

Deputations to Full Council – 21st January 2109

SPEAKING ORDER

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1 Sharon Ashworth

Concerned Residents of Edith Weston

Good evening Councillors.

My name is Sharon Ashworth and I represent a group of concerned residents from Edith Weston.

We understand and believe that when Rutland County Council embarked on the redevelopment of ST Georges Barracks with the MOD, they were guided by their core strategy policy – C S 6¹ and that they did so with the best of intentions, to protect Rutland.

Let's remind ourselves of a few facts.

- The redevelopment of St Georges Site was instigated by the MOD
- The Mod employ Regenco
- The last local plan consultation was for policy changes to incorporate St Georges Barracks -thus enabling the MOD to achieve their objective.
- On page 21 of tonight's Public report - point 6.3 - From the outset the MOD rejected all potential alternative uses
- The comment on page 12 is another example of MOD pressure - The MOD have made it clear that if you don't support the HIF submission, they will STILL bring the site forward for development.

and yet

Well, here's what we find MOST puzzling...

In Nov 2016, after the MOD announced in parliament its “Better Defence Estate” - SIR MICHAEL FALLON was interviewed on Forces Network and he explained the criteria used in selecting 91 sites out of the possible 301

They were

= Those that are most expensive to run,

= Those that could be grouped together into centres of speciality

but also, and I quote “to get out of some of the more rural locations to areas of larger population where their partners have a better chance of getting work”²

There is a certain irony here...

The figure set for MOD to contribute 55,000 houses is A STRONG SUBLIMINAL message that you will no doubt have heard.

In the Better Defence Estates report³, Page 11, the table indicates that 39,800 houses have been accounted for in their targets - this leaves 15,200 houses that need to be met by the remaining 56 sites.

SO, the MOD are suggesting that the Smallest, most rural county in England should accommodate 14.6% of the 15200?

The MOD are our defence experts, but they are NOT Housing or planning experts.

The MOD do not have powers to act above our Government’s Housing departments.

Councillors – it is time to put Rutland’s interests first.

PLEASE SAY NO to the HIF fund submission

Instead - say YES to Option 3 - on page 22 of this evening’s paper.

A NEW RUTLAND VILLAGE with 350 new homes - something that WE CAN ALL BE PROUD OF - no funding, 30% affordable and adding to the prosperity of Oakham & Uppingham our cherished market towns.

We realise this still leaves unutilised land, but the MOD might like to leave Rutland a country park as a legacy!

In addition, we believe there will be other suitable options that will add to Rutland's leisure and economy and contribute towards the MOD'S objectives.

It just takes time to find these options and the future of OUR county, cannot be rushed.

The Partnership RCC have with the MOD is valuable and can still work – but the MOD need to be realistic about what is Right for Rutland.

We have tried very hard to be factual, concise and fair and all we ask is that you give the HIF submission your - independent thought.

Thank you for your time.

¹ Rutland Core Strategy Development Plan - Policy CS6 Re-use of redundant military bases and prisons- Page 29

² <https://www.forces.net/news/tri-service/more-50-bases-go-mod-estate-sell>

³ A Better Defence Estate- MOD Nov 16

2 Neil Newton

St Georges Advisory Group, Empingham PC

Thank you, Chairman, Neil Newton, Empingham Parish Council. In our opinion the decision you are asked to endorse tonight is symptomatic of the mindset that has pervaded the St Georges debacle to date, namely that there is only one answer and the evidence and the arguments will be made to fit.

A brief history, the base is to close, the council engages, a memorandum of understanding the MOU fine. What you were not asked, and the residents were not consulted about was whether you wanted to acquiesce in, indeed facilitate, a monstrous new modern housing estate, totally out of keeping with anything in Rutland.

No expert planning or legal advice was taken as to whether the MOU or normal planning powers would better protect the interests of Rutland. I am not talking small council lawyer or planner, this is way above their pay grade, I mean planning counsel instructed on our behalf by one of the major property consultancies. There is enough meat in your own core strategies in the local plan, the sustainability arguments in the Government white paper, The Right Homes in the Right Places, and the precedents of redundant airfields refused planning permissions, to at least ask the question, never done.

You were given no options or alternatives. The MOU is at best a glorified best endeavours clause, no legal standing and leaving all the power with the MoD

More shamefully most of you, and the public, were kept in the dark as to the scale of the development for nearly a year. Your officers took the decision that the MOU and its contents was not a key decision, how the biggest decision to affect Rutland in its current existence was not a key decision is beyond belief.

This is not just arcane process, because it was not a key decision it was never formally reported to cabinet, your call in and scrutiny processes did not apply, the access to information rules were invalidated. The detail could be kept under wraps. By the time the

scale of what was being considered was apparent, a lot of tick box consultation and information drip feed meant the initial plan was presented as a deep-rooted fait accompli

That attitude of we know best, is replicated tonight. You are asked to endorse a decision to access funds to accelerate the provision of infrastructure to facilitate 2315 homes. Where did that figure come from, you are told it is the MoD's optimum solution, well bully for them. What is the optimum number for Rutland, you should ask?

