

Bluntisham Parish Council Response to HDC Note for the inspector regarding availability of services within Settlements 10.08.2018

Bluntisham Parish Council – 28.08.2018

This is the response of Bluntisham Parish Council to the new information EXAM04 compiled by HDC Planning Department in response to the request of the Inspector during the hearing dated 18.07.2018 and made available to us and where we have been invited to reply.

Bluntisham Parish Council once again question the quality of the information provided and the fact that it is misleading, omits several important details and makes no reference to the capacity for growth and development in the facilities listed. This report refers to Bluntisham and not any other settlement, where having reviewed the information provided is still largely inaccurate.

We restate our position that the Local Plan to 2036 lacks soundness with regards to the settlement status allocated to Bluntisham as a local service centre. That the new evidence submitted does nothing to justify the change and in fact confirms once again that Bluntisham is no different from similar size villages that are classed as small settlements – Earith, Needingworth being examples of this.

Shops

There is one shopping complex in Bluntisham, all the buildings on the site are owned and rented out by the same individual – these are listed as BP Garage, Bugden's, Bluntisham Fryer, The Village Barbers and the Lounge Café.

With the exception of the BP Garage and Bugden's there is an outstanding planning application to demolish the following facilities at this site – Bluntisham Fryer, The Lounge Café and the Village Barbers – application number 17/01785/FUL.

This application is intrinsically linked to the change of status of Bluntisham in that the same individual owns the land opposite the garage which was previously designated as a rural exception site and which is included as a proposed development within the Local Plan to 2036, application number 17/01015/OUT. This planning application is to build up to 26 houses opposite the garage site, but is not in line with the current rules for Rural Exception sites, the application includes commercial buildings and a limited number of affordable homes and despite having been logged with HDC planning in May 2017 has still not been decided upon by HDC planning.

It is on record that HDC planning recommended to approve the demolition of these facilities despite objection from the Parish Council. These are now, knowingly included as justification for the change in the settlement status of Bluntisham.

Replacement of these facilities can only be approved if the settlement status of the village is changed and approval granted to build on the proposed site as per application 17/01015/OUT.

Community Facilities

The new report now lists two meeting halls, a pool hall and bar, and an amateur dramatic centre. There is no detail with regards to these facilities and included are photographs of these buildings for the purpose of reference and reality:

Church Hall – An outbuilding next to the Parish Church, used for activities associated with the church and a ping pong club. Not suitable for expansion or development.



Ex-Serviceman's Club – described as Pool Hall and bar. This is a private members snooker club, there are no female members or members under 18 years of age. Membership is limited and tends to be invitation only. The bar is licensed but not stocked and is operated via an honesty box system and not open to the public at any time.



Bacstage – Amateur Dramatics

The local amateur dramatics group use the old school building for prop storage, prop building and read through's. They rent the building from the Bluntisham Saywell's School Charity and it is not a building suitable for expansion or development. It is administered by two trustees and the terms of the charity preclude development.



Village Hall – this is the only purpose built community building in the village. It is run by the Parish Council and rented to various groups and organisations. It houses the branch surgery within the hall in three rooms (see photos under Health) it is built on Parish Council land and there is no available land available to expand the facilities as it is surrounded on all four sides by a car park, football pitch, cricket pitch and cricket nets.

The facility is licensed but there is no permanent bar in the building. It contains a main hall, sports changing rooms, two meeting rooms and a kitchen. It also contains the three rooms rented to the Church Street Surgery in Somersham for use as a branch surgery.

School Spaces

The data submitted by HDC contradicts the information given to the Parish Council in July 2018 with regards to spaces. Please see this extract from the minutes for the August 2018 meeting of Bluntisham Parish Council:

- Becky Ford – Horizons Learning Federation replied to the PC concerns raised about the availability of school places for this school year. The following spaces were confirmed: EYFS – 26 places confirmed & 4 spaces Year 1 – 24 places taken & 6 spaces Year 2 – 17 places taken & 13 spaces

This suggests there are only 23 available spaces for the coming school year rather than the numbers on the HDC report. It is already on the record that the School federation objects to the change in status due to the level of investment required in the school, both in terms of additional staff and facilities neither of which have any identified funding stream.

Health

The current branch surgery is operated by a GP Surgery based in Somersham (Church Road Surgery). They rent three rooms from the Parish council within the village hall. The Parish Council, as a result of a direct request from the Somersham surgery have agreed to reduce the rent per month by nearly 20% in order to retain the 1.3hrs a week that a GP is on site.

The Church Road Surgery have also confirmed that as of 01.10.2018 the branch surgery will no longer open on a Wednesday. There are no plans to increase the number of operating hours and the longevity of the tenancy is now only a 12 month agreement and there are no intention extend the opening hours or services provided nor is there any capacity to grow this facility within the village hall.



Bus Services

Full details of the times of the bus services in Bluntisham have not been included in the report. All of these are available at <http://www.bluntishambuses.co.uk/>

It should be noted that the guided bus Service A provides services between 0622 and 0712hrs and then 1756 and 1909hrs on a daily basis. There is only one service on a Saturday. There are no other services during the day.

