

Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman
Citygate
47 – 51 Mosley Street
Manchester
M2 3HQ

30th November 2022

Dear Sir or Madam

Re: Conflict of Interest Concerns - CB/22/2399/REG3 Erection of 27 no. dwellings including self-build, 1-4 bedroom units, with associated landscaping, highways, parking and drainage at Land south of Northwood End Road and East of Meadow Piece, Haynes, Bedford, MK45 3QB

On the 26th of October 2022, Central Bedfordshire Council's Development Management Committee approved planning application CB/22/2399/REG3, which concerned the development of 27 new homes in Northwood End Road, Haynes, Bedfordshire.

The vacant arable land is owned by Central Bedfordshire Council, who identified this for development within its Local Plan. Haynes Parish Council commissioned a Neighbourhood Plan, which has been adopted by Central Bedfordshire Council, within which this piece of land sought reasonable justification for it being chosen as opposed to other areas within the village. None was ever given.

The developer for this site and management of the application is New Vista Homes, which is owned by the Central Bedfordshire Group, which is a company wholly owned by Central Bedfordshire Council.

During the Development Management Committee meeting, its own committee members challenged each other over one member being present who was also the executive member for planning and regeneration and an independent member stating they could not reasonably vote on this application as the developer was New Vista Homes. Both the executive and independent members left the meeting before the vote was passed.

The vote was subsequently passed by 7 committee members in favour, with one against and one abstention.

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Since then, residents of the village and Haynes Parish Council have concerns about this process. We would like to know the following:

- Was Central Bedfordshire Council Executive correct in forming New Vista Homes?
- Is Central Bedfordshire Council allowed to operate in this manner i.e., approving their own planning applications?
- Is Central Bedfordshire Council allowed to approve their own planning applications and, at the same time, commission their own developer in the form on New Vista Homes?
- What financial oversight is given to such practice so that matters are legal and ethical?

Your advice regarding these concerns would be greatly appreciated and we look forward to your response at your earliest convenience.

Kind regards.

Yours faithfully,

Mrs D Robins, CiLCA
Clerk to Haynes Parish Council