

Meeting chaired by Sir Alan Duncan MP about future of
St George's Barracks

Friday 22nd June 2018, 3:30pm at the King Centre, Main
Road, Barleythorpe, LE15 7EE.

Minutes

1. Introductions

2. Alan Duncan statement

AD made the following points:

- St George's Barracks is going to close and the MOD will have to do something with the land. It is a very sizeable brownfield site including the listed Thor Missile Site buildings. The fundamental danger is that the MOD sells it all for housing and none of us have any influence outside the normal process of planning which invariably would go to appeal and probably get approved. We would then end up with a random spiralling massive development of new houses.
- AD believes this is a unique pioneering opportunity for our local council to work in partnership with the MOD from the outset.
- AD agreed that there are profound concerns, the most critical being the sheer scale of the plan. What the Council has called a Master Plan has been

clumsily published and unhelpfully labelled. Calling it a Master Plan sounds like a fait accompli but this is a draft concept and no more than that. The confusion has allowed talk of three and a half thousand houses to gain currency and to become an assumed number.

- There is insufficient explanation of the pace and staging of any future building and a plan which just has a single artist's impression on one side of paper has been utterly inadequate for going into the detail people are entitled to.
- In a nutshell, the concern is that Rutland is just going to have a dormitory town bigger than Uppingham dumped on it in order to maximise revenue for the MOD and to build the largest number of houses possible.
- Some of the issues for the meeting to consider are: that we need to consider the impact on neighbouring communities, primarily in North Luffenham and Edith Weston but also in South Luffenham and Ketton among others. This will also have a serious impact on the whole of Rutland because it risks significantly changing the county's unique characteristics.
- We have to look at the scale and pace of development and also the aesthetics of the design. We do not want a whole series of random designs in cul-de-sacs which create nothing more than a dormitory town. If we are to have a so-called garden

village, what actually does that mean and given the number of houses, what is going to be done to ensure that the accompanying infrastructure of roads, retail, health, old age care, schools can be built to meet the significant expansion of people.

- AD asked the MOD to explain in broad terms what they can and cannot agree to in terms of the number of properties they might be prepared to see on the site in order to meet the inevitable pressures and obligations from the central government on costs and revenues.
- AD concluded by saying he hoped that by the end of the meeting some kind of understanding about how we can collectively proceed would be useful.

3. Ministry of Defence statement – James Ryley

James Ryley made the following points:

- MOD are going through a rationalisation programme which was announced in the “A Better Defence Estate” publication in November 2016. St George’s fits into this programme with a closure date of 2021. Typically the MOD would work with the local authority anyway, but they are working together early so they can come up with something the Council are happy with before they reach the point a planning application is submitted.

- The MOD are looking for both best value for the site and what is right for Rutland.
- MOD confirmed it wouldn't typically challenge de-listing of the Thor Missile Site.
- The starting point is that any government department has to achieve best value. The MOD are working with RCC to understand collectively to understand how this site could be developed. We are not working backwards, we are not saying we need X number of houses, we are working the other way around and seeing what the site could deliver and then asking what it would mean in terms of receipts.
- Not ready to extract minerals for 20 years. The minerals would have to come under a separate planning application and process with a separate consultation. The timings of quarrying and house building are yet to be worked out.
- It was asked why the MOD are not exploiting the whole site for minerals extraction given the site is situated on the prime horizon of lower Lincolnshire limestone. The explanation given was that the minerals reduce in depth towards the west of the site hence least cost effective.

- JR is asked if the MOD have been putting pressure on the Council as to the number of houses. JR reiterates that they have to achieve best value, and that the receipts from this programme are directly reinvested into building a better defence estate, so the more funds they have the better for the MOD.

4. Rutland County Council statement – Cllr Oliver Hemsley

The Leader of RCC Cllr Oliver Hemsley made the following points:

- We are here to listen. We are delighted with the number of responses we have received in the informal consultation and we are now taking time to analyse all these and take them into account when looking at the next version of the Master Plan.
- We are very aware that overwhelming number of responses are against the development. Many are opposed to any development but for most it is the scale, pace and phasing that causes most concern – this will be a key element for us to review with MOD and RegenCo as the masterplan evolves and as we look in detail at feasibility and viability.
- It is also very clear that we need to work hard to amplify exactly what supporting infrastructure will be included and when.

- We would like to propose the creation of a St George's Advisory Group of 10/15 community representatives that we can work with over the next months and years on a regular basis. Initially to assist us to develop the master plan but also to improve communication on this key project for the County. We may not always agree about everything but it will give you a forum to voice your views.

Councillor Oliver Hemsley also drew attention to a draft/indicative timeline for the rest of 2018. This makes clear that the decisions on the Master Plan will be made by Cabinet and Full Council and that if there is support for the creation of the Advisory Group that this will meet monthly in the build up to those decisions with a real opportunity to contribute to the evolving Master Plan.

5. Memorandum of Understanding between MOD and RCC – development of “garden village” concept vs alternative uses of the site.

Helen Briggs, Chief Executive of RCC, spoke first on the Memorandum of Understanding:

- Soon after it was announced that the MOD would be closing St George's site, the Council contacted the MOD as we wanted to understand what they thought the opportunities were for the future of site. As a result of these conversations, we thought it would be helpful to have some sort of agreement in

place about how we would work together as a public/public partnership. It contains what the MOD and County Council objectives are and how we would work together to achieve them.

- AD asked what the advantage of this agreement was for Rutland residents as opposed to the County fighting anything the MOD might want to develop separately. HB responded to say it does not stop us disagreeing but it is better to work in partnership as it gives a greater level of engagement at an earlier stage.
- The Council's role as statutory planning authority, highways and minerals authority still stands in place, so at the point that the MOD developer presents the planning application, the Council will still have all of the powers of a statutory planning authority to hear the planning application for housing, minerals and any other applications.
- The Council looked at different MOD sites across country and what had been achieved there and what would be the best way to work with the MOD.

