



Friday 26 June 2009

Re: Annual Report of the Council's Monitoring Officer

Dear Mr Hill

I have spoken to the Ombudsman's office, and it is the advice of the Assistant Ombudsman that I write to you in relation to the serious concerns I have about the way my complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman about the Planning Department has been reported in the Monitoring Officer's Annual Report.

The Assistant Ombudsman has advised that it is the Council's own choice how it reports the outcome of complaints, but he agrees with me that the Council's summary is not accurate or fair.

In making my original complaint to the Ombudsman I had rather hoped that it would cause the Planning Department to reflect on the public perception of the way they handle applications and that they might seek to learn lessons for the future.

I am therefore extremely disappointed that the summary makes no mention whatsoever of the fault of the Council and fails completely to mention the true nature of the complaint.

In essence the part of my complaint which the Ombudsman chose to investigate related to the proposed development of public open space and the Council's failure to correctly identify the status of the land. This resulted in a failure to give proper consideration to local planning policy LE11 and the government policy contained in PPG17; both policies which are there to protect our open spaces.

I feel this 'whitewash' of the real issues portrays a dismissive attitude by the Council to the findings of the Ombudsman and does little to reassure me as complainant that the Council takes the matter seriously.

I understand that the Monitoring Officer's report will be considered by the Standards Committee on Monday evening. I am aware that the Ombudsman's annual letter is attached to the report and it is my view that the Ombudsman's summary of my complaint, contained in that letter, is fundamentally fair. I do, however, feel that it is my realistic expectation that the Officer's report should be equally fair and accurate.

I would be grateful to receive your own thoughts on this matter and I would like your assurances that my concerns will be made known to the Standards Committee at Monday's meeting.

Yours sincerely

Miriam Lewis

c.c. Terry Mortimer, Monitoring Officer