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1 May 2018

FAO of Laura Eden, Senior Planning Officer
Planning Application Ref: DM/17/03214/FPA, Benridge Bank, West
Rainton

I refer to your letter dated 4/4/2018 in response to concerns raised by the Parish Council relating to the S106 Agreement.

Your letter, together with the attachments provided, have been shared with the Parish Council and were discussed at its last meeting on 19 April 18.

The provision of this additional information was welcomed. However, Parish Council still have some concerns relating to the ring fencing of the open space financial contribution.

It was noted that you explained that, “we *normally* seek to ring fence such contributions for use within the Electoral Division”, but you have not explained why. It is noted that Planning Committee Members have the opportunity to consider whether this is appropriate. It is not clear in what circumstances Members would consider this inappropriate.

There would appear to be no clear policy regarding the ring fencing of funds in this way. Without this there can be no transparency, consistency or accountability for the way in which ring fencing decisions are made.

This is of concern to the Parish Council as this has implications for the consideration of future planning applications impacting on the parish.

In relation to this planning application, it is disappointing to note that details of the trigger points will need to be accessed by viewing the S106 agreement, once signed, on Durham County Council's website. An update when the agreement has been completed would have been much more helpful. If this is not possible, could you please let me know when this document has been posted and available for viewing so that I can update the Parish Council accordingly.

It is noted that Stephen Reed, The Planning Development Manager, "would ensure that regular updates are provided to Members, the AAp's and Local Council's in regard to the availability of S106 funding."

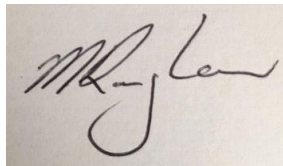
The Parish Council does not appear to have received such updates in the past.

However, from research, the Parish Council is aware that there is a S106 agreement for the housing scheme approved on Station Road but nothing seems to be happening with this development. The Parish Council has received no formal information pro-active information regarding the progress on this development, expected completion dates, S106 application closing dates etc. The rumours emerging in the village are that this development is unlikely to ever start. An update on this approved application would therefore be very welcome.

It is also disappointing to note no information has been provided regarding how applications made to the S106 Working Group will be accessed or prioritised if oversubscribed. Again, the apparent lack of openness, transparency and accountability for funding decisions is of concern.

The Parish Council has therefore resolved to refer this matter to our 2 County Councillors, Cllr Kellett and Cllr Hall, and our MP, Roberta Blackman-Woods, to:

1. Seek their support in ensuring that when applications are considered by the S106 working group relating to this development, that priority is given to funding projects from within the Parish.
2. Seek support for a review of the current practice regarding seeking financial contributions ring fenced to electoral divisions in preference to the relevant parish directly impacted by a development.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Ramshaw', is centered on a white rectangular background.

Signed:

Mark Ramshaw, Parish Clerk, West Rainton Parish Council