



GREAT DENHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Meeting to discuss the changes proposed by David Wilson Homes Ltd to the Section 106 Obligations for Land West of Kempston and Great Denham – 9.30am 28th August 2014, Borough Hall

Present

Bedford Borough Council (BBC)

Paul Rowland (PR) – Assistant Director Planning, Bedford Borough Council

Jim Caffrey(JC) – Senior Planning Officer, Bedford Borough Council

Bedford Borough Council Planning Committee (BBCPC)

Councillor Anita Gerard (AG)

David Wilson Homes Ltd (DWH)

Ian Bennett (IB) – Project Manager, West of Bedford development

Alison Meadon (AM) – Viability expert, Savills Chartered Surveyors

Great Denham Parish Council (GDPC)

Jim Weir (JW) – Chair

Roz Buchanan – Clerk

Kempston Rural Parish Council (KRPC)

Two representatives

Kempston Town Council (KTC)

Three representatives and the Clerk

Introductions

All those present introduced themselves.

Update following 1st hearing at Planning Committee

PR explained that following the Planning Committee meeting on 18th August a decision had been deferred as the Committee believed there had been inadequate consultation with the parish and town councils involved.

He confirmed that only the S106 issues could be considered by the Planning Committee and they could not take account of any perceived loss of “lifestyle” or miss-selling voiced by residents as only the viability of the site was in question for the purposes of this process.

Context to savings requirement and options for alternative method of achieving savings target

IB explained that many items which were part of the S106 obligations had been on hold for over a year as the process of renegotiation was taking so long. Any of the items which were retained meant that something else had to be removed. He circulated a paper (copy attached) listing the S106 obligations for which they are seeking amendment in order to make financial savings, together with a list of those items already delivered and those which they are still committed to deliver. DWH have identified £6.2 million of potential savings.

IB explained the reasons why each of these items had been chosen.

When it came to affordable housing, the value of reducing it was substantial (up to £7m) and DWH could simply provide no more affordable housing in order to deliver all their S106 promises. PR added that whilst in normal circumstances developers would simply have to accept lower profits, government legislation meant that developers were being given the opportunity to revise their S106 obligations so that they could achieve a profit of up to 20%. DWH are accepting a lower profit margin in order to get an agreement.

Comments and question gathering – 5 minutes from each parish/town council

PR asked each parish/town council to state what was most important to them within the confines of the S106 obligations.

Great Denham

JW said that he had many years of business experience and companies often had to accept less

profit than expected. He said the Design Brief, as amended in 2010, was seen by BBC as aspirational, but residents were still being sold houses based on this document. If these aspirations were not achievable the community had at least expected a minimum standard of provision based on the S106 obligations. This possibility has now been removed and GDPC wished to discuss the following:-

- a) The provision of a two storey community hall in the absence of a library
- b) If there is to be no ecumenical centre then the meeting place should be a good quality space – not just a few seats in a car park as shown on recent plans.
- c) Due to the deletion of the Park and Ride, the bus service should call at Bedford railway station – at least at peak times
- d) The CCTV provision should allow the community the chance to purchase further cameras which can link wirelessly to the BBC monitoring service
- e) The bridge crossing at Kempston to be scrapped and instead the bridge at Kempston Mill to be upgraded with the remaining money ploughed back into S106 items
- f) Reduction of social housing which has not been “pepper potted” throughout the development as originally agreed, but provided in large groupings causing many social problems

Kempston Rural

- a) The land at Ridge Road is not required as playing fields but should be retained as public open space
- b) Whilst a large community hall is not desirable as it will be impossible to manage, the community need a central meeting point

Kempston Town Council

Kempston is a deprived area and needs to following to help it:-

- a) Medical centre as it can take three weeks to get an appointment with a GP
- b) Bridge to enable residents to access the Country Park
- c) Affordable housing
- d) A good bus service

It was noted that amongst other items that DWH wish to alter was a change to build sustainability standards to meet current standards. This has been perceived by residents as a reduction in standards which will produce a two tier development. PR explained that whilst in 2007 DWH agreed to build to standards current at that time plus 10%, current build sustainability standards exceed this and so there will be an increase not a decrease in standards.