Have you had the chance to examine the MoD calculations in any detail?

Why are Rutlanders being asked to pay for the legacy clean-up costs of the MoD in terms of numbers of houses they neither need nor want.

Why cannot these legacy costs be met from the quarry receipt.

Do you know what affordable housing means, not in nebulous national terms, but what are the rental levels assumed, densities, build quality, tenure mix, and thus house prices mean for a bus driver in Rutland. Can he/she afford the so-called affordable housing, or will they be a magnet for commuters. You don't know.

Even the information you are given is heavily caveated, the MoD have made it perfectly clear that they can revisit the numbers any time.

Finally, Chairman this is one of the final hurdles but not the last fence, that will be the planning application. You will not take that application, it will be after the next elections.

But what impact will taking the queens shilling now have on the future council's decision options. If the next council wishes to explore alternatives you have been denied, but the developer says the Council have signed up to 2315 and that is the only way it can be delivered, what leg will the council stand on.

I am sure there will be bland comfort noises that the planning application will not be sullied, but how can it not be, even if it is only an influence on a future inspector.

The grant conditions will have to be signed up to well before the planning application is decided. Once again where is the expert opinion?

In a few minutes it is impossible to detail all the information gaps, but If you cannot honestly say to yourselves that you have had adequate information, or time, or expert advice to back this decision against all other options, how will you justify to yourselves, or to the thousands of Rutlanders that view this huge modern monstrosity with horror, that you have faithfully discharged your obligations as councillors to protect a unique rural heritage.

Let your successors consider this matter in a way most of you have not been allowed to.

3 Andrew Johnson

St Georges Advisory Group, Morcott PC

Good Evening – My name is Andrew Johnson. I am Chairman of Morcott Parish Council and a member of the St Georges Advisory Group.

This debate is premature and poorly informed, yet it paves the way for a project which will change the face of Rutland for ever. You will also hear this from others this evening.

In addition to the points they will raise I would like to pose a question: Why, as an outgoing council facing a general election very shortly, you would wish to be rushed into voting in favour of the proposal at this time?

I would particularly like to challenge the obvious bias of the information being provided to you which presents a favourable view of the St Georges proposals. As a consequence of the rush to commit to these proposals, you are not being offered the chance to understand and interpret all the salient facts which would provide balance and properly equip you to make the decision this evening. Where is the evidence of proper Governance?

As an example I would like to focus on the housing numbers assumed if the St George's proposals go ahead. Implicitly this evening, you are being asked to agree with the St Georges evolving masterplan and the total of 2315 dwellings contained within it, including at least 1200 houses to be built prior to 2036.

The key issue with the number of houses proposed at St Georges is that the "Objectively Assessed Need" for housing in Rutland over the next plan period is defined as 160 houses per year. The implication of agreeing to go ahead with the HIF application proposed is that no development in the rest of Rutland other than at St Georges will go ahead within the plan period. In the light of the trend in windfall and brown field site development seen since 2006 this is obviously totally unrealistic.

It is therefore implicit in the development proposal, upon which the HIF application is predicated, that the number of houses built will either exceed 160 per year, or otherwise developments in Oakham, Uppingham and other service centres will be sacrificed. Rutland simply does not need the number of houses which require a level of investment in infrastructure which is implied by the HIF application you are being asked to approve.

It is apparent that the MoD are driving Rutland to meet their demands. For example, County Councillors were not trusted to debate the “Memorandum of Understanding” prior to it being signed. What is to say that the MoD will not demand a faster building programme than anticipated? If more than 160 homes are built in any given year Rutland will still need to build 160 per year in the following years to meet the target. If far more than 160 a year are built in the early years you will then run the risk of not having sufficient supply in future years.

By agreeing to the proposal in front of you this evening you are in danger of paving the way for a large settlement which is not required to meet Rutland’s housing needs. Be in no doubt that the development the MoD are demanding at St George’s is of a scale which will change the face of Rutland for ever.

This development is not “Right For Rutland”, instead it is “Right for the MoD” who are the dominant partner in this initiative. Incredibly £15 Million or 50% of the HIF bid is to be used to defray the cost of Remedial work to clear up the mess left by the MoD, including the removal of significant quantities of asbestos. Why would you allow this?

If you vote for the HIF application, you are complicit in allowing the MoD to dominate planning policy and I urge you to reject this application for HIF Funding.

Ends. 21 01 2019

4 Edward Jarron

St Georges Advisory Group, Edith Weston PC

Ladies and Gentlemen, and in particular Councillors of Rutland County Council,

My name is Edward Jarron and I am speaking on behalf of Edith Weston Parish Council.

The proposers of this development have failed to engage the community properly and have certainly failed to address the very significant number of as yet unpublished objections to the site being developed as proposed. It would thus be totally wrong to suggest that the development has community support.

