

Draft Bourton Neighbourhood Plan - Response to Public consultation – A N Sturt

7th April 2017

Attachment I

My overall area of objection begins with the formation of the Bourton Neighbourhood Plan Group (“**BPNG**”) in 2012 when contrary to the principles of openness and transparency, good practice (as practiced elsewhere within the North Dorset District Council administrative area) there was no publicly advertised opportunity for residents of Bourton to become directly involved in the Neighbourhood Plan process nor to be considered for membership of the BPNG

The Chairman of the BPNG was appointed by Bourton Parish Council with members of the BPNG apparently drawn principally from volunteers previously involved in the exercise to produce the Village Design Statement (“**VDS**”) as evidenced from the minutes of the first meeting of the BPNG.

Reservations and concerns raised at the time and subsequently by local residents on the to the lack of openness in appointing and the failure to have representation from across the community were dismissed by the Parish Council, leaving an impression that the group had the outward appearance of a closed shop” with membership being a matter of personal selection by the Chairman of the BPNG. The regular formal and minuted meetings of the BPNG were not open to the public as at the Blandford where public participation in their neighbourhood plan meetings has been noted. From an examination of the minutes of the BNPG there appears to be no record of correspondence addressed to the chairman by members of the public, nor of any discussions on any matters so raised.

The processes and procedures under which the BPNG operates and the conduct of members are governed by the same legislation and guidance that applies to the Parish Council. The non-disclosure of in the recorded minutes of the BPNG by the chairman of a perceived pecuniary interest in respect of the potential site adjoining his home at Sandways Farm under consideration by the group in the site selection exercise for a new village hall is disturbing and calls into question the fairness of that process. In respect of the site selection the reported direct involvement of the chairman in the selection and weighting of criteria against which the various sites under consideration were judged would appear to be in conflict with Nolan principles. The chairman has consistently maintained opposition to the Sandways site throughout the plan process having previously objected in 2011, on the basis of potential loss in value of his home. In 2012, the

chairman put forward the Jubilee Field site for consideration as an alternative to the Sandways site. Concerns first raised over this matter with the Parish Council in 2012 and subsequently have been to no avail.

That the possible development of the Sandways site could reasonably have been perceived as warranting a disclosure of pecuniary interest by the chairman up at all times up to the sale of Sandways Farm in late summer 2016 can be deduced from the letter written by new owners of Sandways Farm objecting to a planning application for a new hall and enabling residential dated 28 September 2016 (NDDC planning application reference N° 2/2016/1227/OUT).

It would be unsafe, unfair and unreasonable to allow this draft plan to progress given the situation outlined above. At the very least a fresh, transparent, rigorous and objective review of alternative village hall sites and of the Village Design Statement (see Attachment 2) are clearly required before a plan could safely be taken forward. The lack of any meaningful housing needs survey as set out in Attachment 2 is a material omission that should be redressed.

It is noted that much good work has been done by the volunteer members of the group which would remain relevant to the production of a further Draft Neighbourhood plan.

Submitted by

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