted sprawl of Braintree into surrounding communities and villages is not a desirable thing either on planning considerations nor for local residents. This site has an important function in providing a rural edge to Braintree and Rayne and in separating these two distinct communities, and the proposal would significantly compromise that function. The tranquil countryside surrounding the Flich Way represents a vital aspect of the identity of the village of Rayne, and a vital aspect of the user's sense of leaving one developed settlement and arriving into another. It is precisely this that has led to it being part of a proposed green buffer.

10. The assessment of coalescence must be viewed taking into account the Rayne Gardens development on the north of Rayne Road – combining the two together extends the urban edge of Braintree almost to Rayne. Gilda Terrace houses do not properly form any planning justification for this; they were built when different planning laws applied and in any event are a single string of small cottages which, whilst visible from the road are unobtrusive from the Flich Way due to topography and distance. They are a vastly different proposition to this application.

Conclusion

11. Any arguable benefits of the proposal, which are few in number, are either generic or arise because of the need to mitigate the adverse impacts of the development

12. The benefits of the proposals are significantly and demonstrably outweighed by the range of significant adverse impacts demonstrated here.

13. In those circumstances we ask that the planning application be refused.