

SGB/PCLG

13 Jan 19

Distribution: All Present

**SUMMARY OF A MEETING HELD ON SATURDAY 12th JANUARY 2019
ST JOHN AND ST MARY PRIMARY SCHOOL, NORTH LUFFENHAM
BETWEEN SIR ALAN DUNCAN MP AND THE ST GEORGE'S BARRACKS
PARISH COUNCIL LIAISON GROUP (PCLG)**

Present:

Sir Alan Duncan MP (Chair)
Norman Milne – Chair Edith Weston Parish Council
Ed Jarron – Edith Weston Parish Council
Vic Pheasant – Chair Empingham Parish Council
Neil Newton – Empingham Parish Council
Simon Aley – Chair Manton Parish Council
Egg Gilman – Chair Pilton Parish Meeting
Victor Bacon – Chair South Luffenham Parish Council
Sue Seed – South Luffenham Parish Council
Andrew Johnson – Chair Morcott Parish Council
Christopher Renner – Chair Normanton Parish Meeting
Cliff Bacon – Clerk Clipsham Parish Meeting / CPRE Rutland
Paul Cummings – Chair North Luffenham Parish Council (Secretary)

Observers:

Cllr Ken Bool – Normanton Ward
Cllr Ed Baines – Martinthorpe Ward

1. The meeting commenced at 10.00am with Sir Alan Duncan in the Chair. A copy of NLPC paper 'Response to Evolving Masterplan Document – Edition E' had been circulated in advance and provided much essential background regarding the concerns of PCLG members.
2. **Introduction.** Sir Alan opened the meeting by establishing that this was to be a frank and open exchange of views. **He advised that he should not be directly quoted by those attending without clearance through his office.**
3. **Opening Remarks.** He advised that he had met with Robert Stone, the Head of the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO), who had indicated that the MoD had no preconceived formal position in respect of development of the site but were under the following pressures:

- Priority was to reduce the long-term liability in respect of the on-going use and maintenance of the site, which was no longer needed for MoD purposes – a need to terminate existing costs.
- Target for building new homes on redundant military sites and pressure from Homes England (HE) to meet the targets laid down in the Defence Estate paper.
- There was no specific ‘target income’ resulting from the sale of the site, however MoD needed to recover the costs of clearing the site (£15/£16M), bringing to market and selling the site. There was an on-going Treasury requirement to identify some profit through the sale. Sufficient housing was needed on the site to defray all related costs.
- Crichel Down Rules - As far as MoD were concerned, change of use rules, meant that there was no requirement to transfer any land to previous owners. All owners had been advised of this decision, which was not open to further review. Owners could seek Judicial Review in respect of process – however the 3-month window for seeking a review of ‘Process’ was now already well underway

4. **HIF Bid.** Sir Alan advised that although he had met the Council’s Leadership on Fri 11th Jan, he had not been provided with a copy of the Council’s HIF bid documentation and was therefore unsighted regarding its contents and the timescale for submission. Sir Alan was advised that the bid would be considered by RCC on 21 Jan and the bid would be submitted to Homes England by the deadline of 22 Mar 19, it was not anticipated that there would be a second bidding round for HIF funding.

5. **More Quarry / Less Housing.** In response to a question regarding the potential to reduce housing and increase the area for quarrying, Sir Alan advised that a trade-off such as that suggested, was not possible. He advised that MoD considered that on the site there were two distinct areas – one for housing and one for mineral extraction (Quarrying).

6. **Housing.** Sir Alan indicated that he supported the proposal that a significant number (30%) of the housing on the site should be ‘affordable’ and he was fully supportive of the proposal to build a significant number of ‘starter homes’ on the site. He was however very concerned at the potential of getting the aesthetics of the site wrong. He was determined that the new development should broadly mirror a typical Rutland Village and should be an exemplar for others.

7. **MoD / RCC Partnership.** Sir Alan was supportive of the MoD / RCC partnership which would ensure that design and planning criteria were stipulated in advance and rigorously applied during project development. He opined that this would result in a much better outcome than allowing the MoD to sell off plots to developers, who would then impose their own criteria. The Partnership rationale would maximise constraints and establish design requirements from the outset.

8. **Design Criteria.** Sir Alan suggested that the Advisory Group should be given a strong voice in the identification and preparation of an appropriate design guide.

9. **Number of Homes.** Neil Newton (Empingham) advised that the number of homes proposed for the site (2,215 Main Site, 70 Officers' Mess and the new requirement for 30 additional homes on the Edith Weston Primary School site - Total 2,315) was simply too great for this isolated site. He questioned if RCC would win, if a legal and planning challenge was made to an Inspector. RCC had failed to produce any significant evidence that 2,300+ plus new homes were needed. In his view RCC have simply acquiesced to the MoD's Agenda. It was Sir Alan's view that Policy pressure mitigated against that view.

