

Presented to the Planning Inspector on 27th September 2013

Slades Hill

Thank You for letting me speak.

My name is Sarah Webb. I live in Blackmore Vale Close and would like to think that I represent the feelings of a number of other households in the village who have been unable to attend. I have also been unable to attend the previous 2 days as I had no available holiday to take. It was not for want or care about this issue.

I would also like to point out that I am vice chair of The Abbas and Templecombe Parish Council and also a school governor at Abbas and Templecombe Primary School and while I do not have the authority to represent either of these bodies at this meeting it gives additional background to the issue of the development. I am also the Mother of 2 young boys so of course I also worry about where they will work and live as they get older. When you hear that houses will be built so close to your own but if planning permission is not given that the land owner will take back the school field of course it is a huge concern.

Firstly I do not think that the village has ever been properly consulted.

Initially only the Hamlet and Blackmore Vale Close were invited to the village Hall consultation in late 2011. Even that was poorly handled as a number of invitations did not arrive until the day of the consultation or even the day after.

Once planning Permission was submitted in August 2012 a group of householders in Blackmore Vale and The Hamlet choose to letter drop to approximately 200 people within the village as we were so concerned that the issue was seen as being one for the residents in direct proximity to the field and not the rest of the village. Given the level of response to South Somerset District Council we felt there was a very clear lack of overwhelming support for the development which we felt was a key reason for refusal then.

The inquiry process inviting written submissions is intimidating so I don't know how many had anything more to say than had already been said.

What was really confusing was a second application while the process was ongoing for the first, then a letter from Mr Jewson to say that consultation had closed which it had not as the development application was advertised on 22nd August in the Western Gazette with a 21 day timeframe. How the development could be going to appeal on non determination when in fact it was still in consultation. (Dr Who wibbly wobbly time going on perhaps)

The Parish Council held an extraordinary meeting for the first application and when you read the minutes it does become apparent that the council was clear and that the issues deemed good reason for refusal for the 100 houses have not changed with the reduction to 75 houses. I have a copy of the minutes.

The first meeting was well advertised with posters around the village and resultingly well attended. No extraordinary meeting was held for the second application and it was one of a number of matters listed for discussion in one of the 2 agendas on display in the village. Given that this is an ongoing issue on the Parish Council Agenda I know how shocked people were that they were not given a voice and that a decision was made and even more shocked that there were only 2 parish councillors and the chairman that voted to support it. There was no justification from the council as to the reason for a such a change. I therefore do not think that the Parish Councils decision to approve in favour of the development was in any way representative of the views of the village.

I was told by the chair that it wasn't worth losing sleep over – and well it's going to happen anyway. And the Parish Council view is not important. I don't ever remember those as being good reasons to support development of any scale at any time and of course Area East hasn't been consulted.

I do not think that most people grasp that 75 house still means the same field is filled – no change in scale, only in land allocation. I do not think that many appreciate the potential impact that more employment land vs. residential usually leads to a greater number of car journeys and therefore even higher traffic volume and environmental impact. If the land owner won't keep his cows in the field in question because the road is too dangerous for them to cross safely what hope for the rest of us!

I would ask have the parents at the school been consulted. The school recently went through Ofsted and came out with a good the inspector said about the school

Their school environment is stunning, both inside and outside the classroom, providing learning experiences that are impressively rich and varied. The most recent addition is a 'forest school' area to add to the beautiful field, environmental section, playgrounds and trim trail.

Would a school surrounded by the proposed development have the same impact? With a burial ground right next to the current play area. The school is full and currently uses a community facility as it is funded for more teachers than it has classrooms. Where would the extra pupils go? I recognise 106 agreements but what happens to the pupils in the first phases of any development. Does the 106 agreement actually have any benefit to the existing villagers? What happens if parents in the village and in Yenston which lacks a village school can't get a place?

What about the main road – the development includes a plan to shuttle traffic through the village this side of the bridge – how many people who currently park outside their house would lose that amenity and were any of those people consulted – not to my knowledge. That in its own right will have a huge impact on the village and the neighbouring villages but it is hidden in the travel plan.

I know many people found that the format for feedback on the second application was much less user friendly. Whereas we had a feedback template the first time with space for comments and address the second time round there just a request for a letter. A lot of people said – we don't want the development but how do we give a reason when we just know it's wrong and the benefits feel like bribes. It's really difficult to knowledgeable object to any planning application, especially one as complex as this. Where do you start?

I am concerned that all the focus is from South Somerset but Templecombe has a significant link to Dorset. A number of children are educated in Dorset and there are many significant economic links – The 10 year supply of employment land in Wincanton can be added to the units currently available in Stalbridge, Sherborne and of course the vast potential growth that still exists within Henstridge airfield.

There has been no recognition of the changes to lifestyle that could make this development a white elephant before it's built. My husband runs a significant business in Templecombe – typical of many based around a computer and a home offices. No need for costly industrial units. I however work in a more traditional setting and cannot do without a car. Having been based at both Dorchester and Shepton Mallet there is no public transport and now in Yeovil I cannot use the train as the station is a mile and a half from the centre of town and the hourly bus service would extend my working day to unmanageable proportions. I do not see that the train station gives me a huge increase in travel options over and above any other village location. Templecombe is not a sustainable location for employment.

The social housing is also a huge concern as the demands of types of housing have changed with the introduction of the bedroom tax people will need to move frequently to afford accommodation as their situation changes and not in advance. I do not believe a small community such as Templecombe can support that need for flexibility.

I am aware that some people have asked the question so what would be the right number of houses and I have to be honest and say none – because the way the field is constructed by building where there is access

we would end up with a segment of land in isolation and creeping development would be very easy to justify. We would end up with the same density of development but through the back door. This development was only ever about the money Marconi (Thales) offered to change its route in and out of the site. With that road came the opportunity for development. Now that road isn't even part of the development so why are we even still contemplating a development and if it's so great why so much emphasis on the benefits? It's a bitter pill that needs so much sugar coating.

I also note that while much has been made of how those in the development will access the key services as they are in the village that no one has looked at how the village will access any benefits in the new development. The high street is still unpaved and the location at one end of the village makes it pretty inaccessible by foot or cycle if you live the other side of the railway bridge – so any benefits will be not shared equally even within the village.

Yes I am hugely concerned about the impact the development will make on my privacy in my house with a property built 11m window to window. But there is so much a bigger picture of a developer who is saying if I give you these things (even though the village doesn't need them) then development is ok. When we went to the consultation meeting yes, there were lots of things that disappointed me – but perhaps the worst was when I asked Dee what would stop you building in the field beyond – and the answer we don't own it yet. No value for the importance of a village boundary or green belt between the villages – they just didn't own it

I know that South Somerset have feedback about the visual impact and basically that it's not a special enough view or field to protect. I would highlight that when the BBC came to film *Escape to the Country* that one of the establishing shoots was across the field from Blackmore Vale Close – even though the house was in South Cheriton. So perhaps there are others that value the landscape more than it's credited for.

I realise that there are some important planning decisions looming – Such as that at Saltford which has gone straight to Mr Pickles but surely if development is allowed here what happens to every other rural settlement in South Somerset?

I am sorry if these are not good enough planning reasons but I speak from struggling to find objectively any benefits to the village. I certainly see no unusual circumstances for justifying development.

I hope the enquiry will prevent the short, medium and long term disadvantages that this development will bring to Templecombe long after the developer and his agent have moved onto their next project.