

PS/2075/Bampton (Matter 8) AE/O

Mrs Celia Hicks (Councillor)

GEN/759/O/AE BA1/760 BA2/761 BA3/762 BA4/763 NAS/764

- Bampton is an historically important small town but has not been a **market** town for over 40 years, the only vestige being October Bampton Fair Day. It has only 2 main streets. It is a Local Rural Centre with fewer than 2000 people, serving a rural hinterland and should not have been included in the same league as larger towns.
- The Conservation Area includes buildings, trackways and toll roads which have gradually changed over time from their mediaeval relevance to sheep, the wool trade, cloth and leather working and in Victorian times quarrying, to modern day use.

A **Key objective** of the Core Strategy is that the development proposed is planned **to bring benefits** I take issue with the Allocations and Infrastructure DPD on soundness grounds; the process is not 'justified'

As I understand it, to be 'justified' a DPD needs to answer the **key questions**:

1. Has the consultation process allowed for effective engagement of all interested parties?

I say that this question has not been fulfilled.

- *The ideals of the Consultation process are described* in SCI 1 para 2.4
- Highly specialised letters pertaining to each stage of the process were sent to Parish Clerks the language failing adequately to address the audience. People were also lulled into a false sense of security. How much better would it have been if the letters had quoted SCI para. 2.15 informing parish councils that the proposals would have a profound long term effect on the community and that MDDC would like to keep in a constant contact and feedback information.
- **The ONLY** poster referring to the LDF and Community Involvement exhibition held in Castle St shop on 11th January 2006 was displayed on the day of consultation, tied on with string on a post outside the Post Office!
- **Alert** posters, responding to newspaper 'small print' were **locally** produced; hardly an effective way for *MDDC* to communicate with the general public!
- Subsequent 'consultations' were held in the shop and in the Community Hall.....all with **locally** produced posters. Only the 2009 final consultation was advertised by LPA posters.
- Contrary to SCI 2 2.8, the **Response forms have been unintelligible** to the majority of residents. In order to respond people needed a grasp of the concepts of planning language and understanding of the complex process. The result has been a very **low no. of responses** particularly to the most essential Core Strategy. People have been disenfranchised by this.
- There was *no opinion feedback* from MDDC to the Town Council.
- Reassurance from the officers at the Consultations that there was no immediate urgency to worry about the issues which would not have an effect until 2026 bred complacency.
- This feeling of lack of understanding of the import of these complex issues was reflected at a Public Meeting held by BTC on September 7th 2009 which was overwhelmingly attended, angry accusations being heard from parishioners to the effect that they could not respond to the language of the forms and therefore their opinions had been dismissed. There was also confusion owing to the re-labelling of sites from one document to the next.
- SCI 2 para 2.10 says the '**LPA will strive to engage the young and minority groups**'. When did this happen? What was planned?
- SCI 5 para 2.15 says that 'The level of consultation will be **'fit for purpose'** acknowledging that '**proposals for substantial housing development may have a widespread and significant effect on the locality, requiring significant public involvement**'. If the LPA advertisement of the meetings was so lacking and the response forms so unintelligible, how could this ideal have been achieved?

- BTC had **no formal notice** of the August '09 Development Control meeting held in Tiverton which proposed mixed development at Bouchier as the favoured site and a **Letter of Complaint** was filed by BTC with a specific request for it to be included in submission to Inspectorate. It is contained in Section O of one of the files. People are outraged.
- **The Sedley requirement 4 says that the 'decision-maker must give conscientious consideration to the response to the consultation'.**

The preferred site, Bouchier Close

2. Is the content of the DPD justified by the evidence. What is the source of that evidence? How up to date is it and how convincing is it?