10. **Compliance with Local Planning Policy.** Cliff Bacon explained that over many years, RCC planners and Councillors had ensured that appropriate policies had been enshrined with the Local Plan to ensure that should MoD withdraw from their bases in the County, the land made redundant would be protected from development. This included requirements laid down in the current 2011/2014 local plan including the Spatial Strategy and specific policies relating to redundant military bases. The announcement that MoD intended to withdraw from North Luffenham had resulted in significant changes being announced and in revised draft local plans. It was his view that such change would not stand up to scrutiny.

11. **Woolfox.** It was noted that the proposals for changes in the Spatial Strategy within the Local Plan has led to the submission of a planning proposal in respect of Woolfox for up to 10,000 new homes. RCC supported the proposal to build at North Luffenham, outwith the scope of the current and draft Local Plan. This has resulted in RCC unwittingly creating a precedent for development in open countryside, a move which is likely to have significant long term implications throughout the County. It was Sir Alan's view that Woolfox was at present something of a 'Red Herring'. He advised the Group to concentrate their efforts on the current proposals for SGB.

12. **Planning Objections – Sir Alan.** Sir Alan indicated that whilst understanding the logic of the arguments listed above, there were significant planning risks which needed to be understood. Should RCC reject the current Partnership approach, the MoD would inevitably sell off the North Luffenham site to developers, and whilst RCC might object to any subsequent planning application, it was his view that on appeal the Inspectors would uphold the application and trump RCC objections. In this case more homes would be likely to be built and the current protection offered by the Partnership would be lost

13. **Public Opposition.** Eg Gilman advised that he had polled some 13,000 residents and received a response rate of 9%. Of this a huge majority were against the proposed development.

14. **Phasing.** Ed Jarron (Edith Weston) suggested that it might be appropriate to consider phasing of the development, starting with 350/500 new homes if the cash required by MoD was not required in a lump sum future development could be phased over an extended period of 20 years. Sir Alan responded that such a phased development would not create a critical mass which was an essential element of the development.

15. **Discussion – Way Forward.** It was agreed that the most appropriate approach would be to continue working in Partnership with the MoD whilst understanding that the number of homes proposed was neither appropriate nor acceptable. What was Right for Rutland was an appropriate development not a new town in open countryside. It was agreed by all present that other options needed to be considered and the masterplan revisited. It was considered that a development of circa 500 new homes would be appropriate. It was agreed that the current infrastructure could support 350 new homes it was anticipated that this could be extended to 500 without a need for substantial infrastructure (Water / Electricity). If MoD's primary concern was the removal of legacy costs the income from a development of this size would create an appropriate financial return.

15. **Employment.** There was no confidence within the Group that RCC were in a position to meet the aspiration to provide 2,300 jobs on the site. There was real concern that without sufficient employment the site would become a dormitory town, something that should be avoided at all costs. This view was fully supported by Sir Alan.

16. **Advisory Group.** PCLG members advised Sir Alan that the Advisory Group was not working effectively. This was illustrated by the decision to include a further 30 homes on the site of Edith Weston Primary School without any discussion / consultation within days of the most recent Advisory Group meeting. Sir Alan indicated that he was disappointed by RCC's failure to use the Advisory Group effectively and suggested that it had an important role to play in establishing the future aesthetics and layout of the site.

17. **Health.** Andrew Johnson, Morcott PC expressed concern that in the face of rapid population growth such as that proposed local CCGs would be unable to deliver the necessary services. This point was noted.

CONCLUSIONS

18. **Scale of Development.** It was agreed that the scale of the proposed development in open countryside was inappropriate.

19. **Local Support.** All present agreed that local support, an essential element of a development of this kind and indeed the HIF bid, was not forthcoming. There was strong opposition to the development across the County.

19. **HIF Bid by RCC.** The group advised Sir Alan that it would be important for him to make his view regarding the development clear to RCC. The HIF required his support which was currently for a development of 2,215 new homes within the Barracks and a further 100 new homes outwith the immediate Barrack perimeter. There was a very clear danger that once the HIF Bid had been submitted, that there would be no going back. Thereafter, the Council would be set on a development of 2,315 new homes. The bid would be considered by RCC on 21 Jan and the bid would be submitted to Homes England by the deadline of 22 Mar 19, it was not anticipated that there would be a second bidding round for HIF funding..

20. Future Actions.

- Sir Alan agreed to seek an early meeting with Gavin Williamson (SofS for Defence) to discuss the viability of the preferred development of 500 new homes.
- It was agreed that each PC Chair would write to RCC Councillors by 17 Jan 18, setting out their concerns to the development.
- Sir Alan agreed to meet CE/Leader of RCC again on 18 Jan. prior to the Council Meeting that would consider the HIF bid.
- It was agreed that Sir Alan needed to make his views clear on supporting or not the HIF bid. Many Councillors would value his view before making a decision.

PBG CUMMINGS
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