

13/01605/OUT

Land at Leckhampton

Representations

Batch 12

1

CBC has now scheduled the 'core' planning application (13/01605/OUT) for the proposed JCS strategic 'Allocation' at Leckhampton (A6) for **determination** on 31-7-2014.

To have done so is premature and unjust for the following reasons.

1.1

CBC has not addressed the **Leckhampton 'Local Green Space' (LGS) application**, which it received not just eleven months ago (from the Parish Council) but 17 months ago from Martin Horwood MP. Cheltenham's officers have simply **chosen not to progress** that fully documented LGS application - other than (and only very recently) by proposing some **framework/methodology** whereby LGS applications might be considered, (effectively a stalling-device given the final emergency of Leckhampton).

There currently exists only the one LGS application: for urgent, application-threatened Leckhampton, (and in the foreseeable future there might at most be another for the North West UE).

Accordingly, 'methodology' could be developed initially in parallel with doing the Leckhampton LGS assessment and consultation, not be used as an excuse to shelve it.

This is **dilatory, grudging 'evasion of engagement' by CBC officers** with what is the key issue identified by the Planning Inspectorate for the Leckhampton land, namely its landscape and amenity contributions.

The Leckhampton LGS application will be fatally prejudiced by any discussion of this planning application, (where the full landscape analysis cannot be presented and assessed).

1.2

Strategic infrastructure evidence, notably transport but also schooling (especially secondary), is still incomplete/missing from the JCS Evidence Base.

This application's transport 'evidence' is not strategic for the entire A6 Allocation, because it does not address e.g. the further 370 houses recently proposed by Redrow, nor the unknown number which may follow between Kidnappers Lane and Farm Lane. Yet these **accesses** need to be linked and be compatible both with each other and with the character of the two 'rural' lanes, Kidnappers Lane and Farm Lane.

Absent infrastructure evidence amounts to '**unsoundness**' of attempting any decisions now.

Accordingly, the planning application is incomplete and invalid.

1.3

Until it has been properly decided whether this heavily contested JCS (which has received a startling 4,000+ Objections by the most recent consultation, most of them concerning South Cheltenham) is 'sound and appropriate', or not, **it is entirely wrong to try to run just one of the strategic Allocations past a planning committee.**

The current 650-houses planning application represents nearly 60% of Leckhampton's 1125 strategic total, and it occupies the key (townward) site which will determine whether or not the entirety of the Allocation is viable, including its road access onto the A46 (Shurdington Road). If given any assent it will precipitate the rest of the Allocation, prematurely.

The recent decision by developers of A6 to split the application into three sections is tactical, and should not be facilitated by officers.

CBC cannot make a fully informed and fair decision on this strategic-scale application until all the inter-linked strategic evidence (accesses; transport infrastructure; secondary schooling; LGS extent) has been published and then properly examined.

1.4

There is **no clearly stated or compelling need for this haste at A6** (Leckhampton).

Having stayed within the JCS alliance, Cheltenham does incontestably have a (joint) "5 year housing land supply", and CBC officers should therefore not be hurrying Leckhampton forward prematurely.

1.5

It is reported that Tewkesbury lead councillors have resisted, indeed "refused", to accommodate Cheltenham's unanimous Full Council vote on 28-2-14 seeking to exempt Leckhampton as a strategic allocation in the JCS. The resolution directed JCS officers to "**reconsider the status of Leckhampton and Up Hatherley as strategic sites within the JCS and explore the possibility of withdrawing these locations**".

Up Hatherley, (which was wholly unsound due to eroding this Green Belt at a narrowest gap, was then withdrawn.

Withdrawing Leckhampton now remains very easily doable, and very wise both environmentally and infrastructure-wise for Cheltenham as a whole.

Only an isolated and remote 20% (roughly) of the Leckhampton land lies in Tewkesbury District's parish of Shurdington, (due to recent boundary tidying, although historically these fields were all in Cheltenham's parish of Leckhampton). Accordingly, the fate of the Leckhampton land, i.e. whether it should continue to be a "green wedge" of countryside from the Cotswold eminence of Leckhampton Hill, extending inwards to almost touch the historic Regency town (at The Park), **all that choice should be entirely Cheltenham's.**

This is Cheltenham's only remaining and best '**green wedge**' candidate. A 'green wedge' penetrating into a town, as do the 'Strays' in York, maximises the urban periphery bordering and accessing that countryside, thereby gaining "**high doorstep amenity**" from it. This immediately benefits Leckhampton, Allenfield, The Park, Warden Hill and parts of Up Hatherley.