Steve Pearce from RegenCo

- Planning powers in relation to large sites are a very blunt tool, and not particularly suited to the task. You can either say yes or no and if you say no too

many times you end up with an appeal and very unlikely then to influence the outcome. If you work together with the land owner or developer of a large scheme you can help to shape and influence the nature of that development.

- In East Hampshire, the local authority (East Hampshire District Council) worked together with the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (on behalf of the MOD), in very similar circumstances. The MOD had announced the closure of the Bordon Garrison, which was a very similar size to St George's Barracks.
- The local authority worked together with the MOD on the specification for the proposals before the developer was appointed. This allowed the Council to dictate the pace of infrastructure delivery as it is critical to get infrastructure in place early. The MOD and the Council worked together to secure the funding for some of this infrastructure – such as roads, schools and health facilities. On the back of this the scepticism from the public was turned around and the application approved.

Steve Pearce stated that the main principles of the “garden village’ concept are:

- Creation of a community that is sustainable within its own terms and can meet all of its needs from

within the boundaries of that community.

- For every home, there should be a job. The village should enable more people to work within that community rather than a large proportion having to travel outside to work.
- The facilities should be within walking distance or very easily accessible. There must therefore be strong emphasis on sustainable transport – walking, cycling and public transport.
- There should be an element of community stewardship, with the community itself taking some ownership of some of the facilities and services within that area.
- Focus on quality and that the quality is suited to the setting of the area.
- Village must be multigenerational.

6. Scale of development and its effect on local area as well as Rutland as a county

It was asked what number of houses people would be happy with. Edith Weston proposed 1,500 houses.

There was a suggestion that we study at the local plan first and look at what the demand is before working out what a sensible number would be.

AD asked the MOD and RCC what a workable number is that fits with the building of infrastructure and meets the needs of the ambitions of the MOD's revenue from the site.

AD proposes the meeting establish the spectrum of options there may be between 1,500 and 3,000 and what the implications are for infrastructure and viability - what is a definite no and what is a maybe.

Agreement that we need to consult young people. Employment opportunities need to be taken into account. It was suggested that young people want high speed internet, leisure opportunities, nightlife.

Helen Briggs (RCC) confirms that the infrastructure will be in place before houses are built and that there must be appropriate support for the increased community.

7. The possibility of phasing development in stages

AD states that there seems to be no intention to do this in one fell swoop. RCC is asked what the scale and nature of phasing is that they anticipate and are working on.

Helen Briggs advised that in line with the total numbers of housing the phasing is also dependent on overall site viability. This will evolve from the next stages of work and will feed into the next version of the Master Plan. Ultimately the phasing will be affected by a number of

factors including – viability, infrastructure, how quickly houses can be built and market conditions.

AD added this point to the list of necessary clarifications in due course.

8. Infrastructure – the need for improved roads, bus services, schools, doctors’ surgeries and other local facilities

Helen Briggs (RCC) stated that:

- The Government have acknowledged the need for putting infrastructure in advance of development in the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF). We have got through the first stage. It is specifically designed to enable infrastructure to be put in before the homes. As we are developing the Master Plan we will also be developing the business case to secure the funding from the HIF. If we don't get awarded HIF, the developer will still be required to provide the infrastructure but possibly not as early as it could be under HIF. HIF funds will be awarded depending on the size of development, so money can still be given for a smaller number of houses.
- In the HIF submission the Council have included education, health and wellbeing including GP provision, road and transportation including buses, drainage, decontamination, demolition and anything else that will help the site get ready for building

homes on and all the services that the it would require. In addition to the HIF there will be a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106.

9. The importance of aesthetics – quality and style of housing

AD states that there is a fear that an unwelcome degree of modernity risks creeping into the style and we need to work out what would work for Rutland. It is discussed how can we do something that feels in keeping with Rutland and isn't over-expensive. There is agreement that we do not want 'them' and 'us'.

It is agreed that social housing is an important issue and needs to be taken into account. It is possible to do affordable/social housing with quality design and in fitting with the local area.

There is a discussion about a design code and the possibility of drawing one up for St George's development. It was agree by both MOD and RCC that this was a route being followed.

Helen Briggs (RCC) stated that she would be very keen to put a design code in place that would underpin development on the site and would be adhered to. This could be developed in an advisory group. Helen Briggs advised that there was a proposal for a design competition for Officers Mess site.

10. Employment and jobs on site

In the interests of time, it was agreed to move on from this agenda topic to be discussed at a later date.

11. The future structure of consultation

This was clarified in the indicative timetable and supported by the proposal to create the Advisory Group.

12. Conclusions/Any Other Business

The main issues were established as scale, pace and supporting infrastructure to support the new community and mitigate against impact on surrounding communities.

AD proposed a joint understanding about a process that can follow on from this that all present buy into.

AD agreed to talk to ministers in MOD and other government departments to progress matters where needed.

It was agreed to form an Advisory Group and discussion about composition followed. It was suggested that all present be members of the group as not all members will be able to make each meeting so it will be workable.

RCC is happy for everyone to be as involved as much or as little as they want to be. Councillor Oliver Hemsley suggested that at some points the group might want to consult specific people or groups, such as young people and that the whole of Rutland should be involved in some way.

It was agreed that a Terms of Reference should be put together for the Advisory Group – RCC to draft and these will be considered at the first meeting.

It was agreed that Advisory Group meetings should take place before Council Cabinet meetings so it can be consulted in advance of any significant decisions. It was also agreed that meetings would take place as required to ensure the project can move at the required pace.