

Neighbourhood Plan - Statement for Parish Council Meeting 31st July 2018

We are attending tonight's meeting because we wanted the Parish Council as the "qualifying body" responsible for the Neighbourhood Plan to know that as home and landowners we have serious concerns about the way that the designation of Local Green Spaces has been handled by the Neighbourhood Planning Group. We would like WDBC to note our "disquiet".

We feel that as our land will be severely affected by LGS designation we should have been consulted much earlier in the process as directed by the National Neighbourhood Plan Guidance and certainly before the Public Consultation. We have only been consulted at this late stage because some affected landowners attended NP meetings and complained of being excluded from the process. Indeed we were not going to be consulted at all until **after** the draft assessment report had been sent to WDBC. This would have given us no opportunity to challenge the many inaccuracies and assess whether the criteria applied to our land were in fact valid.

There are several aspects of the National Guidelines which appear to have been ignored, in particular it appears that LGS have been nominated purely to frustrate future development.

In addition, sites that already have protection should not be included unless there is "**an additional local benefit**". Ten of the seventeen sites are protected by being totally within the Conservation Area. A further location is partly covered by that same protection.

The process has not been conducted in an open and transparent manner and we have little if any confidence in the fairness of what has gone on in the past three years. One landowner is subject to four separate nominations. The role of the NPG is to gather all available evidence relating to the locations whether it is in support or contrary to the LGS; but what has happened is an assumption that the nominated location should be recommended to WDBC. Committee members have been tasked with building a one-sided case rather than being as impartial as possible and seeking the views and knowledge of the people who live, work and know the sites - the owners.

The NPG chairman has stated that votes cast at the Consultation Day will carry very little weight. We therefore need more than ever to examine the alleged reasons given on the original nomination forms and also to identify persons currently unknown who chose our fields, verges and private gardens as suitable for LGS status.

We attended the most recent NPG Meeting on 26th July and have been given the following assurances:-

- 1) We will see the draft report **before** it goes to the WDBC and be given sufficient time to comment on and challenge any inaccuracies. We also consider it only fair to expect to see and be able to comment on any reports or communications from WDBC in reply to the Assessment Report.
- 2) In order to assess if the criteria used are correct we will be supplied with copies of the original nomination forms as soon as possible, albeit with the names and addresses redacted at this stage if advice is sought on the GDPR Regulations. We need to know whether the

nominations reflect the views of a sizeable part of the community or just a few loud voices with multiple nominations.

It is worth noting that several Authorities including Bath and North East Somerset identify nominees. We have no intention of causing any animosity. People have expressed an opinion when nominating, based on the information made available to them but that has included maps stating "Excluding private domestic gardens" where three such sites have been nominated.

INACCURATE

3) Neighbourhood Plan Committee Members will not be allowed to vote on sites that they nominated or own.

We have been assured that there will be more consultation and that the process will in future have genuine transparency. We appreciate that a large amount of work has been undertaken by the NP Group to date but it is vitally important that the landowners as major stakeholders are informed and involved from now on. The Neighbourhood Plan can be a positive process but it must be objective and balanced.

Three landowners have now joined the NP Committee.