

Central Beds Public Hearing 29/30 September 2014.

Witness statement from Mrs. R. Randle.

I attended the Northhill Parish Council Planning Committee Meeting and the Annual Parish Meeting, both held in Upper Caldecote on the evening of March 25th. 2013 and can confirm the following facts:

- During the public session of the Planning Meeting I, along with other local residents, raised objections to the planning application for Affordable Housing in Biggleswade Road [CB/13/00554/FULL].
- One of the other people voicing material objections to these plans from the floor of the meeting I now know to be Councillor Ian Robinson.
- Following the time allotted for public comment the committee discussed the application and a vote was taken. Comments made by members of the Committee were not easy to hear, nor were their votes. The Clerk announced that the application was approved by a unanimous vote.
- From the floor it was very difficult to see or hear who of the group gathered at the front of the hall voted. There seemed to be more people than the number allocated to that committee on the PC website even allowing for the Clerk, Chairman and Vice Chairman of the PC. [Perhaps given the number of members of the public present some introductions or indications of procedure would have helped.]
- Later the same evening I attended the ACP and during the 'open forum' I made comment on the decision of the earlier Planning Meeting and raised a question; this question was not answered.
- Scanned copy of handwritten comments/question inserted below.

R of Forum Parish meeting 103/1

Whilst supporting the need for affordable housing I am very disappointed that the planning committee supported the application discussed this evening. It was not their first choice and questions regarding their first choice have not been answered - Why? They could have chosen not to support this application whilst supporting the ^{and planning for} identified need. Members have spoken of apathy in the community, when community members take interest, submit comments and attend meetings and are unsupported. How this was achieved April 2013?? I feel completely unsupported.

- Later Councillor Robinson, from the floor, asked for a breakdown of the Planning Committee vote; this was refused by the Clerk.
- Several members of the public asked about an Extraordinary Council Meeting and were advised by the Clerk on the process of requesting this.
- I also attended the Northhill Parish Council Meeting of the 8th April 2013. I arrived at the time indicated for Councillors' Surgery and was surprised to see that little seemed organised - no chairs or tables set out.
- Before the meeting I handed to each Councillor present [and the Clerk] a copy of a presentation on behalf of a group of residents of Upper Caldecote which was relevant to item 7.1 on the agenda.
- During item 4, Open Forum, I made reference to item 7.1 on the agenda, and the document I had distributed, asking that full council ratification of the decision of the Planning Committee made on March 25th be deferred until the document I had circulated had been considered. A scanned copy of this statement is included below.

April 9th
meeting.

To Open Forum

I wish to speak with reference to item 7.1 on the agenda for this meeting, the planning meeting of March 25th 2013 and application number G610 CB/13/00554 in particular. Unfortunately I was not able to read the minutes of ~~the~~^{that} meeting as at 5.30 this evening they were still not on the website although the heading ^{of the minutes page} refers to draft minutes being available within 2 weeks of ~~the~~^a meeting.

However I would ask that the full council withhold their decision to accept or reject the recommendation of the planning committee until all members of the council have had time to study the full details of the presentation they have received this evening.

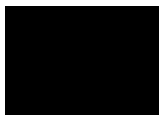
Thank you

No answer received as meeting terminated before that point on agenda.

Subsequently learned that Planning decision was sent to CBC on 25/03/13 after meeting. Time to do that ~~but~~ on same day, but minutes of meeting not on website two weeks later?!!!

- Receipt of this document was not acknowledged by any member of the Council although it is noted in the Minutes. I did not receive an answer to my question that evening as the meeting did not reach item 7.1 on the agenda. I have never received a formal answer to the question.
- Throughout the meeting it was very difficult to hear what was being said. The acoustics of the venue are not good and it is difficult to arrange tables and chairs so that the Council members and Clerk can see and hear each other and allow the public to also see and hear. There is no amplification available. There was constant mumbling from the public, asking one another what had been said and requests to 'speak up'. Consequently the meeting became louder and louder. A more forceful contribution from the Chairman from the start of the meeting might well have improved matters.
- Under item 6, 'Matters Arising', Councillor Robinson presented a document to the Chair which stated that the owner of the alternative housing site in Ickwell Road which had been the Councils preferred choice confirmed availability of the site. Councillor Robinson asked why this site had not been progressed. Discussion at this point became heated. Here again more forceful intervention and no delegation by the Chairman should have occurred.
- I have recently become aware that at the time of this meeting [08/04/13] and to date the reasons for not progressing the Ickwell Road site are confidential. I can confirm that many local residents feel that this falls far short of the aims of 'Clear and Transparent Local Government'.

Signed:



(R.A.RANDLE).

Date:

21/09/14.