

The Alton Society
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Please register your concern by signing this petition and joining us for a peaceful Public Protest on Saturday 18th September 2021 at 3 pm at The Butts, Alton.

Here is a downloadable poster: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EpoCx9G-rZwwutQivRQC0hk9k4gitru5/view?usp=sharing>

Chawton Park Farm's peaceful narrow-sided wooded valley is threatened with a 'garden village' of 1200 homes, primary school and community centre. It lies 1.5 km from the centre of Alton and is bounded by Ancient Woodland and SINCs (Sites of Interest to Nature Conservation).

The aim of this petition is to show public support for

a) stopping the ratification of this proposal at a Full Council meeting, expected to be on Thursday 23rd September, and further, if this fails,

b) opposing the proposal on grounds such as those outlined below in whatever ways that can be found and implemented by our Councillors and Alton Town Council, in the time before and during the Regulation 19 Consultation on the Local Plan, and if necessary at the Examination stage and

c) a recalculation of the housing numbers for East Hampshire

If ratified, the site will be subject to further investigations by EHDC and, subject to there being no 'show stoppers', it will form part of the Local Plan. The Local Plan (reg 19 consultation) will take place in April 2022, then the plan will be submitted to the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) for Public Examination.

Here's a summary of the reasons for our concern:

- **Site given four red flags in the original Large Sites Assessment in 2019**
- **Campaign for the Protection of Rural England describes it as a “Valued Landscape” as defined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) para 170(a).**
- **The Housing Calculation Method**
- **Access to the Site**
- **Sustainability**
- **Deliverability of EHDC Affordable Housing policy**

1. Four Red Flags in the Large Site Assessment of 2019

In the EHDC Site Assessments Background Paper of September 2019 Chawton Park Farm was given 4 red flags for Ancient Woodland, SINCS (Sites of Interest to Nature Conservation), Listed Building, distance from Alton Town Centre and an amber flag, which was of key concern, for proximity to a National Park. Out of the 11 sites analysed, four of them had fewer red flags than Chawton Park Farm see this extract here from the document: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1y4vttKOyO6qIjlyAzME9lq5npylL0bxc/view?usp=sharing>

And see here for the complete document

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1GdJgDyNDgS_kAVpF0Xoqa4dw9VJFg8q6/view?usp=sharing

2. Valued Landscape

The Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) has stated: “CPRE Hampshire considers the Site is a “valued” landscape to which NPPF paragraph 170(a) applies.” This assessment was endorsed by consultant Terra Firma on behalf of EHDC. They say: “Clearly, allocation of the Site for housing would

destroy its peaceful rural character and tranquillity by introducing visually intrusive development, with accompanying lighting and noise, up the valley sides, ruining the outstanding public experience of this landscape from the bridleway on the valley floor. This high quality countryside experience would no longer be available to residents of nearby Alton.”

3. Housing Numbers Calculation Method

Currently, the South Downs National Park (SDNP), which makes up 57% of the East Hampshire District land area, doesn't have to legally provide any housing. However, the rest of the district (the 43%) has to provide the SDNP's housing numbers as well as its own. Furthermore, something called the Affordability Index increases the housing numbers because the index is based on the whole of the East Hampshire district, which includes the SDNP. The higher the index the higher the number of houses that needs to be provided. The SDNP skews the affordability index because of its high house prices, and this won't change.

CPRE support challenging the current method of calculating housing numbers for East Hampshire based on the fact that the South Downs National Park (SDNP) acts as a 'constraint'. MHCLG say the 'standard method' of calculating housing numbers is a starting point before 'constraints' are taken into account. EHDC currently use the standard method. However, if housing numbers are not assessed taking this 'constraint' into account then the Local Plan would be open to challenge, so from EHDC's point of view it is vital that they examine the option for reduced numbers based on this 'constraint'.

4. Access

We find it incomprehensible that this site has been chosen when it is only accessible by a narrow road with a right-angle bend and a Victorian railway arch which barely allows for two cars let alone a bus and a car! To widen the arch would mean replacing it, with the knock-on effects to the financial viability of the Watercress Line which has already had to deal with a long shut-down due to the Butts Bridge replacement, and another due to covid.

Traffic movements are already very high along Chawton Park Road (CPR) – recently recorded at 1585 a day with an average speed of 24mph – with stretches of it reduced to a single lane due to parked cars. There is already a 280 home development being built opposite Jubilee Fields in 5 phases. Meanwhile the road is not just used by immediate homeowners but by out-of-area residents visiting the Hospital, Sports Centre, Surgery, Pharmacy, Bowling Clubs, Tennis Club, Scouts and Guides.

Given the likely number of cars generated by 1200 homes (2500) and from 280 homes (500), we envisage CPR becoming a continuous bottle-neck for all users, with attendant increased levels of noise and air-pollution for those residents living alongside it.

5. Sustainability

EHDC said in its news release at the end of June that it considers this site ‘the most sustainable area to develop, with links to Alton’s transport infrastructure, services and facilities’. The Alton Society along with many people strongly disagrees with this statement, given the constraints of Chawton Park Road and Northfield Lane explained above. The distance from Alton Town Centre (at least 1.5km), the lack of reasonable road infrastructure to service the likely 2500 cars, and the detrimental impact on the local ancient woodland sites and SINC’s of 1200 homes and c3000 people being squeezed into this narrow valley, does not in our view make this site a sustainable option.

6. Deliverability of EHDC Affordable Housing Policy

EHDC’s policy is one of 40% affordable housing in the district. However as the developer will have to provide a large sum of Section 106 monies to pay for the infrastructure associated with such a huge number of houses e.g. a school and community facility as well as a traffic solution regarding the access and the narrow railway arch, they will no doubt try to negotiate a reduction in the numbers of affordable homes - as was done in Bordon where the percentage is 35%.

Thank you for reading and signing!

