

Saltford Green Belt Inquiry into the appeal by Crest Nicholson (South West Ltd) following the non-determination of their application for planning permission for a residential development of up to a maximum of 99 units, access and associated works at Manor Road, Saltford BS31 3AB. August 2013.

CLOSING STATEMENT by Phil Harding on behalf of the SEG/SGBC Rule 6 Party

A Green Belt designation is given and thus belongs to a local community to protect its surrounding land and setting. More than anyone else, it is local communities who live with and understand the real value of the “landscape function” provided by their Green Belt and agricultural land.

Saltford Environment Group and the Green Belt Campaign are asking that the Inquiry Inspector prevents this part of our community’s natural environment from being confiscated and permanently destroyed. If permission is given for this development to proceed, that would put the rest of our Green Belt at risk from developers.

We are asking for the outcome of this Inquiry to show that it is for local people and their local planning authority to determine where new housing should be located. That role is for a place-making plan and not for developers. It is the local community that face the real short, medium and long term disadvantages when developments like this are allowed to proceed.

On several occasions during the Inquiry the appellant referred to local demand for affordable homes in Saltford. If the Inspector is minded to permit this development, there is no guarantee that those homes would be available solely for existing Saltford residents; therefore any local demand would not necessarily be met.

For future planning applications of this nature, i.e. on Green Belt and/or good quality agricultural land, we recommend that before the planning process is allowed to proceed to an advanced stage a Sustainability Appraisal should be produced as early as possible to:

- (a) inform the decision making process;
- (b) reduce the risk of giving consent to unsustainable development; and
- (c) reduce the anxiety, stress and concern placed onto a community.

That last point, (c), and the strength of feeling this planning application has generated in the local community, was underlined by the large number of residents that attended on the first morning of the Inquiry, despite this Inquiry being held in the school holidays.

The Sustainability Appraisal report commissioned by SEG has shown that the proposed development is not sustainable development. Furthermore the appellant has failed to demonstrate that there are any “very special circumstances” for permitting the loss of Green Belt agricultural land outside the housing development boundary at this location. The proposed development is therefore contrary to national planning policy for protecting both the Green Belt and agricultural land of higher quality.

Saltford Environment Group and the Saltford Green Belt Campaign make the following request on behalf of the vast majority of Saltford’s community and the large volume of objections that have been submitted. We respectfully request that this Inquiry supports the principle of sustainable development, protects Saltford’s Green Belt in accordance with the Government’s Planning Policies and rejects the appeal and the associated planning application.

Phil Harding
Chairman
Saltford Environment Group

16 August 2013