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Miss K. Turton,
Planning Department,
East Lindsey District Council,
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LN9 6PH

12th November 2024

Dear Madam,

Re:- **Land to the rear of Blue Bell Inn, Belchford, Lincolnshire.**

With reference to the above, and your recent email, I write to confirm the following –

Given the very limited time available to go through all the documents, we have attempted to extract the points that we feel are relevant to the current situation, and as such will start with comments made as follows, which has prompted the involvement of myself on behalf of the land owner.

Further comments made by Independent Examiner on **17th September 2024** –

Local Green Space 10 – “I am concerned to learn that the owners of the only privately owned area proposed for local green space designation, was not explicitly consulted on its proposed status”

The response from **Belchford and Fulletby Neighbourhood Development Plan** was sent on **1st October 2024** –

Local Green Space 10 – “The owner of the green space behind the Blue Bell Inn, which forms the open centre to the smaller figure of eight road loop (bound by Main Road-Chapel Lane-Ings Lane), is well aware of the Parish Councils (and wider village communities) wish to retain it as an open space”

Unfortunately, this response does not answer the question asked by the Independent Examiner, as they did **not** confirm a consultation had been sent, but stated that the owner was **“well aware”**. We can see from the timeline detailed below, that at no point was the land-owner consulted, and they are actually referring to a use back in 2003!

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We are staggered by this statement and ask that this is taken into account by the Independent Examiner as part of the ongoing process. We have had less than 5 weeks to give our comments on the proposed plans for the parcel of land rear of The Bluebell Inn, yet the start date for preparing the documentation was in July 2021. We feel that the comments that we can make have had to be hastily put together and that we are not able to fully convey our thoughts because of this.

As stated in my letter dated **24th October 2024**, a letter was first received by the land owner on **8th October 2024** at their business address. This was the first and only correspondence received regarding the land and was issued by **East Lindsey District Council** (on behalf of **Belchford and Fulletby Parish Council**) in response to comments by the Independent Examiner.

Having examined all the documents prepared in connection with the proposed Neighbourhood Development Plan, it appears that residents, businesses and organisations within the village(s) were contacted by leaflet drops, notice boards and newsletters – which directed them towards all online content and meetings to discuss the proposed Neighbourhood Development Plan. At no point throughout the process was any correspondence directed towards the owner of the land. I have provided a brief timeline below that gives the key dates of the process.

Neighbourhood Development Plan issued March 2024 after the following –

July 2021	Application initially made. Survey of residents – not sent out to the owner of the land
December 2021	Public meeting for residents – advertised locally – owner of the land not invited 2 nd survey of residents, carried out locally – not sent to the owner of the land
January 2022	Extended public forum – advertised locally -- owner of the land not invited
March 2022	Newsletter sent locally to residents, businesses and organisations (also directed them to online content) – not sent to owner of the land Public meeting for residents – advertised locally – owner of the land not invited Further survey of residents carried out – not sent to the owner of the land

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September 2022	Draft Belchford and Fulletby Neighbourhood Development Plan published
March / May 2023	Hard copies available to view locally at meetings 16 th March / 18 th May – locally advertised via leaflet drop – not sent to owner of the land
October 2023	Statutory Regulation 14 Consultation carried out from 2 nd October > 1st December – hand delivered to residents – not received by owner of the land

There are many more documents and comments that are available on the East Lindsey District Council website, but I have outlined the main ones regarding the total lack of correspondence received by the owner of the land that is subject to part of this consultation.

The owner's address is readily available on the local planning authority website (which ELDC used to contact them on 8th October 2024), and as such it seems totally reasonable that they could have been contacted and informed of the various stages that were taking place.

We must question how the plan was developed into its current form, given that a private landowner was having decisions made regarding the proposed use of that land, with absolutely no discussions taking place.

We respectfully ask the Independent Examiner, as a matter of urgency, to question all involved with the Belchford and Fulletby Neighbourhood Development Plan as to how this has happened and how they could assume that the land owner would not be extremely concerned by this action.

Moving on to the actual matter of the land being designated as Local Green Space, we have the following comments to make –

The Belchford and Fulletby Neighbourhood Development Plan seeks to define the use of the land and also includes the Belchford and Fulletby Design Code. Both documents have been prepared for the Local Parish Council and have been led by them and the residents within the villages.

At the time of writing the documents are under examination and we hope that our comments are examined and any further modifications takes them into account.