The development currently being proposed affects all of Rutland, not just our village, and it is my Parish Council's firm view that, as currently drafted, the proposal to build 2,315 houses of the former St George's site is bad for Rutland and a very high risk venture. There will inevitably be unforeseen consequences and there has been a serious lack of proper consideration of other potential uses.

The master plan is clearly predicated upon securing the best deal for the Ministry of Defence, rather than meeting the real needs of the people of Rutland. This has resulted in a proposal for a massive housing estate which is more than likely to become a dormitory town for surrounding cities, rather than an exciting development that will serve Rutland's needs.

The first of these needs is high quality employment. The Master plan treats employment as an afterthought and, recognizing that the area dedicated to employment is seriously inadequate (less than 10% of the total area available) it makes the extraordinary claim that a large proportion of the residents will work from home. Frankly that is not good enough.

Properly researched plans to bring work to the county would have been a much better place to start and an appropriate allocation of land made for that purpose. The fastest growing jobs sectors are in areas such as information technology, biotechnology, and environmental and engineering technology. There are also great and as yet undeveloped opportunities in the tourism industry, yet to the best of our knowledge no efforts appear to have been made to attract companies looking for new space.

Instead, RCC has been so obsessed with cramming the site full of houses to maximize receipts for the MoD that scant attention has been paid to the many other possibilities for the site.

We are not against housing; quite the contrary. The current infrastructure on the base will support at least 350 houses and with the 70 proposed for the Officers' Mess site, we could go ahead immediately with a development of at least 420 houses, without any major infrastructure investment. There are sufficient facilities in local villages in the forms of schools, shops, churches, pubs, and other meeting places to support a development of this size, which would have the warm support of the local community. It would be a good place to start and would provide the Council with a clear indication of future requirements.

So, in summary, you are being asked to endorse a bid for HIF funding based upon a badly conceived and unrealistically sized plan. By supporting this bid, you will in effect you will be tacitly agreeing to a new town in Rutland from the outset.

It follows that we most strongly urge you to reject this proposal and to charge the Executive to go back to the drawing board and produce a plan that will put Rutland's needs at its centre and gain the support of its people, which the current plan so clearly fails to do.

5 Paul Cummings

St Georges Advisory Group, North Luffenham PC

Good Evening – My name is Paul Cummings, the Chairman of North Luffenham Parish Council.

This debate is premature. Whilst tonight you are considering the Housing Infrastructure bid, there has been no proper debate or opportunity for the Council to challenge the proposals on the table for the development in the form of the Masterplan, which the HIF bid underwrites. At the moment, it seems to the residents of Rutland that this project is being railroaded through, with no real opportunity for their elected representatives on the Council to have a proper debate on the detail of the proposals, or indeed any alternative proposals such as Woolfox. The HIF bid and Masterplan are inexorably linked, however the 'Project Fear' analysis in the Business Case, that without HIF funding the Council would withdraw from the project and the partnership and the MoD would insist upon building thousands more homes on the site, is absolute nonsense.

Beyond a few stylised drawings have you really any idea of what you are now committing millions of pounds to? What will this huge housing estate really look like? Certainly not the promised typical Rutland village. I would remind you that the MoD are in the driving seat of this project yet have no responsibility for its sustainability. Once the last soldier and last dog leaves the Barracks, the MoD only want to meet their financial and house building targets.

As you have heard, in terms of sustainability, the Masterplan still lacks any imagination or credibility in respect of job creation. The scale of this development far exceeds the RCC's own accepted demand for both jobs and housing and, it is simply in the wrong place to meet these needs. Nothing in the plan proposes to build on Rutland's critical £124m/annum leisure and tourism industries that support over 1,700 jobs. In terms of environmental sustainability, we see nothing to suggest that the development will result in the requisite net gain in biodiversity.

Affordable homes for local people are a vital part of the County's future. But what will attract the new residents of the 665 affordable homes to live nowhere near any centre of services or currently established employment, and next to a huge quarry. Solely in terms of affordable homes - this community will be the size of Edith Weston, Lyndon, Manton, Preston, Ridlington and Wing, combined. There simply is not a need for this number of affordable homes to service the County's needs – the number is driven by the requirement to build a total 2,315 homes, 30% of which must be affordable. There is no clarification about what actually is affordable to a bus driver, nurse or shop worker.

This is not 'Nimbyism' it is simply our contention that the current proposal is not "an appropriate solution to the redevelopment of the site. It is not sustainable nor environmentally sound nor does it incorporate innovative and imaginative ideas that might attract high tech business to the site; all of which we support." An essential element of any HIF bid and indeed a Garden Town community is that it does have the support of the local communities and in this case, it is clear that it does not. I urge you to reject this application for HIF Funding. You, the County Council, not the Executive or the Cabinet are in charge of the direction the Barracks development takes, – we urge you to take control and to seek an early and full debate on the Masterplan, before committing to spending £30 million pounds of public money. This is too important for the future of Rutland to be "noddled through".