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Subject: Whitstable Foreshore Oyster Racks

To: [teame2@planninginspectorate.gov.uk](mailto:teame2@planninginspectorate.gov.uk) <[teame2@planninginspectorate.gov.uk](mailto:teame2@planninginspectorate.gov.uk)>

In the matter of the Planning Appeal relating to the Whitstable Foreshore Oyster Beds  
Reference C/18/3209297, 3209299, 3209300

From Ashley John Clark, Canterbury City Councillor for Gorrell Ward, Whitstable.  
1st May 2019

I am the District Councillor for the area subject of this application and have been the Gorrell Ward Councillor since 2011. Since that time I have been the Vice-Chair of the Planning Committee.

I support the action by Canterbury City Council and oppose the appeal.

This matter was first brought to my attention in my capacity as Ward Councillor in January 2017. Prior to that date I had been aware of small-scale experimental activity involving a few Oyster racks close to shore by the Horsebridge and another small area approximately 200metres from the shore that had been buoyed. As a swimmer I only tend to visit the location when the tide is in and when swimming was able to avoid the buoyed area although the area close to the shore by the Horsebridge was a nuisance for persons wishing to swim along the shore line and close in. Since that time matters have changed significantly and what exists now is a substantial, expansive and significant development.

This area has been used by local people for water activity (swimming, sailing, canoeing, wind surfing etc) for many decades. I had used it for at least 55 years without interruption. It was arguably the busiest area on the north Kent Coast for water-based activity. When I went to inspect the site in January 2017 I was shocked by the extent and nature of the racks both close into the shore and offshore in the leisure area covering many acres. It was clear that a lot of development activity had taken place over the preceding autumn.

The racks bore metal spikes some 5 inches long that would be lethal in the event of a bodily collision. Since that time and since the service of the Enforcement Notice there has been a steady increase in the number and extent of the racks although more recently the spikes have been twisted over to form hooks which could trap a capsized sailor by snagging any clothing. The continued extension of the area following service of the notice makes a complete mockery of the assertion by the appellant that "time given to comply with the notice is too short". I am aware of several collisions with boats and windsurfers and at least one injury.

In simple planning terms I oppose this development for the following reasons:

1. There is no historical basis for this type of activity. Oysters were never farmed in this way. They were dredged off shore beyond the tidal limits. Those oysters were of a native species. Dredging activity died out in the 1930's.

2. There has been a total loss of amenity for users of marine craft and offshore swimmers. The racks remain dangerous and have created an extensive no go zone.

3. Visual amenity has been destroyed. There has been nothing of this nature in the area other than in the Second World War. Following the war, the invasion defences were removed and free navigation has existed.

4. This area in question is both a Ramsar site and an SSS I. The activity involves the placing of racks and more recently the placing of posts with regular driving over the site in quad vehicles. This is destructive to the marine environment and involves the introduction and cultivation of a non-native species. Elsewhere on the north Kent coast these Pacific Oysters are being gathered and destroyed to protect the environment. This is in clear breach of the NPPF 175(b).

Over the last two and a half years I have received numerous complaints from local people that reflect the points I have raised above. Whilst there is no democracy in planning and I am also aware that local people sent in well in excess of 200 individual letters of objection to this development prior to the service of the enforcement and these objections included the planning objections that I have mentioned above. I have not received any expressions of support from my constituents.

Ashley J Clark. Whitstable 1st May 2019