

## Session 6 Feedback

### Written Statement Submitted by Mr. B. V. Cockbill

Please find below my Written Statement for the final Session 5 of the Swindon Central Area Action Plan.

Regards

Brian V Cockbill

In what the Inspector termed the "washing up Session" she said that she would like to participants views on the process used in the Inquiry.

In response to this, I intend to be present and am prepared to reply to any question or comment on my following written statement:-

- 1 This informality in Inquiries was entirely new to me, all my experience having been where a strict formal routine had always been employed.

I was therefore somewhat apprehensive that the Hearing could remain focussed, in a businesslike way, on the important aspects on which the Plan depended.

- 2 I became increasingly pleased in the fair way that the process employed, despite the audible problems that plagued parts of the proceedings, all parties views were allowed to be expressed (apart from the exception referred to at 8 below).

Hence, I believe the Inspector and Program Manager are to be applauded.

- 3 I would venture the following suggestions that might be worth considering in future Informal Hearings:-

a) I appreciate that stenograph recording of proceedings would be prohibitively expensive. The absence of any independent minute/note taker meant the Inspector was forced to make copious notes herself, whilst all adjudicators will rely on their personal jottings, some other back up would I think be helpful to Inspectors for instance:

i) employment of an independent note taker;

or/and ii) some electronic video or tape recording apparatus.

- 4 All parties I think were impressed how the Inspector's agenda notes prioritised what she considered key questions and the opportunity the authority had to been able to make available their responses to these prior to the Inquiry. As an objector, this was very helpful as it gave leads for parties to develop

arguments and questions which the Inspector professionally viewed as relevant considerations.

- 5 I consider that a large scale copy of the submission map, or maybe one projected onto a suitable screen or wall<sup>1</sup>, visible in Hearings to all present ought to have been displayed. This would have helped in clearly establishing the exact location under discussion.
- 6 Everybody seemed to accept others views and despite those of us who had passionate beliefs, which on occasion did surface, no rancour or personal attacks were meant. Criticisms offered and accepted in the constructive spirit in which they were made.
- 7 The aim of the Inquiry requiring the authority to try to justify their plans publicly were I think achieved and tested by some very searching questions.
- 8 The Inspector is aware and I understand shares my uncomfortable feeling that one lady's views were not heard yesterday. Some of those privileged, amongst which I consider myself, do have a little experience to some procedural devices. We appreciate that on occasions we have been afforded the chance to push to the boundaries some of the rules. We trust we have not abused these and that they will not, either consciously or unconsciously, prejudice the conclusions of the Inquiry. The Inspector has been very accommodating in some instances, to me particularly, hence I have a sense of guilt that I may have taken all the permissible leniency leaving none for this lady. She was clearly ignorant of the rules. Appreciating the Inspector has rules within which she has to operate, I earnestly hope, even at this late stage some form of accommodation can be found. I consider that no party would object and would even applaud such an outcome. I believe, consideration of this lady's contribution (and I have no idea what they might be) could only enhance the general perception of this Inform Hearing and how it was run.
- 9 Whilst, I personally, was happy with this particular Inquiry I do have some concerns that all Inspectors will have the personal techniques and be able to generate the degree of fairness that was exhibited by Linda Wride.