

**EASTLEIGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**Town and Country Planning Act 1990 – Section 78**

**Town and Country Planning Appeals (Determination by Inspectors)  
(Inquiries Procedure) (England) Rules 2020**

**PROOF OF EVIDENCE**

**of**

**COUNCILLOR TONIA CRAIG**

**On behalf of the Local Planning Authority**

**Planning appeal against refusal to grant outline planning permission for the construction of up to 148 residential dwellings (Use Class C3) with new vehicular access to Hamble Lane, alterations to Kings Avenue and Coronation Parade, new car parking for existing sports facilities, employment use and residential properties, landscaping, improvements to existing bowls and football facilities on site and other associated works and demolition of non-original extensions to Sydney Lodge (Grade II\* Listed Building) and redundant factory buildings with all matters reserved except for means of access.**

**Land at GE Aviation, Kings Avenue, Hamble-Le-Rice, Southampton, SO31 4NF**

**Appeal by GE Aviation**

**Planning Inspectorate Reference: APP/W1715/W/20/3255559**

**Eastleigh Borough Council Reference O/18/84191**

**OCTOBER 2020**

## **Introduction**

1. I am Tonia Craig and I chaired the committee that refused GE Aviation's planning application.
2. My family first moved to Bursledon, on the Hamble peninsula, in 1993. I was elected to Eastleigh Borough Council in May 2002, and to Bursledon Parish Council in May 2003. I represent part of the area on Hampshire County Council, and at Eastleigh Borough Council have served as Cabinet Member for Health and Community Safety since 2014. I am a member of the Community Management Committee that oversees sports and community facilities at Hamble Secondary School and work closely with the Headteacher.

## **Background**

3. At Eastleigh Borough Council, we don't have a single central Planning Committee. The Council believes that all councillors should be accountable for decisions made in the local area. This includes major planning applications, licensing, traffic regulation and parking, housing provision, supporting local businesses, liaison with the NHS and local doctors, and the provision and maintenance of local facilities such as play areas, parks and open spaces, sports and recreation, and libraries.
4. The way we do this in Eastleigh is through our Local Area Committees. These "LACs" comprise all local Borough Councillors in each of five distinct areas of the Borough, reflecting natural geography. Our LAC is made of the three parish areas of Bursledon, Hamble-le-Rice and Hound. It is often referred to as "BHH". The councillors are the local residents elected for the two Borough wards of Hamble and Netley, and Bursledon and Hound North. Each ward has three councillors. It means that all six councillors elected for the area can effectively represent the residents in their community.
5. So the BHH area covers the entirety of the Hamble peninsula, united by one and only one road that links the parishes with the outside world. Hamble Lane is this link, leading up to Windhover roundabout that gives access to the M27 at Junction 8, the A27, and towards Southampton. The roundabout is heavily congested, not just at rush hour. Hamble Lane gives access to major employment sites at Hamble including manufacturing from Cooper Vision, GE

Aviation, major industry including BP's major oil terminal, and world-famous yachting marinas and a vibrant leisure sector, and that's just in Hamble and before we think about our residents. Hamble Lane is busy! It is often referred to as the busiest 'B' road in the country. At weekends and holidays, visitors come from across the country to visit the River.

6. Over the years, trying to sort out Hamble Lane and tackle congestion has been one of our Council's highest priorities alongside maintaining the distinct and different nature of each of the three villages. I remember when I first moved to the area being told about plans in the 1980s for a major bypass for Old Netley that would sort out Hamble Lane. It was abandoned by Hampshire County Council (HCC) back then and little has changed since. One roundabout was put in at Hound Corner, and different ideas have been put forward for the Portsmouth Road junction including traffic lights and a roundabout. Nothing has happened. HCC keep taking developer contributions from housing and commercial sites in our local area but not spending them in here to sort out our traffic.
  