In an earlier document '**140403 SaveGreenfield.pdf**' (re-attached herewith), submitted to the JCS Member Steering Group (MSG) I challenged Tewkesbury's truthful numerical **need** for any of the housing allocation at Leckhampton, as the houses would be more distant from their main centres of population growth; **see the table and calculations in section 6** of that document.

This shows that Tewkesbury has only needed a combined allocation of **255 units** in the two UE's located on Cheltenham's periphery. If this 255 were split in proportion to the proposed size of the two UEs, then Tewkesbury's 'stake' in their site off Farm Lane Leckhampton amounts to **less than 50 houses**, which is insignificant justification for Tewkesbury's dogged refusal to allow Cheltenham to decide what is wise for Leckhampton and the town's overall.

Redrow has now bought these three fields in Tewkesbury District from the previous developer and has upped their proposal to a ludicrous 370 houses, to be accessed off (unviable) Leckhampton Lane and to be sited closest (of all the A6 development) to the Cotswold Escarpment, precisely where TBC's own Local Plan Inspector ruled in 2003 that it would be visually damaging.

The Inspector found that:

"the site forms part of a swathe of open land that sweeps down from the Cotswolds to pass between Cheltenham and Gloucester and it provides a link between the AONB and the Vale of Gloucester", and that "visual impact on the surrounding countryside would be very significant and ... could not be easily mitigated".

Cheltenham's representatives have simply swallowed baseless arguments from a more assertive TBC planning team.

Tewkesbury's planning lead councillor, Derek Davies, even managed to get his **two** sites (Highnam South and then Highnam North), both **non-GreenBelt**, removed from the JCS Draft last autumn. Cheltenham has not resisted accommodating that Tewkesbury 'choice'. Gloucester resisted but only weakly, because frankly this JCS already gives Gloucester all its preferences.

1.6

The principal **injustice to the local community** is the likelihood of giving any minor or major concession or 'indication' to this developer, which will not be recoverable by any subsequent JCS review or by any appeal by objectors, and will therefore prejudice this particular greenfield's well merited case for escaping strategic-scale development.

It is agreed that the JCS numbers may be revised downward before Submission, and CBC Full Council has indicated by its unanimous resolution on 28-2-14 that its remaining priority is the removal of Leckhampton as a strategic allocation. Therefore it is devious behaviour by pro-development officers to run Leckhampton prematurely to a planning determination, doubtless stressing all the attendant 'scares' of appeal consequences and costs, and the New Homes Bonus, albeit they are largely empty scares in this case.

The planning officer's recommendation will be 'Permit', as officers fear for their position in an autocratic hierarchy determined to retain 'inflated targets'. The supporting arguments will be specious, and will be disclosed late, to make it as hard as possible to dismantle them and gain councillor attention for that refutation.

All this railroading is now sadly standard practice by an unchallengeable administration.

1.7

NPPF provisions, very relevant to Leckhampton, have been disregarded with apparent impunity by CBC (and by the JCS officer team).

Leckhampton's "*local people*" (two Parish Councils; ward councillors; Leglag with its huge membership) have certainly not been "*put in the driving seat of decision making in the planning system*" as the recent DCLG Statement on the NPPF advises. On the contrary they have been essentially ignored, unjustly, by Cheltenham's supposedly professional and impartial senior officers (with the assent of an impregnable Cabinet).

No Local Plan has been progressed, despite cries for it (and its valuable landscape designations, e.g. LGS); yet an 'undermining' planning application has been progressed, following lengthy pre-application negotiations with developer RPS.

Cheltenham's LibDem Cabinet has been persuaded (or else instructed by national HQ) to inflate the housing targets, knowing that this incaution over a 20 year period amounts to a '**greenfield first**' policy.

The above reasons demand that the Leckhampton 'strategic' application be deferred, not only as a planning application but also from the JCS Pre-Submission Draft.

CBC has not considered and resolved all these issues of prematurity and justice .

Therefore CBC must CANCEL the 31st July special planning meeting, and now has three weeks in which to do.

If contested, then all these points of objection need to be answered in detail, not tersely dismissed.

2

If the applicant were to go to appeal for non-determination, then all the above arguments will apply very strongly.

Accordingly, it is very obvious that the applicant will not hasten to appeal.

