

Dear Leanne,

I made a brief verbal contribution on Tuesday to the inspector, however I was busy at work that day and feel I didn't get my comments across in a coherent manner, so I would like to put my main points in writing to help the inspector remember/ understand more clearly what I said.

Firstly, by way of a personal introduction my name is Martin Mackey and I have lived in the village of Wye full time since 1993, and as I'm now 51 years old that's most of my adult life. I have been working at Ripple Farm in the neighbouring parish of Crundale since 1994 and in 2001, the three of us that were currently managing the farm started a share-cropping arrangement with the then Wye College, working alongside Dr Andrew Ferguson, growing on their organic unit. I now run the business with my wife, Sarah, and we trade as Ripple Farm Organics, growing organic vegetables, which we sell direct to customers locally in east Kent as well as supplying box schemes and small shops in London. Our own vegetable box scheme started deliveries in the village of Wye in 1997 and we have attended Wye Farmers Market since it first started in 2001.

When Wye College closed, we entered a formal lease arrangement with Imperial College beginning in August 2007. We rent 105 acres between the eastern boundary of Appeal B. Coldharbour Lane and Sidelands and on either side of the Wibberly Way and the North Downs Way. Occupation Road continues beyond Appeal B as a gravel-based farm track through the land we rent.

Agricultural Land within Appeal B

We lost secure tenancy to just under 5 acres of the 105 acres of agricultural land when Imperial sold it to Terillium Telereal (TT) in 2015. TT have allowed us to crop some of these 5 acres on a short-term basis. However, I am now concerned that this agricultural land will be lost to food production forever. While others commenting at this appeal have been very concerned about the future of historic buildings, I feel it important to represent the future of food production on this productive agricultural land. If this parcel of agricultural land is to be used as part of a property development scheme including housing and small business units either side of occupation road then I suggest that rather than being lost to food production for ever it could be developed as a 'community orchard'. This idea is well established, and many models of ownership/management exist. I believe we should consider the loss of agricultural land to housing development as a very serious matter.

We have seen a huge increase in demand for locally grown, organic vegetables since the pandemic hit the UK as have other organic vegetable growers across the UK.

Affordable Housing within Appeal B, Appeal A and Appeal C

We employ approximately 12 people at Ripple Farm Organics and we pay our full-time employees above the Living Wage Foundation rate. However, earnings within the agricultural sector do not compare to those available in other sectors, and Wye is a popular place to live, within commuting distance of London, pushing housing prices up. The most practical and sustainable place for our staff to live is in the village where they work. As owners of an eco-friendly business we're keen that our staff have the option to travel to work sustainably, which for our location, the best option is cycling the short distance from Wye.

Currently 5 of us live in Wye. My wife and I are fortunate to now own our own 3-bedroom house. However, 3 of the employees live at home with their parents and are aged 18, 26 and

27. Whilst it is acceptable to live at home at age 18 I know that the 26- and 27-year-olds are very keen to leave home. Sadly, affordable rents are rare in Wye! A couple of examples here - our 27-year-old employee doesn't drive and cycles to work every day, she cannot continue to work at the farm unless she lives in Wye. Also, 2 years ago, we lost a valuable employee of 10 years when his parents left the village of Wye and at the age of 28, he had no choice but to move with them and leave us as he couldn't find affordable housing within Wye.

I don't object to some new housing in Wye but it's disgraceful that 104 dwellings on 3 sites includes only 2 affordable units. How can this be? Sustainable communities need to cater for those who work there as well as those who commute, the former usually earning less than the latter. Where do we expect those who work in Wye's Co-op, pubs and cafes, hairdressers and care-home as well as our own employees to live?

I invite TT to look at the model practiced by English Rural where houses are part owned and often tied to the occupation of the shared owner. A good example of this exists in the neighbouring village of Godmersham. Some of these houses had stipulations that the shared owners needed to work in rural occupations and even had solar panels as part of their build!

Mains water

Currently our only access to mains water comes across the Appeal B site. We would like for provision to be made for this to continue in a secure manner.

It is necessary for us to have access to a water supply to enable our vegetable growing to continue.

yours sincerely

Martin Mackey Bsc Ag (horticulture) Msc Sustainable Agriculture

Kind Regards

Ripple Farm Organics

ORGANIC VEGETABLES FROM KENT

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