

# Belchford and Fulletby Neighbourhood Development Plan

## Reply to the second response from the owner of the open green space to the rear of the Blue Bell Inn dated 12 November 2024

**20 November 2024**

Belchford and Fulletby Parish Council wishes to apologise to the owner of the land to the rear of the Blue Bell Inn for not including him or his representative Simon Nicholson Architecture in the Regulation 14 consultation of the Neighbourhood Plan in October 2023, or in informal consultations prior to it. It was an oversight, nothing more. The present owner of the Blue Bell Inn was formally consulted and it was overlooked that the land to the rear of the Inn had a different titleholder.

Prior to 2002 the undeveloped land was an integral part of Blue Bell Inn used regularly for camping and village events. The owner of this land was owner-landlord of both the freehold Blue Bell Inn and adjoining land which forms the open green centre of the smaller of the historic Belchford “figure of eight” road loops. In 2002/3 the village community applied for a Vital Villages grant of £23,498 to help the owner renovate the Blue Bell Inn. The owner used this grant and the Blue Bell Inn today remains a vibrant, popular destination for villagers and visitors. The Blue Bell was then sold to the present owners, with the former owner retaining the land behind.

The Parish Council successfully applied for a planning change of use for the retained land to be a recreation area in 2003. Subsequently, the owner of this land, which Belchford and Fulletby Parish Council and the wider village community wish to retain as open green space, submitted 3 planning applications to build housing on it, all of which have been refused by ELDC and subsequently by the Planning Inspectorate on appeal. Belchford and Fulletby Parish Council, representing the majority opinion of the residents of Belchford, objected to each and every planning application.

Contrary to his representatives response of 12 November 2024 the owner of the retained land is very well aware of the strength of feeling against development on it. In his response to the lack of awareness of the Neighbourhood Plan the land owner’s representative refers to the only knowledge that the village community wishes to retain the area as a green space was back in 2003. This is categorically not the case.

Firstly, in each and every consultee comment to planning applications submitted to develop this land in 2004, 2015 and 2021 and their appeal, which were all refused, Belchford and Fulletby Parish Council refers to this land remaining an open area.

Secondly, and importantly, in their response to planning application S/013/02313/21 submitted in 2021 Belchford and Fulletby Parish Councils comments actively refer to the Neighbourhood Plan in their response against the housing application, as follows:

### ***‘Strategic Policy 6 (SP6) – Neighbourhood Planning***

- 1. The ELDC will support Neighbourhood Development Plans, Belchford and Fulletby Parish Council are in the process of constructing a NDP and one popular key issue is to preserve the Belchford open figure of eight feature. Although the land is an eyesore currently there is no justification to build on this land.’*

Considering other issues in the representative’s letter:

- 1) He refers to the recent planning application history, saying that it is a valid point that no Environmental Impact Assessment was required in 2020 for 2 dwellings.

However, whilst an EIA would not be relevant for just 2 dwellings at this time according to government guidelines this does not mean that the proposed development would not have affected the landscape value to the village. We are in National Landscape area, and our historic village character and shape is of immense importance. This is highlighted

by the Lincolnshire County Council Historic Environment Officer who states in his comment on the planning application that the site lies in the medieval settlement core of the village.

- 2) The agent also refers to a discussion with an unnamed planning officer and his opinion of the planning applications.

We cannot comment on this without knowing the context of the email and officer involved so we can explain fully our side of the picture

The Blue Bell Inn is a vital community asset. Access to the retained land is through the left (west) side of Blue Bell Inn car park. It is not partitioned off and for the last 20+ years has provided unrestricted access to the car park located at the rear of the Blue Bell Inn. Development of the land would result in loss of this access and hence may compromise the financial viability of the Blue Bell Inn. Furthermore, the road network in Belchford is inadequate to accommodate any additional car parking needs.

To conclude we are willing to allow the landowner and his representative further time to examine our draft Neighbourhood Plan, if ELDC Planning Officers (Kay Turton) and our independent NDP Examiner (John Slater) think it is necessary for a properly consulted document to be produced.