

WOOTTON BASSETT & CRICKLADE AREA BOARD
NORTH WILTSHIRE RURAL BUFFER TASK GROUP

Notes of meeting held at
Bewley House, Monkton Park, Chippenham, SN15 1ER
Thursday 24th June 2010 at 7.30pm.

Informative:

- *Task Group members note the decision of the AB on 26 May to establish the Task Group.*
- *Members also note the terms of reference agreed between the Chairman of the Area Board and Democratic Services Officers of Wiltshire Council (attached).*

Present: Unitary Cllrs M.Groom (The Lydiards), J.Lay(Purton),
Parish Cllrs P.Willis(Lydiard Tregoz), TH.Pepperall(Lydiard Millicent) and
M Bell (Purton),

Apologies: DPDS, Cllrs John Brady(Cabinet member responsible for Economic Development and Planning) and T.Smith(W.C.).

1. The first decision was to provide notes from the meeting, for ourselves and the Area Board.
2. It was noted that the Task Group name had been changed from The Ridgeway Farm Development Task Group – apparently to provide a wider remit for discussion.
3. Cllr Groom was proposed as Chairman of the meeting by Cllr Lay, seconded by Cllr Pepperall, and unanimously approved.
4. Regretfully there was no presentation by DPDS, but this may take place at our next meeting.
5. It was noted that the imminent dissolution of the RSS and its consequent policies has radically changed the current policy on various matters, not least the previously approved housing numbers. It was felt that the previous government's policies had been based on perceived housing requirements during the boom years from 1995 to 2008, and developers unbridled demand (especially at the 2004 EIP), and are no longer relevant in these current recessionary times. It was agreed that we are left with the planning guidelines of the existing Local Plans, and RPG.
6. The application for the development of 3000 houses at Ridgeway Farm has highly alarmed the Task Group members, and local Parish Councils and residents alike.
7. It was pointed out that in the last 10 years, Swindon Borough has already taken over significant areas from adjoining parishes, with its Northern Development, and the Western Development of Shaw and Nine Elms. These two latter hamlets have totally lost their identity and have become urban areas.
8. Swindon B.C. has also commenced their Southern Development, where sales of new dwellings are scarce, and they still have some 500 dwellings for sale in their Northern Development.
9. It was noted that Swindon B.C. has more than adequate land to its East, and that direction of growth has already been established at the 2008 EIP.
10. There are further recent concerns from local communities, which will affect housing demand, and cause vacuums in local communities. It is concerning that RAF Lyneham is due to close, which will affect not only housing demand, but cause a huge loss of numbers in schools and demand for local services, particularly in Lyneham and Wootton Bassett.
11. Conversely there are other areas, such as Corsham, where the MOD is expanding, which is creating the opposite effect. In addition Brize Norton is expected to grow

- from the closure of RAF Lyneham. This illustrates the current change for the need for local councils to assess demand, rather than blanket Governmental edicts.
12. All the above leads back to the focus on potential development west of Swindon. We are now guided by the existing Local Plans, and the RPG. The latter quoted a case for 1000 dwellings in this area, pointing out the benefits of the Tadpole Lane site. It was thought that this had already been re-allocated, and we would appreciate the advice of the Spatial Planning Section, who may be able to find a relevant 'paper trail'.
 13. There are many reasons why further development to the West of Swindon is critically inappropriate:
 - a. Boundaries are perceived to have become irrelevant, or ignored, both by Swindon B.C. (with the backing of the RSS), and developers.
 - b. Highway infrastructure is already totally inadequate in the area, which is mainly rural, with lack of pavements, narrow and single-track roads and bridges, and subject to busy and dangerous commuter rat-runs. The villages are complaining also of increased numbers of HGVs, many ignoring the weight restrictions, and convoys of buses passing through and not using designated lorry routes.
 - c. There are already significant flooding problems, which can only increase with further development. West Swindon is a 'bowl' which, because of the topography, receives surface water from the N.E. & the S.W. The rivers are unable to cope in particularly wet conditions, especially when they are blocked off further downstream in Oxfordshire. The Cotswold Water Park, because of its clay-lined lakes, and recent housing development, has many fewer areas to soak up any surplus surface water.
 - d. This also affects, and is related to the Sewage problems. We are advised that Swindon's Barnfield Works are at full capacity, and cannot cope at certain times. During such conditions, there are several areas in West Swindon that suffer from sewage overflows.
 14. The problems illustrated above lead us to suggest that:
 - a. no further development to the West of Swindon should be permitted. It also suggests that, for the protection of our rural communities, we should be requesting that the previous Rural Buffer Zones be re-instated to the west of Swindon, and perhaps also other similar areas around Swindon.
 - b. the protection against coalescence in the Local Plans should also be strengthened, to enable the retention of the unique identities of the hamlets and villages, and the green areas which are a haven for the residents and visitors from Swindon and elsewhere.
 15. It was suggested that the next meeting should consist of three parts:
Firstly a presentation by DPDS, to ourselves and a Spatial Planning member,
Secondly a discussion between ourselves and Spatial Planning, and
Thirdly a second closed session of this Task Group.
The Jubilee ClubHouse (JCH) in the Recreation Field, off Chestnut Springs in Lydiard Millicent was offered, and the p.m. of Friday July 9th was mooted.
It was felt that a venue local to the Task Group members was appropriate, and that a free venue would suit the non-funded nature of this Group.

Notes prepared by TH Pepperall, and reviewed by M Groom,