

Appeal refused – Flood risk wins the day!

A recent application was made at Stubcroft Farm on the Manhood Peninsula near the Witterings.

The application site and its context

The proposed site for change of use of agricultural land to public open space lay adjacent to the company's application for 268 buildings located on the edge of East Wittering and lying within the setting of the South Downs National Park.

The Manhood Wildlife and Heritage Group manage Hilton Pond which is a protected natural quiet dark area providing a varied habitat in Church Farm Lane within six metres of the proposed business centre. The application site lies within the MP, SC2 South Coast Plain and is also a part of a long narrow Character Area SC1 extending between West Wittering and Shoreham comprising the majority of the West Sussex coastline. It is a distinctive low, open and exposed landscape which has an overriding visual and physical association with the sea.

The basis of the CPRE Sussex objection

The basis of our objection focussed on the potential impacts on wildlife and in this case on:

- Location and context
- Climate change
- Sea Level Rise and flood risk
- Environmental impacts
- Biodiversity issues
- National and Local policy.

Chichester District Council does not have a five-year housing land supply.

The Appeal: further submissions to the Planning Inspector

The Appeal Decision letter identified the main Issues as:

- **the risks of flooding** of the site due to coastal flooding on the basis of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) modelling for future flood risk and whether a Sequential Test is required;
- the effect of the proposals upon **the highway network** with respect to the level of financial contribution towards A27 mitigation; and
- the effect of the proposals on the **supply of the best and most versatile agricultural land.**

Many previous applications have drawn on these arguments but the Planning Inspector allowed the appeals. However, this did not happen on this occasion.

Attending the Public Inquiry

I attended the Stubcroft Farm Public Inquiry, held at Chichester College, a location which made it difficult for many residents from the Manhood Peninsula to attend.

On day one, I arrived early in order to indicate a wish to make a five minute statement and I was added to the list and was able to read out my concerns later that day.

So, it was a shock to learn the following day that the Planning Inspector had suspended the Public Inquiry as he wished to have a full range of evidence provided on flood risk. Chichester District Council was ready with evidence and a witness whereas the appellant has nothing to hand.

A further five weeks was spent on the Public Inquiry. In the event, the Inspector **refused** the application and you may well have heard the response as the community learned about the decision and celebrated.

Dr Jill Sutcliffe,
CPRE Sussex Trustee and Planning Lead in Chichester North
Co-founder of Manhood Wildlife and Heritage Group