Moreover the land's best chance of a fair assessment has always been with external adjudicators, notably the 1993 Local Plan Inquiry Inspector, who walked the land in July and viewed it from the Escarpment. (Cheltenham planners and councillors have always undervalued both the buildings and the setting of this nationally important 'most complete Regency town', which was so richly endowed that local representatives have felt it could be endlessly eroded.)

Nor is there any likelihood whatsoever of costs being awarded against a very logical deferment on prematurity grounds.

Development agents RPS have pushed Leckhampton early, calculating that their best (perhaps only) chance of circumventing the "landscape and amenity" merits of this site (confirmed by Local Plan Inspectors' verdicts) is to wheedle Cheltenham's planners and current councillors, e.g. in a private meeting. However, the controlling landowner of this entire 650-unit block is the Gloucester Diocese, (lands which were given to the parish to support the rector).

(Bovis owns merely Lott Meadow, but failed decades ago to get building permission for that field alone, with the result that it is now long-accepted that Lott Meadow with its key 'walk to the hill' is not proposed for development.)

Not only should there be no premature haste to a planning determination, but A6 (Leckhampton) needs to be deferred from the JCS as a strategic allocation until the LGS application has been determined.

Leckhampton's presence as A6 in the JCS Pre-Submission Draft will render that Submission unsound, as will be elaborated fully.

The 1993 Local Plan Inquiry (LPI) Inspector ruled expressly in his Report (paragraphs 6.86 to 6.108) that, in the case of Leckhampton, such prime greenfield ought on merit to be preserved **ahead of** the Green Belt at Cheltenham North West.

The Inspector wrote:

"I believe that it would be very sad indeed if development were to proceed at Leckhampton, with its variety and interest, whilst Swindon Farm remained inviolate simply because of its present green belt status".

Essentially little has changed in 21 years, apart from some misguided expediency, which can still be avoided. Nothing has occurred which could modify the above Inspector's recommendation.

Save for a very dramatic reduction in overall JCS housing totals, Cheltenham's **North West** strategic allocation (currently set at 4,800+ homes) is unfortunately too large to be saved from all development. Such a large UE can easily accommodate a few hundred moved from Leckhampton. There is adequate developable space already 'safeguarded' for development further out towards the M5.

Furthermore, it is far more cost efficient to provide the necessary infrastructure (roads and secondary school) in one location rather than two.

Furthermore, there is some real chance of '**affordable housing**' being delivered in the NorthWest UE, far more than in Leckhampton where a developer will be able to argue (at 'full' application and at appeal) that land itself and the necessary landscaping/infrastructure costs are proving too expensive to be able to afford a high percentage of low-cost housing.

Leckhampton is simply more valuable in "landscape and doorstep-amenity" terms than any of the JCS Green Belt allocation sites.

That is the dispassionate finding of landscape quality which needs to be respected, regardless of all local political horse-trading.

In this context of ongoing JCS revisions, there is no need for any 'opinion' from a planning committee **yet**.

Such an opinion might be sought IF the applicant were ever to proceed close to an appeal hearing on non-determination grounds, (by which time the JCS will be more advanced).

Cheltenham's equation is very simple: Leckhampton **easily CAN** and **should** (on merit) be saved.

This is still very possible, despite the disgraceful insensitivity of CBC officers who have wasted the past 21 years by failing to follow-up the Inspectors' rulings with any landscape designation for Leckhampton, and now more recently by their unyielding determination to deposit a UE on the land, (for expediency or worse), but without any all-round justification which could withstand independent examination.

3

Although the Leckhampton fields happen not to have been designated Green Belt, (because they are not directly between Cheltenham and Gloucester, i.e. forming a 'coalescence' risk), they have more intrinsic landscape and amenity merit than any of the other proposed Green Belt locations chosen for urban extensions.

The 1993 Cheltenham Local Plan inquiry 'saved' Leckhampton (specifically in preference to Green Belt at North West Cheltenham) solely on landscape and amenity grounds, in the Inspector's fine four-part phrase, that the land should be protected:

"because of its varied topography, landscape history, dense network of footpaths and pedestrian access from several residential districts".

In 1992, as then Planning Casework Secretary of Cheltenham Civic Society, I presented evidence which 'saved' Leckhampton from "white land" development risk.

That thorough and decisive Local Plan Inspector's Report, which all subsequent Inquiries in Leckhampton have respected, is curiously not available on the JCS 'Evidence' website.

