

## PROOF OF EVIDENCE AT THE HODSON S106 APPEAL IN FEBRUARY 2025

My name is Cllr Jessamy Blanford. I was elected to Ashford Borough Council in 2007 and am the Ward Member for Weald Central which includes Chilmington Green. Before being a Borough Councillor I was involved in some of the Borough Council's workshops to identify a site for future housing in the Borough. I understood the need for increased housing in the UK and thought it better to have one well designed garden suburb rather than adding 50-100 houses to all the villages in the Borough. This view was supported by the Great Chart & Singleton Parish Council. I have followed the progress of Chilmington Green since its original outline consent in 2014 through to full planning in 2017.

I have been disappointed at the slow progress on the Hodson development at Chilmington, particularly when compared with Barretts and Jarvis Homes who are the other two developers on site. It seems almost as if Hodson's have delayed progress in order to avoid the dates at which various S106 payments are due, i.e. 400 houses occupied before providing funding for the improvements to the A28 or the bus service to Ashford station.

Many of the first residents bought their properties knowing it would be a building site for some time but hoping in a comparatively short time they would be living in an area close to the advantages of Ashford but still within easy access to the countryside. They believed there would be at least a supermarket and other shops, medical facilities, children's play areas, a park, footpaths, schools and sports facilities.

I know that residents feel let down by the slow progress and disappointed at the lack of facilities originally promised.

Hodson's should have known what they were taking on when they acquired the Chilmington land for development and organised their finances accordingly. I know that this is a simplistic view but I do not intend to go into the figures in depth.

During the Possingham Farm enquiry Hodson's made a point that, while there were no facilities proposed for these 655 houses, the residents would be able to use the ones at Chilmington Green. Why have they, within six months, changed their minds?

The Borough Council has been debating with Hodson's over the S106 commitments for several years. It is now time for Hodson's to step up to the mark and provide the homes, the facilities and the exceptional setting that we all expected.

Thank you.

Jessamy Blanford (Cllr)

Weald Central Ward

19.02.25