

## **Melton Fields Planning Inquiry submission of Cllr Julie Abraham**

My name is Julie Abraham and I am

- A resident of North Ferriby
- A member of North Ferriby Parish Council for 17 years since 1997 and chairman for nine years of that period
- One of two ward members for the South Hunsley ward since 2003
- As an elected member of East Riding of Yorkshire Council I have served on the Strategic Planning Committee for eight years and on the local area planning sub-committee for approximately four years
- For the last three years I have been a member of the East Riding of Yorkshire Council's Cabinet with a portfolio for Children, Young People & Education
- I am an Associate Governor at North Ferriby Church of England Primary School

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today.

I am addressing you as a ward councillor and any views that I express are my own and I am not representing any of the bodies or establishments mentioned above. However, I give my support to the submissions that you have heard from North Ferriby and Welton parish councils and I wish to make it clear that I am acting entirely independent of the Save Our Ferriby Action Group.

I also wish to say that my comments relate to both of the appeals in equal measure unless I specify otherwise.

### **The policy context and implications for North Ferriby and Melton**

I do not intend to dwell for long on planning policy related matters because I am happy that the evidence that you have heard from East Riding of Yorkshire Council over the first two weeks of the inquiry, and the evidence that you still have to hear from Mr Hunt, more than adequately explain the context within which these appeals are being heard. I will say though, as a senior elected member of this authority, that many years of officer and member time has gone into getting to where the Council is now, with its submitted draft local plan and its Economic Development Strategy. This has been at a time when this Council has been required to reduce its expenditure significantly because of reductions in Government grant and required efficiency savings and, if either of these appeals are upheld, it will have further funding implications as such an outcome will seriously undermine the status of both plan and strategy.

It is my understanding that major revisions would be required to the draft local plan but no doubt Mr Hunt will have made, or will be making the implications of that clear to you in his evidence. My concern is what that would mean for primary villages throughout the East Riding, and for North Ferriby in particular.

Similar size developments to those proposed in these two appeals are all in higher order settlements than North Ferriby and Melton in our draft local plan. North Ferriby would increase in at least 23% if these appeals were upheld. And if this large scale development is considered appropriate for North Ferriby our officers would have to consider whether a higher scale of development should be supported in any other Primary Villages, so potentially requiring a radical overhaul of the settlement network.

In the meantime, that will leave all of our communities vulnerable to approaches from developers whilst we are in a policy void – and that could mean houses and employment being approved on sites that have been discounted during public consultation.

And as a result of an approval for this site, North Ferriby could lose the four potential sites identified in our draft local plan, two of which are strongly supported by the local community for older people's accommodation and for affordable housing for local people in a sustainable location, close to facilities such as shops and schools and in close walking proximity to the railway station, for access to employment - housing in places where people want to live as part of a community, not housing in between communities where people will be neither Ferriby residents nor Melton residents.

This is our residents' draft local plan, that has seen months of significant consultation with ward members, town and parish councils, developers and, most importantly, the public and it determines the future development of our communities in a way that is acceptable to our residents. It has gone through the democratic process and that process will continue once it gets to public examination. These proposals from a national company that are the subject of these two appeals have not been through the democratic process, have not been through the wider consultation that the local plan has, and have the potential to remove all credibility from the local planning process. The employment use of Melton Park was well established in planning policy, in the Beverley Borough Local Plan, that had been through consultation and a public examination process with the secretary of state, well before the appellants purchased the site, and I hope that Mrs Ellison will appreciate that nothing has changed except that the economic need for more development land in this sub-region has intensified given the Green Port Hull agenda. The employment status of Melton Park has also been affirmed by the

provision of the A63 grade separated junction at significant expense to the public purse. That upgrade to the road network would not have happened if the only intention was to open up the land for housing

### **Sustainability of Melton Fields for housing**

Reason 5 for refusal of the first application, for 510 homes, related to the proposal to site accommodation for elderly people and a care home on the northern side of the site. Reason 5 related to the fact that it was in open countryside, it was a remote location and therefore unsustainable. Reason 5 is not a subject for debate at this inquiry because it was agreed between the planning authority and the appellant that it should be so. However, I believe that Reason 5 is very pertinent and I contend that it would be difficult for any resident, not only those in need of sheltered accommodation, to live on Melton Fields without motorised transport.

