

Morning everyone

My name is Graham Eastham and I'm speaking today on behalf of the residents group Keep Bee lane Rural as an interested party. We exist to protect the area of farmland and community referred to by Planners as Pickerings Farm from inappropriate development.

Pickerings Farm is somewhat of a misnomer for the site as the 272 acres is a collection of many old farms including Crooks Farm, Balshaw farm, Holme Farm, Braids Farm, Lords House Farm, Singletons Farm and of course Pickerings Farm after which the planning proposal takes its name. Interestingly the use of this name was never agreed with the owners and has caused them no end of grief since.

Keep Bee Lane Rural was formed by local residents in 2018 to represent their concerns at the first Masterplan submitted jointly by Taylor Wimpey and the Government supported Homes England. We are a broad church of enthusiastic amateurs, and our name was taken from Bee Lane which runs directly through the middle of the site and is used extensively by walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

None of us are of the age where social media is a 'thing' in our daily lives but somehow we created a Facebook group for the purpose of sharing documents and information amongst ourselves. We were left absolutely gobsmacked when it went viral and we were inundated with offers of help from the local community. Not surprisingly the likely impact of the Pickerings Farm development had not gone unnoticed by those using the area for recreation and anyone using the already over-congested local road network . Membership of the group now totals over one thousand seven hundred people.

When this development was initially proposed the residents were instantly divided in two camps - families with land to sell and those without. It would transpire that those with land would be consulted extensively by the developers and those without land received little or no consultation and were told, and I quote here from first-hand experience " just get used to it , its happening".

I think its fair to say that what is proposed at Pickerings Farm is unprecedented anywhere in the UK – that is to build a new c.3000 house community on top of an existing one without any consideration as to what is to become of them.

The forgotten 12 families have been totally invisible to the developers or they simply chose to ignore their basic human rights. The initial scoping report was 1413 pages long, to put that into perspective War and Peace is 1200 pages. Within that entire document not one single sentence was given over to the existing residents and how the new development might impact on them. Even the water voles had 11 pages !!

I know of individuals who are becoming ill through stress and sleepless nights over how they will live in the midst of a building site for the next 10 to 15 years – quite possibly for the rest of their lives for some. I think the real nastiness of this submission was demonstrated by how the developers had chosen to place the highest density housing immediately adjacent to the existing residents. Originally 2 stories then rising to 4. This was rejected by the planning committee and the applicant was told to reduce. They did reduce to the 4 to 3 but then increased the 2 story houses to 2.5 that are immediately adjacent to the existing residents. How unnecessary, petty and peevish, if this doesn't smack of arrogance and punishment then I don't know what does. Certainly not positive consultation and engagement with the existing community.

As stated previously, we are amateurs that have been thrust into a new world of large-scale development and planning process. As such we would expect any Masterplan to be easily accessible and easy to understand. Not so with this latest submission. 282 individual documents, each one requiring downloading and assessing. This was a huge undertaking for us but we found a plethora of misinformation and vast swathes of missing or incomplete information. Where was the cross borough link road for example ? My colleague Mike speaking after me will be able to provide more details in this respect.

When the Masterplan was refused back in Nov 21 it wasn't a close-run thing. It was rejected unanimously across all the political parties with major concerns from major statutory consultees such as Highways, The Environment Agency and Network rail to name just some. At this point faith was restored in the Local Plan and Local democracy within the community.

We understand the necessity for an appeal process, but you can imagine the subsequent disquiet within the community when it was announced that this appeal would be decided upon by the Secretary of State. Constantly I'm asked the questions: why has Pickerings farm been singled out for special attention and by whom and on what grounds? Why in this instance has the local

democratic process been hijacked by Government? No one seems to be able to answer these questions.

We are not anti-development – just anti this Masterplan, although it's stretching the definition of the term to call it that. I think we all appreciate the unique opportunity that Pickerings Farm could offer the local community in terms of recreation, employment, housing and sustainable transport links. I mean the site has a provincial railway line running round its eastern perimeter, yet no effort has been made to utilise this with a park and ride solution. What is proposed is a car-centric cul-de-sac that will be totally unsustainable and blight the lives of all living under and nearby.

I'd now like to hand over to my colleague Mike to provide some further information.

Thank you.