

To: Members of the Planning Committee.

Ref: Planning Application 07/2018/6475/FUL

(Hearing date 09/01/2019)

Please consider this brief response to the document you have received from Cassidy and Ashton. It is brief, not through choice but due to the fact the document was only made public on the 7th January 2019 and therefore there has been inadequate time to formulate a detailed response prior to the Committee hearing.

Cassidy and Ashton have claimed throughout these two applications that they had “Overwhelming Community Support” for the development scheme. This is incorrect and all the evidence proves this. It is contained within the Planning Officer’s report. This new document does not dispute this and they are now totally silent on the views of the community.

The new campaign is based upon the housing supply. Your Planning Officer and the Planning Department at South Ribble are satisfied there is a 5 year housing supply. Cassidy and Ashton have failed to convince on many other claims. On this matter there is a choice between the opinion of a business with a vested interest, and the opinions of the Planning Department.

The Policy situation on Affordable Housing is clear. This development requires 35% Affordable housing. This application is not policy compliant so Cassidy and Ashton attempt to justify this.

They quote the Keppie Massey addendum report dated 23rd November 2018 but ignore paragraph 5.5 which states “ In the event that the financial contributions required towards the playing pitches and the community centre were reduced then there would be a consequent increase in the amount of affordable housing that could be supported .” It is clear that even if the £113,025 (Already reduced to £112,130.61), for the playing pitches was retained, then the Affordable housing policy could be complied with in full by reducing the £1.2 million payment for a community centre.

There is another alternative. One that reduces the payment to the landowner to £685,905 for a field valued at less than £66,000. This of course would enable the Affordable housing policy to be complied with in full.

Cassidy and Ashton provided the details of the above alternative to Cushman and Wakefield who they claim to be “One of the most respected firms in this field.” Cushman and Wakefield stated there is no basis for the above alternative whereby 35% affordable housing could be provided.

However in December 2017 this same Cushman and Wakefield provided a full viability assessment of the Development for the initial planning application. At this point they stated “An affordable housing provision would lead to significant issues for financial viability of the scheme, and would in our opinion, lead to the site not being brought forward for development” (Paragraph 6.64).

Cushman and Wakefield concluded their report and in the final paragraph stated “The resultant viability figure of £1,860,000 is £534,000 below the reasonable Landowner’s expectation of value of £2,394,000 which provides no scope for any additional elements of planning gain or for any affordable housing ,or off site affordable housing based on the proposed scheme. Any such requirements would, in our opinion, threaten delivery of housing on the subject site” It is Cassidy and Ashton who refer to the landowner as “Altruistic”

The “Market evidence” seemed to suggest in December 2017 that there could not possibly be any affordable housing. It would “Threaten the delivery of the housing” and “There is no scope for any affordable housing” This has now changed to 23% following a refusal recommendation by the planning officer in the original application.

This begs the question as to why we were told that no affordable housing could possibly be included.

It also begs the question as to whether the policy of 35% really cannot be attained. It seems to depend entirely on how much the landowner is paid.

Cassidy and Ashton make reference to a fundraising amount of £300,000. Approximately 4 years ago the advertisement on the side of a local shop indicated a figure of £180,000 had been raised. (It is still there) There has been

a surplus of over £91,000 raised in the last four years. Even if we only have £150,000 left it is enough to start to build a local community centre.

In relation to the community centre Cassidy and Ashton state there is a lack of understanding of the proposals. Rather unfortunate as they were the ones who developed the plans. With the greatest respect the following should be considered;

The usable floor space in the main hall will be smaller than the one at nearby Hoghton Village Hall – yet it is costing £1.2 million. A building almost two and a half times the size of the existing one provides a hall with an extra 14 square metres. We understand the proposals. The new building has a footprint of approximately 450 square metres. The existing building is approximately 185 square metres.

Male and female changing rooms. - What happens when there is a cricket match? Do home and away teams change in the same changing room (not in accordance with the rules and regulations for obvious reasons), or are both changing rooms given to the cricket teams? What happens to any female residents or any local residents under the age of 16yrs who wish to undertake activities which require changing rooms/ shower facilities? Perhaps a visit to the facilities at New Longton would have been beneficial and shown the applicants, that in the modern age two simple shower areas categorised as male and female are woefully inadequate. It takes no account of the mix of age groups, and various separation issues that will be required. This is costing £1.2 million!!!

Cassidy and Ashton also fail to mention the objection by Sport England to the application for a centre of this size and on this location. The issue is ball strike. It is a public park and no independent assessment has been carried out as required by Sport England. £1.2 million!!!!

In relation to the setting of a precedent Cassidy and Ashton claim this is unreasonable as there is no indication of other “Altruistic “ landowners in the local area. This is an unfortunate adjective. This landowner is set to receive approximately £1.3 million for a field valued at £66,000 with a realistic “Low hope” development prospect. Had the applicants been successful on the first attempt the landowner was to receive between £1.8 million and £2.4 Million.

The OED definition of “Altruism” is “Selfless concern for the wellbeing of others” Owners of Green Belt and other protected land may just be a little tempted by this form of selfless concern. This is not selfless concern for the elderly residents of Conway Court which is adjacent to the field where they can expect to be subject to 42 months of building work.

Cassidy and Ashton refer to increased noise and traffic generation as not being significant. This is despite the aim within their business plan to attract motorway traffic for business meetings at the centre. It is certainly significant to Lancashire County Councillor Snowden, the police, the head teachers of the two schools and the parents who are currently working together to try to draw up plans to mitigate the chaos and traffic danger in the Gregson Lane / Bournes Row area . This is within 200 metres of the planned new centre. It seems Lancashire County Council Highways have not considered this issue.

In relation to the agricultural land classification this issue may have to be revisited. There are issues as to why only seven samples were used and the selection of the points from which they were taken.

Representation 2741777 on South Ribble portal presented a clear rationale for why this could not be conclusively claimed.

I agree with Cassidy and Ashton that this application should be dealt with on its merits and with no misleading or incorrect information being relied upon.

It is for this reason that I submit the response.

The conclusion in the Cassidy and Ashton document is highly opinionated and makes attempts at emotive persuasion. They claim it is a “Once in a generation opportunity” It is not. It is a business project involving Cassidy and Ashton, Eckersleys, Thornber and Walker and Willowgrove Developments. It is unclear how much each of these businesses will receive as a “Basic fee”

They state the “Fine balance slips inexorably in favour of the development as proposed” This is despite the repeated claim that it will only succeed with the overwhelming support of the community. This is opinion. This is not fact.

They state “The many benefits of the scheme clearly outweigh any impact of the housing development” Opinion again, particularly from those who do not

reside in the area, do not have any link to the area, have a financial interest in the development and have failed to reflect upon the views of the majority in relation to this application.

It is somewhat surprising to read the claim in paragraph 2.41 that none of the issues raised in the Cassidy and Ashton document are regarded as material considerations. I am firmly of the view that failing to comply with Affordable Housing policy is a material consideration.

This application is therefore opposed and it is requested that these issues are reported to the members of the Planning Committee prior to the application being determined.