SKDC Site Allocation and Policies Development Plan Document

Local Hearing 15 November 2012 : Session 8 Omission Sites – Evidence of Billingborough Parish Council re Aveland School Site, Billingborough (representation No 175)

Statement of Rebuttal with regard to the statement of SKDC Para 6.1

The case for this site being included in the site allocations remains as set out in the original representation of Billingborough Parish Council (BPC).

The District Council’s latest statement which in effect says that this site can come forward as an ordinary planning application in the manner of a windfall misses the point of the representation and I need to elaborate on this.

Our statement of 14 November 2011 makes it clear that BPC has long proposed the allocation of the ex secondary school site for a combination of housing and community recreational uses. All parties are in favour of these new uses including BPC, SKDC and Lincolnshire County Council( which made a separate representation). The fact that the allocation has been omitted is the result of a simple mistake – a misunderstanding by SKDC that the site was not available – which was corrected many months ago. SKDC say that it cannot amend the DPD so we can only request that the Inspector now does this.

It is vital that an allocation is made for housing (circa 20 dwellings) on the existing footprint of the school buildings with a link to the rest of the site being allocated for community recreational facilities (the demand for which was made clear in BPC’s representation). Despite what SKDC say about not having consulted on this, the village community is well aware of this plan and indeed will only accept the housing if the recreational land is provided for community use. Para 4.4 of the Lincolnshire County Council representation makes it clear that as landowner it too favours the inclusion of the site in the DPD “to be linked to the provision of community facilities, with specific mention of playing fields and allotments” The community also has an additional objective which is that by allocating the open part of the site for community recreational use this will ensure that the housing development does not creep southwards beyond the brownfield area of the site.

If the redevelopment of this site is left to an ordinary planning application, without an allocation, there will be no pre-ordained control over the use of the open part of the site (the present playing fields) and no assurance, apart from the co-operation of the landowner, that this vital part of the community’s objective will be delivered. This may well turn the community (and BPC) against the proposed limited housing development. Why should we have the housing if we don’t get our playing fields and allotments?
BPC see the limited housing development as an ‘enabling development’ – one that will help deliver the recreational facilities – it is that element which is important to the community rather than just the housing itself.

The status that this linked allocation will give to the site will be vital in securing the subsequent consents for the site and in making sure that the total development happens. These consents include the following:

- Sport England’s consent is needed for a planning application that affects a playing field – consent is much more likely to be forthcoming if it is in response to a positive comprehensive plan which has some status (Billingborough and Pointon villages have begun work on a joint sports and recreational strategy which will support use of part of the playing field area for allotments as well as the enhancement of two existing pitches for football)

- BPC has a statutory responsibility to provide allotments and has evidence of a surge in demand. There is no other available and affordable site upon which to do this.

- The Crown Estate (a previous owner) has a covenant on the total site restricting its use to educational purposes. Now that this use is redundant it will only be likely to release the covenant on the playing fields area if it is convinced that the future of this area is for recreational facilities and that there is not indeed some hope of a wider housing consent across it.

In summary we believe that SKDC will not object to any allocation for housing linked to the community recreational use of the remaining school site that the Inspector chooses to make. It is simply saying that for procedural reasons it was not able to do this itself. Indeed we understand that such linkages have been made elsewhere within the DPD. A simple site plan defining the area for housing and the linked community recreational area can easily be produced based on the one provided in the Lincolnshire County Council representation.

If the Inspector can do this (see also para 4.3 of Lincolnshire County Council’s representation) it will be a good example of the local plan system working in a positive and co-operative way with local authorities and the community to help make wanted change happen. To not seize this opportunity and leave the matter open to a windfall planning application will be a wasted opportunity for positive policy planning and might even frustrate the development due to an open scramble for the last word on its future.

Michael King
Chairman, Billingborough Parish Council 30 October 2012