



Portsmouth
CITY COUNCIL

Hector McNeill
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Councillor Luke Stubbs

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Ref: LS/PC

Date: 18 September 2008

Dear Mr McNeill

I write as a member of the City Council's Development Control Committee, in response to your recent letter about the granting of planning permission for seven houses on the former petrol station site facing Coniston Avenue.

In my view, the planning officers' report to committee was fair and balanced and I was certainly mindful of its contents when voting on the application. I remain of the opinion that the scheme merited permission.

The planning committee does not have a free hand to determine planning applications in whatever way it sees fit – we are bound by government imposed national and regional planning policy, as well as the locally determined policies in the council's Local Plan. I think a little history would help.

Prior to central government's imposition of PPG3 in 2000, redevelopment proposals were expected to mirror the surrounding area in terms of density, but that document turned things upside down and inside out. For the last eight years, the emphasis has been on getting as many units as possible on vacant sites.

/CONTD

Councillor Luke Stubbs
Conservative
Eastney & Craneswater Ward
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I do not support this policy and would prefer the alternative of higher levels of Greenfield development on the edge of urban areas, but then national policy is not something I control and I have to act within the framework imposed by government and the whole council. The committee's role is to negotiate the best deals it can, bearing in mind that planning inspectors can, and frequently do, overturn our decisions. We have to be careful on this— if we refuse everything, developers will have no incentive to deal with us, as their only hope of getting permission will be on appeal. This may give the impression that we have no power at all, but that is not true. We have a lot of influence, but only if we play our hand well.

In this case had we refused the scheme, I am absolutely certain it would have been appealed and the decision overturned. But more than that, given the huge number of properties planned for the city, I think restricting this site to seven units is a good outcome for the area; if you doubt that, think how few of the properties built in recent years have been houses. In my own ward, for example, 90% of the permissions granted in the last two years have been for flats.

I hope this provides you with some reassurance that the committee is mindful of residents concerns.

Yours sincerely



COUNCILLOR LUKE STUBBS
Eastney & Craneswater Ward

PS I did visit the site and read all the objections prior to the committee meeting.

CC Claire Upton-Brown, Development Control Manager, Floor 4, Civic Offices
John Slater, Head of Planning, Floor 4, Civic Offices
Councillor Darron Phillips