- MDDC officer Catherine Simmon's affordable housing survey (2006/7) and reported to the Town Council in April 2007, identified Bouchier as being a suitable site. It is a delightful site for any family to aspire to but what were the identification criteria used?
- It is outside the existing curtilage, up a steep hill, a sufficient distance from the town to necessitate shopping being carried in a vehicle and therefore the choice **does not protect the carbon footprint**. It is pie in the sky to assume that the single, ancient track of Frog. St. (only 9 feet wide in many places) can counteract the traffic access need to the town.
- Neither is Frog St a safe walk/cycle to school route. Being single track, opening onto a five road junction and with several roads to cross it took me 23 minutes walking briskly (without small children, buggy and school gear) to get to the main steps at the entrance to the school.
- Was a Castle Street traffic movement survey done? When, over what period of time, at what time of day, by whom and were the Town Council informed?
- The Bouchier decision assumes that there is a crying need for employment space though in 2005 Rotolok, Global Chemicals and Origin Fashion clothing firms had all closed or moved away and already more employment capability was being built into the development of the brownfield site of the old quarry at Scotts.
- Since that time, on the West St industrial site, PFG has created a further 10 units, only 3 of which are rented and the old Rotolock building has recently been divided into 4 units after lying empty for a number of years. The assessment did not appear to take into account vacant industrial space at nearby Exebridge or Brushford, a very narrow interpretation.
- As far as industrial need is concerned there is unfinished business at Scott's Quarry which it was understood, would take care of future sustainable need.
When Devonshire Homes developed the brownfield quarry site with permission for a total of six industrial units, townsfolk felt assured that this would provide enough employment space for the long term future and, sited as it is on the Tiverton Road outskirts of Bampton, the development had no direct effect on the overburdened infrastructure of the town centre. However, only half the development has been completed with three high units fronting the area. Now we find that a change of use is to be sought for one of the three units and that the final three planned industrial units are to be **omitted** from any 'windfall' Phase 2 development. MDDC cannot be ignorant of this situation.
- The failure to acknowledge the existing vacant employment space is what has made Bampton people so very angry. In spite of being planned in 2005 the Scott's site was never included in the DPD as an identified option as it was outside the town boundary. How is it that the Bouchier site was?
- Because of geography and logistics it simply is not the case that Bampton can attract the anticipated sustainable employment. Bampton is a Local Rural Centre not an easily accessible market town.

3. **Preferred Options and Alternatives** *Can it be shown that the LPA's chosen approach is the **most appropriate** given the reasonable alternatives? Where a balance had to be struck in taking decisions between competing alternatives, is it clear **how and why** these decisions were taken*
- In a letter, Planning Officer Simon Thornley asked Bampton Town Council how they viewed the Scout Hut site (Old Allotments) being included as a preferred Option. BTC replied in Dec 2008 that they supported development on that site provided that the Scout tenants could be re-sited. No explanation was forthcoming when this site was not included.
 - Savill's assessment of the **Bourchier** site made on behalf of Devonshire Homes is extremely selective with its photographs. I notice the lack of a photograph of Castle St., the ancient, narrow access road to town and there is *no traffic-count information* nor acknowledgement of the back-up problems associated with the frequent traffic constriction. Submitted photographs, taken within five days of one-another in September 2009 graphically reflect common situations.
 - The MDDC appraisal for the site in Appendix 1 falls short of an accurate picture.
 - Any development at Bourchier would have to include road widening and the removal of ancient hedgerows. The risk of flooding from run-off from this particular site is very real.
 - There would be an **increase in the carbon footprint** by the *necessary* multiple use of private and large service vehicles as well as an increase in traffic chaos with back-up in the town centre.
 - Tourism is part of the life blood of this little 'town'. Tourists arrive in vehicles and must be accommodated or they will drive on through.
 - **Newton Court.** This site is for a very small development. It has real access problems, the Spar shop deliveries causing great anxieties to adjacent housing.
 - **Ashleigh Park.** This is another very small development opposite the Scout Hut site. If this has been chosen why was the Bampton Town Council preferred Scout Hut site for a greater number of houses rejected?
 - **The school site** is a reasonable alternative, a brownfield site which would benefit the town with some low cost housing and the ability of children to walk into school and attend after school clubs. Access and run-off issues need to be solved.
 - **Non Allocated, South Molton Road.** This site has recently been put forward as a possible site by BTC. The benefits to the town would be to improve the existing narrow High Street scenario. Possible effects of run-off would have to be addressed effectively.
 - **Windfall.** In the last five years Bampton has had a significant number of windfall development, some sixty-odd houses being built. The **rate** of development for this small Local Centre is to exacerbate all the traffic difficulties experienced by its historic streets. The air quality and Carbon footprint cannot be unaffected and the infrastructure damaged.

Conclusion

- **The DPD takes no account whatsoever of local opinion or knowledge.** There are no benefits for Bampton, only greater traffic use, a greater carbon footprint, more traffic chaos.
- In the Summary of Responses to the Preferred Options, there are **no positive** comments regarding Bourchier.
- The DPD preferred option for Bampton cannot be justified.

PS 62/BA2/1132/1/2/3 The preferred site: Bouchier Site B, para 11 Castle Street



PS 62/BA2/1132/1/2/3 The preferred site: Bouchier Site B, bullet point 11.

