

APPEAL ON THE POSSINGHAM FARM, GREAT CHART, APPLICATION  
AT ASHFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Cllr Jessamy Blanford**

Borough Councillor for Weald Central Ward covering Chilmingon Green, Great Chart, Bethersden and High Halden

Member of Ashford Borough Council's Planning Committee and the Long Term Plan & Ashford Local Plan Committee.

Address to the Inspector on behalf of the residents of Chilmingon Green and Great Chart.

Thank you for allowing me to speak at this enquiry. I have been a member of the Ashford Borough Council since 2007 and held various positions in it including Portfolio Holder for the Environment and Portfolio Holder for Culture. I have also chaired the Planning Committee but am not currently the chairman. On the occasion when the Possingham Farm application came before the Planning Committee I was in the chair but stepped down from the chair for this item in order to address the Committee as Ward Member and vote as a member of the Committee.

Before I was elected to the Council, I took part in the workshops, representing Quest International, a perfumery company now owned by Givaudan, arranged by the Borough Council to agree where future development at Ashford should take place. I would like to stress the importance of the red line around Chilmingon Green. It took much discussion to agree this, the aim being to find a site for a freestanding community – a Garden Village - which would to an extent be self-sufficient in that it would include primary and secondary schools, shops, medical facility, play spaces, community hub, open spaces and a bus service. It was an important point that these would be contained within the red line and not straggle out into the countryside.

So far progress has been very slow at Chilmingon Green with to date only 362 houses completed and occupied. Much as been made of Ashford being short on keeping to its 5 year land supply but this is largely due to the Stodmarsh situation. Developers are providing mitigation sites. There are a number of development sites around Ashford which are ready to go once a local or government solution to Stodmarsh is agreed or mitigation arrangements are accepted.

Possingham Farm would have been held up by the Stodmarsh issue if the Inspector addressing the Waste Water Treatment Plant on Chilmingon Green Road had not approved it. However, the Inspector has allowed this appeal. Now we wait for the Environment Agency decision on whether to grant a certificate for the discharge of the treated effluent into the Beult. I raise this matter as it is some concern to the residents because the Beult only rises at Chilmingon and is really no more than a ditch which dries up in the summer. We do not consider it is a suitable outlet for the effluent from the WwTP.

Transport: 655 houses will produce at least 800 more cars on the proposed Possingham Farm site all of which will have to exit the site on to the A28. This road is already at capacity at peak times with long tailbacks at the Matalan Roundabout and over the stretch of road between the Matalan Roundabout and the Drivers' roundabout on the A20. Improvements to this road have been delayed waiting for the developers at Chilmington Green to reach the trigger point of 400 houses at which point Hodson Development should provide funding towards the cost of improvements to the A28.

The tailback on the A28 leads to a rat run situation in Great Chart which has caused much anguish and annoyance to the inhabitants of the village. This has only one lane each way but as most of the houses were built without off road parking, it means that cars are parked down one side of the street during the day as well as at night resulting in only one lane taking traffic in both directions.

Possingham Farm development: I won't go into the density and height issues as these have been covered by other speakers at the appeal, but I would like to endorse what has been said about the lack of facilities in the current proposal. A bland reference to Chilmington as providing what is missing at Possingham Farm would make one cry if it wasn't so laughable. Had Hodson Development kept up to the schedule on the development at Chilmington Green they might have been able to provide this solution but as it is there are virtually no facilities that can be offered to the proposed residents of Possingham Farm. Even if there were the distances between the two sites and the lack of safe walking between them would not make using the facilities at Chilmington Green viable. Only the primary School in Mock Lane is currently available. It is in no way a "logical extension" to Chilmington Green.

Further development will also bring urban issues with it such as dogs and cats as pets which banish local wildlife with the dogs, in particular, as a threat to the badger sett which has long been a feature of the site.

It is important to all the local residents, who have lived with the development of Chilmington Green, both in theory and fact, for a long time and bravely put up with the loss of a local hamlet and much green farmland, that it should not turn into a characterless mass outside the red line constantly creeping into the surrounding agricultural land and closing the gap between Chilmington Green and the historic and beautiful villages.

Cllr Jessamy Blanford

11.10.24 Possingham Farm Appeal Oct 2024