7. Eastleigh is not a NIMBY council. Our LAC has agreed major housing growth around the villages, but close to existing communities and where road access can be achieved away from Hamble Lane. Taylor Wimpey are building at the top of Hamble Lane but we only agreed this site if access could be from Bursledon Road, not Hamble Lane. The Council even bought the site from its old landowner to ensure this could be achieved. There are and have been four sites on the A27 between Windhover and the River Hamble for around 300 homes in the last few years. We want to manage housing need and secure "infrastructure first" at the same time. Jobs are important too. Cooper Vision has become a world leader in contact lens manufacturer. The Council has supported the company grow, and expand on their site, working with them on travel planning given the congestion on Hamble Lane. The Council has also liaised with BP regulating their oil tanker movements for speed and shift patterns to try to minimise congestion.

#### **Hamble and GE Aviation**

8. Hamble has for centuries been a centre for the marine sector. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century aviation developed from seaplanes in this area. The GE Aviation factory, under many ownerships and names, has been a part of the Hamble community for 90 years. Local community facilities have grown up on the site. These were initially for employees but over the years community

groups for bowling, football and cricket have become a focal point for all local people in the village and from Netley and Bursledon.

9. The Borough Council has always tried to support major employers across the Borough and has worked with different owners to protect jobs and allow improvements and changes at the factory site. We recognise the importance of the business to both the local community and the regional economy.
10. Discussions with GE started at least as early as 2016 about their plans for the site. Meetings took place between the company, planners, the Leader and myself, and also with the full LAC team, to explore the company's desire to develop and release land to consolidate their site.
11. The LAC and local ward members were open to ideas for change but were always clear that maintaining community facilities and not seeing any potential significant increase in traffic were of vital importance. The company agreed to explore taking traffic off the narrow Cliffe Avenue entrance to their site and only use this limited commercial traffic leaving the site. The desire was for one main entrance to the north of the recreation grounds, also taking traffic off Kings Avenue that would be blocked. The final plans submitted did not achieve either of these objectives.
12. The LAC were always clear that keeping community sports facilities in Hamble was a requirement. Agreement was eventually reached that the bowling green would be saved on site. This is a significant local facility used by many retired Folland (former owner) employees and is a social club as well as bowling club. We have worked with the Bowling Club to help them get grants to keep the site well maintained. Saving bowling has been very well received by the bowlers and their families.
13. Sadly, resolution of cricket and football provision being kept in Hamble has not been resolved (although I understand that discussions are ongoing between the Council and the Appellant in the hope of resolving this issue). Hamble is one community. Suggestions of moving football to the private VT Sports facility in Southampton, and previous suggestions of improving cricket facilities at Fair Oak, both of which can't even easily be reached by bus from Hamble, would see a serious loss to the village. If, as with the retention of bowling, these facilities can be kept in Hamble at or close to the site, the LAC's objection on this issue would be removed.

14. Both the LAC and Council have not objected to housing on the previously developed part of the GE Aviation site (so long as acceptable traffic and other impacts could be achieved). We welcome the provision of much-needed affordable/social housing, and the retention and improvement of the historic Sydney Lodge. But this should not be at detriment to the loss of recreation facilities, or to the wider loss of countryside by expanding housing outside of the urban edge in a prominent location that is contrary to the Borough Council's Local Plan policies and the County Council's objective of seeking to avoid more traffic pressure on Hamble Lane.
15. If the applicant were to look at their proposals to only develop new homes on the urban part of their site, protecting amenity space, the LAC would welcome such an application.

### **Conclusion**

16. The Council and LAC seek to achieve balance both for existing and new residents. The Council has secured more than a five-year land supply, protected local gaps and the countryside outside of the urban edge, and is strongly committed to the sustainable development of the area with facilities for residents in their own communities rather than remotely requiring traffic journeys and environmental damage. Health, well-being and fitness are best achieved by removing barriers to participation, not creating barriers.
17. The applicant has made some progress in meeting the Council's objectives but is not there yet. The LAC would welcome a new application that meets the Council's policy requirements. This application fails to do so. I respectfully ask for this appeal to be dismissed.