

#### Speech 4 - Biggin and Benefield Estate

I know you'll be familiar with the Estate as we've been to every Planning meeting but as a reminder our site is for 130 houses and is situated immediately as you enter Oundle along the main road to Corby.

The Estate has been around for 200 years and feel a long term responsibility for building in the best interests of the town of Oundle. We do get things done. Over the years we have built extensively in Oundle and the Benefields and twelve years ago we facilitated the building of 52 Affordable Housing units at Wakereley Close in Oundle. No one can argue we are not taking this planning seriously as we have spent thousands on planning advisors and site assessments and for over 7 years have been in close discussions with the Oundle Town Council to try our hardest to deliver what is in the best interests for the Town.

If you refer to 2.13 of the [Policy Committee report of 29 July 2019](#) you'll see that your Offices noted that our site was scored as the second most favourable site in the whole of Oundle by the DLP planning report which was independently commissioned by the yourselves, the District Council. So why, despite all this would they then recommend you discount our site? You are going against the findings of your own report.

They have cited 3 reasons, all of which do not stack up.

1. The first reason should be dismissed out of hand as it relates to us not submitting a pre-application planning enquiry.

This is not a 'first come first served' approach to planning but a strategic plan. A strategic plan chooses the best sites and then makes an orderly approach to receiving and reviewing detailed planning applications over the years the plan is in place. Your officers have instead created a climate that strategy is ignored in favour of a race to get planning applications in first – so much so that they are discounting our site because we have not put forward a pre-application planning enquiry. Such enquiries are not a mandatory planning requirement, nor are they a guarantee that a particular site will be delivered. The last time I had a face to face meeting with Richard Palmer with Mike Sibthorp our planning advisor on *12 December 2018* and asked outright if a planning application would be helpful I was advised by Richard that it was not necessary and would be in fact be unhelpful. For a 15 year plan to insist that pre-application enquires are a pre-requisite to being considered or utilised as a selection criteria is unheard of the making of a pre-application enquiry is not an indicator of deliverability.

2. The second point refers to heritage concerns as there is some ridge and furrow on part of site which we have had independently assessed by archaeologists and have very clear mitigation plans. This is in no way a deal breaker for the site.
3. The 3<sup>rd</sup> is a statement that our site is detached from the main build form of the urban area – Anyone who has visited the site would see that this is simply not the case – it sits opposite the 52 affordable houses at Wakerly close and next to the Oundle school playing fields on the main road from Corby right next to a bus stop.

All 3 points that your officers are using to ignore our site go counter to the independent advice of the DLP report which puts our site as the second most favourable site but because we haven't raced ahead to put in what we see as a premature planning application you are being advised to ignore our site.

We have done everything in the spirit of co-operation and we need you now to ask your officers to include the Benefield site in their next stage of detailed evaluations.