

16 WENTWORTH CLOSE
KIBWORTH
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3 December 2006

Mr P Clarke
Head of Corporate Services
Harborough District Council
Market Harborough

By email: p.clarke@harborough.gov.uk

Dear Mr Clarke

I refer to your letter to me dated 24th October. First would you please note my correct address as above and also that I have not been Chairman of KBPC since May 2004.

Your letter was discussed at the KBPC November meeting and I was authorised by the Council to write to you on its behalf in reply to your letter.

KBPC was not privy to the background to the decisions of the officers and members of HDC on the KB1 issues. Its comments are therefore made from the standpoint of a (very) interested party looking at the HDC process from the outside.

Your letter refers only to the appeals by David Wilson Estates (DWE) but KBPC feels that the review which you are undertaking should encompass the HDC involvement from late 2003 and not just the period from the date when DWE lodged its first appeal so KBPC's response is made on this basis.

The views of KBPC are:-

1 There was a lack of thoroughness on the part of the planning officers in their decision to recommend release of the KB1 site for development. They appear to have relied upon the fact that the site was approved in the Local Plan (HDLP) but without having any regard to:-

1.1 the fact that the original draft HDLP which identified KB1 for development was then more than 10 years old

1.2 the long history of strong local opposition to proposed development of the site which had been supported by previous chief planning officers of HDC

1.3 the consultation processes which had existed between planning officers and representatives of local people on earlier occasions

1.4 the pending expiry of the HDLP and the SPG guidelines introduced since its original adoption.

2 The apparent haste to put the matter of the proposal to release the site for decision of HDC with little or no public consultation and at a holiday time – Xmas/New Year 03/04- created suspicion and consternation among Kibworth residents and parish councillors. The latter were not reassured by a meeting held at HDC on 27th January 2004 the minutes for which they were unable to agree as being a fair record. The local campaign to oppose both release and planning approval for KB1 was fuelled by the consequent belief that HDC, at officer level, was intent on proceeding regardless of any other views.

3 Moving forward to the decision on the DWE planning applications, the failure of the officers to anticipate, following the earlier rejection by HDC of their recommendation to release the site for development, the possibility of rejection of their recommendation to grant planning permission. As a result when HDC decided to refuse permission, HDC was inadequately advised on the technical and legal reasons it could give for its decision.

4 This lack of preparation was apparent in the subsequent public enquiry process:-

4.1 the HDC representation was from a new professional team which had to be recruited only after the rejection of planning permission which was far too late

4.2 when HDC put forward as its main witness a councillor who, however objective in giving evidence, could never be “seen to be” objective to a tribunal (that witness living within a short distance of the KB1 site).

If I you need any further information of the views of KBPC please let me know.

Yours sincerely

John Hunt, KBPC councillor.