

From: Cllr. Malcolm Bell [Cllr.Malcolm.Bell@bramleypc.co.uk]

Sent: Thursday, February 18, 2016 09:52

To: Ranil Jayawardena MP <ranil@tellranil.com>

Subject: Ref Housing in Bramley

Dear Ranil

I am writing to you because as you know Bramley is being subjected to an unprecedented amount of housing development.

Only last week, a further 50 houses has been agreed to be built on Strawberry Fields after considerably justified objections from the Parish Council and residents. Bramley was originally allocated 200 houses to be sited via Neighbourhood Planning. That obligation has been met before the NP is in position and before the Emerging Submission Local Plan is approved with the proposed development at Minchens Lane. A majority of 68% of residents who answered the question "Decline without negotiation for benefits" or "Approve with negotiations for benefits" agreed to the latter in the knowledge that, if it went to appeal, there would be no further benefits coming from the developer other than the norm associated with developments should it be approved at appeal. The Portfolio Officer and the Planning Officer during your time as a Borough Councillor agreed that this was the case.

Recent events prove that appeals seem to get approval with the reports saying "It is a contribution to the housing shortage in the Borough and that there is no 5-year land availability for sustainable housing identified by BDBC".

This is the repeated phrase that planning officers latch onto in recommending approval for housing development wherever it occurs without any consideration for the views of the community and without any consideration for the negative impact it will have on the quality of life of the community. The local plan says that " Basingstoke and Deane (BDBC) acknowledge that the quality of life of its residents is of paramount importance" but when it comes to the crunch it is completely ignored in favour of NUMBERS.

As a resident of Bramley yourself, you know from first-hand the impact the extraordinary growth in housing that has taken place over recent years has had on Bramley without corresponding improvement in the infrastructure. We have a school which is bursting at the seams and I am sure that in itself will be of interest and concern to you in the coming years with the recent addition to your family (congratulations to you and Alison). With the extra traffic, road safety is jeopardised.

Localism is talked about a lot and as you know the members of the steering group have spent a considerable amount of time in preparing a Neighbourhood Plan that, having been through the regulation consultation, is now at the stage of a "Health Check" before being submitted to BDBC for approval prior to going to external examination. We believe in Localism, giving the residents their chance to influence the growth of Bramley Village/Parish, but it is questionable at this stage what ultimate influence it will have when all planning officers are interested in is numbers. This is backed by the Government through the National Planning Policy Framework which is thrown at us paragraph after paragraph by the officers in justifying acceptance of planning applications.

Again, with the wording in the Submission Local Plan for all the villages listed under policy SS5, Neighbourhood Planning, being changed from "approximately" to "at least" means that developers are going to have a field day because it means effectively "ad infinitum" number of houses is

acceptable. How can any Neighbourhood Plan put forward acceptable policies to cope with that "ad infinitum" number of houses?

We are looking to you to give unlimited support to the problem facing Bramley, lobbying the Ministers that are in a position to change attitude to growth in housing by accepting the views of the community who live in the area and know only too well the negative impact that can come with housing numbers. Growth has to be matched with improvements in the infrastructure and a catch up in this area is required in the case of Bramley. Bramley is not adverse to growth, but it has to be carefully planned with necessary improvements in the infrastructure not ad hoc developments that CONTRIBUTE TO NUMBERS.

For the planning officer to cite in recommending the 50 houses on Strawberry Fields many examples of planning applications which have gone to appeal and been allowed because of the lack of five year land availability and on that basis alone to say "In light of all the recent major residential planning application appeals..... a refusal on these grounds would open the council up to costs application on this ground alone" is outrageous. In other words, no matter the impact it will have, its going to get accepted and going to appeal is a waste of Council's money. Is that a paragraph in the NPPF? As said before, the paragraphs are quoted throughout applications and take precedent over everything, no consideration for the impact on any community, its all in favour of NUMBERS.

The Prime Minister, The Rt Hon. David Cameron MP at question time, 27th February 2016, made the comment in the Houses of Parliament in answer to a question concerning house building "that there will be more houses built in most of our constituencies and that we will make sure that the infrastructure that goes with it is necessary as houses are provided". Whilst this was a reference to public services, infrastructure is infrastructure covering all aspects that contribute to a good, healthy quality of life for residents. The infrastructure requirements need to be carefully assessed and in place before further development is allowed in Bramley and this should have been the grounds for rejection of the 50 house development on Strawberry Fields.

As our Member of Parliament for this constituency, and a resident of Bramley, we look to you to support our community and bring about changes that protect Bramley from being destroyed by uncontrolled housing developments that just contribute to the housing shortage in the Borough without benefiting Bramley. The residents want to live in a rural community not just a dormitory.

We look forward to your reply sooner than later because developers are making the most of this window of opportunity and putting in planning applications that are not in any way going to contribute to the quality of life of the areas residents.

Kindest regards

Malcolm Bell

Vice Chair, Bramley Parish Council