

## **CONTENT OF EMAIL FROM WBC PLANNING DEPARTMENT TO WAYNE SMITH – 23 AUGUST 2022**

Ian C and I have both reviewed the Sawpit Road appeal. In short, our opinion is there are no grounds for challenging the decision.

Whilst there are aspects of the appeal to which we would disagree, the Inspector has not misapplied national policy/guidance or development plan policy, and has not acted irrationally. For example, whilst we disagree with the specific approach as to how the Inspector concluded the absence of a five year housing land supply, national guidance does refer to using the most recent data which he relies on in making his judgement.

I also note that the wider context is one where other appeal procedures concluded the supply to be lower than five years:

- Willow Tree House, Brookers Hill, Shinfield: 4.84 years, and
- Land at Baird Road, Arborfield Garrison: between 4.35-4.74 years supply.

In light of these conclusions, and in addition having regard to monitoring information undertaken to support the new assessment that will be based at 31 March 2022 which points to continued high levels of completions well above local housing need, the council has had to accept that it is unable to demonstrate a deliverable housing land supply in excess of five years. Both of these appeals were available at the time of the Sawpit Road decision.

Having reached his conclusion on land supply, the Inspector considers the impacts. In making his judgement, he applies the 'tilted balance', concluding ultimately that the benefits (the delivery of new homes, contribution towards affordable housing and economic spend), are not significant and demonstrably outweighed by the adverse impacts, which he considers largely localised and modest.

Whilst this is a disappointing outcome, other appeals at Willow Tree House and Baird Road show that refusals can be sustained where the impacts are significant and demonstrable. It will be important that the council highlights the strong housing delivery performance which explains why we have a shortfall in supply ahead of putting in place a new local plan.

I would be happy to talk through if helpful.

Kind regards, Ian.