GCC owns four fields in the Leckhampton allocation, all lying **South and West** of Kidnappers Lane, i.e. beyond the 650 houses site. However, just like GCC's essentially abdicated infrastructure role for the JCS, GCC remains a very quiet 'headless chicken' for now, failing even to have given any impartial lead on **landscape designation** (because that would impact a few fields it owns).

RPS's outline application for **650** houses (**plus** school, plus shops, plus pharmacy, plus surgery; **plus** some of: "care home", "dentist", "nursery", "cottage hospital"), all on a site solely **North and East** of Kidnappers Lane, is excessive even in the context of the already excessive (recently JCS-horse-traded up) total of **1125** for Allocation A6.

RPS ventures a figure of "200" for the GCC land, which adding the 370 now proposed by Redrow makes a total of **1220 houses** (plus all the land for other uses), **greatly exceeding the 1125 in the current JCS Draft**.

The treatment of the 'rural' character of Kidnappers Lane all needs to be assessed comprehensively not piecemeal within A6, and to ensure maintenance of the noted recreational "**footpath network**" and all other linkages off/across the lanes.

Once development starts off Shurdington Road, there is no defensible boundary (**in the absence of a LGS conclusion**) to prevent development encroaching southward all the way to Church Road.

There is no need or justification for an outline permission at this sensitive location.

If the JCS is allowed to run its course through EiP, then especially with the emerging ONS and DCLG revised projections, Leckhampton could and would come out as a strategic allocation.

That of course is why CBC senior officers are arranging to scupper it prematurely, **before it can benefit from proper scrutiny through the independent EiP process**, or even through the next round of revised totals.

Name



Ref: Planning Application 13/01605/OUT

Address 26 Greatfield Lane, N.P. Hutterly, Cheltenham
(include, delete or modify the following statements as appropriate) GL51 3QQ

I wish to object to the proposed development on the following grounds:

- (a) Given the evidence from the 2011 census and ONS projections on future housing need in Cheltenham, this proposed development is unnecessary. The application is premature and must not be permitted until the JCS is finalised and the big uncertainties over housing need, traffic and transport, schooling and other infrastructure have been properly resolved. ✘
- (b) The traffic congestion created by this development together with the other proposed developments south of Cheltenham would create horrendous traffic queues in the peak periods. The planning application offers no solution to the grave traffic problems. ✘
- (c) The suggestions made in the application for preventing traffic overloading and gridlock in Church Road are tenuous. They are likely to promote accidents and even if they work they will cause big traffic increases elsewhere, such as in Moorend Park Road. ✘

✘ As exemplified by the detailed analysis undertaken by Lockampton with Warden Hill Parish Council in their response dated 27 February 2014.

P.T.O.

#

I am pleased to note CBC's recent vote to reconsider the inclusion of development on this Westhampton lead in the Joint Core Strategy. This planning application is ~~being~~ highly premature and should be rejected.

(d) I am personally affected / ~~deeply concerned~~ by the health and accident risks from the traffic queues and pollution that would result from the proposed development.

(e) I / my family greatly value the Leckhampton fields for recreation. I strongly support the case made in the LWWH and Shurdington Concept Plan for preserving the land as a Local Green Space for its amenity value, footpaths, landscape, wildlife, history and impact on views from Leckhampton Hill.

(f) I am personally ^{deeply concerned} affected by the risk of flooding.

Other comments: 1) I use the A46 regularly to work in Gloucester,

I also cycle on this road regularly. The traffic is severely congested at peak times, and pretty appalling at other times of day too. It would be gridlock/queues & bad for economy if dev. goes ahead.

2) As a member of the local Lib Dem Team, and seeing on local residents regularly, I saw at first hand in January the dreadful effects of flooding from the other side of the A46 on homes/gardens in Hawkswood Road. (See Gros Echo, 8 Feb). The heavy rains caused so much water to build up in a resident's garden, that her home was almost flooded again as it was in 2007. PTO

The flood alleviation scheme completed in 2010 has not addressed issues further down the A146 toward Cheltenham, caused by either the main tributary (as opposed to the South-West tributary) of Hattenley Brook, or underground water flowing to Warden Hill under the A146. If climate change continues to create periods of heavy rain as seems likely, the risk of flooding here will continue to increase. I am not convinced that the plans for this development address this adequately; moreover the development would preclude the installation of further flood alleviation schemes on the Beckhampton fields which may become necessary in the future.

