

To build or not to build? (30th July 2011)

The new 'National Planning Policy Framework' part of the Localism Bill is slowly chugging it's way through the law-making process and will allow developers to obtain a default 'yes' rather than a maybe or no. Unless, of course, the local authority has a planning policy. In this case, the usual rules will apply.

For example, if you wanted to build a development where a local plan says it would not accord with the locally agreed plan, then an inquiry would have to be held to alter the agreed plan. Naturally, we have a local plan which is updated on a regular basis. The current plan goes up to 2031 and does not allow housing on green belt.

The insurance company that have held onto assorted land on the outskirts of the town, have decided that the combination of the new planning framework coupled with the inconsiderate local authority restating the opinion that the town boundary has not moved to the A41 by reallocating the existing green belt, meant that it ought to off-load the assorted parcels of land.

So it came to pass that an investment company thought it could make a quick killing by proposing an ideal development suggesting everything anyone in their right mind would want. So as not to commit themselves to anything other than a change of use, it is called a 'concept'. What is a concept? It's all in the minds eye!

It also allows the planners, the public and, more importantly, the planners, to see what is possible without actually doing anything. What is that phrase? "you can fool some of the people, some of the time but you can't fool all the people all of the time". I would like to think us carrot tops are not that stupid and can see through the smoke and mirrors with ease. It's the others we have to be careful of!

Just another thought, as you can apply for and gain planning permission for any development even if they don't own the land, I do wonder why we have just a 'concept' rather than a full planning application. Does it suggest the investment/development company don't intend more than taking the money and running or something completely different to the 'concept'? Perhaps someone should ask!