

Gladman, planning etc – Update

As is now well known, Gladman have withdrawn their appeal on the Pluckley Road site. They have also withdrawn their two other appeals on sites in Ashford borough – in Brabourne and in Biddenden.

Why did Gladman withdraw?

The reason for their withdrawal was as follows. In addition to the Inquiry on our site, from April to June two Inspectors from the Planning Inspectorate also held hearings into Ashford's draft Local Plan. At the end of this they issued their [post hearings advice](#) (interim findings). In this they found that Ashford had a "five year housing supply". If a Local Authority cannot demonstrate a "five year supply" – i.e. it cannot demonstrate, on the rather technical calculations required, that it is likely to build sufficient houses to meet demand over the next five years plus an appropriate buffer - then it cannot refuse a site simply on the grounds that it is not in their plan, it can only refuse because the site is "unsustainable", i.e. very unsuitable in ways that cannot be mitigated.

That Ashford did not have a five year supply was thus a main plank of Gladman's arguments for all three sites. The decision by the Local Plan Inspectors undermined this and meant they would have no chance of winning their appeals so they withdrew.

They could try again....

While their withdrawal is good news it does therefore leave open the possibility that they could try to reopen the case in future should ABC once again be unable to demonstrate a 5 year supply. If we had had the decision by the Inspector we would have had a more definitive ruling. We hope though that the very strong arguments Gladman met from ABC, CPRE Kent and us will cause them to think twice before doing so. Another positive is that we should have the chance to complete our Neighbourhood Plan before any new application appears and this will also help.

What about other housing developments?

On other matters the post hearing advice had mixed messages for us. The two sites proposed on the A20 at Tutt Hill and by Holiday Inn which would have affected Charing have been ruled out. But the Inspectors seem to have been deaf to any of our arguments on the "Land next to Poppyfields" site – although there may be more in their full report later. This site (or sites) will therefore remain in the Plan with an indicative capacity of 180 houses (in addition to around 20 on and behind the garage).

We do understand however that ABC will include the need to ensure protection for groundwater supplies in the policy for the site. This is vital since, as the hydrology report commissioned by Lucy Simmons shows, water from the site drains into the West Brook which later runs over the sand of the Folkestone beds. While it traverses the sand it loses water into the aquifer at a point close to the Charing boreholes which supply water to us and to a number of other villages.

As you all probably know there is an outline application for up to 135 houses on the part of the "Land West of Poppyfields" owned by the Wheler Foundation and promoted by Gladman. We expect a further application in the Autumn for the remaining part of the site which is being promoted by a company called Dean Lewis. The application by Gladman is under consideration by ABC. The Parish Council found the Gladman application unsuitable in a number of ways and lacking needed information – we have therefore objected strongly and this can be seen in the [documents](#) on ABC's website. In addition to the vital need to protect groundwater a major – but not the only – concern is the plans for the access from the A20 which seem very unsuitable.

We expect work on the Orbit older people's accommodation to begin soon and we will also be looking out for detailed planning for the homes on the Char 1 site – the land south of the Arthur Baker fields.