

PLANNING INQUIRY INTO RETIREMENT VILLAGE DECISION ANNOUNCED

APRIL 2022

The news we have all been waiting for has arrived! On 7 April we received a copy of the Planning Inspector's judgement on the appeal against the refusal of planning permission to develop a retirement care village to the rear of 163-187 High Street. The appeal has been dismissed. This is the outcome many local residents, the Medical Practice and the Parish Council hoped for.

It is clear from reading the judgement that making the appeal decision is a complex process. The evidence for the many issues raised during the appeal was weighed in detail by the Inspector in coming to his decision. The outcome was by no means a foregone conclusion and it is now clear that the careful work by so many people was essential to it being achieved. My thanks go to the team from East Cambridgeshire District Council, to our District Councillors, Dr Keith, all local residents who made representations (particularly those who registered as "interested persons" to the Inquiry) and my colleagues on the Parish Council.

The key factors leading to his decision were that only 3% of the land within East Cambridgeshire is Green Belt and that this development would have caused harm. However there have been judgements made elsewhere that "very special circumstances" may justify the building of a retirement village on green belt. A key part of the appellant's evidence was an "Alternative Sites Assessment", which claimed that there was no other suitable land for such a development in the District. The Inspector found that the criteria set for the assessment were unnecessarily narrow, to the point that only 4 alternative sites were identified (and each of these was rejected) out of a possible 285!

Jon Ogborn

Chair, Bottisham Parish Council