As I have already mentioned, building houses on Melton Fields will be placing people, particularly families, in a location that has no identity and which will have little in the way of facilities. It is obviously envisaged by the developer that new residents will veer towards North Ferriby rather than Melton as it is proposing a footpath link through the woodland boundary of the Welton parish known as Long Plantation into North Ferriby. The only alternative walking route to that is via the pedestrian/cycleway north of the appeal site that forms part of the A63 grade separated junction.

**Access to North Ferriby via Long Plantation** This woodland forms part of the Wolds Way footpath and is a popular, unspoilt community resource used by walkers and a significant number of cyclists. The footpath through Long Plantation does not benefit from any form of surface treatment and is frequently wet and muddy. Neither does it benefit from any sort of lighting, so from dusk till dawn it is dark. And it is quite right that there is no surface treatment and no lighting, and local residents and users of Long Plantation would not want it any other way. But, for a footpath link from Melton Fields into Plantation Drive to be attractive for potential homeowners in Melton to use, it would need to have both. This would detract significantly from the natural, unspoilt character of the woodland and would also pose conflict with the established users of Long Plantation and, in the case of cyclists, there would be great potential for conflict and personal injury from and for pedestrians crossing the north–south Wolds Way footpath. Long Plantation is, of course, in the ownership of East Riding of Yorkshire Council though currently leased to and under the active management of the appellant. As landlord of Long Plantation, East Riding Council may wish to take a view on the suitability of a footpath link through the woodland and it is within its gift to decide whether or not to grant permission for such a path to be considered.

**Access to North Ferriby via the grade separated junction** Residents on the land to the south of Monks Way East could, if access is not possible via Long Plantation, use the footway immediately to the north of the appeal site. Residents to the north of Monks Way East, and this includes the proposed sheltered housing, could also access North Ferriby along this footway, but only once they have walked through the underpass that goes underneath Monks Way East. Elderly residents would have to walk through a pedestrian underpass that is frequented by skateboarders and graffiti artists, and which has been the subject of vandalism that I have reported to the Council's Environment & Neighbourhood Services directorate as recently as last month. All pedestrians, including the elderly, would then have to walk up a long slope that is not overlooked by any passers-by, and that slope is slippery and dangerous in icy conditions, and sometimes all it requires is a hard frost to make the footway difficult to navigate, and there is no opportunity for the surface to be treated by gritting lorries in the winter. Attempts to site grit boxes along this route have failed because of repeated vandalism, and anyway there is no-one to spread grit in such a remote location. Resources and the Council's Winter Gritting Policy do not allow for footway clearance in any areas except town centres and exceptional locations of high pedestrian usage. Consequently any snow is quickly compacted and remains as ice for many days long after other footways are cleared of snow by the wash of salt and grit from passing vehicles. The low angle of the winter sun and the shadow cast by trees in Long Plantation does not assist at all when daytime temperatures remain around freezing.

I contend that this does not constitute a safe route for residents to access facilities in North Ferriby and that planning approvals should ensure that the needs and safety concerns, particularly of very vulnerable people, are paramount. I believe that this is totally the wrong place for elderly people and that their needs cannot be met by planning conditions as has been agreed by the planning authority and the appellant. In my opinion Reason 5 for refusal remains a strong material planning consideration and I consider that it should be given relevant consideration in this appeal process.

In summary to this section on sustainability and access to North Ferriby, I respectfully request that Mrs Ellison takes the opportunity to view during her visit to the site, both the proposed route through Long Plantation woodland and the only alternative walking route, that being the footway south of Monks Way East including the underpass.

**Potential for nuisance and disturbance for a mixed use development or from the exchange of employment land to the south for housing north of the railway line**

Reason 4 for refusal on the original application related to the potential for conflict between residential and employment uses in such close proximity. Melton Park and its neighbouring MeltonWest that has been successful in attracting some quite significant investment, have benefitted from the improved grade separated junction and highway infrastructure that enables the two sites, plus others employers using the new network, to operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. In North Ferriby we can hear the sound of reversing beepers and machinery and to have mixed use development on the intervening space will bring the problem even closer to home for any new residents of these proposed homes. Furthermore, the suggested proposal to open up compensating employment land to the south of the railway line and so have 24/7 operations running in between and in much closer proximity to dwellings is one that simply must be resisted. At least Monks Way East is elevated and so some traffic noise is avoided at ground level at Melton Fields but that is not the case should additional heavy goods vehicles use Brickyard Lane.