From: Internet - Built Environment
Sent: 29 November 2013 11:06
To: Internet - Planning Comments
Subject: FW: 13/01605/OUT

-----Original Message-----

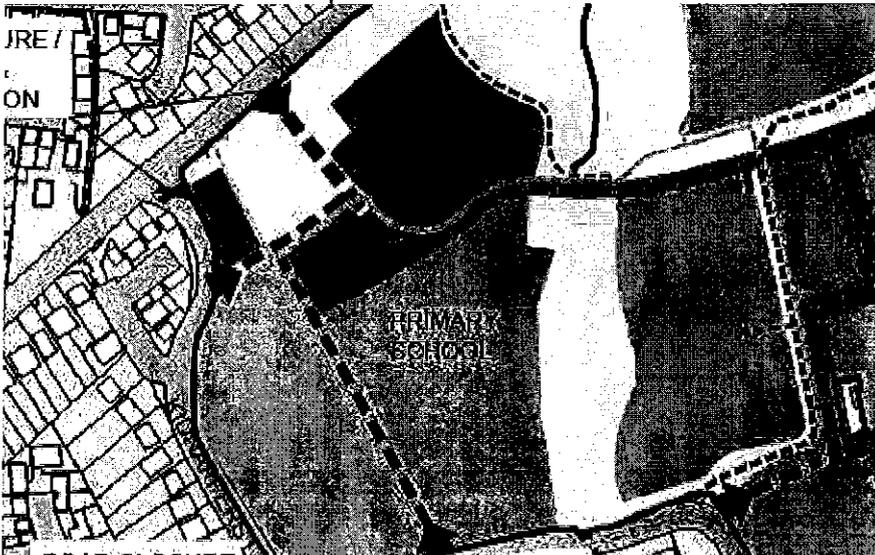
From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 29 November 2013 10:41
To: Internet - Built Environment
Subject: 13/01605/OUT

I recently attended the public meeting held on the 27th November in Leckhampton and wish to raise specific objections to this proposal (in addition to my comments submitted on the JCS).

A primary objection (and running theme) is that this phase 1/piecemeal application allows the developers to jump the gun on the JCS process, but more importantly - potential decisions on this application only need to consider the impact (e.g. traffic; pollution; flooding) of these 650 homes and the 350 homes off Farm Lane (SE2?) AND NOT THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF FURTHER DEVELOPMENT.

What if planning was approved and revised traffic/access was built - then further developments took place and the entire traffic situation collapsed?

From the 27th meeting, I could see that the traffic plan had not changed from when the Consortium held their previous road show on the 1075 housing proposal



at this time - I questioned the positioning of the Primary School (along with the other proposed retail/industrial facilities)on a bend of the main thoroughfare into the proposed estate/bus route/revised Kidnappers Lane routing.

It is totally illogical as regards traffic planning to locate such facilities as shown on the plan, due to the 'mum and dad car drop off fixation (as experienced by anyone driving pass a primary school between 8.15 - 9.00 am and again during the afternoon closing). To claim that all the children will be walked to this school is nonsensical and would go against the experience of all of us attempting to drive pass any school at opening/closing times!

Secondly, the plans still do not address the traffic situation of the 'single lane' constraint of Farm Lane as it narrows and approaches Crippets crossroad.

this proposal should not be approved.

[REDACTED]
3 The Spindles
Leckhampton
Cheltenham
GL53 0QD

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

BUILT

Recd - 6 FEB 2014

ENVIRONMENT

Robinswood
Kidnappers Lane
Leckhampton
Cheltenham
GL53 0NP
Feb 3.

C. Hemphill
Planning Dept.
Cheltenham Borough Council.

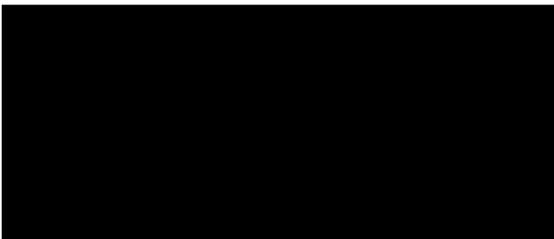
'Leave Leckhampton as it is.' Are the people who support this aware of the state of the land? Apart from one admirable young tenant, most of the holdings are sitting idle and the land has not been maintained. Examples of this are unruly hedges reaching for the sky, fields of dead, uncut hay and areas of considerable decrepitude.

