

# Hill Top Farm - Brookdale Avenue - Ridge Avenue Fields

## Background

Property Spy, a St Albans based company claiming to specialise in Landbanking, have purchased 10.4 acres of agricultural land formerly part of Hilltop Farm.

Approximately one third of the land has been offered for sale as 25 plots of about 0.1 acre at around £15000 each.

Property Spy purchased the land for around £100,000. They stand to make £370,000 alone from the sale of the first 25 plots. The plots cost Property Spy about £1000 each – a bit much as the real value as agricultural land is closer to £400.

## Stockport Council View

A meeting to discuss these activities was held at the Ridge Church in Hawk Green at 7 pm on Thursday 14th July. Three Stockport Councillors and forty local residents attended.

Cllr Shan Alexander	Marple South	<a href="mailto:cllr.shan.alexander@stockport.gov.uk">cllr.shan.alexander@stockport.gov.uk</a>
Cllr Chris Baker	Marple South and Planning and Highways Committee	<a href="mailto:cllr.chris.baker@stockport.gov.uk">cllr.chris.baker@stockport.gov.uk</a>
Cllr Andrew Bispham	Marple North	<a href="mailto:cllr.andrew.bispham@stockport.gov.uk">cllr.andrew.bispham@stockport.gov.uk</a>

The councillors at the meeting emphasised the following points:

- The land in question falls inside the Greater Manchester Green Belt. The council, backed by other local councils is determined to maintain the Green Belt for the foreseeable future.
- The land has been in the Green Belt for many years and this status was confirmed in spring 2006 when Stockport adopted the unitary development plan. In this plan, Stockport has designated sufficient building land for the next 10 years on brown field and other sites. When this plan is updated in ten years time, there are plenty of other sites that will be used before any demand is placed on the Green Belt.
- Stockport council recently stopped a development in the next street as excessive. The plan went to appeal and the council won.
- The plots do not comply with current regulations for housing density. The plan could not be used in a planning application.
- As the land is designated for agricultural purposes, no other activity will be permitted. For example, fencing, growing of flowers, erection of sheds or siting of caravans would not be permitted.

Local residents were urged to be vigilant and report such activities.

### ***For purchasers of plots, the councillors pointed out the following:***

- Landbanking can make money for shrewd investors (Donald Trump) in the long term. It is unheard of for such investors to share the potential profits with schemes such as Property Spy.
- If the land was genuinely development property, the price would be at least 10 times the current value and the land would have been purchased by Barratts or another large builder.
- Property Spy retains the access roads on their scheme. The plots potentially have no access.
- No developer would look at a site of individually owned plots. You will never get to build your dream house on your plot. You would all have to agree to sell to the developer, at the price they offer.
- There was a bill before parliament to try to curb this activity, which although not illegal was a trap for the unwary.

## Local MP's View

### **Andrew Stunell, the local MP has expressed his concerns to local residents:**

"I give full support to local residents. This is a speculative scheme of the worst sort. It is outrageous, and legislation is already before Parliament to stamp out this abuse.

Anyone tempted to buy one of these plots should know they are lining the pockets of the promoters with no chance whatsoever of ever getting their money back or a house built."

Contact: [JONESBR@parliament.uk](mailto:JONESBR@parliament.uk)

## Local Residents' Views

We have spoken to the representatives of Property Spy and have obtained a contract, which you will have to sign if you buy. Incidentally, you have to pay a non-returnable £450 deposit to see the contract, but we will give you a copy free. *Be aware there is strong local organised opposition to any development on this site now and in the long term.*

### **What they say**

Initially, Property Spy representatives were heard telling potential buyers that they could do what they liked with the plot. They now stick much closer to the truth.

They admit that the land is Green Belt, is only a long-term speculative investment opportunity, at least 10 to 15 years before any development could take place.

They now admit a buyer could not even erect a fence around their plot.

They claim to employ a company of planning consultants who will be trying to get the land reclassified. Interestingly, the rep claims that the contract you have to sign will compel you to sell the land back to a developer should the site be developed. Although this is the only realistic way the site could be developed, *it is not in the contract we have seen.*

They are offering 5 to 10% discounts to residents. Bargain with them!

Property Spy say they will sell the current 25 plots and perhaps a further batch. They will retain a considerable area unsold. *Guess which area would be sold to a developer first!*

### **What you sign up to**

The contract to buy transfers the freehold title from Hillgate Land Holdings to the buyer along with a number of covenants binding on both parties for 60 years. (Property Spy seems to represent a group of companies who are behind this enterprise, no doubt including the planning consultants and Hillgate Land Holdings.)

The covenants bind the seller to provide a right of way to your plot, and to put in a roadway should the site be developed, as long as the plot owners pay for it.

The covenants bind the buyer to:

- Not oppose any application to develop any part of the site
- Pay the planning consultants 3% of the market value of the plot every time it is transferred.
- Pay the planning consultants £195 if the plot is transferred in the first ten years, this sum to double every ten years thereafter (£6240 after 50 years)

### **What to do?**

This is a great money making scheme - for Property Spy! Keep your money for serious investments. However it is possible that buying key plots would make life difficult for a developer. My inclination is not to pay Property Spy anything like the advertised price if you do. The prices are soft – start at 50% or less!

Local Contacts:

Tim Snellgrove Tel. 427 5150 Mobile 07974735116 12 Ridge Avenue [timsnellgrove@btinternet.com](mailto:timsnellgrove@btinternet.com)