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## **MIDDLE QUINTON DEVELOPERS REJECT FINDINGS OF ASA INVESTIGATION**

St. Modwen and the Bird Group of Companies have dismissed the decision by the Council of the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) to uphold a complaint made by Peter Luff MP against an advert for the Middle Quinton Eco Town Vision, which appeared in the 11 September 2008 edition of the *Stratford Herald* newspaper.

“It is disappointing that the ASA has failed to appreciate the context of the advert, which was designed to communicate a ‘Vision’ of Middle Quinton to the local community based upon the Vision document submitted to the Government at its request,” comments John Dodds, Midlands regional director, St. Modwen.

He continues:

“The dispute with the ASA boils down to arguments over semantics but we believe we have acted with integrity and sought only to inform the public openly about our plans for the Eco-Town. It appears that our approach is in contrast to Mr Luff’s alleged conduct in relation to his expenses as a Member of Parliament, as reported in last Friday’s Daily Telegraph.

“The Eco-Town scheme is a long way off in development terms and should it be selected on the Government’s final shortlist, it would still have to go through a rigorous planning process. Therefore, all we can do at such an early stage is to provide people with a firm concept for the scheme in terms of what we, as the developers, would like to build based on the facts that we have amassed to date.

“Nevertheless, we stand by the affirmations made in the Vision advert which we have been continuously asked to confirm through numerous public consultation events that

**Continued/ ...**

**2/ ...**

we have attended. The Vision advert was designed in part to make clear the infrastructure Middle Quinton could deliver.”

Bird Group chairman, Tony Bird adds: “The remainder of the public clearly appreciated the context of the Vision advert. There was only one complaint made against it and that was from a self-acknowledged opponent of the Middle Quinton proposal. Members of the public must reach their own conclusions about the credibility of that complaint in light of recent happenings in Parliament. It is not and has never been our intention to mislead the public in relation to the Eco Town and we do not accept that we have done so in this case.

“We remain completely committed to seeing the Eco-Town site selection process through to its conclusion and remain confident that we have a very strong case which has stood up robustly to intense Government scrutiny.”

**-ENDS-**

**Notes to Editors:**

The four elements of the complaint, upheld by the ASA, have been explained by St. Modwen and the Bird Group of Companies as follows:

**The site’s status as brownfield land:**

St.Modwen and the Bird Group say:

The Long Marston site is described by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) itself as brownfield land and has been acknowledged by other government bodies – ADAS and MAFF- as ‘land predominantly in urban use.’

Planning experts describe the site in similar terms, as ‘previously developed land.’

We believe that these determinations, classifications and reports provide more than adequate substantiation for the claim that the site has brownfield status.

With respect to the ASA, they are not qualified to make judgements on technical questions such as the brownfield status of the site. St.Modwen and the Bird Group collectively have over 80 years of expertise in these matters and together with our professional advisors are eminently better placed to fully understand what constitutes brownfield land.

3/ ...

**The creation of 4,700 jobs:**

St.Modwen and the Bird Group say:

DCLG required a detailed employment strategy to be submitted as part of the bidding process. This was carried out on our behalf by a well-respected and independent specialist and was included in the Vision document and refereed to in the newspaper advert.

The fact that the advert represented a 'Vision' for the Eco-Town made it readily apparent that it could not be an absolute and definitive description of the number of jobs that would be created by Middle Quinton.

Naturally we stand by the figures and methodology used in arriving at the prediction of the numbers of jobs that would be created.

**6,000 homes contributing towards Stratford's future housing provision**

**St.Modwen and the Bird Group say:**

Caroline Flint MP, the former housing minister, made it clear in a public speech made in February 2008 that eco town housing would count towards a local authority's future housing targets. She said:

"And so I want to assure local authorities which include an eco-town in their future housing plans that it will, of course, count towards their future housing targets, consistent with our national figure of 240,000 homes per year by 2016."

Based on this confirmation from a government minister we felt entirely vindicated in repeating this piece of information in the advert for Middle Quinton.

**Middle Quinton's £100 million investment delivering Stratford's Western bypass**  
**St.Modwen and the Bird Group say:**

Local Authority ambition for a Western bypass is a matter of record, being included in both Warwickshire County Council's Local Transport Plan 2006-2011 and Stratford District Council's Urban Design Framework.

**4/ ...**

We believe it is clear from the context of the advert that the average reader would of course appreciate that delivering the Western Bypass would be subject to agreement and sign off by the relevant local authorities. It is not possible for a developer to act in isolation on such a major project.

What is not in doubt is the financial investment that would be made by St. Modwen and the Bird Group to make the project financially viable and deliverable.

For further information, please contact:

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