Review and discuss issues raised

Each item was discussed as follows:-

1. Community hall in Great Denham

Can a second floor be provided? DWH did not realise GDPC saw the additional floor as an opportunity for the community to provide additional facilities/services itself and did not require it to be fitted out as a library. JW pointed out that GDPC had produced a fully costed 10 year business plan for running the community hall and both BBC Planning Department and DWH had a copy of it. DWH will do a new financial model and report back.

2. Footbridge connecting Great Denham and Kempston

This is already to be provided and PR believed it was an essential part of the infrastructure. It is unlikely to be removed.

3. Medical centre for Kempston Town

The NHS, after many years of not responding to enquiries, has finally said they wish to investigate the site. They have requested 6 months to consider it and DWH will agree to this. The medical centre is, therefore, likely to be removed from the current negotiations and reconsidered in 6 months.

4. Community hall in Kempston Rural

JC asked if a smaller facility might be considered and KRPC said they would put this to their council. KTC suggested the £50k which was to be split between the two councils could be merged and then reductions in charges offered to Kempston Rural residents for use of Kempston Town facilities. KRPC will also consider this.

5. Land at Ridge Road

KRPC were concerned this land, although not required for sports pitches, would be used

for housing. They would like it retained as a public open space managed by Marston Vale. IB said that although the land was unlikely to be used for housing, DWH were not willing to gift it to Marston Vale and preferred to simply keep it. JC suggested an agreement could be reached not to use the land for housing for an agreed number of years. IB will write to Simon Fisher to explore this possibility.

6. Affordable housing

KTC said it was very important to them to retain as much affordable housing as possible. AM said DWH receive payments from Aldwyck Housing Association before the houses are sold and so the cost implications were complex. PR noted that BBC policy was to keep the level of affordable housing as high as possible, but as the Planning Committee would take an overarching view of the development there may be some room to reduce the amount from 22.5%.

7. Bus service to Bedford railway station

It is important to provide a bus service which is fit for purpose – IB supported this. JW disputed PR's suggestion that the bus could not physically turn left at the roundabout at the junction of Old Ford End Road, Prebend Street and Ashburnham Road. PR/JC will investigate changing the bus route to include a stop at the railway station.

8. CCTV

Great Denham wanted to know if the community could provide additional CCTV cameras which could link wirelessly into the BBC security system already provided in the Park and Ride. JC confirmed in principle this was possible and that each camera currently cost £7k to purchase plus £7k for up to 20 years maintenance. It was noted that the convenience store might also provide additional coverage.

9. Sustainability of Park and Ride

It was proposed the Park and Ride would not be developed beyond what is currently provided. The acceptability of this was linked with the bus service introducing a stop at the railway station.

10. Ecumenical Centre

JW noted that removing this element also linked with the provision of a meeting place and the public art provision. JW said he had previously suggested changing the building into a peaceful garden and if the site of the ecumenical centre were lost then the community needed a pleasant area in which to meet.

IB said DWH were discussing the design of the district centre and as a result of these discussions the meeting place would remain in its original location. JW said the most recent drawings were sadly lacking with the meeting place shown as a few seats surrounded by parking. JC said he had envisioned this as a multi-purpose area which could provide additional parking when future retail units were occupied. PR suggested to IB that Great Denham may find it easier to accept the loss of the ecumenical centre if a "meaningful" meeting place were provided. IB agreed this would be done.

Record areas of agreement and actions required

PR asked if everyone was satisfied they had aired all their issues and knew what actions they had to take. This was agreed.

In summing up PR noted that the outcome was dependant on DWH deciding what, if any, changes they wished to make and put forward to the Planning Committee. DWH have the opportunity to appeal any decision. PR said every effort would be made to put their proposals to the next Planning Committee meeting on 22nd September.

The meeting ended at 11.45am.