

For the attention of the Independent Examiner of the Leire Neighbourhood Plan.

Dear Sir

Having just read the submission from Leire Parish Council posted recently in “responses to second request for clarification 13 Sept 2021“, we cannot let their version of these events go unchallenged. We would like to offer the following comments on their submission;

“From Leire Parish Council

LEIRE PARISH COUNCIL NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Response to Independent Examiners Guidance and Directions – August 2021

At the Parish Council meeting held in July a planning application for the site included in the Neighbourhood Plan was presented to the Parish Council. There were only three Councillors present at the meeting, which was well attended by parishioners. “

The number of Councillors present was sufficient for the meeting to be quorate. The word “only” is irrelevant and intended to cast doubt on the validity of the decision made. The Parish Council called the meeting and presided over proceedings. Other matters and even another planning application were discussed and voted on that evening, yet no discussion has ensued as to the validity of these.

“The parishioners opposed to the inclusion of the site in the Plan made representations on the application and the Plan as a whole.”

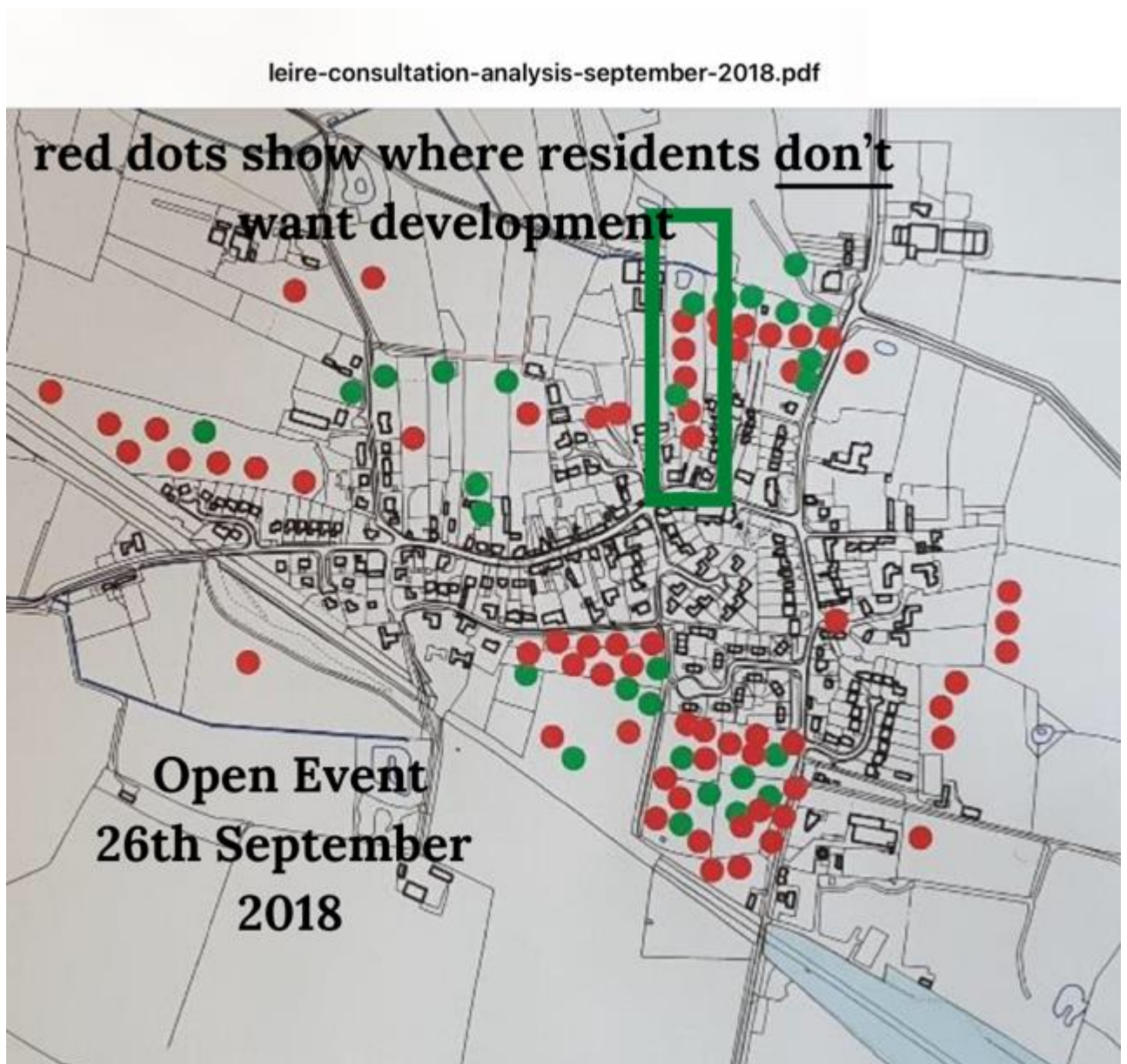
There were no representations from parishioners regarding the planning application 21/01248/OUT until it had been discussed by the Council and voted against by two of the three councillors (one of whom was the Chairperson). The third councillor abstained because of a conflict of interest.

