

Wanborough Parish Council

15 Springlines
Wanborough
SWINDON
Wiltshire
SN4 OES

Telephone: 01793-791904

e-mail: wanboroughpc@btinternet.com

04 July 2013

Ms Sam Howell
Swindon Borough Council
Wat Tyler House West (5th Floor)
Beckhampton Street
Swindon
SN1 2JH

Dear Sam,

Re: Working Party Meetings

As we discussed on the telephone last week we cancelled our 'Working Party Meeting' meeting on 26th June following a discussion with the full Parish Council on the 24th June.

In 2011 and before, the Parish Council were a vocal opponent and the leader of a number of groups opposing the plans for development of thousands of homes within our Parish and that of South Marston. This opposition and the publicity it generated were responsible for many of the 1600+ comments on the 'Core Strategy' (as the Local Plan was then known). This view was supported by hundreds of people at packed public meetings in Wanborough, Covingham and South Marston.

It was then suggested by Cllr. Andrew Bennett (our Ridgeway Ward Councillor) that it may have some positive outcome for the Parish were we to engage with the Borough Council to develop the Eastern Villages plan on the basis that we broadly accepted the need for housing and that growth was inevitable.

We established our main priorities at the first 'Working Party Meeting' on 14th September 2011. These were; Transport, 'Rat Running', a Rural Buffer (to protect the village from further development), the AONB (protection of views and setting) including the removal of a proposed industrial area to the North of the Marsh), and Flooding. There were a few other minor issues such as noise attenuation for any proposed 'link road' to 'Commonhead' and the opportunity to celebrate our Heritage Assets and the Ridgeway Trail.

I am disappointed to see in quoting these items here, quite how little our 'collaboration' has achieved for the Parish and it is for this reason that we go on record to state that we feel there was little genuine 'collaborative working' and that our views and those of the public in subsequent consultations have been broadly ignored. We do not feel you are in a position to claim that you have carried out meaningful consultation with the Parish Council at the EiP as this clearly has not happened. **We will engage in no more 'Working Party Meetings'.**

The above is not intended as a criticism of you and your colleagues whom we believe had a genuine intent, although perhaps more robust reporting up the chain of command would have helped. Phil Smith mentioned at our last meeting that he may not have communicated our anger to Richard Bell and the Council Leader and this was evident when we met them.

In the summer of 2012 Cllr Heenan announced to the press that 'he' had come up with an idea to solve the Redlands noise issue by changing the Local Plan to allow it to be developed for housing. We corresponded with you and in September were told that there would be ample opportunities for us to discuss potential changes before the Local Plan consultation.

Cllr Bennett and I, together with you, Carol Bristow and Phil Smith met at Redlands on Monday 26th November 2012 at which we discussed the 'option' of a small 'hamlet' style development and there was a specific request by Cllr Bennett to Phil Smith to look at designation of the site outside of the EV housing boundary.

The following is a quote from an email from Phil Smith (18/12/2012) *As you know as officers, we are keen to keep the dialogue going – it is in the interest of all that we try to reach an a solution. I have been working on a possible way forward – however you will appreciate my priority has been preparing for the start of consultation. The local plan is now on the website, www.swindon.gov.uk/localplan*

Angela should be getting a hard copy in the post by Thursday. The boundary is as at Cabinet version – I appreciate this is not what you wanted and you will formulate your objections on this basis. However, we have an opportunity to work together to find hopefully an acceptable solution before submission in April.

This repeats the claim of 'a possible way forward' and 'acceptable solution before submission'. Quite clearly our comments changed nothing, a majority of those who did comment were against the Redlands development (Richard Bell confirmed this at our meeting), Covingham Parish Council voted unanimously to oppose any development at all at Redlands, yet after all of that it was simply a decision that was taken in the face of all comments to leave the revised boundary as it was changed and see what happens at the EiP.

In fact even now you have no further dialogue with Redlands owners and there is nothing to control the numbers of homes which could be built there.

The following quote is from the widely accepted 'ACAS' description of 'consultation': *'Consultation involves taking account of as well as listening to the views of employees and must therefore take place before decisions are made. Making a pretence of consulting on issues that have already been decided is unproductive and engenders suspicion and mistrust about the process amongst staff. It will be helpful to decide upon the degree of consultation first and to inform people what the decision making process will be.'* Whilst this relates to employment law it has a long history in administrative law. Consultation should be meaningful and you will ultimately have to show how you have taken our views and those of the public into account?

We will oppose the boundary change at Redlands at the EiP and the way this was administered, as well as raising serious concerns about the sustainability of such a large development with no proven funding and delivery mechanisms, measures to prevent 'rat running' and any ability to control the development in an orderly fashion which is really where the Borough Council should have taken a lead.

After the meeting at Bourton (2nd July 2013) it is evident that there will not be a controlled process of development as there is no consortium of developers and you will 'respond' to applications. Similarly that you will go to the EiP without funding in place for the 'gap' between expected S.106 contributions and costs taking into account the nil CIL rate attributed to the Eastern Villages. There has also clearly been little 'cross border' work on the serious transport issues with VWHDC & Oxford CC and the result is a plan which will affect us all for years to come.

In due course we will comment upon the SPD and if further information arises in connection with any of the matters discussed I trust we will be made aware.

Yours sincerely,

Gary Sumner
Chairman
Wanborough Parish Council