

**Gosport Borough Local Plan 2011-2029 Examination.**

**Representation 24**

re.

**Site of former Royal Sailors Rest Community Centre,  
Grange Lane, Rowner, Gosport, Hampshire PO13 9RX.**

**Statement on behalf of Driftstone Developments Limited**

presented by

**Robert Tutton BSc. (Hons), MRTPI**

in response to

**Question 3.11 -“Should the Sailors Rest site, shown on the Proposals  
Map as existing Community and Health facilities, be deleted?”**

## **Robert Tutton**

**Qualifications:** Bachelor of Science (Honours) Degree in Town and Country Planning awarded by the University of Aston in Birmingham.  
Member of the Royal Town Planning Institute since 1976.

**Experience.** Has worked in the town and country planning field for fifty years, of which nine were spent with Portsmouth City Council (1965-74) and fifteen with Fareham Borough Council (1974-89) in several senior positions, including Chief Forward Planning Officer and Chief Development Control Officer. Has been a Town Planning Consultant in private practice since July 1989 and a Director of Robert Tutton Town Planning Consultants Ltd since January 2008.

Is familiar with the provisions of adopted and emergent planning policies for the Rowner area and has visited the objection site and its environs on several occasions since first being instructed by Driftstone Developments Limited in June 2014.

**Gosport Borough Local Plan 2011-2029 Examination.  
(Representation 24)**

**Question 3.11 – ‘Should the Sailors Rest site, shown on the Proposals  
Map as existing Community and Health facilities, be deleted?’**

**1.0 THE OBJECTION SITE and its environs.**

**1.1** The site the subject of Rep.24 comprises 0.27 hectare of vacant, unused and despoiled land that lies to the east of Grange Lane, within the ‘Rowner’ ward in the northwestern part of Gosport Borough Council’s administrative area. Residents of the locality enjoy safe and convenient access to two local centres - the Rowner Road centre that lies 3.5 minutes walk away to the northeast and the Rowner Lane local centre that lies 4.5 minutes walk away to the northwest; the Rowner Lane Bowling Green lies immediately next door to the site; the public open spaces of Rowner Lane are just 2.5 minutes walk away to the northwest and The Grange County Infant and Junior Schools stand opposite the site, on the west side of Grange Lane. Just 1.5 minutes walk away to the south of the appeal site, St Nicholas Avenue forms part of the route followed by the ‘First’ No.9 bus service that is available to take passengers southeast to Gosport town centre and the Ferry interchange via the War Memorial Hospital or northwest to Fareham town centre via Hoeford – there are 106 buses a day in each direction between 0506 and 1954 hours. ‘Good access’ in Gosport Borough is being ‘*..within 200 metres of a public transport corridor*’ and St Nicholas Avenue meets that requirement. There are real alternatives here to the use of the private car for access to services and facilities; this is an accessible, sustainable location.

**1.2** The area about the subject site is characterised by substantial one/two-storey commercial premises and dwellings in a variety of styles and formats, which includes large two-storey blocks of flats that resemble pairs of semi-detached dwellings. To the south of the appeal site stands a substantial two-storey depot building, beyond which is the ‘Crossley Community Centre’ – planning permission K5023/3 for its erection was granted by Gosport Borough Council in October 1991.

**1.3** Aggie Weston’s Royal Sailors Rest took out a 21-year lease in November 2008 for the building that *stood* on this site but the lease was voluntarily surrendered in 2010. The building stood empty for three years, during which time it was vandalised and subjected to two arson attacks; it was eventually demolished in January 2014 on the order of Gosport Borough Council’s Head of Building Control. The subject site is unused, previously-developed land in a sustainable location in the urban area.

**2.0 PLANNING APPLICATION 14/00305/FULL**

**2.1** Planning application 14/00305/FULL was submitted to Gosport Borough Council on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2014 for ‘*The erection of 6 No. three bedroom houses and 7 No. two bedroom houses, with associated access, car parking and landscaping (adjacent to Conservation Area)*’. Permission was refused on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2014 for five reasons, which included Reason 1:

“1. It has not been demonstrated that the site is no longer required to provide a community facility in the area, to the detriment of the strategic aim to improve the quality of life of residents in the Borough and the delivery of a sustainable community with a reduced need to travel and the proposal is,

therefore, unacceptable in principle and contrary to Policy R/CF2 of the Gosport Borough Local Plan Review, Policies LP3 and LP32 of the Gosport Borough Local Plan 2011-2029 (Publication version 2014) and paragraph 156 of the NPPF.”

**2.2** An appeal is being prosecuted against that decision but its outcome is not yet known. There is no intention to rehearse the issues of that appeal in the Local Plan Examination. The matter of concern is that Policy LP32 was cited as a basis for rejection of a residential development scheme for this vacant, unused and despoiled land, when Gosport Borough Council has itself brought forward no proposals for the site’s utilisation as community or health facilities.