The main owner of the land, Glos. Diocese, is unwilling to pay for any maintenance whatsoever. Under these present conditions a vacuum will be created and nature will take over.

In these circumstances I can think of at least a couple of unpleasant eventualities the like of which would be greatly unpleasant to those living nearby.

Development would at least provide some of the much needed housing and allow the land to eminate its neighbours.

Yours sincerely



[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 08 December 2013 16:51
To: Internet - Planning Comments
Subject: Planning application 13/1605/OUT

Subject: Planning application 13/1605/OUT
Spring Hill
Crippetts Lane
Cheltenham
GL51 4XU

Dear Planner,

I have lived at the Crippetts for over 25 years. Initially the view from the hill was quite rural, but over the years it has been affected by the new housing and super store in Up Hatherley. The proposed development would be yet another change which doesn't, in my opinion, improve the view which is there for everyone, not just those who live here.

Most of my journeys are by bicycle and I cycle daily in Farm and Church Lanes to the Cheltenham shops or on recreational rides. I don't think that these lanes and Church Road and the A46 will be able to cope with the likely increase in motor traffic. Nor do I see any solution to this problem in the planning application. I think that cycling in the neighbourhood will become less pleasant and safe.

A particular problem twice a year is the low sun in the south west. This is in line with sections of Church Road making sufficient visibility at motoring speeds difficult. More traffic might well increase this danger and the police and the courts seem to regard it as just one of those things.

Try this link, for just one example of a cyclist's death.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2511334/Author-killed-cycled-country-road-female-driver-dazzled-winter-sun.html>

If Leglag's claims about the 2011 census and ONS projections are correct, then I agree with them that this development is unnecessary.

Any predictions of the future are uncertain. This is particularly so now of population growth because of the effect the Scottish and the possible EC referenda could have on free movement within Europe. If young people really are as obese as we are told, then this and the possibility of antibiotics becoming less effective could also have an impact. Increased demand for food by the so called emerging economies add to the uncertainties. I think it premature at this time to be building on what could revert to being farm land for food or bio fuel production while still remaining a recreational green space.

Yours faithfully,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
**9 Imperial Square
Cheltenham GL50 1QB**
[REDACTED]

email [REDACTED]

3 March 2014

Cheltenham Borough Council planning@cheltenham.gov.uk
Joint Core Strategy Team info@gct-jcs.org

Reference 13/01605/OUT.

I wish to register my opposition to the proposals from Curtin & Co (acting on behalf of Bovis and Miller Homes) for 650 new homes (plus additional facilities) on Leckhampton land between Shurdington Road, Church Road and Kidnappers Lane.

My concerns relate to the specific application (see below), but also to the way in which the Joint Core Strategy is now being used as a principal justification for developments of this kind. As you will know, the central driver for the Joint Core Strategy is the estimated need for a further 10,800 new homes between now and 2031, whereas the ONS has assessed the level of housing need at 6,070. There is a world of difference between these two estimates.

The proposal itself is so deeply flawed as to beggar belief, given the degree to which that number of new homes in that location will cause very significant knock-on problems, in the following respects:

[1] Congestion on the A46. I have seen the proposals to reduce congestion on the A46, and can hardly believe this is considered by the developers to be an adequate mitigation of the proposal. If the proposal to consent a further 1,500 homes in Brockworth is accepted, it would create a massive problem for all those who depend on the A46 as their principal artery in and out of Cheltenham.

[2] It's not just the congestion: it's all the emissions that all those additional vehicles will produce. As you will know, the EU is now intent on holding the UK much more rigorously to account for its continuing infractions against the EU's Air Quality Directive. This new development will make a bad situation in Cheltenham a great deal worse.

[3] It would appear that very little consideration has been given to the impact of this development on the provision of school places, not just (in the first instance) at Primary level, but at the Secondary level somewhat down the line. Surely there should be an agreed strategy for educational provision before any huge new housing developments of this kind are approved?

[4] On balance, it's hard to believe this proposal has been advanced in the spirit of the coalition government's Localism Act. As I understand it, there is now a proposal from the Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council that the Leckhampton Fields should be protected as a Local Green Space of special community value.

In the spirit of true localism, I sincerely hope that this proposal from the Leckhampton and Warden Hill Parish Council will be given proper consideration before consideration of the housing proposal is allowed to proceed.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]