Bleadon Parish Council

Matter 13

Schedule 1 – Other Housing Locations

Parish Clerk & RFO

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Summary

Bleadon Parish Council (BPC) is of the following opinion:

- The Plan is not considered to be sound

The reasons for BPC reaching this conclusion are as follows:

- As set out in BPC's response to Matter 2 (Strategic Gaps), the Council is of the opinion that the site is within an area which should be designated as a Strategic Gap and development of any kind would not be appropriate. Inspectors are asked to refer to the BPC submission in relation to Matter 2 in this respect.
- The site is inappropriate for development due to a number of specific site constraints.
- The development location will have a disproportionate impact upon Bleadon which is not recognized in the grounds but forward by the LPA to justify inclusion of the site.

Strategic Gap

BPC has submitted evidence in relation to this matter as part of its response to Matter 2. This has not been reproduced within this paper on the understanding that inspectors will take into account issues raised within Matter 2 as part of its consideration of the proposed Leighton Crescent site allocation.

By way of a summary, the LPA has historically treated sites to the West of the Hillcote area as a 'buffer zone' separating the urban area of Weston-super-Mare and the rural area of Bleadon. Allowing development in this location would fundamentally change this position and may make it difficult for the LPA to defend against subsequent applications for development further East along Bleadon Hill and South towards the village centre. Retention of the existing designation of these sites would also ensure that development could only be considered through the prism of rural exception sites. Provision of a strategic gap would afford a greater level of protection.

BPC's concern is not theoretical – a planning application has already been submitted for the area of land on the opposite side of the road to the Leighton Crescent site. The impact of including the Leighton Crescent site is, therefore, very real and immediate.

Site Constraints

The location in has a number of specific constraints, which are material and can be summarised as follows:

- In close proximity to the North Somerset and Mendip Hills AONB (Mendip Hills National Landscape)
- Within the North Somerset and Mendip Bats SAC Consultation Zone ‘B’ for greater horseshoe bats
- In close proximity to the Mendip Limestone Grasslands SAC
- In close proximity to the Severn Estuary SPA / SAC / Ramsar
- In close proximity to Purn Hill SSSI and Bleadon Hill SSSI

BPC is of the opinion that these issues have not been addressed as part of the justification for the inclusion of Leighton Crescent within the Local Plan proposals.

Impact Upon Bleadon Parish

The site sits within an area of Bleadon Hill (which is within Weston-super-Mare) where there are no community facilities. The nearest community facilities are within the village centre of Bleadon and connecting the site to local footway networks (one of only a very small number of requirements for development) will actively encourage and direct residents towards the village centre of Bleadon. There are no halls, play areas, allotments, pubs, post office, shops, public toilets, church or library services within the Bleadon Hill area – unlike within the village centre. Furthermore, residents will likely look to travel through the village centre (along narrow rural roads) in order to access the A370. This will exacerbate existing highways problems – there have been multiple fatalities at the two junctions connecting the village centre with the A370.

There are approximately 400 properties within the village centre of Bleadon. The indicative capacity for the Leighton Crescent site is 81 properties. BPC has grave concerns regarding the accuracy of indicative capacities across sites as the quarry site referenced on page 299 (a site within Bleadon) has an indicative capacity of 24. This development has largely been constructed and has 48 properties (twice as many as stated in the Local Plan). There is, therefore, either an undercounting of capacities across sites more generally or a specific problem in relation to the potential impact upon Bleadon. The quarry development will see a 15% increase in the local population. If the figure of 81 properties in relation to Leighton Crescent is taken at face value, there will be a further 20% increase in the potential impact upon Bleadon facilities and infrastructure – an increase of more than a third if the two sites are taken together. As the Leighton Crescent site sits within the boundary of Weston Town Council, BPC will receive nothing in the form of CIL allocations or revenue from a Parish Precept to meet the costs associated with any impact.

BPC is deeply concerned that the requirements relating to the site relate only to drainage, contributions to bus services (of which there are none) and connections to the local footway network. This clearly points to a lack of proper consideration regarding the suitability of the site for development and the impact on the character of the rural community of Bleadon.

In the event that the Leighton Crescent site is not removed, then as a minimum, the issues identified above in terms of lack of community facilities within the Bleadon Hill area should be addressed through the development.

Conclusion

BPC is of the opinion that Leighton Crescent has not been properly considered for inclusion within its site allocation proposals and should be removed for the reasons stated above and contained within BPC's response to Matter 2 (Strategic Gaps).