It is my opinion that the potential for noise and disturbance resulting from a mixed use development as proposed in both applications cannot be suitably controlled by licence or conditions as has been agreed between the planning authority and the appellant, and that this remains a sound reason for refusal.

### **Impact on local schools**

Setting aside my interest in education because of my Cabinet portfolio, I seek to reflect the concerns of local families if either of these appeals are upheld.

Secondary education in the appeal site area is provided by South Hunsley School and Sixth Form. South Hunsley School's current capacity figure is 1,877 and there are 1,993 on roll in Years 7 to 13 at present. It is a popular, oversubscribed school that has an Outstanding judgement from Ofsted and which regularly produces results at GCSE that are significantly above the national average. For that reason very few catchment area children go elsewhere for 11-16 education; the few that don't tend to go to private schools. South Hunsley can presently accommodate all of its catchment area children but that is a situation that is not sustainable in the long term and it is anticipated that future admission rounds will see no out of catchment area children admitted. A recent planning approval for over 700 new homes in Brough, in the centre of its catchment area means the requirement for additional places to be added, but apart from that there are other smaller developments either approved or contained within the draft local plan that will have a significant impact on the capacity of the school. An outline proposal for the Humber Growers site in Welton will add around a further 60 homes to the catchment, 151 new homes pending at Welton Low Road in Elloughton, a possible appeal pending for 100 new homes on East Dale Road, Melton, and provision within the draft local plan for 85

new homes in each of North Ferriby, Swanland and South Cave and 60 new homes at North Cave, will combine to add a potential 1326 new homes to the catchment area without up to 510 new homes at Melton Fields. In terms of school place planning and from developer contributions, it may well be possible to meet the resulting demand from these homes, and the school may well be willing to accommodate them, though there is an acceptance that there are now significant site constraints. But from what my ward residents tell me, they do not want South Hunsley School to grow any larger because at touching 2000 pupils it is already a very large school - I believe it is now the largest secondary school in the East Riding. Parents in North Ferriby are very afraid that, should the demand for South Hunsley School become so great, the school, as an academy, will seek to change its catchment area and that, being a village on the fringe of the catchment area, North Ferriby children will cease to be accepted at the school. The lack of a safe walking route to the next nearest secondary school would compel this Council to provide free home to school transport for all North Ferriby children and that is a financial burden that it would be difficult to absorb given the need for savings in the order of £70m to be found in the next three years.

For primary education, the Melton Fields development is in Welton Primary School's catchment area but the nearest primary school is North Ferriby Church of England Primary School. It would seem likely therefore that North Ferriby would provide the additional school places necessary to meet demand arising if either of these appeals were upheld. However, this would be dependent on agreement from the school and York Diocese. North Ferriby Primary School has a Net Capacity of 263 and has 278 children on roll at present. The school is, therefore, currently full and is expected to remain full for the foreseeable future, even without the potential impact of the Melton Fields development. Therefore, if the additional children were to be accommodated at their nearest school, it would require expansion. The split site nature of the school would mean that expansion would be required on both the Key Stage 1 and the Key Stage 2 sites, a far more costly option than it would be to expand at a through primary on a single site. Site constraints on the key stage 2 site could be difficult and additional accommodation on the Key Stage 1 site will result in further development on what is one of our few open spaces in the village.

There is little doubt that the additional traffic generated by the demand for places from Melton Fields, 55 – 72 primary places (a potential 25% increase in places) and 49 – 63 secondary places, will add to the overbearing pressure on parking that is already experienced at the beginning and end of the school day at both North Ferriby School and at South Hunsley School. As ward councillor I regularly receive complaints about parking around both school sites and would not wish to see this situation exacerbated.

It is therefore my opinion that both of these appeals should be dismissed on the grounds that they would place an unacceptable burden on local schools.

## **Conclusion**

I have submitted today information on what I believe to be the key material planning considerations for my constituents and for myself as a member of this Council. There are many other points that colleagues from North Ferriby and Welton parish councils will bring to your attention today and I give them my full support. But for my part I would be grateful for consideration to be given to the impact on North Ferriby in local planning terms should either of these appeals be upheld, the sustainability of the Melton Fields development particularly for elderly residents, the potential for noise and disturbance from a mixed use development and the unacceptable impact on local educational establishments. I hope that Mrs Ellison will respect the right and ability of local people to decide how they wish to see their communities develop within their lifetime and not be swayed by these undemocratically submitted planning appeals.