[Home Address]

Eric Pickles MP
Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Dear Mr Pickles,

**Site at Land Off Highworth Road, Faringdon, SN7 7EG** **P13/V1366/O : Determination by the Secretary of State of the appeal by Gladman Developments Ltd in accordance with section 79 and paragraph 3 of Schedule 6 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, the Secretary of State**

I write to urge you to reject the above-mentioned appeal and confirm the decision of the locally-elected district planning committee to refuse planning permission.

The site that this application relates to is known to local people as Humpty Hill. It is a site that is cherished by the local community as an irreplaceable local green space. The site is used by people throughout the year for leisure and recreational activities such as dog walking; local children flock to the site for sledging during snowy weather. It is the only open space this side of Faringdon that can be used in this way.

For these reasons there is huge opposition to the application in the local community and overwhelming support for the rejection of the application by Vale of White Horse District Council.

I understand that the Planning Examiner considering Faringdon’s Neighbourhood Plan did not consider that this strong desire to preserve Humpty Hill came across in the initial consultations on the Neighbourhood Plan. I want to reassure you that the desire to preserve this green space is evident and tangible within our community even if it was not expressed as formally as the Examiner would have liked. I understand that the town is now undertaking the process of providing the formal support that the Examiner has asked for so that the Neighbourhood Plan can properly recognise the importance of this site as a Local Green Space (in planning terms).

Considerable work by Faringdon Town Council and many volunteers has gone into producing our Neighbourhood plan, so nearly finalised now. This is localism in action.

The strong reaction to the application to develop Humpty Hill from members of the public like myself has been on an emotional, rather than a planning basis. This site has a very important place in this community and people feel very anxious about the prospect of it being lost under concrete forever.

If you have any concerns that the place this site holds in our community’s heart does not translate into a good planning reason to reject Gladman’s appeal, the Vale of White Horse’s planning reason for rejecting the application should dispel those doubts. The main argument of the planning authority is clear and compelling:

*The development constitutes a prominent urbanisation of a sensitive area of countryside, which will erode the setting of the town and harm the prevailing character and appearance of the landscape.*

As the locally-elected planning committee has decided - this site is sensitive, and extremely important in maintaining the character of the town’s landscape.

For further detail on why the site is so sensitive and unsuitable for housing, I urge you to look at the arguments put by Faringdon Town Council in opposition to the application:

1) The site is a valued local green space;
2) Development would interrupt of water flows into an adjacent County Wildlife Site (designated marshland);
3) The risks of water-logging and/or flooding have not be adequately considered;
4) The distance from local amenities makes the site unsustainable for housing, particularly housing of the elderly as proposed;
5) The suitability of the site was assessed in 2008 and was found to be more sensitive and less-robust than other potential areas for housing development around the town; and
6) This development, along with the strategic sites identified will put increased pressure on local infrastructure.

We are constantly told that development should be in appropriate places. For all the reasons set out by Faringdon Town Council and Vale of White Horse District Council, I am convinced Humpty Hill is not an appropriate place for a residential housing development in planning terms.

I am aware that Faringdon has been designated a number of ‘strategic sites’ for the development of residential housing. While I struggle to understand why so many houses are required in such a short space of time, I would find it easier to contemplate more large developments in our town if sensitive green spaces were spared.

We may have to accept more developments in less sensitive parts of Faringdon. But we love Humpty Hill. We want it to remain as it is – a cherished local green space. The other proposed new developments are within easy walking distance of Humpty Hill, so the site is likely to be even more frequently used as a green space if the new developments are built.

This site is unsuitable for residential housing development on planning terms – hence its rejection by the planning authority – and it is unsuitable because of its importance to local people as a green space. I therefore urge you to support the locally-elected planning committee’s decision to refuse planning permission.

In making this decision you have an opportunity to show your commitment to localism, to our cherished countryside and to sustainable development. You also have the opportunity to engage our community with your plans to increase house building in our area.

If you decide to allow the appeal and impose an unwanted and unsustainable development on the people of Faringdon it will be clear that Westminster politicians are failing to properly consider and recognise the views of local people.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

cc.Ed Vaizey MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA