

NMF submission to Planning Committee

Dear Councillor

New Monks Farm Application

Your committee will shortly again be considering the substantial development proposals for New Monks Farm. We understand that they will be considered in their entirety added to which it is proposed that the plans for business space on Shoreham Airport will also be considered.

We do not need to remind you that this is probably the most extensive development proposed for Adur in decades. It is also one of the most controversial having attracted objections from a wide range of residents, elected representatives and local organisations many of whom are signatories to this joint letter of objection. At the last Planning Committee meeting to consider this application it was deferred in order to address a number of unanswered questions and unresolved issues. It was also clear that as more details came out during deliberations on the application more questions were raised, not least about the financial viability and sustainability of the whole project.

For an application of this importance with long term implications for Lancing and the whole of Adur and indeed beyond it is vital that all outstanding concerns and questions are resolved before permission is given otherwise the application must be rejected. This is a major development bordering on the important South Downs National Park and depending entirely on the A27 for access, already one of the most congested roads in the South-East of England. As we feel that too many of these issues are outstanding and more questions have been thrown up rather than answered since the last consideration we are now urging you to reject the application outright.

It was clear at the last Planning meeting that members were given precious few criteria on which to reject the application. Whilst obviously legitimate planning guidance and regulations must be paramount in considering applications there were many other complementary criteria which are also relevant and which were not properly considered. We therefore respectfully ask that the Committee considers the following main points and committee members challenge the developers in order to satisfy themselves that all serious questions have been answered satisfactorily before considering granting approval. All these arguments are backed up by more detailed documents largely drawn up by experts in their field which are presented as a series of appendices.

- • Overbearing impact of IKEA traffic on an already heavily congested A27
- • Deteriorating air quality levels
- • Reduction in sustainable transport access
- • Detrimental impact on sustainable transport and access to the National Park.
- • Loss of important potential business space for upskilling.
- • Misuse of public funds to make infrastructure 'improvements' possible
- • Financial viability of whole project in question.
- • No qualifications of economic value added for scheme to Adur.

We fully appreciate that New Monks Farm is identified for development within the Adur Local Plan which has now gained formal approval. Notwithstanding ongoing concerns about the flooding

mitigation measures that have been proposed on what is primarily a floodplain (if they can be afforded) our main objections are focussed on the inclusion of the IKEA store. Whilst we have no qualms with IKEA itself it is purely the location and the size of the plot taken up.

More than just about any other retailer IKEA attracts shoppers by car because of the nature of its large sized goods. It is to be approached by a single entrance road from the A27 via a new roundabout. This will generate considerable additional traffic on an already heavily congested road seven days a week. And given that there have so far been no viable plans to upgrade this stretch of the A27 from the investigations being undertaken by Highways England the current road structure will have to cope with the heavily increased capacity, which of course it will not be able to do, even with the inclusion of the 'magic roundabout.'

We are therefore including a paper which challenges the assumptions on highway capacity set out by the developers, as well as air quality readings which in this area are already alarmingly poor and the addition of the extra traffic and likely slowing further of existing traffic can only cause further deterioration.

Planning guidance states that planning arrangements should mitigate against off-site traffic impact yet this proposal clearly adds to them. Access to the National Park by foot, cycle and horse will be made much more difficult and required path dimensions have been ignored. We therefore include a paper on the deterioration in sustainable transport considerations brought about by this application. There was considerable discussion about the absence of a fourth arm to the new roundabout which will severely impact on users of Coombes Road notably Lancing College, a major employer in the area. Indeed, the College's traffic experts have calculated that the changes will add c 690,000 vehicle miles per annum to the main operational traffic associated with Lancing College. This is clearly putting sustainable transport advances firmly into reverse.

The area to be occupied by IKEA takes up 32,000 square metres against the Local Plan allocation of a minimum of 10,000 square metres for 'employment floor space.' Whilst 10,000 is a minimum it is a very far cry from 32,000 and exceeds the comments of the Inspector allowing for a "degree of flexibility". Even more seriously this space is one of the last few remaining sites for business expansion in Adur where business space is at a premium. Because IKEA was brought in as an anchor tenant at an early stage there was no requirement to investigate other higher tech firms offering higher skilled, higher paid jobs in accordance with the objectives of the LEP, local councils and Government upskilling policy. In contrast IKEA offers primarily living wage jobs with no prospect of any expansion once built.

Furthermore, the addition of the roundabout to enable access to the site which will be used by IKEA customers, staff and deliveries more than any other category, is only made possible by the granting of £5.7m of public funds from the Coast to Capital LEP. Ironically this is clearly at odds with the objectives of the LEP which we believe constitutes a misuse of public funds. Furthermore, we understand that consideration of a retrospective addition of a fourth arm to the roundabout will only be possible through further recourse to public funds compounding the problem yet more. We therefore include correspondence to the LEP from Tim Loughton MP and from Friends of the Earth.

It has also become increasingly clear that the finances of the whole project are 'fragile' at best. The developers have now stated that they are not able to provide the full education contribution associated with this project and the County Council has raised concerns. The much-touted community park has now been reduced from 28 hectares in the original plans to 25.5 hectares now.

In the event of further expensive complications arising as the site is first excavated there is now a serious danger that the whole project becomes unviable and it will turn out to be a white elephant or significant downgrading of facilities will be required in order to complete the work. This surely is one of the most serious questions where robust assurances and answers are required and so far outstanding.

Experts have also raised serious questions about the economic benefits claimed to accompany this development. No criteria is given for the calculation of the £11.4m GVA (gross value added) figure or what the net figure actually is.

Whilst much of the discussions with the developers since the first Planning meeting appear to have been focussed on relatively minor details such as the configuration of a green roof for the IKEA warehouse and the use of louvered shutters, all the above considerations are indisputably much more important and material to the viability and acceptability of the whole scheme. We therefore ask that you raise the serious questions which we have raised here and in the absence of robust and extensive answers reject the application.

Yours sincerely

Tim Loughton MP

Cllr Lee Cowen – Mash Barn

Cllr Andy McGregor – Widewater

Christine Gunter, Adur Residents Environmental Action Committee Member

David Johnson, Chair of Campaign to Protect Rural England Sussex

Gerry Thompson, Shoreham Society Planning Committee

Barbara O’Kelly, Adur Residents Environmental Action

Geoff Hodgson, Adur Residents Environmental Action

Gerard Rosenberg, Chair of Shoreham Society

Bill Freeman, Chairman of Adur Floodwatch

Alan Robb, Adur Floodwatch Group

Chris Todd, Friends of the Earth

CC. The Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP

The Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP