

Mr & Mrs S. Green

My Ref SSG/ST/2023-10.01

26 October 2023

By Hand

Mr Simon Theakston DL

Field House
1 Manor Court
Farnham
HG5 9JE

Dear Simon,

Planning Application Reference ZC23/02895/FUL

I write in relation to our planning application for the erection of a self-build home and associated works on our land adjoining Manor Cottage, Farnham.

You may have been made aware that we have now uploaded various letters of response to the six letters of objection we have received to our planning application on a website in the public domain, in the interests of transparency and for the information and knowledge of other interested parties and residents of the village, who may not be aware of the situation we find ourselves in with regard to various false statements/untruths and dishonesty which has been perpetuated about our planning application (and also ourselves personally as applicants) by the authors of the various objection letters we have received:

www.ZC23-FARNHAM.com

I must say that both my wife, Maya and I are very disappointed and saddened with the approach you have taken to our planning application. I did recognise from the outset that you would likely have some concern with regard to our proposal, given the length of time the land in our ownership (adjoining your home) has been undeveloped and therefore that you have come to enjoy the same. However, whilst our proposal has been well-intentioned and designed consciously to minimise any impact on you and the main aspects of your property, it is a fact that the land is ours, not yours and that unfortunately, you do not buy a view. Moreover, the way in which you subsequently have gone about dealing with this matter after meeting with me in my home to discuss our proposal has been, in my opinion, very heavy-handed, authoritarian and just simply unnecessary.

I contacted you entirely in good faith and despite never having met you or had dealings with you previously, had heard good things about you as a person. However, I am sad to say that this just is not the experience I have had of you during the period we have come into contact with each other. Indeed, since I kindly invited you around to our home to discuss our proposal (before the planning application was validated) as a gesture of goodwill, I have heard nothing further from you directly, whether to say that you would be objecting to our proposal or otherwise, which whilst not a legal requirement, is un-gentlemanly of you.

Unfortunately, considering the uncompromising approach it was clear to us that you had decided to take against our proposal, I felt left with no option than to respond in kind, which resulted in me reporting your illegal use of your adjoining paddock for domestic purposes to the Council's Enforcement department for investigation, which I understand is ongoing.

I am informed that the Case Officer for our planning application herself also picked up on your unlawful domestic use of the paddock following her site visit on our land and as a result, that she also directly reported concerns to the Council's Enforcement department.

Rather like the situation I find myself in with my planning application now, I am sure in all reality that this is hassle and a drain on your time that you could well do without. Certainly, I would have preferred it that we had both shared the approach of live and let live with regard to our respective use of our properties, as amenable and understanding neighbours. Alas, this has proven not to be possible as a result of your chosen course of action.

Whilst we are clearly at cross-purposes now, I do hope that, at least in time, you will come to regret your actions in attempting to hash the sincere hopes and dreams of an upstanding young family and also come to respect my defence of such in the face of objections from you and others forming part of a tight knit group associated, in the most part, with the Farnham Parish Meeting, where I feel that I have been left with no other option than to stand up now and fight, firmly but professionally, for our livelihood. We will keep on doing so until the very end of the road and our resolve should not be doubted for one minute.

Our proposal is genuinely one of self-build for our own long-term occupation - you will recall I looked you in the eye and gave you my word when we met that this was to be the extent of our intentions for the development of our land after you asked me how I could assure you of such, telling you also that I was a man of integrity. My word is my bond. Therefore, in light of this and the circumstances I outlined to you when we met, where I was nothing but upfront, honest and sincere and frankly wore my heart on my sleeve (just as I did when I met your wife for the first time, when she invited me into your home some months before - where we had a lovely chat) we simply cannot understand, other than to conclude that it simply boils down to a matter of Nimbyism on your part, how you can have been so heartless and disrespectful in your approach towards us and our proposal.

That my parents own a development company, has no bearing on our application to obtain permission for our first owned, self-build home and certainly mischievous and untruthful statements made by your appointed planning consultant (who submitted the objection to our proposal on your behalf) and others with regard to our relationship with that company, are simply misplaced and patently untrue. I have never been a Director or Shareholder of Yorkshire Land Limited and this is readily confirmed by information in the public domain. Therefore, the fact that we have been accused of such is simply all the more upsetting and demonstrative of the unscrupulous approach your consultant and others have taken towards attempting to prevent our application from proceeding.

I understand that you served for 18 years as a Harrogate District Councillor and am aware that you continue your public service now in your role as a Deputy Lieutenant for North Yorkshire, which putting our current differences aside, is something I greatly admire you for.

Nonetheless, I am sure you are familiar with the Nolan Principles which apply to those holding public roles (including that of Deputy Lieutenant) and also that it is a requirement of those persons to challenge behaviour which conflicts with these principles, which in the context of the untruths that have been unscrupulously perpetuated by your planning consultant (on your behalf) and others in the village (whom we are aware you are familiar with) I believe it is clearly demonstrated is something you are failing to do.

One of the Nolan Principles relates to Honesty; requiring holders of public roles to be truthful and to challenge others where you are aware that they are acting untruthfully. You will no doubt be aware that we had requested that your planning consultant correct the untruthful allegation in relation to Yorkshire Land limited being the 'applicant's development company' and to apologise for making the statement and that he has thus far refused to do so.

Perhaps in light of these actions - your knowledge of this dishonesty and also that perpetuated by others in the village (where I consider you to be an elder statesman in the light of your many years of public service) in relation to the same or similar statements, coupled with your actions in contravening aspects of the Town and Country Planning Act (whether willingly or not) with regard to your unlawful use of land for domestic purposes (and I am advised also the removal of a tree in the conservation area on your property without the necessary permission from the Local Authority) - which again to reiterate, are actions entirely at odds with the Nolan Principles of Public Life - you should now carefully reflect on and consider your suitability to continue in your role as a Deputy Lieutenant for North Yorkshire.

I had very much hoped, when I first became aware that you were our neighbour, that we could become good friends as I believed that, whilst of very different ages, we still had a lot in common as local businessmen and both with a record of public service in the area - albeit yours much longer than my own! Sadly, I feel your behaviour in relation to our planning application has all but scuppered any chance of friendship, although as a Christian (albeit non-practising) I am mindful of the importance of forgiveness, particularly where past wrongdoing is then corrected by good deeds.

In the meantime, we must now fight on for justice and to gain permission for our proposal through the planning appeals process. Whereafter, on the basis that we are ultimately successful in obtaining permission for our home, I can only hope the old adage of time proving to be a good healer rings true and that we can at least be amicable neighbours.

Yours sincerely

Sam Green
Mr & Mrs S. Green