

DRAFT (NOT FOR RELEASE)

FAO. Michael Atkinson.

As discussed I would welcome your comments before I submit to  
Martin Hooker.

Keith Rocket Esq.  
The Editor  
Meon Matters  
Drayton Cottage  
East Meon  
Hants  
GU32 1PW

Comments made to YJA  
by phone 14/15-4-00.

MH/jr/98.P44  
11<sup>th</sup> April 2000

- 1) looks too long for Meon Matters, but that is Keith's business.
- 2) OK as a proposal for B/Tos. land, but overlooks ① width of football field ② uselessness of land left to Diocese.

Dear Mr Rocket

Given the level of confusion and conflicting views at the Parish Council meeting on the 6<sup>th</sup> April, I am very grateful to you for affording me the opportunity to clarify, in written form, my client's position.

Those present at the meeting will, I am sure, remember the comments of the ex-Chairman of the Parish Council, Mr Wilson-Atkinson who stated with some strength that despite numerous approaches from the Parish Council, The Blackman Trustees had refused to sell the land to the Parish Council. In a similar vein there were many calls for the land to be brought forwards as a recreation ground and that there should be no housing anywhere in the village. The crucial question which explains the current position is: why should The Blackman Trustees sell the Kews Meadows to the Parish Council for purely a recreation value?

It is my understanding that the approaches of the Parish Council have centred around the Parish Council paying a notional value of a few thousand pounds per acre for the field in question. In order to understand the position of The Blackman Trustees, you have to understand that there have been and there remain numerous national housebuilders queuing up to acquire this site on a speculative basis for substantially more money than any offer that the Parish Council have put forwards. Furthermore, all of these offers would provide a further substantial sum should development ever come forwards on the site. Consequently, if all of your readers were to put themselves in the position of The Blackman Trustees and ask if they owned such an asset, whether they would be prepared to sell it for a single figure fraction of what they should otherwise get from selling to a housebuilder, would they do it? Clearly the answer could be no. However, even if there were philanthropic members of the public who were prepared to entertain such a discounted sale, in this particular case as the land is held in trust, it would not be legally possible to do so.

Consequently the reality of the position is that legally and from a commercial point of view, it is not possible to dispose of the site for purely recreational value. It is this huge divergence of basic historic positions of the Trustees and Parish Council which has led to the current stalemate, lasting for as I understand it, the past 27 years.

However, the current position provides a solution to this historic impasse. The two fundamental differences with the current position are:

- a. The introduction of the Tosdevine Land; and
- b. The emerging Local Plan position.

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The introduction of the Tosdevine land means that there is now flexibility to overcome the two previous positions of, on one hand the Parish Council wanting the whole land for recreation and on the other The Blackman Trustees wanting the whole site for housing. The joining together of the Blackman and the Tosdevine land in this way means that there is scope for some of the housing value that the Trustees require to be generated, by relocating housing elsewhere in the village, thus freeing up land on Kews Meadow for recreational use. Again contrary to some of the comments at the meeting, this approach would actually result in both the Blackman's and the Tosdevine's ending up with less financial gain than they would by pursuing outright housing on each of their own parcels independently. Conversely, it would of course mean that there would be less recreational land the village should either of the independent housing proposals come forward.

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It also has the substantial advantage, from a village point of view, that there is more choice in the location of both recreation and housing than the straight historic position of housing or recreation on Kews Meadow. Furthermore, the reality of the situation is that both the Blackmans and the Tosdevines have put forward a proposition, via me, which is basically a good deal for the village. The amount of money that they would get from any of the three options that I advanced at the village meeting would be substantially less than if they sold out to a housebuilder who succeeded in covering the whole site in housing.

Again as I mentioned at the meeting, it is my clients intention to do something which both they, as local families, and the people of East Meon will feel proud both in terms of the quality of any houses as well as the quality of the recreational fields. These fields will be held in trust or gifted to the Parish for recreational uses in perpetuity.

Consideration of my comments above in the context of the emerging housing numbers, gives considerable credence to my point that this is both fair and a good deal for the village. The summer of 1998 District Council publication 'Your Area, Your Future' was produced in the context of a Hampshire Structure Plan requirement that netted down to a need to find allocations for some 2,400 houses within the District. In light of this level of need, the 'Your Area, Your Future' document stated that 250 of these would be distributed amongst the smaller villages. The document defined these villages as those with "a specific need and/or close to large settlements which can easily be reached by existing or improved public transport which are likely to have a school or shop which further small scale development can help to sustain." Clearly East Meon falls into this category. However, when the Deposit Draft Plan was published last autumn, the Structure Plan position was uncertain and it looked as though the housing figure for East Hampshire would be reduced from 2,400 to 1,600. It was in the context of this figure of 1,600 that the officers at East Hampshire originally suggested a mixed allocation of a football pitch and 20 houses on Kews Meadow and the Glebe Strip. As you can see this allocation is not far from the allocation proposed in a total of 40