The daily 21 service leaves and returns three times a day, but the timetable is not suitable for use by school pupils, students or people who start work before 10.00am. If you were to catch the last bus in Bluntisham to St Ives during the week at 1640, the last bus from St Ives arrives back in Bluntisham at 1718pm.

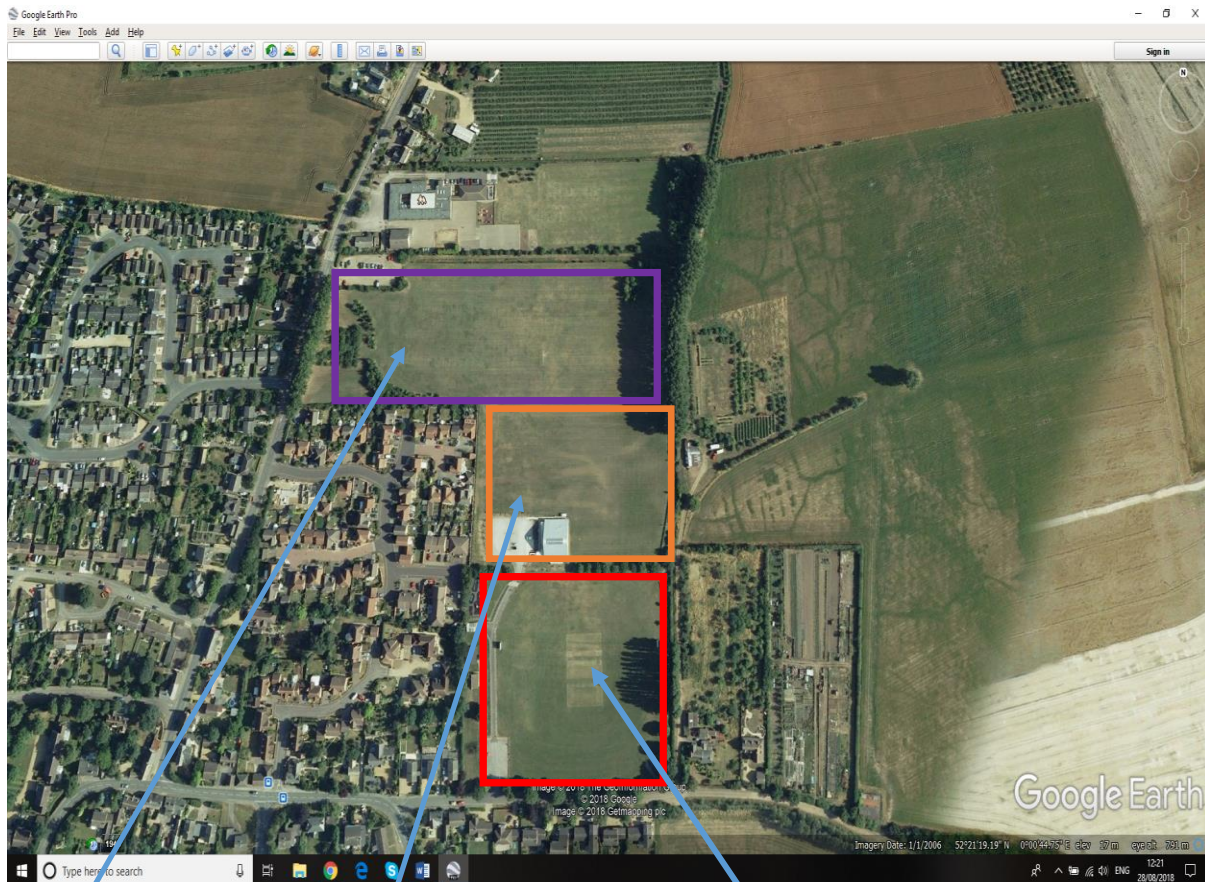
The 22 Service is currently funded by the County Council and this funding stops in March 2019 and there is no funding stream available on the horizon. There is a suggestion that local Parish Council's on the route fund this service going forward

None of these services can be defined as providing a sustainable alternative to the use of private vehicles. The current profile of the public transport reflects an outdated demographic model, there are no frequent or direct links to any of the main employment, education and transport hubs such as Cambridge, Peterborough and Huntingdon. There are no plans from any of the current service providers to increase the level of public transport provision.

Growth

There is no scope for growth or land to provide the amount of open space laid down in the Infrastructure Development plan. The IDP identified over £3M of required infrastructure development in Bluntisham in order to sustain the change in status. This would be funded via the developers, CIL money and Section 106 payments – the rules around S106 mean that a development needs to be 200+ houses, but none of the two proposed developments in Bluntisham will deliver any S106 money as they are below 200 houses. CIL payments are paid to HDC and we will only see 15% of this contribution as we don't have a local plan.

Please see the following photo and notes which shows the land ownership of the public open space in the village and as you can see from the photo there is no available land in which to grow the current facilities and provide new open space required by the change in status.



Land leased from CCC used for Youth Football Boys and Girls

Parish Council land – new nets not shown to right of hall & adult football pitch.

Feoffee's owned land and rented by Parish Council and used as the Cricket pitch.