

The Planning Inspector, Ms Stephanie Chivers
C/O Lynne Freeland
Programme Officer
Ashford Borough Council
Tannery Lane, Ashford

Clare Skidmore
Old Mill Cottage
Pluckley Road
Bethersden, TN26 3DD
17 June 2010

Dear Ms Chivers,

I am writing on behalf of the Bethersden Housing Consultative Group with respect to the forthcoming DPD hearing programme. We have a number of points to make.

As we have already commented in our response to the original DPD proposals from ABC, our preference for development at site Beth1a was based on **18 months of in-depth consideration of the evidence** and the issues.

We are concerned about the recent proposal from Hobbs Parker for development on sites Beth19a and Beth19b, submitted in the guise of a 'comment', at a very late stage, **leaving stakeholders with no opportunity to respond.**

Opportunities for input into the DPD ended in summer 2009, with plenty of time for comment. **This new 'comment', which is in fact a detailed proposal, missed all official deadlines, and should therefore be ruled inadmissible by the Inspector.**

The sites at **Beth19a and Beth19b are located within a Conservation Area**, which was extended fairly recently, in recognition of the area's role as **an important open space**. The area also has a history of flooding.

For these reasons, when the Consultative Group discussed the sites in Aug / Sept 2007, **they were rejected at this early stage on overwhelming evidence.**

This new proposal from Hobbs Parker, should it be accepted for consideration, drives a coach and horses through ABC's DPD rules, setting a dangerous precedent. **We feel that we are entitled to an explanation as to why ABC is considering the proposal at all.**

Keith Brannan will be attending the hearing to **speak on behalf of the Consultative Group** on Day 3 of the hearing, about the local needs issue.

However, should the Beth19a and Beth19b proposal be discussed on Day 5, we feel that Mr Brannan (as our spokesperson) should be allowed to speak then as well. The manner of this new proposal has prevented any formal responses. If the rules are waived to allow consideration of a new proposal without public consultation, a similar waiving of the rules to allow us to respond seems the least we should expect in the interest of fairness.

Finally, please find attached a copy of an email sent by the group to ABC regarding the DPD stipulation that any development on Beth1a should have an indicative capacity of 15 units. We are concerned about the **impact this could have on our attempts to secure sufficient local needs housing in the village**, as explained in the email.

Yours sincerely