

June 30, 2020:

Letter written by Hazel Arturi (Alton Road, Winslade) to the Basingstoke Gazette.

"I feel compelled to write to express my horror and disbelief at the recently announced proposal for 2,500 houses in "Upper Swallick garden community" which I read about in your paper dated June 25.

"My husband and I were brought up in Hampshire and moved into the area with our young family two years ago. We were drawn to the village of Winslade because of the stunning landscape. We have invested our time to renovate a run down cottage in order to be surrounded by this wonderful farmland.

"We are not alone in enjoying the beautiful countryside around us. A great many individuals enjoy walking, riding, running and cycling along the tracks and bridleways crossing the area earmarked for development. Over the past few months there has been a significant increase in the number of people exercising in the area, as many of us have realised the great benefit of having this stunning countryside on our doorstep.

"The prospect of the absolute and final destruction of rolling countryside, coupled with the strain on the local infrastructure by the increase in houses and traffic, is horrific. In addition to the disruption, noise and aggravation that living beside a building site for the next 20 years would bring.

"It is clear that I have to declare an interest as we would be negatively affected by this development as it would become our immediate neighbour.

"Garden Communities, as a concept, have proven to be an ineffective in delivering sustainable development in idyllic locations, instead they simply provide low density urban sprawl. The worst of both worlds; residences situated too far from amenities, ensuring total dependence on cars, and therefore a greater pressure on local roads, and the destruction of the once idyllic countryside.

"The farmland around us has been watched, hawk eyed, by our children during the seasonal changes since we moved here. Prompting questions about crops and food production, eagerly anticipating the successful harvest as if it were their own. How are we able to teach our children that the ownership of land comes with responsibility, if their first example is torn up and destroyed?

"I am horrified that such contempt can be shown for beautiful and productive farmland. Hardly a legacy worth leaving to the next generation."

Hazel Arturi, Alton Road, Winslade