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It can be seen that the land is completely land-locked by 20 properties (including the Blue Bell Inn) and not visible from the surrounding road network, and as such it has very limited value as a parcel of open space for the public. The following history gives East Lindsey District Councils planning officer thoughts on this.

RECENT PLANNING APPLICATION HISTORY –

Screening Opinion – 2 dwellings and garages

Application decided on 26/11/20

Reason for decision –

- 1. The site is a green space in the middle of the village of Belchford within the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB. The site is associated with the Blue Bell Inn to the west but the land is otherwise surrounded by residential properties. The application has the potential to impact upon the protected landscape but the surrounding sites would limit any impact to within the village only and does not have the potential to have substantial impacts upon the wider protected landscape. The proposal would therefore not be EIA development and no environmental statement is required.*

This is a very valid comment with regard to the proposed change to the use designation of the land, and highlights that the land does have a little landscape value within the village, but is not relevant to the wider surroundings. This is contrary to some of the comments given within the documentation, which is very focused in its designation.

Full Planning – 2 dwellings and garages

Application submitted on 24/11/20

Withdrawn on 19/04/21

Reason for withdrawal –

To allow for issues raised in the course of the application to be addressed and a revised, more acceptable scheme to be submitted.

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Full Planning – 2 dwellings and garages

Application submitted on 18/11/21

Refused on 28/04/23

Reason for decision –

- 1. The application site comprises an important and character defining area of open space within the Lincolnshire Wolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the core of Belchford village. Development of the site in the manner proposed would detract from the openness of the application site and the established, defining pattern of development. The development would undermine the open character of the site and result in a suburban form of backland development at odds with general linear form and informal character of the village contrary to SP10 of the East Lindsey Local Plan in seeking to maintain and enhance the character of the districts villages, and SP25 in seeking to protect locally important green spaces which contribute significantly to the character of the village. Furthermore, the proposal would represent a harmful visual intrusion into the AONB, conflicting with the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB and contrary to SP23 of the East Lindsey Local Plan and the NPPF.*
- 2. The application site has the potential to provide habitat and be used by protected species and other wildlife, but no suitable ecological assessment has been submitted. The Council is thus unable to conclude that the proposal would not have a harmful impact on protected species nor is it able to consider what mitigation measures might be required to overcome such harm. To allow the application in these circumstances could be harmful to protected species contrary to SP24 of the East Lindsey Local Plan.*

During the course of the above application, detailed correspondence with the planning officer at East Lindsey District Council took place and we were in the process of addressing the reasons for refusal by way of a species survey and and LVIA – which were requested in the email below. This email also contains a statement on the landscape value of the site and its setting within the village.

“Morning Simon,

Secondly the inspector’s comments have a strong bearing on this case, especially character and landscape impact. Personally I do not necessarily agree that the development of the land in question would have detrimental impact upon the wider character, were views of the site are limited. Following my own site visits their reference within the appeal decision to views from Ings Lane are somewhat contentious. However, I must admit I haven’t been down

Land to the rear of Blue Bell Inn, Belchford, Lincolnshire.

the public footpath to the west heading in a northerly direction which could change that opinion. Nevertheless, I have to accept the form of the village and that such development would alter that. Moving forward and given the inspectors comment I would suggest a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment be undertaken in which to inform proposals and justify the harm if any by accredited/suitably qualified Landscape architect. Furthermore, given the overgrown nature of the site an Ecology Report is also required. In addition to the above there is a big difference in land levels across the site running from North to south and therefore could a topographical survey be provided as a basis for determining scale and massing in relation to the neighbour plots and in particularly those bordering the eastern boundaries of the site.

Any questions please do not hesitate to ask”

As briefly stated above these negotiations were ongoing during the course of the application, however we were unable to provide them within the timescale of the application – hence the refusal was issued. We feel that the comments are very valid to the current situation as the Belchford and Fulletby Neighbourhood Development Plan is seeking to change the use of the land to a Local Green Space, based upon its landscape value within the village. We have also worked on a new application for a single dwelling which has just been lodged with East Lindsey District Council, which addresses the above comments.

As part of the consultation process several comments were raised that seem to favour development within the village confines, not extending out into the countryside as “ribbon” development, along with a welcoming well-designed dwelling on plots with large garden areas.

We feel that this is exactly the way we see the land use moving forward and as such are strongly objecting to the Local Green Space designation.

I look forward to your comments on the above.

Yours faithfully,

Simon Nicholson