### **3.0 PLANNING POLICY**

**3.1** The statutory development plan for Gosport presently comprises only the saved policies of the Gosport Borough Local Plan Review (2006). Production of the Proposals Map at 1:10,000 scale presents some difficulties of interpretation but it is apparent that the major part of the objection site is coloured pink to represent ‘*Existing Community and Health Facilities (Policy R/CF2)*’. With regard to the ‘Protection of Existing Health and Community Facilities’, paragraph 8.11 of the Local Plan Review explains that ‘*The policy also seeks to protect other community facilities, such as community centres and halls, which can provide important social and recreational functions for local residents...The Borough Council will therefore resist any proposal that would involve the loss of existing facilities, unless they can be reprovided in an appropriate form and location*’. Policy R/CF2 generates this presumption against the loss of existing health and community facilities:

“Development proposals which would result in the loss of existing health and community facilities for which there is a significant need will not be permitted unless:

- i. alternative provision is made of at least equivalent value in terms of quality, quantity and accessibility; or
  - ii. adequate and appropriate alternative facilities are available in the locality.”
- (Policy R/CF2)**

**3.2** No issue is taken with Gosport Borough Council’s continued wish to resist the *loss* of an existing facility that makes a valued contribution to the local community but the redevelopment of this site would not actually result in the loss of an existing facility - Aggie Weston’s Royal Sailors Rest held a 21-year lease from November 2008 for the building that stood on this site but surrendered it in November 2010 and moved to St Mary’s Church, where it continues to operate; the building on this site consequently stood unused and empty for three years, during which time it was subjected to vandalism and two arson attacks and eventually had to be demolished. The local community itself brought about the demise of the facility that stood here and the harsh reality is that there is not actually a facility on the site for its enjoyment. There is no community facility here to be lost and community use of the site has been abandoned.

**3.3** In light of the comments submitted to Gosport Borough Council by Theresa Pratt of Aggie Weston’s in respect of application 14/00305/FULL, David Paxman of Driftstone Developments Limited met with Ms Pratt on 18<sup>th</sup> September and 9<sup>th</sup> October 2014, to consider

whether there may be any common ground. The ‘Agreed Version’ of their conversation that took place on 9<sup>th</sup> October showed that Aggie Weston’s has an informal agreement for the continued use of facilities at St Mary’s Church until mid-2016 and the prospect of another two years beyond that; Aggie Weston’s has not undertaken an objective, rigorous evaluation of the options that may be available within the Rowner area; and Aggie Weston’s accommodation requirements for this site would prevent the delivery of its viable residential redevelopment. It also became apparent that, although Aggie Weston’s Annual Report for 2013/14 showed that it had carried forward total funds of £9,256,026 on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014, ‘*Their expectation is for the developer/Council to provide the facilities at no cost*’. Driftstone Developments Limited has been obliged to conclude that there is no prospect of accommodating Aggie Weston’s ambitions for this site and that Aggie Weston’s vague intentions would simply perpetuate uncertainties that have already dogged the site for four years.

**3.4** Gosport Borough Council submitted the ‘Publication Version’ of the Gosport Borough Local Plan 2011-2029 to the Secretary of State for examination on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2014. It is apparent from paragraph 11.90 that Gosport Borough Council seeks to perpetuate a similar principle to that which underpinned Policy R/CF2 of the adopted Local Plan Review – ‘*The Council will normally resist any proposal that would involve the loss of existing community, cultural, sport and built leisure facilities*’. Emergent Policy LP32 generates this presumption against the loss of buildings that are currently used for community purposes:

“Planning permission will not be granted for development which would result in the loss of existing community, cultural, sports, recreation and built leisure facilities unless it can be demonstrated that:

- (a) an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the buildings to be surplus to requirements for that particular purpose
- (b) the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; and
- (c) it can be demonstrated that there are no other viable community, cultural, sports, recreation or built leisure uses for the premises or site and that there have been reasonable attempts to sell/let them for these purposes.”

**3.5** The community use of the building that stood on this site was terminated in 2010 when Aggie Weston’s surrendered a lease that still had nineteen years to run; the consequent lack of use led to vandalism and arson attacks. It is paradoxical that the very operator that triggered the demise of the building has recently sought to persuade Gosport Borough Council that it should resist an alternative future for the land. There is no community/health building on the site to lose and the site has not been put to *any* community, cultural, sports, recreation or built leisure use for four years.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION and SUBMISSION**

**4.1** The objection site comprises despoiled, unused land in a sustainable location within the urban area of Gosport. Aggie Weston’s Royal Sailors Rest voluntarily surrendered its lease of the premises in 2010 and the building stood empty for three years; it was vandalised and subjected to two arson attacks. The building was demolished in January 2014. There is no building on the site to facilitate the continuation of community/health use. Gosport Borough Council accepted (in the

context of planning application 14/00305/FULL that, if this site did not carry an R/CF2 notation from the Gosport Borough Local Plan Review, no objection would be raised to its residential redevelopment. Deletion of the site from the LP32 notation of the submitted Local Plan would not lead to the **loss** of a 'community or health facility' - there is no community facility here to be lost and its community use has actually been abandoned. This site is vacant land with a nil use, for which a new and positive future needs to be found. Deletion of the LP32 notation from this land would facilitate the delivery of thirteen family houses on unused, previously-developed urban land.

**4.2** Inspector Wilde is respectfully requested to accept this submission and agree that the inclusion of the Sailors Rest site on the Proposals Map within the 'Existing Community and Health facilities' notation is factually erroneous, unjustified and unsound and should be deleted.