

A VANITY PROJECT?

Many residents of Coates and Eastrea have been receiving an electioneering leaflet, distributed by Councillor Haq Nawaz (surprisingly, he seems to have forgotten to put one through my door!).

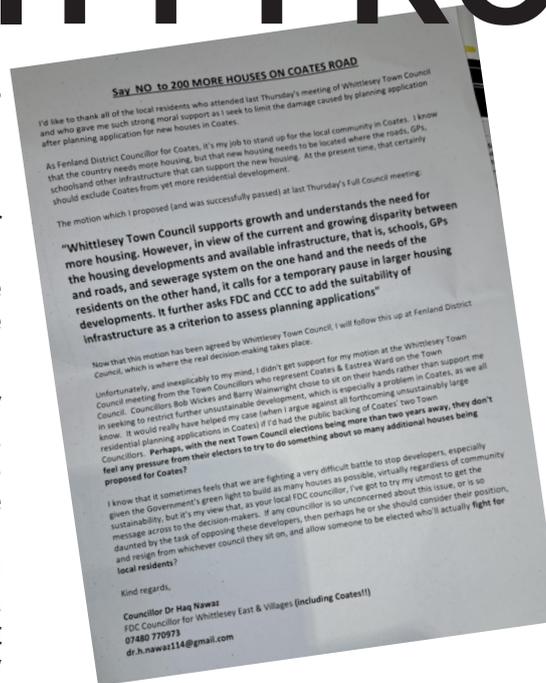
He heads the leaflet “Say NO to 200 MORE HOUSES ON COATES ROAD”. In it he lauds the success he claims in getting a motion carried (more on that in a moment) at the recent meeting of Whittlesey Town Council (a meeting that descended into chaos when one of his fellow councillors, Elisabeth Sennitt Clough, launched an unprecedented and entirely misguided personal attack on Independent Councillor Peter Bibb – with the Chair struggling to maintain order and resulting in eighteen member of the public walking out in protest and disgust).

The leaflet also contains the following paragraph:

Unfortunately, and inexplicably to my mind, I didn't get support for my motion at the Whittlesey Town Council meeting from the Town Councillors who represent Coates & Eastrea Ward on the Town Council. Councillors Bob Wickes and Barry Wainwright chose to sit on their hands rather than support me in seeking to restrict further unsustainable development, which is especially a problem in Coates, as we all know. It would really have helped my case (when I argue against all forthcoming unsustainably large residential planning applications in Coates) if I'd had the public backing of Coates' two Town Councillors. Perhaps, with the next Town Council elections being more than two years away, they don't feel any pressure from their electors to try to do something about so many additional houses being proposed for Coates?

Councillor Nawaz must have a very bad memory.

I must assume that, as the alternative is that he is simply not telling the truth.



It has been less than a week since that meeting and already he appears to have forgotten that every councillor involved with planning either at Whittlesey or Fenland made a declaration of interest at the start of the meeting and abstained from the debate of his motion or the vote on it. Here is my declaration (you will be able to check on the accuracy this for yourselves once the meeting minutes are published):

"Having taken advice on the matter, I must declare an interest in item 5 of Agenda Item F26/2025.

As a member of the Whittlesey Town Council planning committee I am required to consider each application on its own merits.

There is a significant possibility that an independent observer may consider any engagement in this agenda item to predetermine my opinion on any current or potential planning applications that come before the committee."

Every other member connected with planning made an identical, or broadly similar, declaration — every member except for Councillor Nawaz himself, who sits on Whittlesey Town Council Planning Committee and has probably, by submitting this resolution, ruled himself ineligible to be involved in any application for 'Larger Housing Developments'.

TRYING HIS UTMOST?

Councillor Nawaz claims to be "trying his utmost" when it comes to Planning Decisions.

At the last count, out of 31 WTC Planning Committee meetings held since he was appointed, he has attended only 14. He has failed to attend 17, and has failed to even send apologies (the most basic courtesy) 8 times!

If that is 'his utmost', then things aren't looking very good, are they?

ABOUT THAT RESOLUTION...

"Whittlesey Town Council supports growth and understands the need for more housing. However, in view of the current and growing disparity between the housing developments and available infrastructure, that is, schools, GPs and roads, and sewerage system on the one hand and the needs of the residents on the other hand, it calls for a temporary pause in larger housing developments. It further asks FDC and CCC to add the suitability of infrastructure as a criterion to assess planning applications"

Fine words! But, is it anything more than a vanity proposal, issued to tell the public what they want to hear (at a time when Cllr. Nawaz is putting himself forward for election at the upcoming CCC election – or is that just ‘coincidence’)?

As a member of Whittlesey Town Council Planning Committee, Cllr. Nawaz should be aware that planning applications are *never* decided simply on the wishes of the local residents and councillors. There are very clearly defined legal requirements and restrictions. If a council ignores those rules and regulations and allows or rejects a development on a whim, the developer may appeal and that appeal will be decided on the basis of Planning Law. If it is found that permission was unreasonably withheld the developer will be given leave to go ahead and the council can be left with a very large legal bill to cover the costs of both council and developer!

Is what he asks for unreasonable? For “FDC and CCC to add the suitability of infrastructure as a criterion to assess planning applications”?

THEY ALREADY ARE CRITERIA!

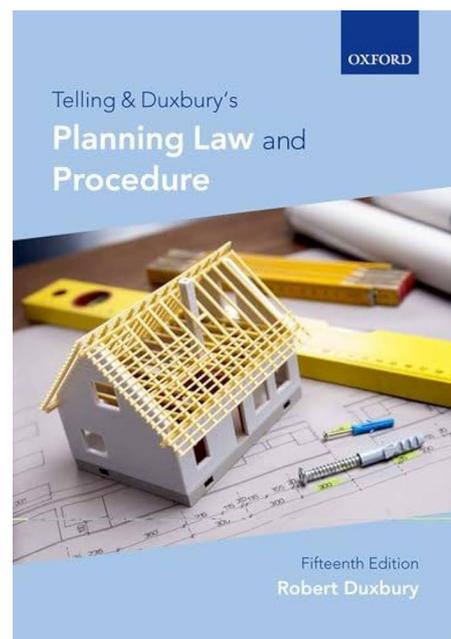


The Nation Planning Policy Framework (a central government publication) mention ‘Infrastructure’ 63 times and ‘sustainability’ 61 times. For the Fenland Local Plan, they are mentioned 157 times and 71 times, respectively. In the Whittlesey Neighbourhood Plan they are mentioned 9 times and 31 times.

Councillor Nawaz seems to feel he has won a great victory in getting this proposal passed. He has been posting on Social Media “We Won!” and “No more houses”... Unfortunately, the truth is a little different to how Councillor Nawaz would like to portray it.

The motion was carried. He managed to get the support of one other councillor – Councillor Mockett. **EVERY OTHER COUNCILLOR PRESENT ABSTAINED.** Either because, like me, they had declared an interest in the planning process, or because the motion was insupportable due to it’s lack of real content or legal impracticality — That includes all the other council members of his own party as well as the Independent councillors he singles out for criticism.

So, please, don’t be taken in by Councillor Nawaz’s blatant electioneering – he has achieved nothing, his proposal can achieve nothing and will be laughed out of court if he does try to take it to FDC or CCC.



Recommended Reading for Councillor Nawaz