Bentworth Parish Council - Planning Meeting 14th May 2024

At last week's parish council meeting of 7th May we deferred discussions regarding

Planning Application 60094 Land to the south of Glebe Fields, Station Road, Bentworth, Alton as we are aware of the numerous objections from Bentworth residents.

We called a planning meeting for 14th May to give more time to focus on this item on this item only.

In the intervening 7 days our District Councillor Tony Costigan has contacted Simon Jenkins at East Hants District Council to raise several concerns regarding this revised agreed in principle application.

Tony has applied to the planning officers to go to full planning committee where objectors will have an opportunity to make representations.

Extracts from Tony's email below raised the concerns brought forward at the Bentworth Parish Council Meeting of 7th May 2024

I had a meeting with Bentworth PC last night. As the meeting highlighted the Glebe Fields application, it was well attended. It was also hostile with the complaints being directed at the two planning officers handling this case. Some of the hostility was due to the fact that the communications between the applicant and the planning office seem to be indicating that the planners were assisting the application as opposed to reviewing the details. I have to say, from what was read out, that this does appear to be the case.

There were also comments about the print size in parts of the communications being so small that the documents had to be enlarged to screen size maximum to be able to read them. That was followed by a comment that this was because it contained critical information. I have asked both residents to e-mail me their written complaint as I am sure it will contain more detail which will assist you. I am merely writing to advise you as to what is being said.

I will get back to you with the written complaints as soon as they are to hand.

Extract from the Response Received from EHDC

I have looked at the application and specifically the amended Planning, Design and Access statement. It is clear that the applicants are aware of the lack of a 4-year supply of land and that in the absence of this applications should be approved wherever possible. The case officers are doing just that, I am sure there will be those that object to this (and any) development in the village, however the site is shown as a draft allocation in the emerging Local Plan and officers are trying to ensure the development is acceptable and capable of approval. This will help the supply of housing coming forward so that we can get a 4-year supply of housing sooner rather than later. Until we get the min 4-years supply the "tilted balance" in favour of sustainable development will apply.

I hope this explains the position. I await the complaints and will respond to them in due course.

How did we get to this position:

East Hants is in an unfortunate position whereby we have the South Downs National Park covering 57% of the Geography. We however get a full allocation of 100 % of the housing allocation on 43% of the land.

Earlier this year an aggressive land agent called Gladman appealed case 56082/004 (Gladman, 46 Lymington Bottom Four Marks)

This was a site on Four Marks for 60 houses that had been refused several times over a number of years.

During this appeal Gladman satisfied the government inspector that EAST Hants did not have a 4-year land supply. This therefore puts all of East Hampshire at risk from developers.

The following is an extract from letter received from EHDC following concerns that the appellant had been successful in Four Marks.

The Council share the disappointment of the recent appeal decision regarding 60 dwellings at Mount Royal, 46 Lymington Bottom, Four Marks. Unfortunately, the Inspector dismissed the Council's concerns about the harm to landscape and the countryside setting of the village, concluding that there would only be limited/very limited harm. Having read through the appeal decision, the Inspector has come to his decision based on planning judgement and the Council consider no legal mistakes have been made, therefore, there are no grounds to challenge the decision.

Despite the conclusions in regard to housing land supply, the Council will continue to determine planning applications on their merits and will continue to refuse development that is considered inappropriate. The Planning Policy team have already started work on the update to its housing land supply position. We are currently waiting on the finalised data on completions and outstanding commitments now a new monitoring year has passed. We will be liaising with those representing sites to ascertain realistic delivery timescales, which will be formally evidenced. We have to balance a number of things, including the current economic climate, but the update will not be published until such time we consider it can stand up to scrutiny. However, until the data is received, and work done, we do not know whether we will have four years' worth of deliverable sites or not.

Until an updated position is known, the tilted balance is engaged, and all pending applications will be considered on their own merits. Each application brings its own particular issues depending on the quantum of development, its layout, neighbouring uses and a whole host of other material planning considerations which would also include facts on the ground. It will be these considerations that will be taken into account when determining whether the adverse impacts of the proposed development counter the presumption in favour. The Council's role is to identify the issues and assess the impact the development would have in order to apply a balanced conclusion for each proposal we receive.

Where does Bentworth now stand?

Briarsgate homes along with all other major developers are aware of the situation and will bring forward applications in the knowledge of the successful Gladman appeal. If their application is rejected, they would likely appeal and win. This situation will continue until EHDC can fully substantiate they have a 4-year housing supply.