

LONG SUTTON & WELL PARISH COUNCIL

31st May 2022

Councillor R Quarterman
Chairman of Planning Committee
Hart District Council

Dear Councillor Quarterman,

LONG SUTTON & WELL : LAND AT WINGATE LANE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT – MATERIAL BREACHES AND CONCERNS. PLANNING REF: 20/00282/XPLAN3

First, may I offer my congratulations on your appointment as Chairman of the Planning Committee.

Unfortunately, my first note to you as the newly elected Chair of the Parish Council is to seek your urgent assistance to resolve a significant planning enforcement issue here in Long Sutton. HDC's Enforcement Officer, Sylvia O'Connor, submitted her report to Maxine Lewis, Head of Enforcement, on the 16/17th of May confirming ME's continued inaction and silence and by default legal action would be the next route. The development located in the centre of Long Sutton (referred to locally as Big Meadow) comprises 5 new houses built by ME Land, combined with a large area of former meadow land, to be designated a public open space, which under the planning approval requires landscaping.

Under the terms of a deed of 2016 between Hart District Council, the land owner, the developer and the Parish Council, when the development and landscaping has been completed in accordance with the terms of the planning permission, the land destined to become public open space is to be offered to the Parish Council, who would assume permanent ownership and responsibility for it, with the assistance of a 20 year maintenance fund provided by the developer.

To date, after 3 years, the 5 houses are complete with 3 occupied, but the overall site has now been effectively abandoned by ME Land with the landscaping left entirely incomplete notwithstanding the requirements of the extant planning approval. Attempts by the Parish Council to resolve directly with ME Land have either been re-buffed or ignored.

The key concern is that the Landscape Management Plan has not been adhered to with material effects of this causing significant and ongoing distress to residents adjacent to the site. Issues include:

- Entirely incomplete/no landscaping leaving the site as resembling a battlefield (a term I do not use lightly) inclusive of deep holes, high mounds of excess earth and rubble, and overgrown vegetation. The site is unusable as a public open space.
- During heavy rain excessive flooding occurs into adjacent properties from clay deposits due to poorly executed land drainage;
- Over a period of many months, residents have lived in an unacceptable environment with the stench and disease risk of an ineffective sewerage system located on the site; and
- In turn, we offer a strong opinion that the development fails to meet building control requirements from a planning, soil levels and, of course, sewerage aspect. (We are told by Sylvia O'Connor that HDC commissioned their own soil level inspection and subsequent report back in December 2021).

Linked to the preceding, there are also related issues which include:

- On completion of the development including the landscaped area excluding the 5 properties (as noted above to be a public open space) is to be transferred to the Parish Council for its use by the village and upkeep. Clearly under current circumstances if the landscaping is not completed in accordance with the planning approval, as the Parish Council, we are legally entitled to refuse ownership. In turn, Hart DC will, as I understand it, be required to take on the financial and resource liability of maintaining the site; and
- Finally, clear breach, occupation of 3 of the 5 houses triggers the payment by ME Land of Section 106 monies under the planning approval which we understand has not been paid.

In summary, the failure by ME Land to adhere to the requirements of the extant planning approval has directly caused significant disruption and inconvenience to local residents which they continue to experience combined with a material risk to their health. This continues to cause them considerable stress and potential financial loss primarily due to flood damage to their properties. Linked to this, the site as stands is entirely unusable as a public open space, is an eyesore and there are also financial liabilities under the planning approval which remain outstanding.

For Hart, I suggest that the failure of ME Land to comply with the terms of their planning permission is not just a planning enforcement issue for the Council, but brings with it the question of ultimate ownership of the public open space if the Parish Council feels unable to accept ownership of it. I should stress that is not at all where we want to end up, but we do not, as a small Parish Council, have the resources to take ownership responsibility of a large site in the appalling current condition which I describe above.

I therefore request on behalf of the Parish Council, and most especially the residents directly affected by the issues presented by the Big Meadow development, your assistance in implementing robust planning enforcement action without delay. If you consider a meeting would be beneficial either at the Big meadow site, your offices or both we would be very happy to accommodate to move this unfortunate situation to conclusion.

Yours sincerely,



J A GOODBOURN
Chairman, Long Sutton & Well Parish Council

Copied to:

Councillor Jane Worlock, Chairman of Hart DC
Councillor John Kennett, Hart DC Planning Committee, Odiham Ward Councillor representative.
Maxine Lewis, Head of Planning Enforcement
Mark Jaggard, Head of Place