

SELBY CORE STRATEGY – FAIRBURN

RESPONSE TO THE 6<sup>th</sup> SET OF CHANGES

**STATEMENT BY R WILSON**

Following the EIP in April 2012, the Inspector asked SDC to reconsider certain changes to the Core Strategy. One of these changes related to downgrading Fairburn from a DSV to a Secondary Village, taking into account evidence presented at the EIP by the Parish Council and myself. It was agreed that there had been errors in the evidence and methodology which had resulted in Fairburn being wrongly classified as a DSV. The Officers of SDC presented a report to an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council on the 29<sup>th</sup> May 2012 which stated –

*"April EIP Inspector asked the Council to further consider its position on these 3 villages in the light of new evidence"*

*"Officers have reviewed the evidence base and Council's case and recommended changes"*

and recommended that-

*"Further evidence agreed after September EIP regarding level of services and poor access to public transport means Fairburn no longer meets DSV criteria – change to Secondary Village."*

The Extraordinary Council Meeting was not well attended and no new evidence was presented and yet the Council resolved not to support the Officers' recommendation, citing Paras. 55 and 70 of the NPPF for not so doing. It should be noted that the NPPF was taken into consideration by the various parties at the EIP. Briefly, paragraphs 55 and 70 of the NPPF state that the *"location of housing should be where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities"*. The relevance of that paragraph is not immediately clear to me when the matter under consideration is whether Fairburn should be a DSV or a Secondary Village.

The report to Council claims that that Para. 70 of the NPPF says that *"planning policies should guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services particularly when this would reduce the community's ability to meet day to day needs"*. Generally, the report at Paras.8.3 – 8.8 claims that expansion will maintain and even promote new services.

In recent years Fairburn has undergone considerable expansion of mixed housing types. For example, there have been development

sites of 11, 18, 25, 13 and 15. This totals 82 new houses and flats plus a number of single dwellings which brings the total to near 100. This represents an increase of more than 35%.

I now would like to consider the impact that this very considerable expansion has had on services:

- A general shop CLOSED
- Post Office and shop CLOSED
- Replacement Post Office and shop CLOSED
- Butcher's shop CLOSED
- Bay Horse Pub CLOSED
- Youth Club UNDER THREAT OF CLOSURE
- Mobile Library WITHDRAWN
- Bus service to nearest local town, Castleford, WITHDRAWN
- Dedicated bus service to Micklefield Station (York/Selby/Leeds Line) WITHDRAWN
- The agreed existing level of public transport is POOR

On the plus side, the Primary School now enjoys the highest level of pupil numbers for many years and is not in need of expansion. However, it should be noted that, because of site restraints, there is no room for the school to expand. The Community Centre was provided and maintained by the local community. It is thriving and manages to return a financial surplus and is not in need of expansion as it has already proved to be sustainable.

It is clear that when reaching their conclusion the Council took no notice whatsoever of the evidence, if indeed it was ever brought to their attention.

The report wrongly claims "*Whilst recognising that the PO/shop has since closed this could be seen as a temporary result of the current economic climate and other shops may well open.*"

The closure cannot be regarded as temporary as, over the years, two attempts to maintain a PO/shop have failed. The original PO/shop closed and was converted into two dwellings. The closure was followed some two years later by the conversion of a house into a PO/shop. Because of the large number of steps, a lift for the disabled was installed. This PO/shop failed after 2 years and was subsequently converted into two flats and the lift removed. This cannot be seen as a "temporary" as claimed by the Council. The assessment of its status acknowledged that "*the village requires improved bus services*". This is unlikely to happen as Fairburn is on a circular route and the contribution it makes in passenger numbers to the total route is negligible. Expansion on the scale proposed will have no impact whatsoever on improving bus services.

A further reason given by the Council for opposing the Officers' recommendation is that *"New evidence was put forward at various stages by third parties relating to water (should have read sewage) infrastructure capacity which have been dealt with by Yorkshire Water."*

This matter has not been dealt with and the statement is incorrect. On 10<sup>th</sup> May 2012, I wrote to the EIP informing them that once again there had been a sewage spillage on Silver Street and Yorkshire Water had to jet the drains in order to unblock them. This was in spite of earlier assurances given by Yorkshire Water to local residents that the matter had been dealt with (see my letter dated 10<sup>th</sup> May 2012).

The current position on housing growth in Fairburn is that approval was granted for 14 dwellings some 4-5 years ago. Because of lack of interest, to date, no start has been made on that development. Recently a further 9 dwellings were granted planning permission. These two approvals alone meet the 23 dwellings allocated to Fairburn over the plan period, therefore there can be no need to review the Green Belt as both sites lie within the village envelope.

#### CONCLUSION

The NPPF gives no reason to change the conclusion reached and agreed by all parties at the EIP, nor does it change the Council's initial assessment policy. There is a striking lack of evidence offered by the Council as to why they should not support the Officers' clear recommendation. Indeed, the reasons stated are incorrect, not evidence-based and biased. It must be obvious to anyone, in the case of Fairburn, that Councillors, having made a decision regarding the DSV status, albeit on incorrect and misleading information, are now unwilling to change it. They now seek to manipulate the tests to fudge and invent reasons in order to justify their misguided decision. Should this be allowed to happen, then the assessment process will not have been applied fairly across the District which is a basic requirement of the process. Only Fairburn appears to have been subjected to this flawed process whilst other non-DSV settlements have been treated in accordance with the agreed method of assessment. If this is allowed to happen, then the process will be UNSOUND.

We therefore appeal to the Inspector to put this matter right in order to bring consistency and fairness to the Core Strategy.

Please note that I wish to attend and contribute to the EIP on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2012.

**Roy Wilson MBE 19<sup>th</sup> July 2012**