“During the discussion two of the Councillor’s said that as a standalone application that they would personally object to any development”

No. The council discussed the planning application and took a vote on it. They voted against the application as already stated. There were no provisos or conditions or attempts to qualify their decision. This planning application 21/01248/OUT was an agenda item and required a vote in it’s own right. It was not a topic raised as part of a general discussion.

“In addition, the Leire Village Questionnaire, carried out at the start of the process showed that a high proportion of the responders were happy to have an additional small-scale development, and in fact at our Open Neighbourhood Plan Exhibition, held at a similar time, villagers indicated on a Plan where they felt that such a site could be located.”

The map below was photographed at the open event in September 2018. The boxed area is the site designated for development in Policy H1.



“The progress of selecting a small site was always updated at our open meetings”....“Progress on the Plan was also on the agenda at our Parish Council meetings.”

There were no reports on the “progress of selecting a small site” at any open meetings or at any Parish Council meetings. The first villagers knew about the selection decision and selection process was at the start of the “consultation process” in July 2020.

“and to the best of our knowledge none of the complainants attended either the open exhibition or the open meetings.”

Totally misleading and inaccurate statement. We attended the open exhibition as did several other of the complainants.

“The Parish Council are clear why a site has been included and are fully supportive of the Neighbourhood Plan in its current form. Therefore, under the provision of Standing Order 7b, an extraordinary meeting was called on 25.08.21 specifically to reverse the resolution made at the July meeting due to a recommendation of the Neighbourhood Plan Committee. At this meeting it was resolved that the Parish Council would abstain from commenting on the application as it forms part of the NP that is currently undergoing independent examination. The Parish Council were unable to convene an extraordinary meeting prior to 25.08.21 due to holidays.”

What was the resolution that had to be reversed? If no vote was taken against planning application 21/01248/OUT, why would the planning application not simply be discussed and voted on at the next ordinary council meeting? Why are they referring to standing order 7b? These are the standing orders pertaining to this matter;

7. ² Previous resolutions

a A resolution shall not be reversed within six months except either by a special motion, which requires written notice by at least (2) councillors to be given to the Proper Officer in accordance with standing order 9, or by a motion moved in pursuance of the recommendation of a committee or a sub- committee.

b When a motion moved pursuant to standing order 7(a) has been disposed of, no similar motion may be moved for a further six months.

Surely they mean 7(a)? Where is the evidence of any written request from councillors or the sub committee? Where are the minutes for the sub committee meeting at which this matter was discussed? Where was the motion moved in pursuance of the recommendation of the sub committee? It would seem to us that following private discussions between various council officials and advisers they simply decided to call an extraordinary meeting to reverse the vote taken in July. There was no consideration given to due process. The justification for the extraordinary meeting was made up at the meeting, following advice on standing orders read out by a District Councillor present at the extraordinary meeting.

“The submission of the planning application was unfortunate timing as it was presented to the Parish Council when the Parish Council representative on the Neighbourhood Plan Sub-Committee was absent and statements were made under pressure.”

Nobody forced the landowners to submit their planning application. The timing was of their own choosing. The Parish Council were completely aware that this application was the development included in their Neighbourhood Plan. The planning application was posted on HDC website on the 7th July. The Parish Council cannot claim to have been taken by surprise when planning the council meeting. They voted against 21/01248/OUT without pressure from anyone.

Yours faithfully

(resident)