APP/D1265/W/23/3336518: Land to the South of Ringwood Road, Alderholt

Opening statement from Stephen Godsall, Secretary, Action4Alderholt

The appellant, the local planning authority and the Rule 6 parties all agree on at least one thing; Alderholt as it stands is not a sustainable location for development on the scale proposed.

If we understand the appellant's case correctly, they claim it can be made sustainable by becoming more self-contained and introducing improved transport options. We disagree for three reasons.

Firstly, we do not believe that the appellant's proposals will make Alderholt more self-contained for services, education, employment or day to day activities. In fact there is a high risk they will do the opposite.

Secondly, we believe the transport proposals in this scheme are not remotely adequate to improve things for most current and future residents of Alderholt.

And thirdly, we believe uncertainties about deliverability and speed of development are substantial. A patially completed scheme would leave the village in a less sustainable position than it currently is - probably for many years, possibly forever.

In all the detailed arguments we are about to hear, it's easy to forget how much this scheme has changed since it was first submitted. Certainly local people are having great difficulty in keeping up with changes.

There were proposals to substantially reduce travel to school by making St James a full primary school and expanding Burgate school in Fordingbridge. These have fallen by the wayside, along with a cycle route to Verwood, a library and a youth centre. It's not clear whether a pub or a restaurant is in the latest proposal, or even which indicative bus timetable we're meant to be looking at.

This all adds to the uncertainty about what might really be delivered, which is worrying so many people in and around the village. We hope our local knowledge will help give insight into the potential impacts of the proposed scheme on Alderholt and the surrounding communities. We'll listen carefully to the evidence to see if the appellant can not just promise but reliably deliver sustainable development.