

I am unable to attend the Public Hearing but would like my experience to be known.

### **Has the qualifying body been inclusive and open in the preparation of the submitted Neighbourhood Plan (NP)?**

The bar has been set quite low as to what is acceptable in terms of consultation and the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG) have not managed to step over it.

I am not going to regurgitate any further what has already been reported and documented. This is simply my experience.

Six people formed the NPSG and decided at the outset what form the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) would take without, in my opinion, inclusive meaningful consultation with the village. It seems part of their decision making was based on a village housing survey appraisal from 1996! <sup>(1)</sup> The NPSG were aware of SODC's small village policy of "8-10 new houses only" <sup>(a)</sup> but ploughed on with selecting a large site despite village preference for infill or infill and small sites. The NPPF paragraph 183 shared vision and direct power have applied to a few and not the majority. It has been incredulous to see the process described as 'open', 'transparent' and 'punctilious'. A selection of a site has been far from open and transparent as the reality has been it was undemocratically chosen for us.

I was under the impression that NPs must be in general conformity to strategic policies of the Local Plan. The NPPF paragraph 184 states "*Neighbourhood planning provides a powerful set of tools for local people to ensure that they get the right types of development for their community ...and should not undermine its (SODC) strategic policies*". At SODC planning committee meeting to decide whether to approve the planning application on the six acre field the Councillors asked twice "*are you really sure you want to do this?*" <sup>(1)</sup>. It was clear that this was not in line with SODC planning policies and without a NP this planning application would have been refused.

When challenged on why not go for infill I was told by the Chair of the NPSG it was 'too much work' to go with what the village wanted. Meetings were at inconvenient times and email communication discouraged or ignored with the village email being told was off limits. The pace of the preparation of the plan has been frantic and as a consequence insufficient time has been allocated for processing of information. For example, we were given 10 days to process and comment on the emerging policies of which the appendices were missing and requests for sight of these were ignored. Information appeared on the PC website and then removed quickly after.

I came to this process with limited knowledge of national and local planning policies and in order to have a knowledge base I have read and digested an enormous amount of documentation not least of which is the NPPF and all of SODC planning policies past and emerging. Over the last 18 months and more I have attended SODC consultation meetings and have been party to commissioning reports by

experts to ensure that my opinion has balance. Any attempt to add my voice to the development of this NP has been met with resistance.

This resistance has been nasty in form and has created an ugly atmosphere in what was once an exceptional community. I have experienced unpleasant personal comments in public as my emails to the NPSG and PC were leaked and gossiped.

Petitions were presented that included dead people and duplication of names by members of the NPSG, partners and friends.

Requests for support for the NP has been threatening with the message being 'if you do not support us you will be responsible for the destruction of the village'.

The Code of Conduct for the PC has been breached on many occasions as the PC and NPSG have leaked emails to friends. The PC have ignored all my many attempts to have this Code of Conduct acknowledged.

Requests for information have been ignored, even using the Freedom of Information Act in desperation to get information, only resulted in the wider community condemning us but very little meaningful information handed over.

Most of this has been documented in the 'Lack of Consultation' <sup>(a)</sup> report but there is much more that has not been included. There are many people in the village that do not border the six acre field that have found it intimidating to add their voice and have been unwilling to make public their unpleasant and threatening emails.

Any dissenting voice has been met with hostility and threats. The latest article in the Parish Magazine <sup>(2)</sup> again contains half-truths - Long Wittenham did not allocate a site, this is true, but the full information is that the developer won on appeal as in their NP is the desire for a village hub but the means to pay for it are not accounted for.

I was once proud of this village and felt privileged to live in such a special community. Now I am sad and angry at how the behaviour of a small minority has tainted this village, and this will take a long time to heal.

Throughout this process I have worked alongside some very exceptional people. As a group our mission statement has always been 'what are the facts and can we prove it'. We hold our heads up high as we have always behaved with integrity despite being likened to the KKK.

Response 127 <sup>(a)</sup> more than adequately eloquently sums up the process.

This village has had its specialness tainted and without a Neighbourhood Plan the NPPF and local policies would have protected this village.

Documents attached:

1. Transcript of Committee Meeting for planning application on the six acre field
2. Copy of article in the Parish Magazine

Documents referred to:

- a) Lack of Consultation report plus appendices submitted under response 135  
[http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Website%20Report\\_%20Redacted%20FINAL%201.pdf](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Website%20Report_%20Redacted%20FINAL%201.pdf)